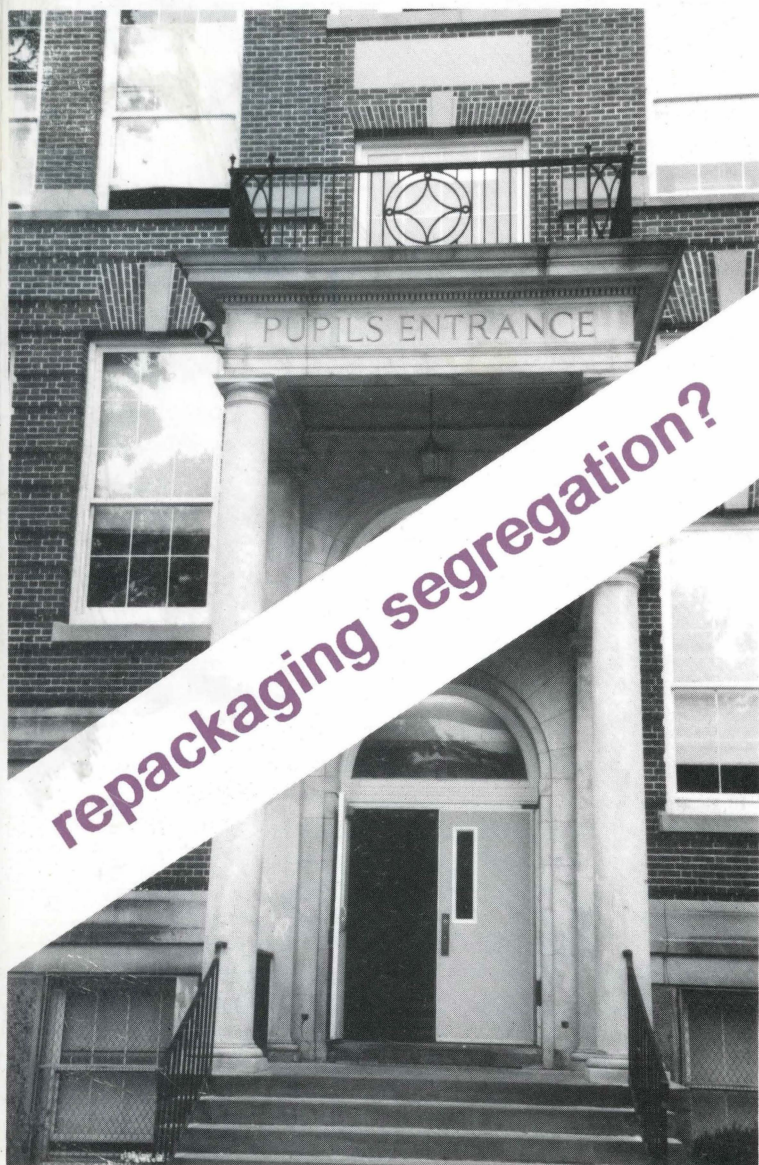


# RACE

# TRAITOR



winter 1998 number 8 \$5

**TREASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY**

# Race Traitor

*Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity*

NUMBER 8 / WINTER 1998

features	contents
STAUGHTON LYND: Black & White & Dead All Over: The Lucasville Insurrection	1
RICH GIBSON: Privilege on Holiday	25
EULA BISS: Team Players	31
JAMES MURRAY: Chiapas & Montana: Tierra Y Libertad	39
JANE MANNERS: Repackaging Segregation? A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey	51
THOMAS LANDEFELD: Constructively Demoted	99
 <b>review</b>	
JOANNA BROOKS: <i>The Redneck Manifesto</i> , Jim Goad	101
 <b>letters</b>	105

from St. Paul, Birmingham, Eugene, Berkeley, Sacramento,  
Raleigh, Sydney, Melbourne, & New York City

## what we believe

## inside back cover

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**editors:** John Garvey, Beth Henson, Noel Ignatiev, Adam Sabra

**contributing editors:** Abdul Alkalimat, John Bracey,  
Kingsley Clarke, Sewlyn Cudjoe, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin,  
James W. Fraser, Carolyn Karcher, Robin D. G. Kelley, Louis Kushnick,  
Kathryne V. Lindberg, Kimathi Mohammed, Theresa Perry,  
Eugene F. Rivers III, Phil Rubio, Vron Ware

**masthead:** Alan Hill Design

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# BLACK & WHITE & DEAD ALL OVER: THE LUCASVILLE INSURRECTION

BY STAUGHTON LYNDE

**I**n April 1993, an inmate rebellion broke out at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville, Ohio, near Cincinnati. Nine prisoners and one correctional officer were killed during the 11-day uprising.

In court proceedings following the end of the riot, five inmates were sentenced to death and are presently on death row at Mansfield Correctional Institution. They are: Siddique Abdullah Hasan (formerly known as Carlos Sanders), Namir Abdul Mateen (formerly known as James Were), Keith Lamar, Jason Robb, and George Skatzes. Hasan, Mateen, and Lamar are black. Hasan and Mateen are Sunni Muslims. Robb and Skatzes are white and are members of the Aryan Brotherhood.

We begin with a chronology. Lest we be suspected of slanting our presentation, we take these facts from the opening statement of Special Prosecutor Daniel Hogan in Skatzes' trial.

**April 11, 1993** Inmates take over the L cell block. Six inmates are killed. More than half a dozen guards are taken hostage.

**April 14, 1993** A truck load of food and water is left next to the occupied cell blocks.

**April 15, 1993** The body of Corrections Officer Robert Vallandingham is dumped in the yard about 11:10 a.m. About 7:30 p.m., George Skatzes escorts Corrections Officer Darrold Clark onto the recreation yard. After Skatzes speaks on the radio, Clark is set free. ("Opening Statement of Special Prosecutor Daniel Hogan," Skatzes trial transcript, p. 1556.)

**April 16, 1993** Corrections Officer Demons is released, and a Muslim named Stanley Cummings makes a TV broadcast. (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1556-1557.)

*Staughton Lynd is a historian, attorney, and longtime activist, who lives in Youngstown, Ohio.*

## 2 RACE TRAITOR

**April 17, 1993** Anthony Lavelle, representing the Black Gangster Disciples; Jason Robb on behalf of the Aryan Brotherhood; and Hasan (Carlos Sanders), a leader of the Muslims, meet representatives of the authorities in the yard for settlement negotiations. The inmate negotiators are assisted by Attorney Niki Schwartz. (Skatzes trial transcript, p. 1557.)

**April 21, 1993** After a second meeting between the authorities, Attorney Schwartz, and the three spokespersons, a settlement is finalized. The settlement provides, among other things: "(2) Administrative discipline and criminal proceedings will be fairly and impartially administered without bias against individuals or groups . . . (14) There will be no retaliating actions taken toward any inmate or groups of inmates or their property." Between 3:56 p.m. and 11:20 p.m., inmates walk out of the occupied cell blocks in groups of twenty. (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1558-1559, 1562.)

**April 22, 1993** The bodies of inmates David Sommers and Bruce Harris are discovered. (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1559-1560.)

## I. ANATOMY OF AN UPRISING

**W**hat caused the uprising at Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) at Lucasville, April 11-21, 1993?

There is general agreement that the triggering event was the authorities' attempt to conduct a tuberculin skin test by injecting a substance containing alcohol. Muslims prepared an affidavit stating in part: "we firmly believe that the Mantoux tuberculin skin test which consists of the injection [of] Purified Protein Derivative under the skin of the forearm of an individual . . . contains alcohol which is not permissible for Muslims."

But a long train of abuses contributed to the final decision to rebel. Longtime inmate John Perotti has written: "The SOCF had a reputation for being one of the most violent prisons in the country. . . SOCF was built to house 1,600 men, one to a cell, but the cells were doubled up and the population was close to 2,300. . . . [M]edical treatment was atrocious." In 1983, a prisoner killed a shop supervisor, after which twelve guards beat to death a mentally disturbed prisoner, Jimmy Haynes. Two black prisoners, Lincoln Carter and John Ingram, were alleged to have touched white nurses, were beaten by guards, and were found dead in the hole. Inmates

filed numerous law suits. Wardens were replaced. Abuse of prisoners continued.

Lucasville inmates organized a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), but the courts held that inmate workers were not "employees" entitled to a minimum wage. In June 1988, inmates filed a complaint with Amnesty International detailing violations of the United Nations Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners. The complaint set forth instances in which prisoners were chained to cell fixtures, subjected to chemical mace and tear gas, forced to sleep on concrete floors, and brutally beaten. Then-Governor Celeste ordered an investigation. (John Perotti, "Lucasville: A Brief History," *Prison Legal News*, Dec. 1993.)

The upshot was appointment of a new warden, Arthur Tate.

Chrystof Knecht, a Lucasville inmate at the time of the 1993 uprising, describes the indiscriminate oppressive treatment placed on all SOCF prisoners after Tate's appointment.

Under Tate's regime, SOCF prisoners were told how and when to eat, sleep, talk, walk, educate, bathe, and recreate. Privileges were taken away on a regular basis. New rules were enforced daily, disregarded, then re-implemented weeks later. Psychological conditioning techniques were upgraded. Integration was enforced and agitated by guards to create racial animosity in the form of fights and deeper racial hatred. (Chrystof Knecht, "Letters from Lucasville Prison," *Race Traitor*, Spring 1994, p. 21.)

Another inmate, William Martin, gives greater detail in a letter written on February 20, 1995, to Attorney Richard Kerger:

King Arthur [Tate] repeatedly demonstrated his ineptitude . . . . For example, King Arthur followed Otto Bender's advice of closing all the windows during the summer because SOCF was designed to have a flow-through ventilation system to keep the institution cool. Without any investigation, King Arthur signed Bender's decree which ordered all the windows closed. . . . My supervisor, Pat Burnett, subsequently went into King Arthur's office and inquired about his "window decree." King Arthur . . . had the institution's blueprints on his desk and, as he was gently patting them, he told Burnett, "I have it all right here. The institution was designed with flow-through ventilation. It will

#### 4 RACE TRAITOR

keep the institution cooler if the windows are kept closed.” Burnett then informed King Arthur that the flow-through ventilation will not work because most of the blowers on the roof are burnt out. . . . [You would think that King Arthur would have rescinded] his “window decree.” But he did not want to appear foolish so we all suffered through a very hot summer.

