The First Educational Exodus: A Narrative of 1965

by
Billy Huang

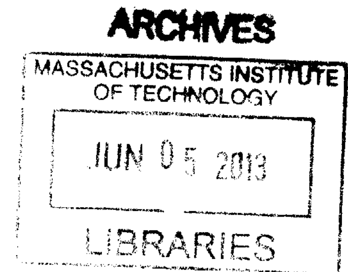
Submitted to the
Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2013

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**Abstract**

Histories of Boston's school desegregation crisis have focused on the legal and political struggles that preceded the Garrity decision, which, in 1974, enforced citywide school integration. It is necessary to discern and evaluate the viewpoints of black and white parents in the greater Boston area in the years before court-mandated integration. This thesis examines the black community's efforts to assure higher quality education for their children through public protests and self-help actions. It also explores the responses of urban and suburban white residents to this rising civil rights challenge.

Black parents created Operation Exodus, a grassroots movement aimed at enrolling Roxbury children in other Boston schools, in response to the Boston School Committee's reluctance to build better schools and integrate existing schools. Led by a group of prominent black activists, Exodus members found allies within and beyond Roxbury. From 1965-1970, Exodus rallied the black community to not only demand better education, but also to develop more effective social agencies in Roxbury. The movement eventually inspired similar programs, such as METCO, in the suburbs. Although the Exodus movement was eventually superseded by national efforts to integrate Boston's schools, it played a key role in shaping public opinion about school desegregation and publicizing the failures of the Boston school system.

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The First Educational Exodus: A Narrative of 1965

## I. Introduction

In 1965, a group of poor black parents achieved the seemingly impossible by creating an entirely private busing system in defiance of the Boston School Department. Beset by crumbling schools, inadequate teaching equipment, outdated curricula, and incompetent teachers, the parents appealed to the school department in hopes of improving the quality of education for their children. For two years the parents waited for actions from school officials. The Civil Rights Movement had raised expectations in the long-neglected black ghetto of Roxbury. Previous successes desegregating schools elsewhere in the United States had given the Roxbury parents hope that their children would receive better education once reforms were passed in Massachusetts. However, what the parents discovered was a school system mired in a bureaucracy committed to maintaining the *status quo*. The Boston School Committee, which presided over the School Department, dismissed the parents' claims with an air of indifference. The Committee assured the parents that they would look into the aforementioned problems, but it produced little more than cursory debates. Even after the passage of Massachusetts's Racial Imbalance Act in 1965, the School Committee did not act to improve Roxbury's schools. Without official support, the Roxbury parents moved forward with their own solution. Their plan, dubbed "Operation Exodus," called for the immediate busing of Roxbury children to purportedly better schools elsewhere in the city. The parents believed that if they could not get better schools in their neighborhoods, then they would bring their children to better schools. The parents catalyzed

a movement that achieved several milestones for the black community. First, Exodus inspired the black community to cooperate with suburban supporters to deliver quality education for black children throughout Boston. Second, the movement empowered Roxbury's social agencies and connected them to outside institutions. Third, the movement provided invaluable training for a new generation of black activists who would go on to achieve both political and social influence. These milestones became critical factors in the eventual overhaul of the Boston Public Schools, ushering in in a new, more modern school system.

## II. Research Background and Historiography

Most historians write about Boston's school desegregation crisis from the perspective of politicians, educators, and activists. Those groups dominate the various primary and secondary sources and the literature emphasizes the legal and political aspects of desegregation. However, there were other actors who were integral to the desegregation process, including local parents and children, whose voices were often overshadowed by more prominent members of society. This paper attempts to analyze the roles of those overshadowed groups in the years immediately preceding the desegregation crisis.

This paper focuses on the development of Operation Exodus as a community organization and analyzes the factors that led to the desegregation riots of the 1970s. Primary source documents were collected from the "Desegregation-Era Collections" in City of Boston Archives and Northeastern University's "Freedom House Collection." Contemporary newspaper accounts were found in the *Boston Globe*, *Bay-State Banner*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and

*Chicago Tribune*. I have also consulted various secondary sources by historians, political scientists, and sociologists. Firsthand accounts of the period include works by Peter Schrag, an Amherst historian, and Mel King, a prominent black activist and scholar.

## III. Boston's Segmented History and its Education System

Unlike the highly publicized racial desegregation battles of the Deep South, the struggle to end racial segregation in Boston involved campaigns to overturn less overt public policies. Given that Boston served as the political capitol of the progressive and liberal New England elite, the issue of segregation was avoided for much of the 20th century. Boston's *de facto* segregation was the product of a long process of social stratification. Political and legal mechanisms, such as gerrymandering and racial covenants, intensified segregation and isolated Boston's black population.

Boston's black community dates back to the colonial era. By the 19th century, a black enclave in Roxbury had developed. During that same period, white philanthropists and religious groups opened schools for black children. In the 1840s, liberal reformers found the schools to be "inadequate and unhealthy."[1] With the help of Protestant reformers, black leaders attempted to desegregate Boston's schools. In 1855, the Massachusetts Supreme Court integrated the schools. From the 1850s to the 1880s, the black community enjoyed a higher quality of life, spurred on by post-Civil War legislation that forbade discrimination against African-Americans.[2] By 1880, the

1 Ron Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 23.

2 J. Brian Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute: Social Change and Legal Maneuvers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 21.

black population grew to nearly six thousand. However, after 1880, black children were, once again, clustered into segregated and second-rate schools. The emergence of a "Negrophobic" working-class Irish immigrant population politically and socially marginalized the black community.[3] White protestants had retreated for the suburbs, leaving African-Americans with few political allies in the city. Thus, for the next eighty years the black community was relegated to second-class status.

The emergence of the Irish as Boston's ruling group was key to the Civil Rights Era desegregation battles. By the mid-nineteenth century, Boston experienced a large demographic shift that upended the traditional stereotype of Boston as a liberal and intellectual enclave. Suburban development and the creation of the European-styled Back Bay neighborhood on former swampland allowed white Protestants to move out of the city proper. Many Protestants, including the Brahmin elite, were disgusted by the "ugliness of industrialization" and saw themselves as a new suburb-based aristocratic class.[4] At the same time, ethnic immigrants, primarily Italians and Irish, began to cluster in the city. During the antebellum period, the Irish were vulnerable because of their immigrant status and religion, and were unable to attain economically stable jobs. Consequently, they concentrated in Downtown Boston's slums.[5] As the Irish slowly moved up the social hierarchy because of suburbanization, they create their own communities. By the turn of the century, the Irish, aided by the development of public transportation, began to settle in the largely rural peninsula of South Boston and its surrounding

3 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 24.

4 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 19-20.

5 *Ibid.*, 22.

regions, such as Dorchester.[6]

White Protestant suburbanization left Boston largely in the hands of the Irish. For many years, native Protestants kept the Irish in a subordinate economic and political position.[7] However, the Brahmins did not yield their influence over the city as a whole. They started the city on a course that would severely limit its future political and economic options. Ever conservative in their actions, the Brahmins neglected to develop the city's commercial ports after the Civil War. As a result, Boston never became a great seaport despite its advantageous geography.[8] The lack of commercial development during the late 19th century stymied potential investors and resulted in a stagnant economy. Without a strong commercial and industrial base, Boston's infrastructure was limited and its future growth stunted. When the Irish inherited the city from the Brahmins, their occupational options were restricted to service work or municipal employment. However, the city's most prestigious and powerful service jobs, such as those in the financial industry, were closed to the Irish.[9]

The Boston Irish sustained themselves by dominating city jobs.[10] Middle-class Irish men became lawyers and city officials while working-class Irish men clustered in the police, fire, and transit sectors. Irish women found work in secretarial and in teaching positions. Irish communities secured their futures by excluding other groups from these occupations. After the Irish took control of the city government, they worked to secure their control over both

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6 *Ibid.*, 23.

7 *Ibid.*, 16.

8 Peter Schrag, *Village School Downtown: Politics and Education—A Boston Report* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 27.

9 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 16.

10 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 30.

municipal jobs and their respective unions.[11] Consequently, other ethnic groups were unable to compete for these jobs. Hiring policies within Boston's municipal departments became an implicitly Irish affair.

By the early 20th century, the Irish had taken firm control of Boston's educational system at all levels. Analogous to the way the Brahmins had closed off commercial access to Boston, the Irish had effectively closed off minority access to the upper echelons of Boston's school system. During the 1950s, almost all of the superintendents of the Boston schools were Irish and graduates of Boston College, the region's preeminent Catholic university.[12] Promotion to superintendent and principal posts was open to those who had teaching experience, which favored Irish teachers. At the lower ranks, Irish women dominated teaching. For many unmarried Irish women, the prospect of making a living by teaching was ideal not only because of the economic security it afforded, but also because it reinforced a sense of home and community. Teaching was a respectable and safe job. As Peter Schrag notes there was "a coziness in the... offices at 15 Beacon [Street] (headquarters of the Boston School Department), a person[al] affinity between people who have worked together for years, and who expect to maintain those relationships for the rest of their lives."[13] The result was a rigid educational system that worked to uphold Irish power.

The rise of the Irish in municipal government brought new ethnic and racial tensions. Throughout the 20th century, there were race riots caused by competition for jobs.[14] The Irish and

11 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 22.

12 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 55.

13 *Ibid.*, 56.

14 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 24.

African-American conflict over school desegregation was part of this longer struggle for jobs, economic security, and social mobility. Boston did not, at least initially, stand out in the fight for school integration any more than other northern cities. This was, in part, due to the relative isolation of Boston's African-American community and the low numbers of black students in the school system. Boston's black population was about ten percent of the total, smaller than New York or Chicago (both twenty percent).[15] The postwar period brought a second dramatic demographic shift that forced the Irish school administrators to deal with a changing reality. The insular Boston Public Schools were hemorrhaging Irish students at a rate of around two thousand pupils per year.[16] With a school population just over 90,000, this meant a decrease of nearly two-percent annually. Concurrently, large numbers of new working and middle-class black families moved to the Boston region. From 1940 to 1970, the black population increased by 342 percent.[17] The influx of African-American students kept the overall school population relatively stable.

By the early 1960s, NAACP activists, aided by both suburban white elite and professional groups in Boston, increased demands to better schools for minority children. After the first attempt at integration failed to change the *status quo*, Roxbury children were relegated to under-funded and under-staffed schools for nearly a century. The post-World War II period desegregation movement was a product of a number of changes. Historian Ron Formisano argues that the emergence of a school desegregation movement was the result of "[a] confluence of

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15 *Ibid.*, 35.

16 "Fourth Stage Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools" by the Boston School Committee, Box 1, June 1971, Collection 0405.004, City of Boston Archives.

17 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing,* 25.

national events, internal strains in the black population, improved economic conditions for native blacks, rising aspirations, and the desperate condition of schools in black neighborhoods."[18] The large-scale migration of black families into Roxbury further taxed school facilities. Inspired by the educational battles at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, Roxbury leaders attempted to improve the quality of education for Boston's black students. They found various academic and political allies to help challenge the longstanding Irish-led education system.

The Boston School Committee was the central target. The committee was a five-member council that was elected at-large biennially. It presided over school policies and controlled the general budget. The Irish dominated the committee. During the early 1960s, Louise Day Hicks, a middle-class Irish lawyer from South Boston, led the School Committee. The School Committee was conservative and often reluctant to confront or solve problems.[19] The Amherst historian Peter Schrag notes that the committee comprised senior administrators in "a close club of unimaginative civil servants lacking interest in outside ideas,...and lacking initiative to innovate in anything but the most perfunctory manner."[20] In 1963, Roxbury leaders approached the School Committee with their proposals, hoping to get action.

Louise Hicks initially promised to look into issues of quality education for black students. However, escalating demands by the civil rights activists brought increasing hostility from Hicks and the Boston School Committee. Black leaders demanded immediate integration and improvement to Roxbury schools. The Boston School Committee responded with numerous

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18 *Ibid.*, 27.

19 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 64.

20 *Ibid.*, 56.

discussions and negotiations with the NAACP that further delayed action. From 1963 to 1965, the two parties debated without results. Frustrated by the committee's attitude, Roxbury parents launched a grassroots campaign to enroll their children in schools elsewhere in Boston. The campaign, which started in the fall of 1965, was named Operation Exodus. Lasting for more than five years, Exodus became a pivotal force in driving the eventual court-order desegregation of the public schools a decade later.