Martin went on to list new rules implemented by Warden Tate. According to Martin, perhaps the “most bizarre” rule was the one

requiring prisoners to march to chow, recreation, chapel, work, school, commissary, etc. After the [school teacher Beverly Taylor] was killed at SOCF in 1990, the Speaker of the General Assembly (Verne Riffe) publicly criticized the uncontrolled movement in SOCF’s corridors. Warden Terry Morris responded by painting yellow lines in the corridor.

King Arthur took it one step further after becoming SOCF’s warden. He not only wanted prisoners to stay behind yellow lines but walk in double-file formations. Prisoners who hated each other were forced to march next to each other. Everybody deeply resented this.

Warden Tate’s decisions, from Martin’s point of view, created an atmosphere of paranoia. There were repeated massive shakedowns “without regard for prisoners’ property,” and constant transfers of inmates from one part of the facility to another.

Finally, Martin highlights a policy of double-celling blacks and whites. According to Martin, integrated double cells increased from 1.7% to 26-31% of the total number of cells at Lucasville (citing *White v. Morris*, 811 F.Supp. 341, 342).

A third, anonymous inmate account of the “situation at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility as it led up to the riot” is dated July 5, 1993, less than three months after the rebellion, and draws on the observations of several eye witnesses. Warden Tate and Deputy Warden Roddy, this account asserts, showed “total disregard for the opinions or professional insight of staff with many years at SOCF and in corrections.” Poor communication between upper and lower level management led to constant uncertainty on the part of inmates as to what the rules were at any particular moment. Tate and Roddy “tore the college program down to bare bones” and “did away with music programs, literary programs and a lot of other positive”

programs that men were using to do their time. The author believes that Tate would have liked to lock down the whole institution and make it another Marion, Illinois super-max.

Like Martin, the author of this third history says that Tate began mass transfers of the inmate population. "Inmates that had been in the same blocks for years were forced to move to other blocks . . . . Guys were forcefully integrated with other races."

The third history also provides a vivid glimpse of Warden Tate's insensitivity to the Muslim inmates on the eve of the uprising. The author says that the Muslims

thought they had valid reasons and they voiced these concerns to both Tate and Roddy. Instead of trying to resolve this problem to the benefit of all concerned, Tate point blank told the leader of the Muslims that he would "drag everyone to the infirmary in chains and force them to take the shots." The Muslims told Tate that they would declare a "jihad" with Tate over this situation. They also stated that they'd been willing to take x-rays to test for TB. [Attorney Mark Devan in his opening statement at the trial of Jason Robb, declared: "[The Muslims asked Warden Tate] to please let them take saliva tests." Robb trial transcript, p. 143.] They just didn't want nothing shot into their bodies.

According to the history, on April 6 there was a meeting of Warden Tate and five of his staff with the leader of the Muslims and his "security chiefs." Tate said what he would do with the chains. On April 9, Tate sent the Muslim leader an interoffice communication "stating that it was the decision of the administration not to permit any group of inmates to dictate policy and that those men who had refused the TB test would be tested, whatever means it took to test them." By then, states the history, it was "common knowledge that the whole institution was going to be locked down to force the Muslims to take [the] TB test."

The inmate historian sums up that portion of history dealing with the prelude to the riot this way:

This was the situation as it stood before April 11, 1993 and the start of the Easter Day riot. The institution and the atmosphere of the institution had become very tense since the arrival of Arthur Tate as Warden. The incidents described so far . . . are but fractional in comparison with the everyday occurrences that

## 6 RACE TRAITOR

degenerated the stability of the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility. There was a sense of impending trouble . . . . The stagnation of any positive aspects to life had left a heavy air upon everyone at SOCF. Staff and inmates alike were very discontent with the operations of the institution. Either through bad management or by conspiracy, the attitude of the whole institution was at a boiling point without any outlet in sight. And this is where the complete breakdown of hope sowed the seeds of dissent.

### DEMANDS

It would seem that the inmate *demands* made in the course of the uprising should shed additional light on the rebellion's *causes*.

On the one hand, the authorities made tapes from their listening posts in the tunnels beneath L block, recorded their conversations on the telephone with inmate negotiators, took notes on the radio presentation by George Skatzes, and put all this evidence into SOCF Critical Incident Communications. Thus there is a contemporaneous, objective record of inmate demands.

On the other hand, there no longer exists any single presentation or list of demands that can resolve all doubt as to which demands were of highest priority.

Based on the Critical Incident Communications (hereafter CIC), the following were major inmate concerns:

1. Arthur Tate has got to go. (Skatzes radio broadcast on April 15, CIC p. 439.)
2. Medical care is insufficient. There must be more medical personnel. "We're given Tylenol for anything and everything." (CIC pp. 466, 467, 511, 578-579.)
3. The policy of integrated celling must be rescinded. There should be no forced integration. (CIC pp. 489, 510, 511, 564-567, 573, 576.)
4. Overcrowding in all Ohio prisons must be reduced. (CIC pp. 511, 513, 578-579.)
5. Indiscriminate mixing together of prisoners with and without AIDS, prisoners with and without TB, mentally ill prisoners and those not so afflicted, and prisoners at different levels of security, must be ended. (CIC pp. 466, 564-567, 591.)



6. Punishment for alleged gang activity on the basis of physical appearance has to stop. "Say I wear a bandana, they spot us by the way people dress or act. If I draw a swastika, they shake me down and find it, they say it's gang-oriented. Frank Phillips took pictures of tattoos." People in the yard are spotted by the stuff they wear in their hair. The authorities must stop classifying people and charging them as gang members based on bandana, cap, etc. (CIC pp. 507, 509, 511, 513.)

Of course these were not the only demands. Some were difficult to make specific, such as "No more oppression," "civil rights violations," "violations of due process when a prisoner goes before the R.I.B. [Rules Infraction Board]," "religious freedom violations." There were complaints that the law library was insufficient and that in the prison work program "you sit on your ass all day." Inmates wanted to grow their hair and beards as long as they desired. They thought the college program was "bullshit, that anyone can pass it." The offensive TB test was mentioned more than once, and one inmate said "the TB test could have been done by spitting." There was a desire that the administration be held to its promise of one 5-minute phone call at Christmas.

Finally, there were the demands that arise at the end of any strike or rebellion, here pressed with life-and-death urgency. There must not be singling out of any inmate or group of inmates (CIC, p. 505). "Worried about staying off death row. Must get Fed to take over for protection" (CIC, p. 510). There must be no repercussions to inmates involved in uprisings. There must not be any singling out of leaders involved in the riot. (CIC, p. 600.)

## CONCLUSION

There is a substantial fit between inmate accounts of the events leading up to the rebellion, and the demands that inmates put forward as they rebelled. Arbitrary decisionmaking by the warden was one major cause of what happened. Overcrowding, compounded by a policy of double-celling black and white inmates together, was another. The conduct of the black warden and black deputy warden was offensive to white inmates. But in the end, a black warden's failure to listen carefully to the concerns of black (Sunni) Muslim

## 8 RACE TRAITOR

inmates was, in the words of the third inmate history, “the spark to ignite the flames to a riot.”

## II. A RIOT, A RACE RIOT, OR A BLACK-&-WHITE INSURRECTION?

The composition of L block as of April 11, 1993, was 429 black inmates and 327 white inmates (Blackmon trial transcript, p. 201). About half of these L block residents withdrew from the rebellion as it began, by going out into the yard and from there to K block.

According to Special Prosecutor Hogan, the vast majority of the 407 inmates who surrendered at the end of the disturbances did not belong to any organized group. However, he also claimed that three organizations “ran the show” during what he called “this riot.” (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1529, 1553.)

The largest organized group were Sunni Muslims. Hogan said that there were about fifty to seventy Muslims at the beginning of the riot, and that their numbers grew as it went on.

The “second most powerful group,” according to Hogan, was the Aryan Brotherhood (AB). They numbered about twenty at the beginning of the riot. During the riot they controlled cell block L-2, and many white inmates who were not members of the AB were permitted to stay there, also.

Finally, a third group that in Hogan’s words “had some control” was the Black Gangster Disciples (BGD). They numbered eight to twelve on April 11, 1993. (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1529-1530.)

The Muslims and BGD were all-black. The AB was all-white. Prosecutor Hogan told the jury that all of the inmates killed on the first day of the riot “were white” and that a “paranoia began that lasted for a number of days.” (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1501, 1550-1552.)

### PAUL MULRYAN’S ACCOUNT

Inmate Paul Mulryan has published a detailed account of the first hours of the uprising that is consistent with Prosecutor Hogan’s remarks, and with the testimony of guards and inmates.

Mulryan writes: "My first thought was that there must be a racial war. . . . Down the range I could see several teams of masked convicts converging on the block. . . . Then I saw both black and white skin showing through their masks. I was relieved."

A little later, Mulryan recalls, "two Masks" announced: "Lucasville is ours! This is not racial, not racial. It's us against the administration! We're tired of these people fucking us over. Is everybody with us? Let's hear ya!" According to Mulryan: "Hundreds of fists shot into the air as the prisoners roared their approval."

The convicts rigged up a public address system using a tape player and two large speakers taken from the rec department. They set these up near the windows facing the large media camp in front of the SOCF. Mulryan says that the following tape recording was played over and over:

The prison authorities want you to think that this is a racial war. It is not! Whites and blacks have united to protest the abuses of the SOCF staff and administration. (Paul Mulryan, "Eleven Days Under Siege: An Insider's Account of the Lucasville Riot," *Prison Life*, n.d., pp. 32-33, 91-93.)

## **BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER**

The banners and graffiti displayed in the occupied cell blocks expressed *both* racial separation *and* racial cooperation.

Sergeant Howard Hudson of the Ohio State Highway Patrol testified in Skatzes' trial about the insignia found in the occupied cell blocks after the surrender. They included:

- A six-pointed star, said by the officer to be associated with the Black Gangster Disciples;
  - A shield containing a large "N" and a cross, said to be a symbol of the Aryan Nation;
  - Swastikas and lightning bolts together with the words "Honor," "Aryan Brotherhood Forever," "Supreme White Power," and "Belly of the beast," an apparent reference to the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) at Lucasville;
  - A crescent moon representative of the Nation of Islam.
- (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1930-1945.)

## 10 RACE TRAITOR

Sergeant Hudson also identified a photograph of the L corridor. This testimony followed:

Q. On the wall on the right there appears to be something written?

A. Says, "Black and White Together."

Q. Did you find that or similar slogans in many places in L block?

A. Yes, we did, throughout the corridor, in the L block.

Q. Including banners that the inmates produced?

A. Yes, sir.

(Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1922, 1978.)