## IV. Prelude to Exodus

Muriel Snowden and her husband Otto were among the first parents to instigate community-wide education planning in Roxbury. The Snowdens were a black professional couple who lived in Roxbury and who had been involved in social activism since the 1940s. Muriel Snowden had a "very pleasant childhood," in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. As the daughter of a prominent physician, she did not experience the difficulties of poor black communities until she began social activism in Newark in 1938. After her marriage, Snowden moved to Boston and immersed herself in urban renewal projects. In 1951, she founded Freedom House, "a meeting place where those...concerned may come together freely across racial and religious lines to plan joint action on those problems which affect [all citizens] of a community." Building upon her numerous connections with various Boston leaders, Snowden sought to rally activists across racial lines to renovate and reinvigorate Roxbury. She wanted to educate residents and attract outside investment. Every week, she held coffee discussions to integrate Roxbury residents into middle-class life. However, the continued urban blight in Roxbury led her to pursue more direct

action. Starting in the 1960s, Freedom House's activities shifted from more relaxed social functions to more aggressive social activism. By then, Freedom House was a site for political engagement in Roxbury. Congenial coffee hour discussions on social advancement became work sessions dedicated to fixing immediate local problems.[21]

Frustration with inadequate educational facilities had been on the minds of many Roxbury parents. Coordinating their efforts at Freedom House, the parents created e an *ad hoc* education committee to document the conditions in their children's schools. On the night of Wednesday March 20th, 1963, five parents, including the Snowdens, met at Freedom House to discuss their experiences with Boston's public schools. Forty-eight notices had been sent out, but a heavy snowstorm reduced attendance. Among the attendees was Paul Parks, a civil engineer deeply involved in the educational committee of Boston's NAACP branch (Parks would later go on to become one of the founders of METCO, chair the Boston School Committee, and the Massachusetts Secretary of Education).[22] Parks had recently attended a lecture by Jacob Landers, the coordinator for the New York High Horizons program, and he relayed that discussion to the Freedom House parents. According to Parks, school policies often classified black students as mentally unfit. He reported that while an increasing amount of money was being spent on the education of black and Puerto Rican children, existing intelligence tests were biased against minority children. Otto Snowden suggested that they develop curricula for the new schools in Roxbury's Washington Park area, which had been targeted for urban renewal. Parks agreed that a new set of standards was necessary. The parents then decided that the first step in implementing

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21 Ashley Farmer, "Working Toward Community is Our Full-time focus: Muriel Snowden, Black power, and the Freedom House, Roxbury, MA." *The Black Scholar* 41(2011): 17-25.

22 Howard Manly, "Parks, engineer of Hub School equity, Dies at 86," *Bay-State Banner*, August 6, 2009, http://www.baystatebanner.com/local13-2009-08-06.

their ideas was to involve the community in the election of a new school superintendent in September. They agreed to communicate their ideas with the Boston School Committee, and chose Snowden as their liaison.[23]

The Boston School Committee eventually took notice of the parents' plans. On May 22, 1963, Louise Hicks attended a meeting at Freedom House. Paul Parks introduced her to the parents and listed their grievances. Hicks claimed that she was unaware of these issues and openly wondered why no one had informed her earlier. According to Joseph Cronin, Parks believed Hicks and also thought that her later opposition to the Roxbury activists was political, not moral.[24] Several weeks later, the Boston School Committee agreed to a dialogue with the Roxbury parents. Ruth Batson, another activist, asked the School Committee to denounce existing stereotypes of black children (i.e. notions they were lazy and unmotivated) and begin improving the quality of school facilities.[25] Batson then suggested that she be allowed to work with Parks, Mel King, and Herold Hunt, a Harvard professor, to search for a new superintendent.

However, other black community activists, dissatisfied with the School Committee's lack of initiative, took a more radical stance. On June 12th, they proposed bringing national attention to *de facto* segregation by staging a school boycott. The Reverend James Breeden of St. James Episcopal Church explained that the boycott was designed to be non-obtrusive, with neither street demonstrations nor picketing of schools.[26] Organizers planned a "detailed curriculum" for

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23 March 20, 1963 Freedom House Meeting Minutes, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1468.

24 Joseph M. Cronin, *Reforming Boston Schools 1930-2006* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 70.

25 *Ibid.*

26 "Hub School Boycott Planned By Negros," *Boston Globe*, June 13, 1963, 12.

an alternative school at the St. Marks Social Center. The activists ignored pleas from more moderate activists, such as Harry Elam, a black lawyer who suggested giving the School Committee a chance to respond.[27] On June 18th, hundreds of Roxbury students boycotted school and attended "freedom schools." The boycott drew national attention. On June 23rd, Myrlie Evers, wife of the recently assassinated Mississippi civil rights leader, headed to Boston to lead a rally and voter registration drive at Boston Common.[28] School officials were angered over the boycotts, although they continued to work with Herold Hunt to find a new superintendent. The School Committee's refusal to acknowledge *de facto* desegregation continued to frustrate the Roxbury activists. The committee's resistance to the topic of segregation was so great that at one meeting, Louise Hicks abruptly left when the term, "*de facto* segregation," was used.[29] After several rounds of discussions, the School Committee ended negotiations with the Roxbury parents.

Many of the School Committee members believed that the black community was agitated over of a lack of quality education. They argued that poor education was not an issue exclusive to the black community, but was prevalent in the ethnic white communities as well. Hicks proclaimed that she even felt that some black students actually enjoyed an educational advantage over white students because of higher spending for remedial programs.[30] She insisted that racial discrimination could not account for educational deficiencies in ghetto (i.e. black) children. By

27 *Ibid.*

28 Bryant Rollins, "What's Behind Them? Hub's Negro Demonstrations," *Boston Globe*, June 23, 1963, 52.

29 Cronin, *Reforming Boston Schools 1930-2006*, 82.

30 Emmett H. Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1982), 64.

transforming the issue into a city-wide problem, the School Committee, under the aegis of Hicks and her peer John Kerrigan, denied that the causal factor was race, and maintained that financial difficulties were all children equally.

By the fall of 1963, even the more moderate leaders, such as Batson, felt a need for action. The outcome of the biennial School Committee elections further compounded black people's dissatisfaction with the administration. Black leaders had repeatedly attempted to gain representation on the committee. In 1959, Ruth Batson had unsuccessfully run for one of the five seats. Mel King had run in 1961 and 1963, and did so again in 1965. He failed all three times. Since the voting was done at-large, the predominant Irish factions were able to consistently place their candidates into office. Mel King noted that when Noel Day, the head of a community program at St. Marks, ran for election in the U.S. House of Representatives against the incumbent John McCormack, the latter did not even bother to organize a campaign.[31] Nevertheless, according to King, repeated campaigns, even unsuccessful ones, publicized the black community's demands. Day had set up action offices, such as the Boston Action Group, during his campaign, and those offices continued to operate as organizing centers for urban renewal.

After several months of searching, the School Committee chose William Ohrenberger, a former teacher at the English High School in Jamaica Plain, to become the next school superintendent. Ohrenberger was a safe choice. He was a graduate of Boston College and played football with a South Boston team. Ohrenberger's background made him particularly appealing to the Irish, although he was German.[32] He was also a reformer, with experience in the Great

31 Melvin King, *Chains of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 80.

32 Cronin, *Reforming Boston Schools 1930-2006*, 73.

Cities Program for School Improvement and had knowledge of educational reforms in other cities. By 1960, Ohrenberger had already served as an assistant superintendent. After his appointment, Ohrenberger devised a plan to increase school resources, better training programs, and more transparent teacher appointments.[33] However, his apparent unwillingness to take up transportation reform angered many black parents, who saw that stance as a denial of the existence of school segregation. Busing would be a tacit acknowledgment of the existence of segregated and inferior schools.

Unsatisfied with Ohrenberger's plans, black activists sought to influence legislation at the municipal and state levels. As talks with the School Committee continued, parents started carrying out their own studies of the neighborhood schools. By the summer, members of their *ad hoc* education committee were canvassing schools in the Roxbury neighborhood to catalog ongoing problems. By June 14th, the parents had visited fourteen Roxbury schools, including two neighborhood junior high schools.[34] Sixteen other schools were marked for further investigation. Using their connections, Muriel Snowden and other prominent black activists gained support from outside groups. The June 18th boycott had brought national attention to Boston's schools, leading to increased assistance from suburban groups. The failures of black candidates and NAACP-endorsed candidates, including Arthur Gartland, in the 1963 Boston School Committee elections, further drove black leaders to pursue their cause outside of negotiations with the School Committee. Hoping to garner more widespread appeal for their campaign, the Roxbury parents planned another school boycott on February 26th, 1964. Unlike the previous boycott, which asked that students attend a single "freedom school" at the St. Marks Center, the February

33 *Ibid.*

34 School List, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1468.

boycott was organized on a much greater scale. Reverend James Breeden and Noel Day organized twenty-eight different "freedom schools" that hosted students from 11 neighborhood high schools, 6 junior high schools, and 21 elementary schools.[35] Besides the St. Marks Social Center, local churches, YMCAs, community centers, and the Freedom House hosted "freedom schools." Parents, teachers, clergymen, social workers, psychologists, and lawyers were among those who enlisted as teachers.[36] Planners distributed leaflets instructing parents where to send their children and arguing the legality of the actions. They also provided milk for the children and "freedom school diplomas," which certified that children had attended school. According to Mel King, the second school boycott became an indication of how "kids everywhere [were] aware that they were directly involved in changing the schools." He added that, "[it] made an enormous impact on the children to watch their parents caring enough to make this sort of massive effort to communicate to those in power."[37]

Indeed, the second boycott was not only much larger than the first, it was a measure of just how far the parent movement had progressed in a year. The boycott demonstrated the willingness and ability of other community organizations, such as the churches and the YMCAs to aid in the school fight. Those organizations provided space, food, and training for a large population of boycotters. What began as a simple plan to help appoint a school superintendent had become a large self-help movement aimed at forcing state action.

The success of the February boycott led to widespread recognition of the parents'

35 List of Freedom Schools, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1459.

36 Bryant Rollins, "What's Behind Them? Hub's Negro Demonstrations."

37 King, *Chains of Change*, 39.

demands for educational reform. The *Washington Post* reported that out of the 14,000 black students enrolled in Boston's public schools, 10,000 had participated in the boycott.[38] In comparison, the first boycott had drawn 3,000 students. Superintendent Ohrenberger was outraged, and retorted that the demonstration "dangerously undermined a basic democratic principle of respect for law and authority" and that the "flouting of law will cause [everyone] extreme regret for years to come."[39] Similarly, Thomas Eisenstadt, a member of the Boston School Committee, threatened to bring court action against the boycotters, although his fellow committee members, including chairman William O'Connor, were much more ambivalent. Despite the threats from the Boston school officials, the Roxbury parents steadily gained supporters from the white professional classes in the suburbs. On February 13th, the *Boston Globe* reported that twenty-two towns in Greater Boston would participate in the school boycotts in some form.[40] Organizations in Arlington, Bedford, Brookline, Cambridge, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Lynn, and Medford expressed support. A total of 900 students from those towns rallied around the Roxbury students by either staying at home or traveling to Boston to attend the "freedom schools." By February 20th, seven more towns had joined the boycott, raising the total number of suburban communities to twenty-nine. In Brighton, one parent, Mrs. Jacob Gottler, explained that her neighbors "share[d] the Negro's feeling that the Boston School Committee [had] failed to plan for changing school populations."[41] The Brighton Citizens for

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38 "More than 10,000 Join Boston School Boycott," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1964, A4.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Bryant Rollins, "What's Behind Them? Hub's Negro Demonstrations."

41 Anne Wyman, "Seven More Town Groups Back Boston School Boycott," *Boston Globe*, February 20, 1964, 8.

Public Schools group and three local churches organized a boycott. In Lexington, nine clergymen, including two rabbis, released a statement asserting that *de facto* segregation existed in the Boston Public Schools, violated "human worth and dignity," and was "therefore an affront to God." They added that, "when other means had been exhausted," protest was in accord with the "highest principles of American democracy in the redress of social injustice."[42] By February 26th, the day of the boycott, the movement had garnered national recognition.

There are several explanations for why the Freedom School boycotts received so much support. Many white Bostonians were just as discontent with the lack of quality education as the Roxbury parents. Although most Boston schools were segregated, the lack of quality education was pervasive in both poor black and white neighborhoods. Roxbury organizers had also effectively publicized their campaigns. Leaders, such as Muriel Snowden, used longstanding relationships with white professionals, especially those in higher education, to advance the school protests. By 1964, middle-class white support for the Roxbury parents and students had grown, as evidenced by the participation of reform-minded teachers such as Jonathan Kozol. Thirdly, local religious and social institutions, such as the churches and the YMCAs, helped inside Roxbury and in the suburbs. In the nearby Mattapan region there was interfaith cooperation between ministers and rabbis. Jewish Bostonians had also faced Irish hostility, making them sensitive to the complaints of black communities.[43] These various factors allowed Roxbury parents to demand improvements in the quality of education from a position of relative strength with respect to the School Committee.

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42 *Ibid.*

43 Steven J.L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (New York: The State University of New York Press, 1998), 22.

But what exactly constituted "quality education" from the perspective of the Roxbury parents? In his essay, "Quality Education: A Definition," Paul Parks argued that the school system must change its philosophy about success. He believed that the underlying tenet for education must be that "every child can be educated." Parks believed that children learned through a variety of means, and as such, the development of a holistic curriculum was necessary. Furthermore, he felt that poor children were treated as if their educations and their lives were not valued. A child whose parents understood and emphasized education was no more valuable than one whose parents did not. The school, Parks argued, was responsible for socializing the child, "in spite of the attitude of the parent." Quality education was not exclusively about learning, but also about teaching children to "control and manipulate his or her environment to the greater good of all members of society." Park's argument revealed several beliefs about the state of education in Roxbury. His call for a holistic teaching methodology implied that there was an outdated educational curriculum, both in terms of its material and its philosophy. Furthermore, Park's statement about the value of a child's education being independent of his or her parent's attitudes, is a not only a criticism of the system's prejudice towards poor minority parents but perhaps also a reflection of his sense of the helplessness of Roxbury parents.[44]

Patricia English, another Roxbury parent, echoed these sentiments. She argued that quality education was one that enabled students to, "be able to deal with a subject...without the fear of failure." Under the current system, English argued that students were too often demoralized and unsure of their own abilities to succeed. Consequently, that inability fostered dependence and prevented the students from exploring, "whatever creative talents [they had],"

44 "Quality Education: A Definition" by Paul Parks, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1456.

and thereby the possibility of a living "a successful life in [their] terms." English felt that the school system was not designed to promote independent thought in minority children, but rather attempted to socialize them within the hierarchy of white society. Black children were neither asked nor encouraged to pursue their own visions of success but rather coerced into predefined definitions.[45]

Taking a less abstract stance, Charles Pierce, a third parent, contended that a quality education should allow students to confidently choose their careers, whether it be to continue with higher education or to pursue vocational occupations, by the end of their twelve years of schooling. Pierce was concerned about the lack of real-life skills taught in the contemporary curriculum. Elementary and secondary school, Pierce argued, should, "prepare one to make any choice without necessitating an interim of one or two years in a prep schools to acquire the skills for entry into an institution of higher learning." Public school had evidently not taught black students the skills valued by colleges. Black students, according to Pierce, were unable to transition to college without remedial work in community or junior colleges. At the same time, Pierce also believed that public schools did an inadequate job of preparing students for vocations. He maintained that the existing education still left the necessity of "a long training period of apprenticeship" for students to enter the industrial market. The school system, Pierce charged, was constantly "siphoning" off its responsibility to teach both academic and vocational skills. Pierce attributed the inferior standards to systematic "tracking," which judged and placed limits on a child's potential.[46]

45 "What is Quality Education" by Patricia A. English, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1456.

46 "What is Quality Education" by Charles M. Pierce, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1456.

In their assessment of public education, Parks, English, and Pierce portrayed a system that failed to prepare students for the future. Roxbury parents believed that the Boston public school system severely hampered the intellectual and social development of their children through biased testing and outdated materials. They advocated for a system that removed those biases and assumed responsibility for their children's well-being. Rather than a system that presumed failure, the parents wanted a system that fostered a sense of confidence. An education, they argued, was not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also of sound character and confidence. By not teaching children to think and act independently, the system bred indifference and a lack of ambition. Consequently, Roxbury's schools failed to function as tools for social mobility. The parents also wanted to revise a curriculum that they felt was antiquated and provided little preparation for entry into academic and vocational careers. They accused the system of being indifferent and detrimental to the future of their children. Not only did the system fail to provide students with the skills necessary for adulthood, but it also forced them to pursue remedial education after they left. Public education was thus a resource drain on all Roxbury residents because it affected people of all ages and placed financial and temporal obligations on not only students, but also parents and siblings. In short, the failure of public education in Roxbury had ramifications that went beyond the student.

**V. The Racial Imbalance Act**

The NAACP drive for school reform led to a state-commissioned investigation of racial imbalance in the Boston Public Schools. In March 1964, State Education Commissioner Owen

Kiernan appointed an advisory body, consisting of community leaders and university professors, to investigate whether racial segregation existed in Massachusetts public schools. Among the members were the presidents of several Boston universities as well as several influential religious and business leaders. Dubbed the, "Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance," the group sought to quantitatively assess the concentrations of black students in state school systems. In April 1965, the commission reported racially imbalanced schools in Boston, Springfield, and New Bedford.[47]

Defining racial imbalance was key to the advisory committee's assessment. Inherent in their definition of imbalance was an element of asymmetry: schools that had a minority student body over fifty percent were deemed imbalanced, but the reverse condition of having a majority white student body was not. Otherwise, virtually all Massachusetts schools would have been considered imbalanced. Instead, the committee only noted racially imbalanced schools in African-American communities. Nevertheless, the Kiernan Committee definition achieved two objectives: first, it succeeded in identifying black enclaves across Massachusetts, and second, it provided proof of educational segregation. By identifying and linking black neighborhoods to segregated schools, legislators were able hold the respective school departments accountable for integration. Legislative attempts *de facto* segregations led to the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965, which directly tied each school's state financial aid to its progress in ameliorating racial imbalance.

Ever suspicious of the state influence and resentful of their more affluent counterparts in the suburbs, the Boston School Committee fought to free itself of these new obligations. The

47 Cronin, *Reforming Boston Schools 1930-2006*, 82.

Committee viewed the Racial Imbalance Act not only as a threat to white rule in the Boston Public Schools, but, more importantly, as an excuse to scapegoat Boston while absolving the suburbs the responsibility of desegregation. After the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act, a prolonged and acrimonious battle between the Boston School Committee and the State Education Department began. In order to comply with the Racial Imbalance Act, the School Committee had to submit racial balancing plans to the state. In December 1965, the School Committee submitted a first-stage desegregation plan. The State Education Department judged the plan inadequate and suspended funding to the Boston School Department. The School Committee then accused the state of making impossible demands. The committee argued that the Boston school system was being unfairly targeted for policies also used in other counties. Since the imbalance act characterized any school with a fifty-percent or higher non-white student population as segregated, every school in a minority neighborhood was segregated. Because Boston was only one of two major cities in Massachusetts with a notable minority population (the other being Springfield), it was one of the few locations where the Racial Imbalance Act mattered.[48] The two sides began taking swipes at each other in what historian Ron Formisano described as a "ping-pong" battle.[49] Then in August 1966, the School Committee sued the state for ignoring their plans, which they claimed violated the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment.[50] The following June, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts rejected the School Committee's claims, and demanded that it submit another plan to the state. From that point on, the Boston School

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48 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 79.

49 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 45.

50 "School Committee of Boston v. Board of Education & another," http://masscases.com/cases/sjc/352/352mass693.html.

Committee was obligated to comply with the Racial Imbalance Act, but devised various methods for delaying the construction of integrated schools and undermining school busing policies.

The committee members immediately saw the threat that the imbalance act posed to their control of the Boston Public Schools. Like the 19th century attempt to integrate Boston schools, this new attempt was, once again, the result of suburban interference. As such, the Racial Imbalance Act undermined the authority and legitimacy of the Boston School Committee. The political struggle between city and state and the lack of financial aid also strengthened the arguments of minority communities. Traditionally, schools in Massachusetts had been funded by a variety of taxes, the most significant of which was the property tax. The ability to pay higher taxes and delegate a higher percentage of that tax to education was solely at the discretion of the local government. Boston's size and its many tax-free institutions limited its spending on education. During the early 1970s, Boston spent $839 per student in contrast to suburbs such as Brookline, which spent $1,280 per student.[51] State funding kept the Boston school system afloat. With the Racial Imbalance Act in place, minority communities were able to blame the Boston School Committee for declining state funding. However, despite the financial pressures, the Boston School Department rejected the Racial Imbalance Act for nearly a decade, until the Garrity Decision of 1974 enforced the act.

## VI. Exodus and its Support Groups

From 1964-1965, the issue of segregation in the public schools was primary dealt with in

51 Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 76.

the state legislature. After the Racial Imbalance Act was passed on August 18th, 1965, the Roxbury activists made efforts to convince the Boston School Committee, once again, to acknowledge *de facto* segregation in the schools. With legislation that firmly defined segregation, the activists hoped to put renewed pressure on the Committee. However, in a narrow 3-2 vote, the Committee declined.[52] Since the Racial Imbalance Act did not include any specific plan for reducing segregation, it was not self-implementing. Strong provisions, such as busing plans, were cautiously removed from the bill in order to garner enough legislative support. According to the political scientist Emmett Buell, the definition of a "reasonable" timeframe for implementing the Racial Imbalance Act was unclear from the start, and court fights were subsequently used to delay implementation.[53] The act, in fact, delayed the desegregation of Boston schools because it forced the NAACP to seek state, rather than federal, remedies for cases of segregation. In other words, the Racial Imbalance Act had brought the issue of segregation in Boston's schools to the state level, which acted as a legal barrier to federal intervention. It would not be until 1972, with the *Morgan v. Hennigan* case, that the NAACP's campaign shifted to the federal courts. The 1965 School Committee elections ruled out the possibility of compromise for the Roxbury parents. Louise Hicks and her cohort handily defeated all the NAACP-backed candidates, despite the fact that Hicks had virtually no support in Roxbury and Dorchester. With Hicks at the helm, the ability for the School Committee to essentially sidestep the issue of desegregation forced Roxbury leaders to realize that the committee had neither obligation nor desire to help their cause. With little legislative, political, and financial support, Roxbury parents decided that they needed to act forcefully outside the

52 Cronin, *Reforming Boston Schools 1930-2006*, 84.

53 Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 70.

official channels once again.

In September 1965, a group of frustrated Roxbury parents, headed by Ellen Jackson, accepted that the School Committee would not take the step of busing Roxbury students to other city schools under the city's Open Enrollment policy. They also determined that their children desperately needed better education facilities, which they believed were available in other parts of Boston. To address both issues, they created a private enterprise, which would be known as Operation Exodus Incorporated, to provide an alternative method of transportation. Jackson was chosen to be the president of Exodus by consensus vote because of her affiliation with community organizing agencies, especially in the area of education.[54]

A lifelong Roxbury resident, Ellen Swepson Jackson was different from lifelong professional activists such as Muriel Snowden. She had grown up in a working-class environment and attended Boston State Teacher's College in hopes of starting a career in education. However, in 1954, she left college, before graduation, to marry Hugh Jackson, who worked as a carpet cutter.[55] As a housewife, her time was primarily occupied with raising her five children. Then in early 1965, Jackson became more involved in community organizing when she volunteered to work with the Northern Student Movement (NSM), a group that had offered her children tutorial services.[56] Working as an intermediary between parents and the NSM, Jackson began organizing discussion sessions with parents. Among the topics were housing, household consumption, and, most importantly, education. Further expounding on her role as "a channel

54 Exodus position paper Re: "Afrew," Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1460.

55 Elizabeth Weymouth, "Ellen Jackson, House-Crusader," *Boston Globe*, January 30, 1966, C9; "Women in the News: Ellen Jackson of Operation Exodus," *Bay-State Banner*, August 27, 1966, 5.

56 Elizabeth Weymouth, "Ellen Jackson, House-Crusader."

between the parents and the agencies," Jackson headed to Jamaica Plain in the summer of 1965 to work as a social service advisor.[57] There she met with numerous parents who were again concerned about their children's education. In particular, they complained about School Committee's plan to implement double sessions in order to alleviate purported overcrowding in some Roxbury schools, notably the Greenwood, Gibson, and Endicott schools.