The prosecutor returned to the slogans in L corridor and the gymnasium, as if to make sure that the jury had taken notice.

Q. [What is photograph number] 260?

A. 260, the words, "Convict unity," written on the walls of L corridor.

Q. Did you find the message of unity throughout L block?

A. Yes. . . .

Q. Next photo?

A. 261 is another photograph in L corridor that depicts the words, "Convict race."

Q. 262?

A. Again, in L corridor, "Black and white together," painted on the wall.

Q. 263?

A. Another shot of, "Black and white together."

Q. That slogan appeared a number of places?

A. Yes, it did.

Q. 264?

A. Again, another shot of graffiti in L corridor, "Blacks and whites, whites and blacks, unity."

Q. 265?

A. "Black and white together." Then below that, written in different color ink, says, "Eleven days." . . .

Q. 266?

A. This is located in the M-2 gymnasium, the words, "Whites and blacks together," painted on the bulletin board.

Q. 267?

A. The words, "Black and white unity," painted on the wall in L corridor.

Q. 268?

A. 268, the words, "Black and white together," again painted on the board in L corridor near the gym. (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1993-1994.)

### WHAT GEORGE SKATZES SAYS

George Skatzes joined the Lucasville Aryan Brotherhood in about January 1993, three months before the uprising. Skatzes joined because he perceived whites to be a minority at Lucasville: a majority of the inmates were black, the warden and deputy warden were black, and the head of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction was black. For Skatzes, joining the AB was a way to carry out his philosophy of, "You respect me and I will respect you."

Skatzes says he had no advance knowledge of the uprising. When the insurgent inmates opened the cells in the L blocks, George was able to leave his own cell, L-6-58. "I didn't know what it was all about," he says.

George received a message asking him to go out on the yard. Skatzes went out on the yard, but then returned to the occupied cell blocks. Why did you go back?, we asked George. Because I had friends in there, he answered. In his words, The place was blowing up and "I had people I was concerned about."

At some point on this first day George saw a black inmate (Cecil Allen) talking through a bull horn to a small crowd of other prisoners. George went up to listen. To his surprise the man on the bull horn pointed to George and said, "There's nobody going to be talking to you guys but me or this man right here," meaning George Skatzes.

A little later the man with the bull horn approached George together with Hasan (Carlos Sanders). Skatzes did not know Hasan, or that he was Imam of the Muslims. Hasan said to Skatzes, "We've got to get this under control."

Finally, a third black man came up to George. He said that white guys were congregating in the gym and the blacks were paranoid. He asked George to go to the gym and calm things down.

We asked George, Why did these three black men—the man with the bull horn, Hasan, the third man—ask you for help? Weren't you a member of the Aryan Brotherhood?

## 12 RACE TRAITOR

Skatzes answered that he did not want to make much of himself, but “I had a lot of respect.” He told us of incidents before the uprising when white *and* black inmates had asked his help in settling disputes. One of these incidents involved the man who asked him to go to the gym.

So Skatzes did as he was asked and went to the gym. He went up to the group of black inmates and said, “This ain’t no time for you to call me a honky, or me to call you a nigger.” Then he approached the whites, who were sitting in the bleachers. Putting his arm around a black inmate, George said, “If the guards come in here they’re going to shoot us all, no matter what color we are.” We asked George who that black man was. He said, I don’t know; I had never met him before.

On April 15 when George spoke on the radio his words were recorded by the authorities and a transcript was introduced as Exhibit 309A at his trial. He stated in part: “We are oppressed people, we have come together as one. We are brothers. . . . We are a unit here, they try to make this a racial issue. It is not a racial issue. Black and white alike have joined hands in SOCF and become one strong unit.”

## A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

When people learn that Jason Robb and George Skatzes were members of the Aryan Brotherhood (AB), they may feel that they want nothing to do with the defense of the Lucasville Five. We urge you to reconsider any such inclination.

**It is our tentative but carefully-considered conclusion, that Jason Robb and George Skatzes were targeted by the prosecution BECAUSE they made common cause with black inmates during the uprising, and presented themselves to the authorities as spokespersons and negotiators for both races. We propose that the authorities want to kill them because they committed an unforgivable sin in white America: they stood up together with a group of blacks in a life-and-death situation.**

### III. A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

On February 3, 1997, the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association voted 280 to 119 to urge Congress and state legislatures to declare a moratorium on the death penalty.

The ABA calls for implementation of previously-adopted policies intended to “minimize the risk that innocent persons may be executed.” These policies include: (1) Competent counsel for all defendants in capital cases; (2) Availability of Federal court review of state prosecutions; (3) Elimination of discrimination in death sentencing on the basis of the race of either the victim or the defendant; (4) No execution of mentally retarded defendants or defendants under 18 at the time their crimes were committed.

The ABA House of Delegates acted on the basis of a Report by its Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities. Referring to the four previously-adopted policies listed above, the Report states that “the federal and state governments have been moving in a direction contrary to these policies,” for example by ending federal funding for lawyers helping death row inmates to pursue appeals. According to the Report, “fundamental due process is now systematically lacking in capital cases.” It characterizes present administration of the death penalty as “a haphazard maze of unfair practices.”

The trials of the Lucasville Five were just such “haphazard maze[s] of unfair practices” as the ABA condemns.

These unfair practices included the following:

1. Attorney Niki Schwartz of Cleveland, who helped to negotiate the settlement that ended the uprising, has denounced the criminal prosecutions of participants in the rebellion as a travesty of justice. According to Schwartz the prosecutions violated point 2 of the settlement, which said that “criminal proceedings will be fairly and impartially administered without bias against individuals or groups.”

Schwartz has asserted in a letter to Chief Justice Thomas Moyer of the Ohio Supreme Court and in testimony under oath in the trial of Jason Robb that Special Prosecutor Piepmeier successfully aborted efforts by the inmates to obtain counsel during the investigative stage of the proceedings. Schwartz states that

## 14 RACE TRAITOR

Piepmeyer told him that if the inmates had counsel prior to indictment they would not incriminate themselves.

According to Schwartz, after the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Ohio Public Defender Commission recruited and held training seminars for over 200 volunteer lawyers to provide individual representation to the inmates targeted for criminal charges, the Special Prosecutor blocked appointment of many of the volunteer lawyers, and through *ex parte* contacts with the judges persuaded them to appoint lawyers for the inmates selected and approved by the Special Prosecutor.

2. Millions of dollars were provided to the prosecution, while the inmates' defense was starved for funds. According to an article co-authored by Reginald Wilkinson, Director, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction: "Over 1,250 interviews were conducted. Investigators received on-the-job training from FBI forensics experts. More than 4,000 items were tagged as evidence. A special computer program using over 1,000 megabytes of memory was developed to store and retrieve data on crime witnesses, locations, and events." ("After the Storm," *Corrections Management Quarterly*, 1997, pp. 20-21.) An article in the *Columbus Dispatch*, Apr. 6, 1997, based on "state records," summarizes the money made available by the State of Ohio to the prosecution and the defense in the Lucasville criminal cases as follows:

### PROSECUTION

Criminal prosecution	\$1.4 million
State Highway Patrol investigation	\$1.3 million
Total	\$2.7 million

### DEFENSE

Defense attorneys, investigators, expert witnesses	\$892,000
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Thus the state's own figures show that three times as much was spent on the prosecution as on the defense.

3. The prosecution conceded that there was no physical evidence linking any of the defendants to the murders and kidnappings with which they were charged. The allegations against the defendants rested altogether on the testimony of guards and other inmates. In the case of George Skatzes, the Ohio State Highway Patrol pressured him to cooperate with them, that is, to inform ("snitch"). They said they would indict Skatzes for only one murder



if he would testify against other defendants. Skatzes told the prosecution that he could not help them. The next time the authorities came to see Skatzes, they told him that this was his last chance, that if he would not help them he would be indicted for three murders. Skatzes once again refused to plea bargain. The prosecution did exactly what it had threatened.

The testimony that caused the Lucasville Five to be convicted came from inmates who had themselves helped to kill the victims about whom they were questioned, but had entered into plea bargains. A statement to the press by Special Prosecutor Piepmeier indicates that thirteen months into the investigation, Anthony Lavelle, leader of the Black Gangster Disciples, agreed to cooperate with the authorities. (*Cincinnati Post*, Apr. 6, 1996.) Robert Brookover testified that he had killed David Sommers (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 3668-69) but he received no additional time as a result of the Lucasville riot. Many of the witnesses conceded that their testimony at trial contradicted their initial sworn statements to the authorities. In many instances, their testimony was inconsistent with the testimony of other witnesses.

4. The prosecution was permitted to question witnesses at length about events that occurred after the riot as well as about horrendous murders and beatings with which the defendants on trial for their lives were not charged and in which they were not involved. Inevitably this prejudiced the minds of the jury.

Robb and Skatzes are white and the men they were charged with helping to murder (Vallandingham, Sommers, and in the case of Skatzes, Elder) were also white. Yet the prosecution was allowed to spread on the record the facts that Robb and Skatzes were leaders of the Aryan Brotherhood and that many members of the Brotherhood are hostile to blacks and Jews. This must have had a prejudicial impact on the jurors, and may have been unlawful under the holding of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Dawson v. Delaware*, 503 U.S. 159 (1992).

5. The prosecution's theory as to the defendants was essentially that they were leaders, and therefore responsible for anything that happened during the riot. Inmate Johnny Fryman was so badly beaten and stabbed at the beginning of the rebellion that witness after witness who saw his body lying in a pool of blood assumed that he was dead. After the surrender, the Ohio State

Highway Patrol told Fryman, “we don’t care how we have to do it, we want Robb, Hasan and Skatzes . . . . Give us those three.” Special Prosecutor Piepmeier told him, “We’re able to make any kind of deal you want.” (Interview notes of Attorney Jeffrey Kelleher, Sept.30, 1995.) Reginald Wilkinson, ODRC Director, later wrote:

[T]he key to winning convictions was eroding the loyalty and fear inmates felt toward their gangs. To do this, [Piepmeier’s] staff targeted a few gang leaders and convinced them to accept plea bargains. Thirteen months into the investigation, a primary riot provocateur agreed to talk about Officer Vallandingham’s death. He later received a sentence of 7 to 25 years after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit murder. His testimony led to death sentences for Carlos Sanders, Jason Robb, George Skatzes, and George Were. (“After the Storm,” p. 21.)