The concern over double sessions grew so great that Jackson was convinced to spearhead a movement to enroll Roxbury students in other Boston schools. By the end of summer, Jackson organized a meeting at the Robert Gould Shaw House in Roxbury, where she convinced 250 parents to enroll their children in schools outside Roxbury. For Jackson, the problem of better, and more personalized education struck home: one of her children was enrolled in a class with forty-four other pupils the previous year, a situation that Jackson claimed led to her child's learning difficulties. Another of her children did well in school, but was unmotivated because of the lack of personal attention. According to Jackson, Roxbury parents met with teachers "two minutes twice a year," hardly enough time to talk about their children's progress.[58] Enrolling their children in other schools seemed a better, although untested, alternative. Guido St. Laurent, a blind community organizer and father of two Endicott students, proposed using Exodus to highlight educational deficiencies. St. Laurent hoped that the movement would, "give an understanding from mother to mother, not just of overcrowding but of other conditions, which will help improve schools elsewhere as well as in Roxbury."[59]

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57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 Ian Forman, "To Enroll Pupils Through City: Parents Plan Boycott of Crowded Schools," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1965, 1.

Peter Schrag, the Amherst writer, agreed with Jackson's assessment that Roxbury students suffered from overcrowded and overextended schools that were run without regard to the personalized needs of individual students. According to Schrag, Boston's black children were on average almost a year behind national norms in arithmetic and reading by the sixth grade.[60] By the tenth grade, the students placed in the bottom third nationally in those respective subjects. In comparison, Schrag reported that New York students in the sixth grade placed four months ahead of the national average. In other words, successful urban education was possible, but Boston's archaic and rigid system needed an extensive overhaul. Moreover, Schrag noted that the priorities of the school administrators were outdated and misplaced. He claimed that for many school administrators, the most important aspect of education was not the dissemination of knowledge, but rather order. According to Schrag, the average students were, "honest, dutiful, and curiously moralistic."[61] They attended school as though it was a necessary and unquestionable job.[62] Correspondingly, the lesson plans emphasized rote memorization and order over creative thinking. In one class, Schrag described a lesson where yes/no and one-line questions dominated the discussion. While the class was "alive" with the students quickly responding, "in a rhythm which they [had] learned well since the beginning of the [school] year," Schrag deduced that the brief declarative responses were simply another drill with no inductive thought involved.[63] What the Roxbury parents wanted was modern education, but such curricula were not used in the majority of schools.

60 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 74.

61 *Ibid.*, 92.

62 *Ibid.*, 93.

63 *Ibid.*, 96.

However, the Boston School System could not adequately and realistically meet the standards that Roxbury parents set. Paul Parks, Patricia English, and Charles Pierce called for educational reforms that were not taught at any Boston school. All schools, not just low-performing schools, emphasized order over creativity. The highly selective Boston Latin School was no different. Rote memorization, simple one-lined question and response lessons dominated the classroom. Schrag argued that what remained of Boston Latin following the exodus of white professionals in the 1950s, was a system that was concerned not with intellectualism but with "patriotism, character, and morality."[64] The once liberal student body consisting of middle-class children of doctors and lawyers became filled with working-class children. However, during the 1960s, Boston Latin was still virtually all-white. Boston Latin, the epitome of quality public education in Boston, was quickly becoming much like other Boston public schools in quality, if not spirit. Nevertheless, the Roxbury parents, whether they had a clear idea about alternative curricula, pressed forward with their plan to integrate their children into what they believed were more desirable schools in the city.

In a move that provoked national attention, more than 400 black students enrolled in predominantly white schools for the fall 1965 school year. On September 9th, the first day of the school year, scores of private automobiles and chartered buses transported the students throughout the city to register for classes. Over sixty parents volunteered their cars for the movement. National newspapers immediately picked up the story, with both the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* comparing Operation Exodus, rather unsympathetically, to an invasion.[65] City officials immediately called for restraint. Mayor John Collins pleaded with black

64 *Ibid.*, 88.

65 John H. Fenton, "Boston Negros Invade 4 Schools: Pupils From Crowded Units Defy City by Transferring," *New York Times*, September 10, 1965, 39; "200 Negros Enroll in Schools in White Boston

parents, through television and radio addresses, to not "act precipitately" while Superintendent Ohrenberger appealed to the parents to enroll their children in neighborhood schools until a better solution was found.[66] According to the school officials, the better solution consisted of building integrated schools, which could alleviate overcrowding and improve education. School officials reacted with hostility when the Exodus movement began in part because it not only upset their plans, but it aggravated working-class white parents. In South Boston, parents concerned about possible crowding in their schools, made calls to the mayor's office.[67] At the Jeremiah Burke High School in Roxbury, five-hundred parents and activists met and unanimously voted to ignore the mayor's appeal, setting up a confrontation with local school officials.[68] At one elementary school, the Grew School, the principal initially refused entrance to enrolling black students, citing the need for transfer permits, although he rescinded his refusal afterward and claimed that the enrollment procedure had been completed smoothly.[69] Tensions rose between the parents and the school officials throughout the day. Street mobs formed and angry words were exchanged between activists and police.[70] There were even reports of bombs being placed inside a Roxbury school, and so many threats were made to Louise Hicks that two policemen were personally assigned to protect her.[71]

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Neighborhoods," *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1965, N3.

66 John H. Fenton, "Boston Negros Invade 4 Schools."

67 Robert L. Levey, "But Bus Problem Looms: Exodus Plan Settles 100 More Students," *Boston Globe*, September 11, 1965, 1.

68 Ian Forman, "To Enroll Pupils Through City: Parents Plan Boycott of Crowded Schools."

69 "200 Negros Enroll in Schools in White Boston Neighborhoods."

70 Robert L. Levey, "But Bus Problem Looms: Exodus Plan Settles 100 More Students."

71 John H. Fenton, "Boston Negros Invade 4 Schools."

However, in contrast to what school officials reported, the Roxbury parents did not act out of impulse. Given the two year interval between the beginning of Ruth Batson's correspondence with the Boston School Committee and Operation Exodus, the decision to undergo a massive Open Enrollment movement came at a time when the Roxbury parents believed that not even the law could help them correct the school system's segregationist policies. They had waited two years for desegregation, and the Racial Imbalance Act had failed. Moreover, official proposals to build integrated schools were heavily delayed by numerous time-consuming debates and studies. The Boston School Committee was often at odds with itself, with each member espousing different ideas about the necessity of new schools, even though there was plenty of evidence of the dilapidated conditions of the schools. Peter Schrag contended that there was, "no sense of urgency, no motive force," during the School Committee's meetings where the members, "patronized Negros and teachers and children and each other."[72] No school had been constructed in Boston during the period from 1963-1965, despite the $29 million in construction funds earmarked for building.[73] The apparent unwillingness of the Committee to implement even their own plan moved the Roxbury parents to self-reliance. If neither the politicians nor the school officials were going to help, then black parents were going to help themselves. Jackson declared that the parents chose the name "Exodus" because it represented the idea of leaving "the forgotten land," and moving into "the promised land."[74] For the parents, getting to the promised land meant developing quality education for Roxbury students in Roxbury. According to the *Bay State Banner*, the predominant African-American newspaper,

72 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 66.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Elizabeth Weymouth, "Ellen Jackson, House-Crusader,."

Roxbury parents wanted a quality community school to stand as a model for the city.[75] Unable to find the necessary solution through the School Committee, the parents turned to Exodus scheme in order to pressure school and public officials.

After the initial hoopla surrounding the mass enrollment of students on the first day of school, the Roxbury parents wanted to find a stable source of transportation to keep the program running. On September 12th, they extended another request for the School Committee to help transport the black students. In response, the mayor's office announced that it would pay for the costs and supply the means of transportation, but only with the approval of the School Committee.[76] The Committee again refused. Out of money, Operation Exodus began to look at other means of supporting itself. The leaders began reaching out to all different groups, including unions, such as the United Auto Workers and the AFL-CIO, in hopes of getting working-class white peoples on their side.[77] Exodus mothers began pooling their money in a show of resolve. Unwilling to give up, the Exodus parents looked for alternative transportation. They turned to their suburban supporters too. Eventually the Roxbury Parents selected the Arnold Bus Company of Newton, a small enterprise run by Betty Arnold and her husband.

For the entire school year, Exodus organizers staged various events to keep the buses running, including parent marches, bake sales, and other fundraisers. Every week, there were mothers marches, dances, and speeches to stress the need to keep the movement alive. However, enthusiasm for the program waned after the initial outpouring of support. Exodus was never far

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75 "Parents Group Expands 'Exodus'," *Bay-State Banner*, September 25, 1965, 1.

76 Richard J. Connolly, "Exodus Parents Ask School Board to Supply Buses," *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1965, 28.

77 *Ibid.*

from bankruptcy. In December 1965, Ellen Jackson cautioned that Exodus only had a month's worth of operational funds.[78] Moreover, Jackson noted that difficulties in getting people involved in day-to-day work increased over time because the media was no longer focused on Exodus.[79] Nevertheless, Exodus leaders were able to organize profitable fundraisers. In February 1966, they had a dance with the Jamaican Associates, which attracted more than 750 people and raised more than $5,000.[80] The next month, Pauline Cain, a hair stylist and Exodus mother, sponsored a fashion show. Some 300 people attended that function, which used Roxbury women as models.[81] In April, Exodus organizers convinced a group of Dudley Square merchants to donate two percent of their sales to the busing program during what the organizers called "Operation Exodus Week."[82] In addition, another fundraiser in April attracted the attention of Eartha Kitt, the Broadway actress, who agreed to perform a musical comedy.

To keep the campaign active, Exodus leaders reached out and won both spiritual and financial support from the surrounding suburbs. Just as they had backed the earlier school boycotts, community leaders in Newton, Brookline, and Belmont raised funds for and made pledges to Exodus. Suburban support steadily picked up after the first few months. In the spring of 1966, a group of popular New England artists, in conjunction with two North Shore churches, organized a Festival of Arts and donated the proceeds to fund summer transportation for Roxbury

78 Bertram Waters, "What Happened to Operation Exodus?: Buses Still Go Each Day to Schoolhouse Doors," *Boston Globe*, December 26, 1965, 37.

79 *Ibid.*

80 "Exodus-Jamaican Dances Highlight Active Weekend: Parents Gross $5000," *Bay-State Banner*, February 19, 1966, 1.

81 "Hair Style Show Benefits Exodus," *Bay-State Banner*, March 26, 1966, 7.

82 "Owl and Pussycat- Exodus Benefit Show," *Bay-State Banner*, March 26, 1966, 2.

children attending the Pingree School in South Hamilton.[83] The privately-run summer program was designed to introduce music and art to elementary school students and ran with the help of four teachers, two from the North Shore and two from Roxbury. Student assistants from both the North Shore and Roxbury rounded out the contingent. This cooperation between the two communities came as the North Shore actively integrated itself into the Exodus program.

The North Shore benefit festival was one of the first, but certainly not the last, examples of a suburban community holding events for the benefit of Roxbury. The festival was a large affair that attracted most of the North Shore community. The *Boston Globe* described the festival as "one of the most ambitious ever staged on the North Shore."[84] A baritone singer from Boston, a playhouse director, and a Boston University music professor directed a hundred children in a play, which was centerpiece of the three-day festival. The art exhibit included several hundred art pieces, paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and crafts. Local luminaries from the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Museum headed a large panel of judges. In short, it was a grand community event. The arts festival brought as much joy to the North Shore community as it brought financial help for Roxbury. Similar suburban fundraisers soon followed. Those events chose themes of urban renewal and highlighted the plight of Roxbury children, thus increasing community awareness of Boston's school crisis. Eventually, suburban involvement in Roxbury convinced white activists to establish METCO, a program designed to transfer Roxbury students into suburban schools.

Exodus fundraisers reflected a growing sense of cohesiveness and operational capability.

83 Edgar J. Driscoll Jr, "Boston Children Benefit: North Shore Festival Under Way This Week," *Boston Globe*, May 15, 1966, A15.

84 *Ibid.*

When the program was first started in September 1965, it relied on door-to-door donations from Roxbury citizens. It did not have a stable set of sponsors, and the organizers reached out to various different groups, including school officials and unions. However, by December, the leaders were organizing large social functions. Exodus leaders reached out to relatively stable sources of revenue, namely Roxbury merchants and store-owners. These business people were more willing to offer financial support and expertise. Furthermore, the Exodus organizers used increasingly sophisticated means of fund-raising. The fashion show was an example of how the organizers were able to cater to the interests of the community and elicit the support of Roxbury's black middle-class. Similarly, getting celebrities, such as Eartha Kitt, on board allowed the organizers to attract a more high-profile audience. Exodus leaders also discovered that suburban communities were more than willing to organize for Exodus. Suburbs, like Newton and the North Shore, were able to create events tailored for their own communities, but which supported Exodus's cause. By the end of the 1965-66 school year, Operation Exodus was relying primarily on these two separate approaches for funds.

With a strong core and stable suburban support, Operation Exodus Inc. was expanding its scope faster than expected.. By December 1965, the organization had settled in a six-tenement building at 374 Blue Hill Avenue. Exodus had earlier shared offices with the Northern Student Movement, Jackson's initial group.[85] Samuel Hightower gave the new building to the organization rent-free for two years, and Exodus fathers spent days renovating it.[86] As Exodus's headquarters grew, so did its mission. Parents began actively looking into other school-related

85 Bertram Waters, "What Happened to Operation Exodus?: Buses Still Go Each Day to Schoolhouse Doors," *Boston Globe*, December 26, 1965, 37.

86 Robert Levey, "Roxbury Image Changing: Negro Parents Provide Community Leadership," *Boston Globe*, December 5, 1965, B34.

problems. Several parents formed the Boardman's Parents Group to investigate school-related issues in neighborhoods outside of Roxbury. The Fathers for Freedom, a group under Guido St. Laurent, worked to keep the buses running. According to the *Boston Globe*, these sub-groups within Exodus formed at a quick rate because "there was no civil rights group pushing" those agendas.[87] In fact, the *Globe* reported that civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, were actually surprised by the efficiency and energy of the parent movement. Kenneth Guscott of the NAACP even noted that "[the NAACP] had nothing to do with [the movement]," and that they even thought initially that it was not "such a good idea because [they] didn't think it could be successful."[88] Guscott further noted that the successes of Exodus had convinced the NAACP to offer resources to the organization, but he emphasized that Exodus was a parents' movement and that the NAACP would not seek to influence Exodus policies or decisions. The NAACP's surprise at the success of the Exodus busing program was understandable. The national organization turned to the courts to battle school segregation and backed away from public activism. Its leaders were baffled when a group of parents with little community organizing experience managed to pull off a large-scale alternative, albeit temporary, solution. They may also have disagreed with the methods of self-reliance that Exodus embodied. The NAACP targeted the Racial Imbalance Act because they felt that it was ineffective and simply paid lip service to the broader issue of desegregation. The success of Exodus de-emphasized the legal battle for integration by endorsing self-reliance. Moreover, the NAACP made no attempt to appropriate the movement, perhaps because its leaders felt that success in the courts would lead to a more permanent solution.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*

After a long year of fundraising and financial uncertainty, Operation Exodus had successfully completed its objective. The parents were exhausted, but vowed not to let up on their campaign. Ellen Jackson proclaimed that as parents, the organizers, "can't afford to let the children sit there and vegetate."[89] Emphasizing a need for self-reliance, the Exodus organizers sought to continue their work without institutional support. "The days of boycotts and marching, of protesting physically are over," Jackson added.[90] The battle for desegregation was put on a hiatus. Instead, of pushing for integrated schools *per se*, Roxbury parents initially saw Exodus as the only immediate opportunity for better schooling (i.e. a better alternative to double sessions in overcrowded and under-staffed Roxbury schools). After a year, their views appeared to have remained unchanged. According to the *Boston Globe*, the parents reported that, "they would prefer to keep their children in neighborhood schools if they thought the school was good enough."[91] Dirtiness, overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and the lack of competent staff were still among the chief concerns. As a result, the parents believed that placing their children in other Boston schools would increase performance, even though most of Boston's schools were failing. In fact, James Teele, a Harvard scholar involved in the research component of Operation Exodus Inc., noted that most Exodus mothers held favorable impressions of their children's educational experiences after a year of busing.[92]

Exodus's first financial crisis struck in the fall of 1966. Two factors led to the increased

89 Holcomb B. Noble, "Boston Negros Vow to Double Operation Exodus," *Washington Post*, July 5, 1966, A2.

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*

92 James Teele Research Note, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1463.

financial strain. First, Exodus leaders had expanded the busing program, doubling its capacity. Enthusiasm was at an all-time high for the Exodus program. Nearly 900 students signed up for the program, which now covered eighteen elementary and seven middle schools (up from the previous fourteen schools). In total, the program cost $3,000 per week to run (around $3 per student).[93] Second, the organization had spent most of its reserved funds running summer tutorial programs. According to Barbara Pitts, an Exodus official, the organization was essentially bankrupt by the beginning of the school year in 1966.[94] By the end of September, Ellen Jackson reported that Exodus was $6,000 in debt. Exodus officials turned to the federal government for help: they applied for funding under Title III of Lyndon Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provided grants for supplementary educational services. However, Exodus's status as an entirely privately-run enterprise made it ineligible for Title III funds without approval from the school district (i.e. the Boston School Committee). To raise money, organizers turned to their tried and true fundraising methods. Exodus leaders organized a music and arts show at Boston Technical High School. The Newton Friends of Exodus organized another fundraiser at the Jack Gardner museum. Interestingly, Exodus officials were not especially worried about their immediate future. The Boston Tech fundraiser included a lavish celebration of Exodus's first year, topped off with a bus-shaped cake. The Newton fundraiser was similarly spectacular, with prominent Newton socialites attending a semi-formal cocktail sip that raised $2000. During that reception, Jackson reassured the participants that Exodus officials were confident that they would be able to elicit enough support from the communities in and around

93 "Exodus Staff Guest At Newton Reception," *Bay-State Banner*, September 24, 1966, 1.; Emmett Buell argues that only around 600 students were enrolled at the peak of Operation Exodus. Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 85.

94 Robert L. Levey, "Exodus More Than a Bus Plan," *Boston Globe*, September 5, 1966, 35.

Boston.[95] Jackson's confidence in Exodus's ability to garner the support of Bostonians and suburbanites reflects her belief that the organization had enough stable allies. Jackson may have believed that the suburbanites had a vested interest in seeing Exodus succeed. Those communities had rallied for Roxbury not only during the Exodus movement but also during the earlier boycotts. Moreover, in 1966, the suburban communities worked with the Roxbury parents to create METCO, the suburban variation of the Exodus program. Each major fundraiser generated several thousand dollars, enough to keep the buses running for a number of weeks.

Jackson's confidence in Exodus's appeal to various communities may have been unfounded. Although the suburbanites were interested in helping Roxbury programs, their fund-raising was organized independently and at their own convenience. Consequently, those drives did not always coincide with Exodus's immediate financial needs. More importantly, many Roxbury residents had difficulties communicating with Exodus staff. In a forum speech at the Roxbury YMCA, Jackson exhorted Roxbury residents to be more interested and vocal in community affairs. Citing other communities, Jackson encouraged Roxbury residents to become more active in local organizing. She noted that Roxbury citizens needed, "forums...[that] provide a means of direct exchange between people who [were] organizing programs and people for whom the programs [were] being organized," because the community as a whole was weak in "planning and implementing...many War on Poverty programs...being brought into the area."[96] Jackson wanted Roxbury residents to be more pro-active about the opportunities open to them and to demand that public officials do more. She cited the example of the South End Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP), which held rallies and bonfires in August 1966 in order

95 "Exodus Staff Guest At Newton Reception," *Bay-State Banner*, September 24, 1966, 1.

96 "Ellen Jackson Stresses Better Communications," *Bay-State Banner*, November 26, 1966, 1.

to bring attention to the city's unwillingness to clean up the streets. Jackson concluded that community-wide forums would create a better link between organizers, such as herself, and the residents.[97]

Indeed, Exodus faced challenges from within the Roxbury community. For one, the organization was often the victim of neighborhood crimes. On November 5th, criminals brazenly broken into Exodus offices and stole expensive equipment.[98] It was the second time within the span of a few months that the organization was robbed. Unable to replace the equipment, the Exodus organizers pleaded with Roxbury citizens for donations. More importantly, Audrey Butler, Operation Exodus's secretary, called on the community to pressure the authorities to protect Roxbury properties. The Exodus robbery was not an isolated incident—there was a rash of robberies along Blue Hill Avenue in November 1966. Jackson and Butler's calls for action signified new dangers in the neighborhood and implied community apathy towards neighborhood groups. Social apathy put a stranglehold on many social institutions. Without a change in the residents' mentality, Exodus leaders feared Roxbury would lose out on many of the social programs emerging from the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty.

Jackson's speech at the Roxbury YMCA alluded to the rapid expansion of Exodus programs. Developing the scope and mission of Operation Exodus beyond busing required far greater community participation. Coincidentally, it was a financial crisis that brought Exodus back into the national headlines and reinvigorated the movement. By November 1966, Exodus's debt had reached critical levels. The Arnold Bus Company demanded that Exodus pay its bill. Betty Arnold, the head of the company, reported that Exodus had more than $12,000 in

97 *Ibid.*

98 "Exodus Robbed For Second Time," *Bay-State Banner*, November 5, 1966, 1.

outstanding debt extending back several months. Since Exodus was the company's biggest client, Arnold Bus needed that money to keep itself afloat and pay for its own insurance.[99] Consequently, Arnold threatened to cut services by the middle of second week in November if the debt was not settled. Scrambling to find an immediate solution, Exodus leaders ordered a massive fundraising drive. On November 6th, Otto Snowden, the co-founder of Freedom House, issued a memorandum to an impromptu group, the Citizens' Committee to Save Operation Exodus, alerting them of the various measures that the organization would take to to raise enough money to keep the buses running. Within hours, forty Roxbury community leaders and businessmen mobilized to solicit donations throughout the neighborhood.[100] This time a new, more personalized fund-raising technique was used: local businessmen and merchants were asked to "adopt an Exodus student" by paying for their busing.[101] Furthermore, Exodus parents themselves were asked to support the cause by either directly donating or volunteering in the Exodus drives. These methods deviated from the previously established fundraisers, which placed no obligations upon Exodus parents to pay for the busing of their children. They used direct solicitation from parents to raise the funds necessary to keep the buses running. It was a resounding success. After an intensive three-day drive, Exodus raised $24,000, more than double what was needed to cover all expenses.[102] Donations from Dorchester, Newton, Brighton, Cambridge, Allston, and the South End poured into the emergency fund. Both urban and

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99 "Businessmen, Activists Combat Exodus Crisis," *Bay-State Banner*, November 12, 1966, 1.

100 "If Buses Fail—Exodus Has Taxis," *Boston Globe*, November 7, 1966, 2.

101 Exodus Fundraiser Memorandum from Otto Snowden, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1461.

102 "Exodus Donations Top $24000," *Boston Globe*, November 14, 1966, 12.

suburban church groups contributed as did numerous politicians, including Senators Edward Brooke and Edward Kennedy. The crisis was resolved, and Exodus had deepened its community roots in the process.

But the crisis of 1966 revealed Exodus's unsustainable financial structure. Because the program was privately-funded, Exodus leaders had to organize fundraisers on a regular basis. The program depended on the connections of its leaders and the sympathies of its allies, both in the city and the suburbs. Furthermore, the lack of any federal funding (i.e. Title III) deprived the organization of a stable source of support. The result was a highly erratic day-to-day operation. Exodus did not drastically change, even after the 1966 crisis. While the 1966 crisis increased the role of local businessmen in Exodus, it also highlighted the fact that Exodus was running out of fund-raising options. In 1967, the organization still collected the majority of its funding through social functions. Consequently, Exodus was always in financial straits. Queried by the *Globe* in September 1967, Jeannette Bowen, chairman of the Exodus fund, replied with the familiar quote: "we won't be able to take youngsters already registered unless we can raise more money."[103] The organization continued to use benefit concerts, art shows, and other communal activities to raise funds. Suburban fund-raising drives remained a mainstay as well. For instance, the Lexington Choral Society performed a concert at Jeremiah Burke High School to raise funds for Exodus during the 1967 holiday season.[104] The numerous drives and fund-raisers that Operation Exodus Inc. mounted over the next several years were essentially the same.