## IV. ON DEATH ROW

The men sentenced to death as leaders of the Lucasville insurrection have been reunited on Death Row at the Mansfield Correctional Institution.

What they have experienced there is described as follows by the lawyer who helped them in negotiating a surrender agreement:

Departmental regulations provide for three levels of privileges on death row and for newly sentenced inmates to be placed on the middle level upon arrival. However, Jason Robb (and all other subsequently death-sentenced riot inmates) was placed on the lowest level of privileges upon his arrival, notwithstanding two years of exemplary behavior since the riot. When I protested that this was “retaliatory” in violation of Point 14, I was told that this was the death row equivalent of administrative control. However, administrative control is not supposed to be punitive and death row inmates are already under very heavy security control. [My requests have] fallen on deaf ears . . . . (Attorney Niki Schwartz to Attorney Gerald Messerman, June 4, 1996.)

The Lucasville Five have undertaken two hunger fasts to upgrade their security classification. In 1997, they were joined by another inmate on Death Row, John Stojetz.

The 1997 fast had two objectives: medical treatment for George Skatzes; upgrading the fasters' security classification from Level C to Level B. The following letter to Warden Coyle was written by one of the black inmates from Lucasville.

Mr. Coyle (et al):

This letter is in regards to the reasons we have elected to initiate a strike in order to protest against what we feel are the unfair conditions that we have been subjected to, since being convicted and sentenced to death, and subsequently confined here at Mansfield Correctional Institution.

Sir, as you know, we have consistently communicated with Mr. Israel concerning this matter, but, as of this date, there still seems to be some confusion with respect to our concerns and expectations. Therefore, to guard against further waste of each other's time, we all agreed that it would be more conducive to reaching a resolution if we simply stated our position, thereby giving you an opportunity to clearly consider the issues involved.

To begin with, we already understand that there are some concerns regarding security, and that, due to the nature of the circumstances that resulted in us being placed on death row, it falls within your responsibility to enforce whatever "Security" measures you deem necessary. Understanding that, we recognize your need to keep us in an isolated area. However, as we have repeatedly attempted to explain, keeping us in an isolated area and denying us privileges that do not constitute a security threat, is equivalent to punishing us twice for the same offense.

At the forefront of our list of concerns, we are asking that George Skatzes receive immediate medical attention for what is, as yet, an undiagnosed problem he's been having with his stomach. With respect to this, he has repeatedly tried, to no avail, to have the Doctor order some tests in order to determine what the problem is. Surely, he is entitled to the same attention that is accorded to everyone else. We're asking that he be given attention capable of addressing these concerns, and preventing his problem from becoming any worse than what it already is.

Secondly, as regards the privileges, we're asking that we be given "all" our personal property that doesn't interfere with you

## 18 RACE TRAITOR

maintaining security. As this is a security issue, we're asking that we be accorded the same privileges that were given to all of the S.O.C.F. inmates immediately following the riot, when placed on Security Control Investigation here at the Mansfield Correctional Institution.

These privileges consist of:

- 1.) All personal property (T.V., Typewriter etc.)
- 2.) Access to phones
- 3.) Food Boxes (No canned goods per Institutional policy)
- 4.) Full Commissary privileges
- 5.) Full visitation privileges
- 6.) Full recreation privileges
- 7.) Legal services
- 8.) Stop messing with our mail.

[Referring to] the so-called "21 point agreement" ... [o]f particular importance, in our opinion, are #2 and #14, which state that, there will be no retaliating actions taken toward any inmates, or their property.

In conclusion, let us assure you, that we understand your position and the concerns you have in maintaining a safe environment. We also realize that we'll never be allowed to mingle among other death row inmates and, though we disagree with the notion that keeping us isolated is the answer, we have no intentions to resist against this reasoning. Nevertheless, we set forth the fact that we have already been punished for our alleged participation in the riot, and that any further punishment is blatant retaliation.

Sir, as you know, being sentenced to death is the strongest penalty available to man. Having already been sentenced, we all understand and, await the final decision. In the meantime, however, we request and expect to be treated in the same fashion as other death row inmates.

If you will take the time to investigate, you'll find that we have presented no problems since being here. The only problem exists in us being singled out and treated contrary to everyone else. This we are no longer willing to accept.

Finally, we ask that you acknowledge the urgency in addressing our concerns, as this is approaching the fourth week

of the strike, and we have no intention of yielding, until we receive a legitimate response and appropriate changes are made.

Sincerely,

1. George W. Skatzes
2. Jason Robb
3. A. S. Hasan
4. John Stojetz
5. Namir Abdul Mateen
6. Keith Lamar

The Lucasville Five ended their recent fast on July 24. The unit manager has been transferred. Skatzes' medical condition remains problematic.

## V. EPILOGUE

On September 5, 1997, a disturbance occurred in DR-4, the area of Ohio's Death Row where the Lucasville Five and thirty-two other condemned men are housed.

### THE MEDIA VERSION

Initial reports of the disturbance told a relatively straightforward story. The incident began at 5 p.m. when inmates overpowered three guards, took their keys, and freed other death-row inmates. Several hours later, a prison tactical squad fired tear gas into the unit and regained control. Three guards and four inmates were said to have been injured, but there were few details. Authorities indicated: "We're not sure what triggered it. Nor do we know the leaders." (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Sept. 6, 1997.)

Spin control started in Columbus, the state capitol. The *Columbus Dispatch* began its story: "Those responsible for the deadly 1993 Lucasville prison riot were among Death Row inmates who took control." The *Dispatch* went on to quote the first of many misleading statements from warden Ralph Coyle: "Some of the injuries may have been afflicted [*sic*] by other inmates before prison officials regained control, Coyle said." The story added without comment: "Wilford Berry, who has volunteered to become the first inmate executed in the state since 1963, was also housed in the same area." (*Columbus Dispatch*, Sept. 6, 1997.)

## 20 RACE TRAITOR

Within twenty-four hours Berry's presence in DR-4 had given rise to a full-fledged official theory:

An inmate who has volunteered for execution may have provided the spark that touched off a five-hour riot Friday among the most dangerous prisoners on death row...

Berry, 34, suffered severe injuries at the hands of his fellow Death Row inmates during the uprising, Coyle said.

Skatzes' sister Jackie Bowers told the paper that Berry was unpopular but that "her brother isn't among those who dislike Berry. She said he told her he feels that Berry doesn't have the mental ability to make decisions about his appeal." Bowers also said that tensions had been mounting on Death Row because of the conditions that prompted the summer hunger strike. "They just keep taking things away and punishing them and punishing them," she said, adding that after the fast the Five had lost the right to receive "sundry boxes" from relatives. Warden Coyle denied any connection between the fast and the disturbance, claiming that he had granted the Five more privileges after the hunger strike ended. (*Columbus Dispatch*, Sept. 7, 1997.) The controversy about the fast and the riot continued elsewhere. Sonny Williams of the Ohio Prisoners Rights Union said

prison administrators have ignored warnings for months that there could be problems on death row. He said inmates are not provided with proper medical care and some death row inmates have been denied privileges granted to others on death row, such as access to televisions and radios.

Coyle said there were no warning signs... (*Youngstown Vindicator*, September 7, 1997.)

As the hours passed it became clear that all injuries to guards had been minor, whereas several inmates had been seriously hurt. Richland County Prosecutor James Mayer, Jr., entered DR-4 shortly after the riot ended. "You had to be careful because there were very few places where there wasn't any blood," he told the local paper. Mayer also confessed puzzlement as to how the state could punish those responsible. "I can't think of anything else we could do to them. They're already facing the worst the state can give them." (*Mansfield News Journal*, Sept. 7, 1997.) Warden Coyle concurred

that if the most dangerous prisoners were involved in the riot, there wasn't much more that could be done to punish them. "You really can't do much more," he stated. (*Columbus Dispatch*, Sept. 9, 1997.)

### WHAT GEORGE SAYS

When George Skatzes was interviewed on September 10, his public defender reported visible lacerations over both eyes and on one ear, where guards had banged his head against a wall. By September 16 Skatzes' wounds had healed and he was ready to tell his story. He carefully distinguished between what he had seen, what he had heard from others, and what he inferred to be true.

The disturbance began about 5 p.m. when supper trays were brought in. George was locked in his cell at the time. About half an hour later inmates came to George's cell and unlocked it. He told them that he wanted no part of what was going on, and asked to be left alone. He remained in his cell throughout the disturbance.

Inmates were milling around in the public area of the pod. "No one was doing anything," George says. Inmates tried to arrange themselves two or three in a cell in case there should be violence.

At any time the guards could have come in and peacefully regained control, according to Skatzes. He saw no inmate-on-inmate violence whatsoever. He saw no shanks or clubs. The only object that could be considered a "weapon" was a body chain, after it was unlocked. "All they [the guards] had to do was come in," Skatzes insisted.

George advised others of the Lucasville Five not to get on the phone to negotiate, lest, as in 1993, this cause them to be viewed by the authorities as ringleaders.

Time ticked away. Inmates conjectured that the authorities were hoping "for the body count to pile up," so that inmates could be severely punished. But there was no body count, and unlike 1993, there were no hostages.

About 10 p.m. George looked through the window of his cell into the corridor and saw men in gas masks. Then came a loud banging, followed by a noise like the firing of shotguns. A cannister came through the cell window, shattering the glass, striking George directly, and causing minor cuts on George's arms. At least five

## 22 RACE TRAITOR

cannisters were shot into his cell. One of the cannisters lodged on his top bunk, among his legal papers.

He felt as if gasoline had been poured over him and set afire. The hair on his arms stood straight up, and turned white. He couldn't breathe. He lay down on the floor, thinking he was going to die. He could not see his hand in front of his face.

After about fifteen minutes, as if by miracle the fog of tear gas lifted. George got up and leaned toward the hole in his cell window to get some air. A guard sprayed liquid mace through the hole. George told him, "You don't have to do that. I'm no threat to you."

George put a blanket on the floor, sat down on it, and waited. Everything in the cell was white from the tear gas.

About an hour later "bunches" of masked guards, wearing black ninja suits, came into DR-4. Two of them told George to stand and put his face to the wall. His hearing is not good, and had been affected by the shotgun-like sounds when the tear gas was first fired, but as soon as he understood what was wanted, he complied.

The guards went into Jason Robb's cell next door. Jason was told to strip to his underwear. He was then beaten very badly (but did *not* lose an eye, as the prisoners' grapevine first reported). George could hear beating, screaming, mumbling from the cell next door. A man who was with Jason in the cell told George later that Jason didn't say a word to provoke the assault.