More importantly however, the over-reliance on suburban support had unintended consequences for the Exodus program. Many suburbanites developed programs of their own for

103 Marjorie Sherman, "Exodus drives for funds," *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1967, 31.

104 "Lexington To Aid Operation Exodus," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1967, 23.

Roxbury children. For example, funds from the North Shore Benefit in early 1966 went towards Operation Genesis, a summer tutorial program hosted by North Shore teachers. Beginning in September of 1966, a much greater suburban program, METCO, emerged as an alternative and also a competitor to Exodus. METCO, the product of collaboration between numerous suburbs and Roxbury-Dorchester imitated the Exodus busing program and provided the city children with far better options in the form of well-to-do suburban schools.

## VII. White Attitudes and the Emergence of METCO

METCO, or the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, was the premier program for transferring Roxbury children into suburban schools. Roxbury and suburban organizers created the program in 1966 in response to the successes of Exodus. Given the great deal of support that Exodus received from suburban communities, Roxbury leaders attempted to replicate the Exodus experience with even better suburban schools. Prominent organizers such as Otto Snowden, Paul Parks, and Ruth Batson spearheaded the project with the support of experts, including Leon Trilling, a professor at MIT. The experiment was well-received on all sides. Unlike Exodus, METCO was able to gain significant backing and funding from both the state and federal government. Because METCO was an official school program, it qualified for Title III funds through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That added legitimacy also allowed the program to attract other supporters, such as the Carnegie Foundation.

The state defended METCO on both legal and moral grounds. An official METCO report in 1969 noted that the Department of Education had "a clear commitment to the joint goals of

intergroup good will and equal educational opportunity."[105] For the state, METCO's development represented "a significant coming together of suburban citizens and school committeemen and administrators with outstanding representatives of the Roxbury-North Dorchester black community."[106] As such, the program was hailed as "a striking illustration of urban-suburban cooperation in effecting the principles enunciated in the Kiernan Report and in the Commonwealth's historic Racial Imbalance Act of 1965." The state embraced METCO because it was an actual example of the Racial Imbalance Act's effectiveness. Correspondingly, METCO admission was open exclusively to black students, indicative of the need to racially-balance schools. The state claimed that an "interracial learning experience" was important to, "the total process of reducing race prejudice and providing equity with respect to educational opportunity."[107]

The METCO experience was just as important for white suburban parents as it was for Roxbury parents. Not only did the suburbanites endorse racial integration, they were encouraged by the prospect of having black students attend school with their own children. There was a sense that such relationships would result in better education and train students for "the duties of citizenship."[108] METCO was therefore an opportunity for suburban parents to educate their children on the issues of civil rights through the METCO program.

Many METCO-sponsored student discussions reflect the eagerness of white suburban

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105 "A Report to the Carnegie Corporation" by Ruth Batson, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 38, Folder 1301.

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*

students to learn about problems in the black community. According to the METCO report, most suburban students favored schools in urban rather than rural settings and complained that they were "just getting a factual education without participating in the things that were happening."[109] Suburban white students wanted to interact with urban black students to prepare for leadership in a post-Civil Rights world where racial integration would be a reality. The black METCO students would act as teachers, "educating white youths about the facts of life." There was even a group of white students who dedicated their time to studying black militant movements. The overall fascination with urban black students was palpable, and many white students endorsed black studies programs. Most of the students agreed that the ideal school would be, "ethnically, religiously, and racially mixed—where anyone could come but no one would have to."[110]

At the same time, there were also racial boundaries that both black and white students agreed upon. For instance, the issue of interracial dating and marriage was taboo. Some students asserted that interracial relationships were "hard on the children," while others felt that interracial children were not able to join any community. Mixed children were accepted by neither urban nor suburban communities. Thus for many white students, it was acceptable to interact with black students in school, but not socially. Conversely, the same was true for black students who enrolled in METCO. They looked at the program as an opportunity to not only educate themselves, but also export their ideals and aspirations back to the black community. One METCO student noted that they black students "would want to return to the black community with committed concern for all black people." Those ideals were certainly more ambitious than the goals of many Roxbury parents, who had primarily hoped that a better

109 *Ibid.*

110 *Ibid.*

education would allow their children to attain a stable living.[111]

Roxbury parents used METCO as a surrogate system to get around the Boston School Department. Boston School Committee members felt that they had acted in the best interest of the black community. It was a patronizing mindset inherited from their Brahmin predecessors. Peter Schrag argued that anyone who examined the Boston School Department would find it "difficult to determine how much [was] Yankee skeleton and how much [was] Irish flesh."[112] As such, the Irish administrators looked upon themselves as "caretakers" with a "genuine feeling for the children they teach and counsel."[113] However, there was also a strong sentiment against outside interference or activism. Only those in power had the authority to make changes, and those changes by definition were in the interest of the community. The administration believed in internal harmony regardless of external forces. The attitude of the Boston School Department was hence a key factor in the black community's decision to turn to suburban patrons. Unlike the Boston Irish, the suburbanites were able to provide opportunities for Roxbury children without overhauling their school system and exciting racial fear.

Whatever motives the state department may have had in aiding METCO, the end result was a very well financed movement in which the state and federal government covered the cost of both transportation and tuition for inner-city children. The suburbanites had planned for an extensive program designed to integrate METCO students into their community. For the 1967-68 school year, the Massachusetts Department of Education received $100,000 to cover the transportation and tuition of 101 METCO students to schools in Brookline, Framingham,

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111 *Ibid.*

112 Schrag, *Village School Downtown*, 72.

113 *Ibid.*, 70.

Needham, Newton, Reading, and Wellesley.[114] The funding was provided through the Chapter 506 legislation passed by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1966. The state gave about $1,000 for each METCO student, without counting funding from other sources. METCO transportation received $150 more per student than the Boston School Department's total per student budget. Title III of the ESEA and private foundations provided additional money. Funding was never an issue for the METCO program, especially given the relatively few number of Roxbury-Dorchester students involved. By 1969, only 400 students were enrolled in the METCO program, and those students were distributed among sixteen different suburbs. That year, the state took control of the program's funding, a budget that skyrocketed to $2 million by 1972.[115] There was little financial strain on the suburbs. Each student had access to better suburban schools, psychological testing, and "host" families. The goal was to allow both METCO students, and their suburban counterparts to become comfortable with one another. There was also a secondary objective. Similar to Exodus's psychological testing service, METCO devoted a certain portion of its resources to the research of the students and the program. This academic interest stemmed from a more generalized interest in urban renewal, under the Great Society programs. Academics, including university professors and researchers, worked with psychologists to evaluate the METCO program. They distributed questionnaires, interviews, and tests to students, parents, teachers, and host families. The attitudes and aspirations of the parties involved were meticulously analyzed in hopes of using the data to renovate existing programs and design new curricula.

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114 "A Report to the Carnegie Corporation" by Ruth Batson, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 38, Folder 1301.

115 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 38.

The suburban parents were central to METCO's success. Since METCO was run through suburban schools, white suburbanites were able to participate in the design and evolution of the program. White parents dominated the METCO program. Roxbury parents were not directly involved with its day-to-day workings, even though the program's headquarters were located in Dorchester. Many of the suburbanites offered to work with and host METCO students. Parent-teacher association meetings, served as forums for recruiting prospective host parents. Social workers interviewed the prospective hosts. The process was comprehensive: details such as the parent's personality and social status taken into consideration.[116] Once assigned, suburban parents held their own council meetings to discuss community events and internal elections. Members from various suburbs were represented and met at METCO headquarters. Host parents created a committee to elect METCO representatives, ranging from professional educators to council members. Interestingly, the whole process proceeded without input or interaction with the Roxbury-Dorchester parents. It was the suburbanites who planned visiting days for black parents to come and discuss the agenda. Host parents also created inter-community groups for interested Roxbury and Dorchester parents. METCO was ultimately a program created for Roxbury-Dorchester students but, unlike Exodus, black parents were much less involved.

For all its successes, METCO was not universally praised as a method for eliminating racial imbalance. Mel King argued that METCO was not the solution to racial imbalance, but rather that it "harbored the danger of distracting energy and attention from the larger and deeper solutions needed for Boston's problems."[117] King believed that programs like METCO only

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116 Guidelines for METCO Participants, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 38, Folder 1301.

117 King, *Chains of Change*, 87.

superficially addressed the issue of racial imbalance while providing an excuse for the School Committee to ignore real underlying social inequities such as the lack of quality education. The fact that METCO supported only a small number of minority students further suggested that it was a political rather than a comprehensive reform. The four hundred or so students enrolled in the program constituted only a small fraction of the twenty-thousand black students in Boston. Racial balancing through METCO was effectively in name only.

Moreover, suburban white people were much less concerned with the education of poor urban white children. Working-class white children who lived in Boston were, for the most part, ignored. For instance, when METCO first opened, a number of white mothers in Boston were intrigued about the possibility of enrolling their own children in the program. Unsure of what to do, some of the mothers called the *Boston Globe* asking for directions. One North Dorchester mother asked about how she could get her child into a high-powered suburban school, while another South Boston mother inquired about ways she could better motivate her children.[118] More informed mothers even called Ruth Batson's office and submitted applications in hopes of enrolling their children. Confused, and perhaps embarrassed at the development, the METCO organizers decided to debate the topic. The situation was awkward because the primary goal of METCO was to fulfill suburban desires for integration and improve the education of black students. Accepting working-class white children from Boston did nothing to alleviate racial imbalance and even opened the possibility of taking away seats from black students. Consequently, METCO quietly downplayed the issue and ignored the inquiries of ethnic white parents in Boston. To this day, METCO has not changed that policy.

118 Bertram Waters, "White Families Are Showing Interest in METCO," *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1966, A11.

With neither sympathy nor support from the white suburbanites, some white parents in Boston sought independent action. When Operation Exodus launched in 1965, a group of Boston white activists launched a campaign protesting their lack of educational options. These activists, from the Patrick F. Lyndon Home and School Association in West Roxbury (an ethnically white neighborhood in Boston), urged the School Committee to "check [their] conscience before [they] consider voting funds for the much glamorized and televised Operation Exodus."[119] These white parents believed that it would be unfair if School Committee funds went to bus black students only. They also suffered from the lack of quality schools and took any deference towards black parents as an affront. The West Roxbury parents were not like the South Boston parents: they were more vocal, assertive, and aggressive. Ron Formisano described the West Roxbury parents as more "individualist, pragmatic, and legalist" than the South Boston parents who acted as a collective.[120] The difference in attitudes was partly due to social class: while the West Roxbury Irish were middle-class, most South Boston Irish were impoverished.[121] When news of the Exodus program broke, South Bostonians, unlike their West Roxbury counterparts, were relatively quiet.

Nevertheless, South Bostonians could not ignore their own situation. Like Roxbury, many white neighborhoods were filled with deteriorating schools. In May 1965, the Norcross School in South Boston was burned down, leaving the 360 children without a school. The students were subsequently dispersed among several South Boston schools. The following June, a rumor spread about the possibility of permanently busing the students to East Boston schools. Incited by the

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119 John H. Fenton, "Whites in Boston Also Seek Busing," *New York Times*, September 14, 1965, 23.

120 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 7-8.

121 Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo*, 20; Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute*, 24.

rumor, more than a hundred South Boston mothers swarmed the D-Street ball park to protest the purported plans.[122] Unwilling to bus their children, the mothers asked that temporary classrooms be erected in the Norcross location. According to Dorothy Bisbee, a journalist who had visited the Norcross School in 1964, many parents did not want their children bused because they were content with the "friendly" and "serene" atmosphere that the school provided.[123] Bisbee argued that since no Boston school district reached national averages on test scores, busing would not improve the quality of education. The Superintendent William Ohrenberger agreed with the South Boston mothers. He noted that to bus the students would, "do a great deal of damage," because the students would not have a stable teacher.[124] Ohrenberger warned that in the case of busing, each student would have to deal with three different teachers by the winter holidays. Concurring with Ohrenberger's assessment, South Boston mothers successfully lobbied for portable classrooms to be installed at the location of the old Norcross School. Moreover, they allowed double session to serve their students in those classrooms. For them, the lack of quality education was secondary to the stability and familiarity that local schools offered.

The South Boston mothers were adamant that their children not be bused. Emmett Buell, the political scientist, argued that the Norcross parents acted out of racism. They feared that a new school might be required to be racially balanced (the Norcross School controversy took place after the Racial Imbalance Act had been passed).[125] Buell interpreted, Hick's 1967 statement that, "[South Boston mothers] would keep their children out of school and even go to

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122 "South Boston Mothers Told 'No Busing'," *Boston Globe*, July 23, 1966, 21.

123 Dorothy Bisbee, "Letter to the Editor: Busing Not The Answer," *Boston Globe*, September 28, 1966, 26.

124 "South Boston Choice: Bus of Double Up," *Boston Globe*, September 13, 1966, 1.

125 Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 75.

jail before allowing them to be bused," as an admission of racism.[126] Such abrasive behavior indicated that South Bostonians were motivated to keep their children from being bused due to a variety of reasons, the sum of which presented an unpalatable picture. For one, South Boston was what Buell considered to be a "defended neighborhood." The residents felt comfortable and safe inside their neighborhood area. Amongst all major neighborhoods in Boston, South Boston ranked second only to the North End in terms of the residents' perception of safety.[127] The possibility of busing may have stoked fears of danger: many parents may have feared that the state's integration agenda would break up their community by scattering their children throughout the city.

South Boston parents used the busing controversy to resist the development of integrated schools. During the Norcross School crisis, the South Boston mothers knew that their children would not be bused into black schools: the students were to be bused to schools in East Boston, another ethnically white neighborhood. Instead, the mothers feared that by allowing their own children to be bused, they could potentially catalyze a reaction that would eventually lead to the busing of black students into South Boston. They rejected busing as part of a greater strategy to make the development of local all-white schools the only solution to the issue of overcrowding. Since all integrated schools were designed to be located at the peripheries and boundaries between black and white neighborhoods, students from both neighborhoods would have to be bused to those schools. For instance, after the Norcross School crisis, the state wanted to build a school in South Boston that was large enough to accommodate 700 South Boston students and 300 black students. Integration would require busing Roxbury or Dorchester students. The state

126 Robert B. Kenney, "Semantics Divide Mrs. Hicks, Kiernan," *Boston Globe*, January 15, 1967, 28.

127 Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 53 Table 4-4.

promised to cover two-thirds of the building costs under the Racial Imbalance Act. The School Committee rejected and delayed the proposal for over five years. During the course of negotiations, Louise Hicks claimed that smaller, segregated local schools would even save the city money by eliminating busing costs, even if the project lost state funding.[128]

Ethnic white parents in South Boston had little incentive to work with black activists to force the School Committee into action. Operation Exodus personnel used the Catholic Church to collaborate with South Boston parents on their agenda. When Operation Exodus offered to help South Boston parents deal with the Norcross School issue, the latter group declined. Anne Keating, a South Boston mother, noted that, "it [was] not that [they] don't appreciate their help," but rather that, "[South Bostonians] want to fight it [themselves]."[129] Keating went on to voice her dissatisfaction with the School Committee, adding that, "the ones who should help aren't helping [them] at all."[130] The "ones" that Keating was referring to were the School Committee members and Louise Hicks. By 1966, many white Bostonians were fed up with Hicks's paternalism. Indeed support for Hicks dwindled after her easy 1965 election. Hicks failed in a 1967 mayoral campaign, losing to a more moderate Kevin White. As Ron Formisano noted, Boston's voters "knew Hick's value to them as well as her limitations."[131] Like the black parents in Roxbury, white parents were also becoming tired of the constant procrastination and false promises from the School Committee. They too wanted better schools, and they too were apparently determined to find their own solutions.

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128 *Ibid.*, 75.

129 Janet Riddell, "Exodus Offers Help To Southie," *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1966, 44.

130 *Ibid.*

131 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 48.

Ethnic pride partially explains why the Irish in South Boston refused to work with Operation Exodus activists. Their reluctance was not lost on the Roxbury parents. When Ellen Jackson offered to join forces with the South Boston parents, she flatly stated that, "it [was] time [they] stopped this ridiculous foolishness about who wants to integrate and who wants to sit with whom."[132] Jackson was well aware that the South Boston parents did not want integration and that the Roxbury parents did not prioritize integration. Both groups simply cared about quality education, and quality education for their community only. Roxbury's legislators agreed with Jackson's assessment. In August 1966, two state representatives from Roxbury, Michael Haynes and Royal Bolling, advocated the creation of modern neighborhood schools. Haynes and Bolling noted that they would not object to the school-building proposals even if those schools were not integrated. According to the *Bay-State Banner*, both Haynes and Bolling were concerned about obtaining quality education for Roxbury students, rather than immediately pursuing the NAACP-backed goals for integration.[133]

The Roxbury and the South Boston parents were not focused on integration. Both sides had similar aspirations, but South Boston's refusal to ally itself with Roxbury reeked of stubbornness. It may be that South Bostonians felt a need to sort out their problems on their own terms. Ron Formisano argued that during the 1960s, there was a strong pride within ethnic white groups stemming from blacklash against the Civil Rights Movement.[134] The Civil Rights Movement had emphasized that to be black "was beautiful" and that black culture should be celebrated. Feeling under-appreciated, many ethnic white communities began emphasizing the

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132 Janet Riddell, "Exodus Offers Help To Southie," *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1966, 44.

133 "Legislators Support Equal Separate Schools," *Bay-State Banner*, August 13, 1966, 1.

134 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 6.

beauty and American-ness of their cultures. Therefore, if South Bostonians (i.e. the Irish) were to align themselves with the Exodus movement, they were not only betraying the school system that their leaders controlled, but also admitting that the black community's ideas about education were better than theirs. Working outside the school system seemed unthinkable because the South Bostonians felt that they built the system. Even those who disagreed with Committee members, such as Louise Hicks, could not reject the system as a whole. It would mean that their own culture was inadequate in providing a modern education.

## VIII. The Expansion and Decline of Exodus

With the growth and success of METCO, the Exodus busing program was overshadowed by other Exodus programs. Beginning in 1966, Operation Exodus Inc. had rapidly expanded its programs to cover other social needs. Exodus headquarters had become a community hub that neighborhood residents often used to solve other social problems. Soon after the creation of the bus program, Exodus organizers began looking at ways to expand. The long-term goal of the organization was to create better schools in Roxbury. Consequently, all early Exodus programs dealt directly with education. Barely a month into its bus program, Ellen Jackson was already spearheading a plan to create a community school. However, due to the lack of federal funding, the community school plans were delayed for several years. Other, less ambitious, Exodus programs gained traction over the course of the 1965-66 school year, including planned tutorial programs and book drives. Jackson developed the tutorial program from her previous experiences in the Northern Student Movement and recruited NSM members to Exodus. Book

drives followed: in May 1966, Exodus personnel created a "Books for Roxbury" program in which they purchased loads of books from major publishing houses at discounted rates. According to Jackson, the Books for Roxbury program "[added] another aspect to attempts to give out-of-school assistance to youngsters in the community."[135] Emphasis on extracurricular educational activities continued with Operation Genesis, Exodus's first exchange program with the suburbs.

Over the next five years, Exodus created a variety of educational programs aimed at providing cultural and academic enrichment. Working in conjunction with other community centers, Exodus combined social work with education. Organizations, such as the Roxbury Multi-Service Center, the YMCA, and the Children's Medical Center coordinated with Exodus.[136] The various agencies worked not only with each other, but also with regional institutions such as universities. By 1970, a vast network of social service agencies had developed within Roxbury. Hundreds of paid and volunteer teachers and tutors joined social workers to staff those agencies. Alongside those agencies, Exodus organized periodic trips to museums, theaters, concerts, and sporting events. Other enrichment programs included after-school classes in history, literature, music, and art. The organizers encouraged children and adults of all ages to participate in the programs. Exodus also created a library as the result of its book drives. By 1970, the Exodus library possessed fifteen hundred volumes, many of them donated. Exodus's library served not only children, but the greater community as well. Exodus leaders emphasized culture because the organizers believed that public education neglected aspects of learning that were necessary to

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135 "Exodus Sponsors 'Books' Program," *Bay-State Banner*, May 28, 1966, 6.

136 "A Proposal for Operational Support for a community-based educational center" by Ellen Jackson, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1468.

motivate students. Those aspects included "artistic expression, racial dignity and pride, and black awareness and identification."[137] Capitalizing on the black pride themes derived from the Civil Rights Movement, Exodus leaders encouraged the entire community to explore its culture under the belief that self-identity led to self-motivation. They believed that a good understanding of black culture would drive community interest in all areas of education.

The Exodus organization also created vocational training programs and employment opportunities for students. The program used local parents as mentors who provided supplementary tutoring, college counseling, and part-time jobs for young adults. In 1968, Exodus was able to enroll forty-five Roxbury students in summer training programs with Boston-based corporations. Several corporations, including the *Boston Globe*, the John Hancock Life Insurance Company, and the Jordan Marsh Company participated. According to the organization's records, the students learned practical skills such as, "interviewing, reporting, photography, data processing, and retailing and merchandising."[138] At the end of the summer, the companies offered permanent part-time jobs to the students. In another instance, Exodus sponsored around twenty college-aged students in publishing their own newspaper, which was circulated throughout Roxbury.

The creation of a youth sports league was another element in Exodus's holistic approach towards community education. Run by local parents, the Exodus Youth Committee provided weekly recreational services for several hundred children. Funded by local merchants, Exodus organized softball and basketball leagues. Exodus fathers also renovated a playground in Dorchester for team sports. Organizers believed that parents could use sports and other team-

137 *Ibid.*

138 *Ibid.*

related activities to motivate students to remain in school. Exodus touted the ability of its parent-organizers to relate to local children. According to the organization, two "highly-respected and highly-skilled" community men, who held strong rapport with local gangs, co-directed the Youth Committee.[139] Exodus also claimed that all drop-outs who had joined the Youth Committee eventually returned to formal schooling. Whether or not those claims were accurate, Exodus organizers were apparently under the impression that sports provided youths with a more positive attitude towards education.

Ascertaining the psychological well-being of Roxbury children was paramount to Exodus's efforts. The organization worked with psychologists at Harvard, Boston College, Boston University, and Northeastern University to identify social and educational stresses. Exodus tested the psychological well-being of children suffering from poor reading comprehension. Emphasizing Paul Park's earlier position on the inaccuracy of intelligence testing, Exodus specialists worked to place Roxbury children in their proper grade levels.[140] Many collaborating scholars, such as James Teele of Harvard, were also interested in the psychological impact of Exodus itself. Those researchers analyzed community-wide perceptions of Exodus. For instance, Robert Belenky of Boston College found that many children "hung around" Exodus offices because if its "friendly and supportive atmosphere."[141] Belenky saw Exodus as a "psychological first aid clinic" for children who lacked support at home. The organization was thus a surrogate family for those in need.

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139 *Ibid.*

140 *Ibid.*

141 Robert Belenky Statement, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1463.

Operation Exodus Inc. became a central player in Roxbury's social service network by acting as an information hub. As a first-stop resource, the organization actively dealt with broad community issues or referred them to other social service agencies. The organization routinely processed and aided in issues regarding employment, housing, and welfare. Moreover, Exodus operated as an advisory and advocacy group. Residents and local businessmen with pressing problems often turned to the organization for help. For example, when Roy Smith, an itinerant black laborer, was arrested and convicted of murdering Bessie Goldberg, an elderly Jewish woman living in Belmont, he turned to Exodus. Writing directly to Ellen Jackson, Smith pleaded for assistance and counsel. In his letter to Jackson, Smith wrote that he believed in Jackson because she had "sincere interest in helping black people to get fail treatment and justice."[142] He asked Jackson to intervene with the legal authorities. Unfortunately for Smith, Jackson was unable to help him overturn his conviction. Nevertheless, the fact that Smith even wrote to Jackson indicated that the influence of Exodus had. Local merchants also turned to Exodus for help. Wary of community crime and facing threats from angry youths, white merchants from one Roxbury clothing shop appealed for support.[143] They asked for assistance, advice, and instructions on how to deal with the violence, and whether to continue their business. Given the history of collaboration between Roxbury merchants and Exodus, their appeal to the organization rather than law enforcement reveals the mutuality of their relationship. By 1970, Exodus had essentially become the local advisory, if not governing, body.

Exodus's integration into the greater black community coincided with a demographic shift

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142 Roy Smith's Letter, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1467.