When the guards came to George's cell, they told him to get down on his knees, with his hands behind his head. At least three of them then opened the door and stormed in. They asked no questions but "started beating on me." George did not resist, but rolled himself into a tight ball, trying to protect his head. The guards pulled his arms and legs in different directions, trying to make him straighten out, face down. They succeeded.

The guards got his left hand behind his back and put on a plastic handcuff. They bent back his wrist and fingers, trying (George believes) to break the bones. One guard hit George several times with his fist on the left side of the head, causing cuts on his jaw and above his eye. Another put his foot on George's neck.

George's right arm was still under his body. He was told to "get your right arm around here." He told them he was sorry to be angry but they didn't need to do all this. When they took hold of his right



arm they tried (he believes) to break his right index finger and right arm.

George was handcuffed behind his back, “ungodly tight.” A guard tried to stomp on his private parts. He squeezed his legs together. The guards picked him up by the cuffs and half walked, half dragged him out of the cell. George thought he was walking to his death. He saw thick gobs of blood on the floor.

The guards forced the handcuffs up as high as they could, so that George was bent over like an old man as he moved. A guard told him, “You are going to stand up and walk out of here.” It was impossible for George to stand up. Another guard took him by the hair, and slammed his head against the wall of Jason’s cell. George thinks he was “out on his feet” for a time.

The next he knew he was at an exit door from DR-4, a guard on each side, bent over with his arms up high behind him. In front of O17 a guard hit George in the head. He rolled with the punch. There were more punches. They walked him out.

For half an hour he was put in a cell with Hasan and two other inmates who complained they could not breathe because of the tear gas on George. Then two officers, one female, the other male, walked George to the warehouse. The female officer who is from Mansfield said, “This man is saturated with that shit.” The male guard (who George thinks is from Mansfield) told him, “You’re a good man.” When the guards cut off the plastic handcuffs to put on an orange jump suit and then recuff George, the female guard remarked on how swollen his hands were.

The inmates from DR-4 lay in rows in the warehouse floor for about three hours. A nurse gave medical attention to the most seriously injured. There was no opportunity to wash off the tear gas and mace, nor would there be any shower for five days.

George found himself on the floor next to an inmate named Combs, a man with only one arm—and therefore “totally defenseless”—who had been sprayed with gas and severely beaten. “His head was a mess,” George recalls.

At this writing (September 17) George and the others from DR-4 are housed in Security Control Investigation in very burdensome conditions. All their personal property was left behind in the cells, and much appears to be missing. Everybody’s commissary is gone. They have been given toothbrushes cut off after the bristles,

## 24 RACE TRAITOR

apparently on the theory that the toothbrush handle could be a weapon. No one has shoes (although George has hospital slippers). Food is even more inadequate than before. Neither coffee nor cigarettes are permitted.

George wants everything to be told 100 per cent truthful. What George saw was totally uncalled for, he says.

*A support bulletin for the Lucasville Five is published monthly by George Skatzes Supporters, P.O. Box 1591, Marion, OH 44301-1591. People wishing to receive it should write to that address.*

# PRIVILEGE ON HOLIDAY

BY RICH GIBSON

One million white people moved back into Detroit on June 10, 1997. They celebrated the Red Wings' seizure of hockey's Stanley Cup, absent from the city for 42 years, and the recapture of a city white people mostly fled 30 years ago. They were unafraid and took great pride in their propriety, the decorum that a teenage Bubba helped raze in 1984, after the beloved Tigers won a rare pennant, as he posed and waved a red team flag beside a burning overturned black cop car. In 1997, thirteen years later, the million white people march, unlike Farrakhan's in its spontaneity, promised not a hint of revolution. Rather, white people rallied to prove their reliability as respectful spectators.

The white people celebrated the four-game sweep of the Philadelphia Flyers, waved brooms, and attached a hammer and sickle to the flying red wing emblem of the home team. They scoffed at the anti-communist screams of Philly fans, bitter over the Russian presence on the Red Wings, their Flyers' individualist style overwhelmed by the Soviet influence on collective hockey play. Some Red Wings fans shouldered red flags. The white people sanitized the revolution and consumed the city's best temporal offerings. They spent more than 40 million dollars in downtown Detroit, underscoring the heady times of the stock market and the rolling dice of Tiger-Red Wing-Pizza-Casino owner Mike Illitch. Capital reigned triumphant, no alternative in sight.

Worried class-conscious heads three miles east in the UAW's Solidarity House, on Jefferson, hoped no one would compare numbers with their dreams of 20,000 mostly white union folks at a planned march against corporate greed on June 21. Then they joined the parade—just as they used their special vantage to invite the industrial working class to watch hydroplane races on the Detroit River, a virtual open sewer but the lone river of three in the city that the demands of capital could not encase in concrete.

*Rich Gibson is Director of International Social Studies Education at Wayne State University in Detroit.*

The UAW lost a half million members in the decade. A two-year newspaper strike of mostly white people led by the UAW collapsed when the union leadership demanded the right to unconditionally surrender to Knight-Gannet, then threatened to call the police when the corporation reaffirmed its views on class war. The union did not comment about the absence of support for the strike, an action whose demands were never clearly articulated, in what they call "Union Town." The union's *Research Bulletin* says 3.8% of the city's residents are unionized. One UAW member worked the night shift, then brought his two teen-age sons to the celebration, the family hauling a huge rendition of the team mascot, a tentacled octopus sons and Dad crafted together at home.

It is a Red Wing tradition to throw a live octopus on the ice during the Stanley cup playoffs. The tradition became an anathema when Detroit fans showered the ice with plastic octopi during a losing effort against New Jersey two years ago. Then upstart Florida fans began to pelt the ice with plastic rats. The league instituted a minor game penalty for such remunerative rowdiness.

## **Detroit Now**

The white people in downtown Detroit on June 10<sup>th</sup> danced in a city now more than 80% black, where over 100,000 children are without immunizations and the chances of a black child completing high school are one in three, much better odds, though, than those offered gamblers at the city's projected casinos.

The white people patted the noses of mounts ridden by the once-hated Mounted Police Unit, trained to adapt to conditions even better than their masters: calm in serene areas, unbothered by the touch of curious children; in earlier days, charging with stamping feet into crowds of workers or anti-war students. The last chief of police did not make the jubilee. He is in Milan Federal Prison, 60 miles west, unable to explain the one million dollars in cash found stuffed in the ceiling in his modest Detroit home. In 1996, the Detroit Police Department caused the City Council to forfeit nearly one million dollars to citizens bringing suit against police brutality.

Thirty years ago this summer, the city of Detroit was in flames. Troops were recalled from Vietnam to make war on the city's citizens and enforce a twenty-four hour curfew. Cops in the downtown Algiers Motel tortured their captives. More than 40

people were killed. Rumors set the deaths at over 100. More still were corralled in stockades on Belle Isle, once named Pig Island, where the Detroit Grand Prix now runs. It's called an 86-mile test of fuel economy but is a favorite of the black tie set. After the rebellion, a national commission decried white racism as the source of the uprising. One hundred thousand workers got industrial jobs around the U.S. Poverty programs boomed. City ADC roles doubled in four years. The night-raids of welfare workers looking for men in the house came to a quick halt. White folks left Detroit in droves, using freeways. The immediate cause of the rebellion was a fierce police assault on a passenger car.

Hockey is more white than any other major North American professional sport. It's played by the children of working class Canadians, miners' kids, and, with more frequency now, U.S. college grads raised on rinks and accustomed to playing on glass-ice with ample pads and mouth guards. These are the fellows with their teeth. They inherit a few of the traditions of their predecessors like Bernie "Boom-Boom" Geoffrion, "Leapin' Lou" Fontinato, Rocket Richard, Terry Sawchuck, "Gump" Worsley, no-masked goalies and corner grinders from earlier days. Surely present millionaire hockey salaries are built on the bloody stitch work done on the benches in hockey's golden era.

Urban planners at Wayne State University in central Detroit privately wonder what will happen to the black super-exploited class when Detroit's center is fully reclaimed in fact and in consciousness—when it is possible to remove the barricades in front of the Renaissance Center on the river front. The planned population shifts that disappeared Hastings Street, the Black Bottom, simply reshuffled the poor from one inner-city area to another. White citizens of an area known as Poletown had some mobility, though they resisted the capture of their city by the radical Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and General Motors. One Poletown parish priest who stood with a cross in front of his church to deflect oncoming bulldozers died of related stress. GM won. Their plant won't pay taxes until the next millennium. The residents lost and moved away.

But the reassigning of downtown, now that property values are destroyed, means there will be a poor black population with nowhere to go, with ever more collapsed schools, and no tax base or good will to draw upon. It will be important to somehow move the poor again,

to areas where they are not too unsightly, where they can burn yet destroy no value, but where they are a sufficient presence to remind Red Wings fans how lucky they should believe they are.

Red Wings fans did not feel hockey luck for some time. Since 1957, the Red Wings failed to win the cup. In the interim, hockey, then the domain of only the finest in the world, was diluted—expanded beyond the western world pool of good skaters—as the Wings, derided as Dead Things, lost year on year. Brawling substituted for skill for nearly a decade. Even a close series between the every-man-for-himself style of Canadian hockey and the incessant passing of the collectivist U.S.S.R. teams failed to influence North American clubs. In Detroit, an ex-college coach named Ned Harkness oversaw the tailspin of the Wings and the century's greatest athlete, Gordie Howe, number 9, complained that he was treated like a mushroom, kept in the dark and fed crap. Howe quit and left town.

### **The Big Eat the Small**

Unrestrainable capital quietly lets the big eat the small, unconcerned as all become commodities. In 1995, Michigan's governor swept 90,000 people off public assistance. They no longer had vouchers to sleep in verminous downtown hotels whose owners quickly went belly up. Now the poor march on a trail worn smooth around the city, shelter to shelter, and their old slumlords are forced to sell cheap to the very rich who can orchestrate the future—gambling, spectacles, and food for those that can buy it cooked. The Red Wings walloped the Flyers, blind-sided them. An embittered Flyer superstar, Eric Lindross, risking all on the ice as he recovered from a back injury, demanded his coach's head. The coach's boss, Bobby Clark, a diabetic ex-Flyers star whose toothless maniacal grin symbolized the "Broad Street Bully" Philly days, fired his old pal the coach, tethering Lindross for a future Lindross believes he will control.

Ted Lindsay started the tradition of a Stanley Cup winning captain taking a victory lap with the trophy held high over his head. Terrible Ted who led the Red Wings to their heights in the fifties, the fellow with a road map face carved by competitors' sticks, did not attend the play-offs and was not seen in the celebrations. Ted was the fellow who formed the players union. Only Canadian

television mentioned his name. Gordie Howe, back in the city selling cheap mattresses on late-night TV, was interviewed once, blinked, and smiled forgivingly.

Detroit's African-American Mayor Archer, the Democrats' best hope for black votes, was prominent, broom in hand. A Clinton Democrat, he had earlier threatened to join Republican Governor Engler in seizing the corrupt Detroit schools. City voters had, two years earlier, passed a multi-million dollar bond issue to build and repair schools. No building or repairs followed. The school board rejected Freedom of Information requests to discover the money's path. The board's auditor resigned when it was learned she had no auditing background. White suburban citizens were shocked, shocked. Early in the century, Detroit's white populist Mayor Hazen Pingree ordered the arrest of an entire school board of white people who he believed he had fixed, on grounds that, "You are so corrupt, you won't stay bribed", putting the lie to the notion that black people alone cannot govern themselves, and that anyone governs capital. Mayor Archer and Engler thought twice. Once one seizes Detroit's schools, one is responsible for them. The unlikely pair disregarded the threat. Archer's good friend, pizza's Big Czar Mike Illitch, owner of the Tigers and Wings, will have a new stadium before the new high schools are built. On June 10, Archer said he was proud to be mayor of a city that could celebrate without arrests.

### **Back to the Salt Mines**

That same day, fans sat on the head of Hazen Pingree's statue. They also danced on top of Detroit's salt mines. The city is undergirded by a vast system of mines. The few visitors to the shafts were struck by the youthful appearance of the workforce, preserved like the machines they warehoused underground once they were worn out. The workers said they did not miss their own aging. Most reported they loved the work and hardly noticed time passing. No salt miners' kids became National Hockey League players. The mines are closed now. Not long ago, the mines were considered good real estate, for sale to store nuclear waste.

Burton International School, in a wealthy suburb, dismissed ten classes to attend the parade downtown, a journey unthinkable to white suburban parents months earlier. The lead teacher said she

### 30 RACE TRAITOR

used hockey's play-offs to incorporate geography (distances between cities) and non-violence, "Because they shake hands at the end."

The night of their final win, Red Wings players took the trophy to a West Bloomfield bar. West Bloomfield is overwhelmingly white, but has a black population that earns, per capita, more than its white residents. The black bourgeoisie wanted out of Detroit as well. The Red Wings partied so long that the limo drivers left, leaving the stretch autos in the parking lot. Suburban police drove the players home, safe and sound.

Two days later, the thirty-five-pound silver Stanley Cup rode the downtown victory parade in a convertible with Red Wings Captain Steve Yzerman. "I thought winning the cup was everything. But today, coming down Woodward, was what it was for. This is unity."

On Friday, June 13, 1997, at 8:45 p.m., a white limousine, chauffeured by an unlicensed driver, went out of control and struck a tree in the center of Woodward Avenue, in Lindsay's fifties the artery to downtown Detroit's Olympia stadium. Two Russian Red Wing players, a Russian trainer, and the driver were severely injured. Vladimir Konstantinov, "The Vladinator", the "Ghost-Rider on Ice-skates", suffered massive head injuries and survived on a ventilator. White fans built a shrine at the site of the accident, photographing one another over wreaths and team flags. Captain Yzerman, speaking at the hospital, said, "Yesterday I thought winning was everything. Now I know it's your health." Konstantinov, days earlier, had crushed one of Philly's Flyers with a play-of-the-day hammer of a check, legally levelling an onrushing skater amateurish enough to look over his shoulder to foresee a passed puck. Konstantinov, at the million white person rally, said, "This cup is for you, for you."

The fans went wild.



# TEAM PLAYERS

BY EULA BISS

There's one thing you've got to understand about Bradley..." Nick has said this before. He says it every time he mentions his hometown. We are looking at pictures of Nick's friends from high school. He is leaning up against the wall, bent forward because he is tall and thin. His hair is shaved close and he runs his hand over it.

"Bradley. It's not a real big town, but a lot of it is really poor. And there's this street, this street that separates the white section from the blacks." He drags his foot across the carpet, making a line. "It's called Riverview, and as you get closer to the river it gets nicer and nicer. Farther from the river it gets worse and worse, and then you hit this street and it's like BOOM - ghetto."

I look from the invisible line he has drawn on the carpet to the photo I am holding. Nick and another boy are standing with their hands in their pockets, smirking. Nick leans against a brick building, everything around them is dark. They are cocky, Catholic school boy cocky. Nick went to a private Catholic school—he is Jewish, but a Catholic school was better than public school.

"The public school, God,—the public school was the type of place where there's dogs in the halls, and police, and you have to wear ID tags with your picture on them. You can't walk through the halls between classes at all, you can't talk between classes, stuff like that..."

He takes the photo from me and looks at it, shaking his head. He lays it down and smiles, still shaking his head. He points at the boy in the photo.

"Man, Bobby Lincoln, he is not the same kid he was back then. He used to be a total punk, unbelievable. I guess he used to hate it, though. You know, crying himself to sleep every night..." Nick digs a dent in the carpet with his shoe and raises his eyebrows.

"Bobby'll tell you stories about grade school, it was a classic grade school situation. Peter was the leader, from kindergarten, and then there was always a fight for second place between Bobby and this guy Josh. And the girls, they went to this little Catholic grade school—St. Martin's. The girls had a number one, number two, and

*Eula Biss is a student at Hampshire College, Amherst, MA..*

a number three girl. All through junior high they'd date the top boys—number one and number three, two and one, three and two, always fluctuating.

"One of the first contacts I had with Bobby was through this guy I was on the tennis team with, Tim. That was the summer after my sophomore year. We decided that we were poets, we started this religion too. Really bad—all based on justifying whatever we were doing at the time."

Nick is studying religion now. His book shelf has the Koran, the Bible, the Tao Te Ching. There is some philosophy, too—works by Camus and Martin Buber. Nick doesn't just read these books, he worries them—their spines are all cracked from being reopened. Nick is the sort of guy that will drive four hours to Walden Pond after he has read Thoreau. Two months later he'll tell you Thoreau wasn't worth the gas money. Right now he is taking a class on the Jew in Modern Society. It's a token class, he says, something to say you have taken.

"Basically we were confused fifteen year old kids, yeah, 'follow us, we've got the answers.' We decided one night to sneak out. We all had the same curfew. We were going to meet at this train yard. We used to hang out there all summer, hop on trains and ride a couple miles. We wanted to be train conductors. That time was all about wanting to be a train conductor, hanging out with Tim, and planning to run off to San Francisco to spread our religion. I remember watching a Bulls game and saying 'Wow, I won't be here for the end of the season. I'll be in San Francisco spreading the word of infinitism.'"

Nick stretches, and smiles a little sheepishly. He shrugs. There is a poster for a class on the wall behind his head. It says, LAY YOUR HEART OPEN TO THE BENIGN INDIFFERENCE OF THE UNIVERSE: A STUDY OF ABSURDITY IN ART, RELIGION, AND PHILOSOPHY.

"So there's that night we snuck out to the train yard. Tim and I, at like two in the morning and—aw, damn—we just started talking about all this bullshit. Tim was always like 'let's talk deep about stuff.' Yeah, so we were always talking about nothing. Our big debate was always about money, whether money was everything. To him, money was everything, and to me, it was nothing. It wasn't happiness, 'can't buy me love'—that sort of thing. He was like, 'money can buy you anything. It's the key.'"

"I went home from sneaking out that night and my dad was waiting up for me. One of those classic times— 'Hi Dad.' There was some screaming, actually there wasn't even any screaming. It was, of course, the stereotypical worst—disappointed. 'I'm never going to trust you again,' the worst. I got grounded for a couple weeks and I couldn't talk to anybody.

"When I got done being grounded I went to play tennis with Tim, and this guy Andy came by and said, 'Hey guys, we're having a party at my house tonight. My parents are out of town, why don't you stop by?'

"So, I'd been hearing these stories. It was about my first or second day of being ungrounded and Tim started telling me these stories of how they'd been driving through the black section of Bradley and beating people up. I didn't believe him. Tim, although I liked him a lot, was totally full of shit. When he talked about going to these... areas, and beating people up, I just didn't believe him."

Nick opens his eyes wide when he talks to you. He doesn't shake exactly, but there is an intensity in the way he talks. People would call him cleancut—he is wearing a collar shirt and a cardigan. No one shaking Nick's hand for the first time would look at him and question his intelligence, or his honesty, or his good intentions. It is easy to imagine what his friends must have looked like, in their collar shirts and cardigans. Boys that could have conversations with my dad. Nice boys.

"So we went to the party that night, and we were just hanging out. Messing around. Tim and these guys, one of which was Bobby, kept on going back and forth from the party in Tim's car with these stories of all this crazy shit. Beating people up or whatever, I didn't believe it. It was getting about time for me to go home, and Tim was there. All of us had the same curfew, but it was a little bit early for going home when we left. Somebody yelled out, 'Hey let's go get one more.' I was like, 'Oh, God what are they doing?'

"So we pack into the car, there must have been about twenty of us all crammed in the back seat. It was insane, just shouting and leaning out the windows."

High school, the backs of cars. That's what it was all about. The smell of sweat and cigarettes, pressed in against people that it didn't matter you didn't know. You have to keep on ducking to avoid getting burned by the tips of cigarettes. Loud music, the heater

running and the windows open. Laughing, you can't even hear yourself laughing. You are lost in it, but not drowned out. You are part of the noise. You are in on the jokes. It doesn't matter if you say something stupid, because nobody hears. And if you say something funny, everybody laughs. The headlights are off and the car is driving through the fog. You sit back. It doesn't matter where you are going or how fast you are speeding or how far off the road you are swerving...

"Everyone has a baseball bat, I look down and there is a bat in my hands. I don't know where they all came from, but we've got these bats and we're driving into this bad section of Bradley. This is a really bad part of town. I mean crazy high crime rates, murder rates, it's just nuts. They start driving into this area and I think, 'Oh, Jesus, what the hell are they doing.' Like 'c'mon now, this is stupid, what the hell are you guys pulling now.' We all have these baseball bats, and this guy Peter, who's in the passenger seat, has this long metal bar—I'm not sure where the hell he got it from, just this big metal bar. It was pretty darn heavy too."