143 Rubin Men's Shop Letter, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1467.

in Roxbury. During the late 1960s, many middle-class black families left Roxbury for Mattapan and other, more suburban, neighborhoods. In 1969, the organization orchestrated a move to Mattapan to better serve that new community base. However, the organization was once again beset by financial issues. The rapid expansion of Exodus programs had meant much larger expenditures. In November 1968, Exodus owed the MBTA, which had taken the responsibility of busing the Roxbury children, more than $9,000.[144] Two months later, that figure ballooned to $30,000. The MBTA warned that services would be cut by the middle of February unless the debt was settled. At the same time, Exodus needed funds for both its new offices and an educational center. Exodus staff estimated that the total cost for the programs amounted to approximately $180,000.[145] There was little hope of keeping the buses running. On January 14th, Ellen Jackson issued a press release on the imminent demise of the busing program.

Jackson called on parents and allies to petition the state to cover the costs of the busing program. The previous fall, Exodus leaders had sued the School Committee in order to force the latter to cover the costs of busing. According to Exodus, the School Committee was responsible for busing because they had used Exodus's efforts to back its racial balancing claims.[146] The ensuing political battle was fought over House Bill No. 88, which would shift the costs of busing over to the state. The bill was being debated on Beacon Hill and reached a preliminary conclusion by the end of January 1969.[147] On January 27th, a large crowd of parents, educators,

144 "Exodus Seeks Funds To Trim $9000 Debt," *Boston Globe*, December 14, 1968, 14.

145 January 14 press release, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1458.

146 "Exodus to Sue School Board For Bus Costs," *Boston Globe*, September 5, 1968, 8.

147 "A Friend in Need," *Bay-State Banner*, January 23, 1969, 4.

and politicians packed into the Massachusetts State House to debate the bill. Proponents, such as Morris Locke of the American Jewish Conference, argued that it was the responsibility of the state to carry out Exodus's busing program.[148] Louise Hicks and her allies protested that passing a bill would be unfair because busing only black children would be discrimination against white children. When asked why white children could not be bused, Hicks argued that it was because, "white parents [would] not have their children bused into black areas."[149] The deadlock continued. Unfortunately, no relief funds had reached Exodus by the end of the month and Jackson was forced to terminate the busing program. Nevertheless, the heated debate about the use of state funds for busing began to favor the Roxbury and integrationist blocs. By early August, both the House and the Senate approved House Bill No. 88, taking the issue of busing into state hands.

House Bill No. 88 changed the course of Exodus's history and the subsequent fight for integration. Operation Exodus Inc. continued its operations in Mattapan, but its heyday had past. There were several different explanations for Exodus's declining influence. First, during the four years between Exodus's inception and the termination of its busing program, a growing number of legal and political disputes brought the issue of busing into the courts. The Boston School Committee's lawsuit against the state in 1967 was only the beginning in a series of legal and political disputes between the two sides. After failing to defeat the Racial Imbalance Act in court, Louise Hicks and her South Boston peers, William Bulger and Raymond Flynn, began a political campaign to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act. By 1969, the School Committee had all but given up on racial balancing. The number of racially imbalanced schools was rising much more rapidly

148 "Friends, Foes Speak on Imbalance Law," *Bay-State Banner*, January 30, 1969, 1.

149 *Ibid.*

than the Committee's capability to integrate schools. From 1965 to 1972, the number of racially imbalanced schools almost doubled from forty-six to seventy-five.[150] At the same time, the percent of non-white pupils had risen from 23% in 1965 to 32.5% in 1971.[151] In their forth desegregation report, drafted in June 1971, the Committee accused the state of using the Racial Imbalance Act to discriminate against Boston while "[taking] no action against the remaining 348 cities and towns of Massachusetts which may be fairly described as operating segregated school systems."[152] Feeling as though they were scapegoated, the School Committee flatly refused to work with the state unless the Racial Imbalance Act was amended to include the suburbs. This animosity between the state and the School Committee proved to be a key element in the state's eventual decision to take control of busing.

Black parents, under the aegis of the NAACP, began to use the courts as well. A growing number of grassroots legal campaigns against the School Committee blossomed after House Bill No. 88 passed the responsibility of busing on to the states. In October 1970, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination filed suit on the behalf of Christine Underwood, a black student who was denied admission to Rosindale High School. Rosindale was then an ethnic white neighborhood. On October 17th 1971, the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) began formally investigating Boston's segregation crisis. According to J. Stanley Pottinger, then the director of the Office for Civil Rights, HEW's investigation was spurred by "a number of complaints alleging that the Boston Public School System was operating its schools in

150 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 46 Table 3.1.

151 "Fourth Stage Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools" by the Boston School Committee, Box 1, June 1971, Collection 0405.004, City of Boston Archives.

152 *Ibid.*

violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act."[153] Inspired by HEW's investigation, the NAACP filed a class-action suit against the School Committee for unfairly denying black students access to white schools. That lawsuit, known through its lead plaintiff Tallulah Morgan, would be the basis for the Garrity decision, which brought court-ordered desegregation. The ruling changed the face of Boston's school system. Smaller lawsuits, such as the one filed by Patricia Bonner-Lyons, another Roxbury parent, against the School Committee in 1973, further undermined the School Committee. By the end of the decade, various groups of black parents were using the courts to target the School Committee.

The court battles did not weaken Exodus alone. According to Emmett Buell, participation in the Exodus program had declined by the 1968-69 school year due to an increasing number of private schools in Roxbury.[154] While Exodus's ultimate goal of creating a community school stemmed back to 1965, the development of those schools also superseded the busing program. Among those schools was Noel Day's New School for Children, which opened its doors for the fall 1966 semester. The new school had a dramatic impact upon the Roxbury community. The *Bay-State Banner* proclaimed that the school, which was organized by over a hundred Roxbury parents, would served as a model for quality education.[155] Select teachers and modern equipment were just a few of the many advantages that the school boasted. The school also called for community teachers to work side-by-side with both students and parents. Mel King surmised that

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153 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare letter to Superintendent Ohrenberger, Box 1, November 1971, Collection 0405.004, City of Boston Archives.

154 Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 85.

155 "Community School to Open in Fall, New School for Children Organized By Local Parents' Group," by *Bay-State Banner*, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 38, Folder 1314.

Roxbury parents were now "organizing on a whole new level, not just for 'sporadic demonstrations,' but for the very basis of power which the School Committee had for so long blatantly misused."[156] The school had afforded the Roxbury parents a degree of leverage with the public school system similar to the power that the Catholic schools provided the Irish and Italians. Over the next decade, other community schools opened in Roxbury. Another group of parents created the Highland Park Free School, which began accepting students in September 1968. Both the New School and the Highland Park Free School made efforts to keep the tuition free for its most needy students. However, the community schools also had several drawbacks. Like the Exodus busing program, the community schools suffered from a lack of dedicated funding. By 1970, the New School was shut down due to its inability to meet financial demands. The Highland Park Free School soon followed. Mel King noted that "the community failed to support the schools and the schools failed to support the community, as there was no built-in requirement for such mutual support."[157] King asserted that the failure of the community schools was due to the mistreatment of those institutions as parochial schools, whose staff operated on a limited income (i.e. treating the staff like nuns and priests), instead of as private schools.[158] In any case, the community school experiment provided another distraction from the Exodus program.

METCO was far more sustainable than Exodus. From the start, METCO had enjoyed several advantages over Exodus. As previously stated, METCO was run using state and federal funding which ensured its financial stability. The stability was further enhanced by strong

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156 King, *Chains of Change*, 92.

157 *Ibid.*, 94.

158 *Ibid.*

suburban support and compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act. METCO was a win-win for parents, educators, and politicians. It made an ostensible effort towards integration while diffusing the costs across a wide political and geographic region. Moreover, it did not attempt to subvert the authority of the Boston School Committee, whose reports used METCO as evidence of racial balancing. By 1975, METCO transported twenty-five hundred students to the suburbs, a number far greater than what was achieved during the height of Exodus.[159] METCO became, first, a competitor, then a successor to Exodus.

Finally, Exodus lost its support base in Roxbury. In 1968, Ellen Jackson complained that, "things have become such that [Exodus's] overworked, underpaid...staff [had] agreed...to reevaluate, to reconsider just where [their] loyalty, energies, and strengths [lay] in the future."[160] Jackson further lamented that, "doors [were] being closed on [them] when [their] doors have always been open," because the black community was not acting on its ideologies. After three years, much of Exodus's support had begun to erode due to a lack of community participation. There was also a declining number of resident activists in Roxbury. In a March 1971 letter to the black community, Ellen Jackson declared that the organization needed to move to Mattapan because there was a, "vacuum created by the emigration of long-time citizens to the suburbs."[161]

Operation Exodus Inc. moved its offices to Mattapan because its Roxbury constituents had emigrated there. However, it moved to Mattapan with no funds and was still dependent on dwindling donations to pay off debts amounting to fifty-thousand dollars. Consequently, even the

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159 Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods*, 85.

160 Communications Follow-Up, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1458.

161 Operation Exodus Newsletter by Ellen Jackson, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1465.

smaller fundraising efforts were beyond Exodus's means. For instance, Jackson noted that a benefit dance, which was a staple of Exodus fundraising efforts five years earlier, would have been too costly to organize.[162] Furthermore, the organization had to establish alliances with new neighborhood residents and institutions. In particular, a working relationship with the influential Jewish community in Mattapan was of utmost priority to the Exodus organizers. In the months preceding the relocation, the Exodus organizers held several meetings at the Freedom House to discuss how they should approach Mattapan residents. Foremost on their agenda was cooperation with groups of people who would be able to financially support the organization, such as the local homeowners and merchants.[163] However, they were unable to garner enough support to run their most ambitious programs. In an unfamiliar neighborhood without the backing of other activist groups, the organization was relegated to a much less prominent role.

## IX. Epilogue

Today, Exodus is a topic most familiar only in the archives and the history books. By the mid-1970s, the organization faded into obscurity as the uproar over court-mandated busing took center stage. Exodus disappeared from the media, academic literature, and even the Freedom House records. The Exodus organizers moved on to other ventures. Ellen Jackson went to Harvard to obtain her master's degree in education. She continued to work with various women's groups as well as with the Freedom House. In 1970, Ruth Batson resigned from METCO to work

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162 *Ibid.*

163 April 17 Meeting Notes, Freedom House Collection (M16). Northeastern University, Boston, MA Box 41, Folder 1464.

in Boston University's School of Medicine. In 1986, she became a professor at the university. Her work with the black community continued through her foundation and her role as director of the Museum of American-American History (on the grounds of the old Abel Smith school). Paul Parks continued to serve as vice president of METCO, and eventually became the state education secretary in the Michael Dukakis administration. Muriel and Otto Snowden continued to operate Freedom House and worked in areas of urban renewal until their retirement. In 1987, Muriel Snowden was awarded a MacArthur grant and she passed away the following year. At that time, the Boston School Committee, which had since underwent significant change, voted to rename a high school in Copley Square in her honor. Mel King continued his academic work, and eventually became a professor of urban studies at MIT. Upon his retirement from MIT in 1996, King joined anti-poverty agencies in Boston. Leon Trilling also continued his academic work at MIT. Trilling worked with minority students through the MITES program, which recruited promising minority students for a summer of study at MIT. In 1971, Louise Hicks, the ever-staunch opponent of Exodus, won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Hicks became notorious during the 1970s when she organized the anti-busing coalition ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) to actively and militantly protest school desegregation. Hicks continued in politics, but retired after a series of losses in the early 1980s.

The final verdict on Exodus's success cannot be made from an educational standpoint alone because the organization was involved in a great deal of community activism during the late 1960s. While its original objective was to better education, parents immediately saw Exodus as an opportunity to solve other chronic issues. The true value of the organization lay in its ability to mobilize Roxbury residents and connect them with other resources both within and

outside of Roxbury. The organization relied on a strategy of self-reliance because neither the state nor the city was willing to help the black community. For its efforts, Exodus became the first modern organization to successfully advocate for equal education in Boston's black community. Its pioneering efforts paved the road for numerous other programs that allowed the black community to form networks with influential groups in the political, social, and academic arenas. After 1970, the changing political climate allowed the state to replace many Exodus programs, including its busing operation. The battle was, once again, taken out of the hands of local parents and placed into the courts. Exodus was therefore a movement in the greater struggle for integration, but its legacy continues throughout Boston today.

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