Nick shakes his head, his hands are holding an invisible bar. We used to sit in the dining hall talking about the inherent racism of the death penalty. I read the paper he wrote about it. I think of the car full of Catholic school boys. Boys in a part of town their parents didn't want them in because it was dangerous.

"They see this old black guy on a bike, a couple of blocks up. They say 'Aw, yeah, let's get him.'"

The old man's breathing is loud in the dark. He is slowly turning the pedals, laboring uphill. He has never owned a car. His groceries are tied to the handlebars. His hands are cold on the metal, and his fingers are getting stiff. The wheel veers unsteadily away from the curb, and headlights from a car behind him project his shadow onto a building. He hears the motor behind him. He pulls closer to the curb, leaving room for the car. He hears a shout and tries to turn his head as he rides, without upsetting the groceries.

"Tim drives up next to the guy, and Peter sticks his whole body, like up to the waist, out the window with this metal bar. We pass the guy and Peter just cracks him on the head."

The old man turns his head towards the car as it passes, and everything explodes in pain.

“The guy goes tumbling over the handlebars and smacks the ground. They all yell ‘Who—Hooo’ and slap fives. Just having a great time. I’m just like ‘Oh, hell, what the hell is going on.’ Totally not believing what was going on.”

Nick looks at the floor. I put my hand to my face, I rub the back of my head. The image of the metal bar bouncing off the man’s head, and the sound it would have made, dull and hollow, flash through me. Shivers run down my back.

“This all started because some black kid stole Peter’s bike. They went and found him and put him in the hospital... They had so much fun doing it that first time because they had that reason. After a while they didn’t need that reason anymore. Then it was just recreation. All you need is a little bit of justification...”

“So we kept on driving around, we drove by these guys that were playing basketball in their back yard. It was a corner house, on the street, so you could see directly into their backyard where they have this little court set up. There were about two guys playing basketball, so we were like ‘Oh, yeah, let’s get those guys.’ Peter starts yelling out the window ‘YOU FUCKING NIGGERS, WE’RE GOING TO GET YOU, KICK YOUR ASS, YOU FUCKING MONKEYS.’ We turn around, and go down the block, and then we come around and park.”

Everything is happening unbearably slowly. The men playing basketball are watching the ball hit the backboard, with the street light glowing above them. The shouts of the boys are muffled by the hum of the car, but you can feel how dangerous they are, how heavy a wooden bat is, how hard it can swing. The sound of the basketball beating pavement stops, there is a pause as the car passes. One man holds the basketball and looks at the other.

“Then they were like, ‘OK, let’s get ‘um.’ We file out of the car, and there’s really no place for me to head, you know. It’s weird for me, looking back. What the hell could I have done? You can’t even get out of the car at midnight in this section of town. In or out of the car, it wasn’t safe alone.”

Nick is holding on to the open car door, he is watching the others start to walk away. He looks around him at the empty street; something moves in the shadow of a doorway.

“You can’t rationalize with these guys because they’re fools. We’d argued before and they didn’t care then, why would they care now. You can’t really stay in the car—well, probably you could.

Possibly that's even what I should have done. But it's not the place where you want to be sitting around as a white, preppy kid at midnight. This is what was running through my fifteen-year-old mind.

"So they slapped a bat into my hand. Peter is pounding me on the back and saying 'Hey Nick, you gonna get this one? You gonna help us out here?' This guy is the senior and I'm the little sophomore. He's the guy all my friends follow around. Now is when I have to prove myself. I said 'Oh, Yeah.'"

Nick's voice trails off, he looks across the room. "Oh, no."

"Then I was walking towards the house, I was thinking 'Oh, God, what is going on.' Justifying to myself in a million ways—like the bat is just for defense just in case something happens to me, then I can use it. You know, just in case..." He clears his throat. "...anybody comes out and jumps on me. Like, I'm not going to hit anybody, hell no, that's not me. I'm not going to hit anybody. The whole time I'm just thinking, just praying to God—" He seems to catch himself, adding, "I wasn't praying to God, but I was praying that they wouldn't be there. We walk down, we turn the corner."

Nick pauses. He looks at his hands, spread out in front of him with his the palms up. He shakes his head and shrugs.

"And they're not there. I was like 'Oh, thank God.' But, you know, I always wonder, will always wonder, what the hell I would have done if they had been there. You know? Because the stories they told me, which I now believe, you know they were really... messing people up. They put a few people in the hospital, and really just attacked people with baseball bats. I mean, just POW," He swings an imaginary bat at my head, "beat them, you know, broke numerous bones in people and crazy stuff."

"Horrible, God, and you never know, in your fifteen-year-old hands, what all would have happened. I don't think I would have done anything, but even that is just ridiculous. That is me, at nineteen years old, sitting in this room at Hampshire College. I'm sure if those kids had been there... something would be different today.

"But they weren't. So we start heading back to the car. Actually, we were running back to the car. Peter yells out, he goes into the middle of the street and yells out— " Nick laughs, a little, nervously. "'WAKE UP YOU FUCKING NIGGERS.' Then we all

jump in the car and speed away. We keep driving around. Peter has this... when he cracked the metal pole over that guy's head, it broke in half. Peter has the other half of the metal pole and he wants to do something with it. We're driving around, and we spot this little girl—God, she couldn't have been more than five years old, sitting on the porch."

She pulls her skirt over her knees and examines a scab on her ankle. Are people screaming inside? Is she eating a popsicle? Is she waiting for her dad to get home, so he will pick her up and swing her around? It is late for her to be up. She hears a car coming up the street, maybe it's her dad. She looks up, and the headlights shine in her eyes.

"Peter takes this pole and see's her... God, that Catholic school arm, you know, years of pitching, finely developed... He whips it at her and you just hear BLAM."

Nick smacks his hands together. I feel the shock of it go through me. The sick sound of metal hitting flesh, and little bones. The sick surprise of it.

"You hear it smack her, and the little girl screams as we drive away."

The scream mixes with the sound of the tires. It fades, it reverberates. Her mother hears it all night.

"I mean, I don't know if it hit her, but it certainly seemed like it did. And then we speed away. God only knows what happened to the little girl. They keep driving around, looking for somebody else. But they don't find anybody."

Nick pauses, ducking his head a little, playing with the edge of the photograph. He twists one side of his mouth up, in disgust. He looks at the floor, and then the walls. I would like to reach over and hold his shoulder, but he's sitting too far away.

"So, eventually Tim took me home that night, and I never really hung out with him again. I used him for his car a couple times, when I wanted to go somewhere, but I never really hung out with him..."

"Bobby Lincoln, though, Bobby I admire to the ends of the earth. If you have a problem, more than anybody I would tell you to go to Bob. He jokes about being a racist, but he's one of the most understanding guys I've ever met. People in Bradley still try to give

## 38 RACE TRAITOR

him hell about it, but he says ‘well, that was where I was then, I was an idiot.’ No regrets, no guilt, that’s Bobby.

“But at one point he was in that blue Chevy, slapping fives when some little black girl got hit with a metal bar... All those Catholic school kids, with that number one mentality, followed this one dumbass. I know Bobby was miserable doing it, hated it, cried himself to sleep every night. But, these were your friends, if you don’t have these guys you don’t have anybody. You didn’t have to do it, but in some ways, yeah, you did. Without them you’re nothing, what do you do on a Friday night? God knows Bob’s dad is a racist. Nice guy, but totally racist, all these guys’ parents were—totally racist. It’s just, oh God, crazy. I mean, me sitting there with the bat in my hands. I wish I could say what I would have done. I know, I know I put this perspective on it now that I was just this innocent little kid with a bat in my hands, but God knows I think that’s the only way I can see it now.”

The little girl’s scream must still sound in his head, sometimes.

“I’m sure most of the story is based on how many times I’ve told it. The first few times I was probably telling it to some girl I was trying to impress. Told it like I was some innocent little boy, and that’s how I ended up remembering it. But I do distinctly remember thinking ‘This is fucked up, I don’t want to be in this car.’ Feeling Peter tap me on the back, hearing him say,

‘let’s go get some niggers.’ Thinking that’s insane. At the same time I never told him to take me home. Part of this group, you know, everyone’s slapping high fives, all team players, all friends.”



# CHIAPAS & MONTANA: TIERRA Y LIBERTAD

BY JAMES MURRAY

Since 1993 two chinks have appeared in the armor of the New World Order. On the surface they are disparate, but a closer look reveals similarities that some would rather avoid. We all know of the Indian insurgency in Chiapas, Mexico that has reaped mixed rewards from a combination of armed propaganda and land appropriation. The Zapatistas have won the hearts and minds of *norteamericano* leftists and radicals. These same leftists and radicals have been quick to deride the homegrown rebels in their own backyard. I am referring to the militia movement, the latest bogeyman for the suburbs.

Why is this? Why does the radleft lavish support on the Zapatistas and fear and loath the militias? Part of the answer is the cowardly vicarious nature of American leftists. It's safe to root for revolution somewhere else, but when the shooting and helicopter fly-overs might threaten the family summer vacation it is a whole different matter.

Another reason is ignorance. The left in this country has never understood the rural population. They easily forget the sage-brush rebellions that dot our history, rebellions that for brief moments have been more egalitarian and radical than any manufactured among the urban proletariat.

Yet another reason, felt in some circles, is color-coded blindness. Some leftists actively support revolution only when the antagonists equal black versus white. They love to applaud the dark masses battling Whitey. Evidences of this trend include the treatment offered to the Black Panthers and Weather Underground. Although the Panthers had a much higher bodycount and could hardly be considered "politically correct" by today's standards, they have become folk heroes while the Weatherpeople are condemned as adventurists, psycho-Maoists, etc.

The abovementioned mind-set frames the current debate over militias, Zapatistas and the like. This essay is intended to shed light on what is happening on both sides of the border.

*James Murray is a writer and filmmaker.*

On 6 January 1994 the EZLN (Zapatista Army) issued a communiqué in which it sought to describe itself. The first point in the document stressed that the EZLN had no ties with any previous armed movement in Central America or beyond.

Our military tactics are drawn not from Central America, but from Mexican military history, from Hidalgo, Morelos, Guerro, and Mina, from the resistance to Yankee invasion, from the heroic feats of Villa and Zapata, and from indigenous resistance throughout the history of our country.<sup>1</sup>

The EZLN go to great length to remove themselves from any association with groups such as the Salvadoran FMLN or the Guatemalan URNG. Nor do the Zapataistas claim any systematic ideology. I'm sure all of their leaders have read some Marx, and probably some Baudrillard, but they seek their inspiration and draw a precedence for their actions not in the writing of European intellectuals but in the lives and legacies of Mexican leaders who fought good fights before them. This is critical.

The idea of taking up arms to defend one's historical rights and then negotiating with the government has deep roots in Mexico. Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, which adopted the Aztec dictum, "The land belongs to those who work it," and especially following the energetic land reform of the '30s under President Lazaro Cardenas, landless peasants felt it was not only their right but their duty to take what was theirs.<sup>2</sup>

The Militia movement, as well, declares itself legitimate by claiming a national tradition of honorable rebellion. In a recent *Atlantic Monthly* article, Conor Cruise O'Brien recommended that the writing of Thomas Jefferson be removed from the American Canon (as though there were such a thing). O'Brien reasoned (in splendid reactionary form), that not only was Jefferson a racist, but that his writing tended to encourage rebellious elements to use violence to affect political change.

In the context of Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1787, Jefferson wrote, "God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion...The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."<sup>3</sup>

O'Brien then asks, "That is something very much like a Jeffersonian charter for the most militant segment of modern American militias, is it not?" Yes, Mr. O'Brien, it is, and the charter cannot be revoked by foreign nationals in the pages of a pseudo-intellectualized yuppie rag filled with ads for mutual funds and financial services. Jefferson will continue to find rebels worthy of his ideals, in the same way Emilio Zapata will.

It was clear to the early patriots that the militia was independent of organized government and made up of people who stood ready to repel a tyrannical government from denying the rights of liberty under the Constitution. It is equally clear to the members of the Pennsylvania Citizens' Militia today.<sup>4</sup>

Whether this is actually true is wholly irrelevant. National symbols belong to those who manipulate them only until someone else takes them back. The visage of Emilio Zapata appears on a Mexican bill of currency. But his spirit plots for "Tierra y Libertad" on both sides of the mapped border. Jefferson also has been heard, directly or indirectly, in the Lacandon Jungle. The Zapatista "Declaration of the Jungle" asserts the right, enshrined in the Mexican Constitution, which gives "the people at all times the inalienable right to alter or change the nature of their government."<sup>5</sup> The language is reminiscent of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

O'Brien complains that Jefferson accepted no limits on the holy cause of freedom—neither geographic boundaries nor conventional ideas of morality and compassion.<sup>6</sup> O'Brien must believe that geographic boundaries can be placed on freedom (a system that has worked so well in his native Ireland). And yes, perhaps we should stick to "conventional ideas of morality and compassion." Thankfully such pragmatism is not quite universal. Wild-eyed peasants in Chiapas and hicksville farmers in Montana still believe the "holy cause of freedom" is worth fighting (and killing) for. They possess a moral authority that O'Brien and his owners are not capable of comprehending. But O'Brien does try to understand. He writes:

Those in the culture of the modern American militias who see themselves as at war, or on the verge of war, with the federal government are fanatical believers in liberty, as Jefferson was. Jefferson condoned French revolutionary atrocities on a far

greater scale, numerically, than the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City.<sup>7</sup>

That is the mental condition of the apologists for the New World Order. The phrase, "fanatical believer in liberty," can be used as condemnation. A fanatical belief is always dangerous to those who do not share it. And fanaticism does not spawn in a vacuum. It can be the result of centuries of oppression and disregard (as in Chiapas), or it can be the result of squashed expectations and the slow strangulation of individuality (as in Montana). The fanaticism of the Zapatistas and the militias is not blind rage, it is focused anger. It is not paranoia, it is awareness—awareness of societal contradictions in power and privilege that seemingly can only be solved by direct militant action.

Our country is caught in a debate between the arrogance and pride of a political elite, and the desperation of millions of common citizens tired of living in an anti-democracy enforced by the terrorism of the state.<sup>8</sup>

Those words were written in south Mexico but they could well have been written anywhere. Millions would understand them with clarity. The tradition of armed rebellion continues to this day, on both sides of the Rio Grande. The desperation certainly differs in degree, but actions taken on behalf of the desperation differ hardly at all: organization, webworking, armed propaganda, and the occasional violent attack or defence.

On both sides of the ever-militarizing border, revolutionary actions have begun (and will continue) in response to the same geopolitical trends. The Zapatistas call these trends Neo-Liberalism. The militias use the term New World Order. In both cases what the participants refer to is bureaucratized social control processes and a system of capital flight and localized blight.

While expressing support for the Zapatistas, U.S. leftists have almost uniformly bought the state/media disinformation campaign about the militias. They rely on groups such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League, who manage to advise and reconnoiter for the Justice Department, major media types and anyone who will listen that the militia movement is rightwing, racist, and anti-government. And who does the SPLC consider a part of the movement?

...patriots include militia members, common law adherents, Christian fundamentalists, anti-abortion zealots, secessionists, anarchists, neo-Nazis, survivalists, Constitutionlists, gun fanatics, anti-drug law activists, hackers, libertarians, Objectivists and would be-terrorists.<sup>9</sup>

I (personally) fit into several of the above categories. If you are really boring you might only fit into one. Reading this list it is easy to see the ADL's and SPLC's problem with the aforementioned groups: anti-authoritarian viewpoints all the way around. Since the SPLC and company now advise those in authority, these organizations have a shared stake in maintaining the status quo. Recently, the ADL and SPLC have gone even further, launching their own undercover operations and sharing intelligence with the Feds. These groups form a natural complement to the lesser "anti-racist" organizations, always allowing any debate on racialism or oppression to be framed squarely within the manageable confines of the elite. Suddenly questions of political complexity become a clash of hysterical mob versus hysterical mob. And still the power increases.

The old (tired and disgraced) left view the militias with fear and horror because they quite rightly guess these weird western conspiracy buffs have the potential to upset the balance of power in North America. The left in this country has been irrelevant since it blinked in the face of revolution in late 1969. The staid intellectuals who have been made comfortable in the role of "Loyal Opposition" deserve a pie in the face and the eternal shame that our history will write for them. They squawk in confusion as a broad mass movement (including people of every "color" and "caste") has been organized for the expressed purpose of defending and increasing individual and community autonomy. This is the (re)proletarian movement the America left spent almost a century (1878 to 1968) attempting to instigate. They failed. Now it has sprung up without their help, the result of diminished economic prospects and the (clearer by the day) realization that the national security state apparatus is foundering out of control and must be curtailed. This movement is anti-government, anti-multinational, anti-elite. This (nothing if not postmodernist) militia movement is often derided by pundits with the dismissal that it "enjoys no serious intellectual support." If this is true, so much the worse for the "serious intellectuals." Once again they will be passive

observers, whose predictable sophistry will be invoked to justify any repression the state feels is necessary.

### **White Men Betrayed?**

The militia movement is screened in the mass media as being primarily white supremacist paranoid middle-aged crazies. No doubt this is true in individual cases, but as a summing up of the entire movement it is, quite simply, bullshit.

Militias are nothing more than a group of people with guns who meet and train to defend themselves and their interests. Since there are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of militia currently operating in the U.S., their character and interests vary widely. Some are open and specific about a racial ideology (Aryan Nations, Jewish Defense League, Nation of Islam), although I would say that this category of racist militia accounts for no more than 15% of the militia total. They do get more screen and print exposure because their beliefs are often bizarre and exploitative. For propaganda purposes, racist militia leaders are usually willing to give media interviews, thinking it will legitimize their cause.

Most militia groups, however, espouse no racist theory. The closest thing to a party-line in militia circles concerning race relations is not some separatist ideology, but the far more perceptive (and unnerving) commentary that the New World Order may attempt to start a race war in order to declare martial law and set up a corporate-owned police state.

Since the militia movement is a broad-based mass movement, any attempt to simplify it or make it one-dimensional will fail. The movement is black and white, old and young, male and female, urban and rural. There is no doubt that some individual militia members hold ideas and opinions many of us would find objectionable or arcane. A mass movement always involves the masses, and (like it or not) the masses in the U.S., like the peasants in Chiapas, come complete with sky-gods, gender roles and racist ideas. Sadly, many do not know better.

Meanwhile, other militias have been moving as they should, stressing liberty and freedom over restricting ideology, staying radically democratic through group decision-making, lack of any hierarchy, and the use of only self-hidden media (shortwave radio, webpages, fax networks, zines). If the militias' ranks are filled with an

inordinate number of middle-aged white men, it is because the tools of a militia person (electronics and weaponry) easily costs into the thousands of dollars.

Much is made of the militias' paranoia and conspiracy worldview. As a systematic analysis, conspiracy theory certainly has its drawbacks, but on at least one level it is valid. Conventional nation-states built on the European model have an elite class that jealously guards its own self-interest. Power and privilege congeal in certain strata of society and tend to stay there. Since a great deal of time, energy, and wealth goes into maintaining the illusion that American society is classless (and open and free), anyone who challenges these assumptions will be branded a racist, a fanatic or some other media-scare by-word. The only thing surprising is that those who know better believe the disinformation campaign.

The militia's conspiracy theory is often critiqued as veiled anti-semitism.

The ADL would love to do away with militias for perceived anti-Semitic overtones in militia conspiracy theory...When a militia-man talks about the international bankers, the ADL believes he is using code words to describe Jewish control of the monetary system. The presumption of anti-Semitism in the militia movement is overstated, especially when a number of Jewish libertarians, including Jews for the Preservation of Firearms ownership, are movers and shakers within the militia movement.<sup>10</sup>

The current state of conspiracy theory resembles nothing so much as postmodernism. Think of conspiracy theory as rural (de)construction. The irrelevance of whether a text is fact or fiction, the revision of history, an awareness of simulation. It is interesting to note that conspiracy theorists and postmodernists are frequently attacked from the same quarters. This is because postmodernists and conspiracy theory force a new appraisal. The practitioners come to understand all is not as it has seemed, nor how it has been written. Some relish this atmosphere; to others it is a dire threat. Every action has a reaction, and none are more reactionary than those lame knee-jerk "progressives" who are scared witless by the notion that our society can be radically altered.

*"It's comin back around again..." RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE*

I find conspiracy theory and Marxism to be equally valid, and equally laughable. I would measure a movement's threat to state and order not in terms of its analysis but rather in the way a state's security forces would measure the threat, in terms of its active potential. By this quotient the militias are a major threat to the established order. The supposed experts who have written otherwise either don't know their hardware and tactics or are deliberately disinforming. The FBI knows better. Fifty-thousand people with sniper rifles, explosives, nightvision gear and satellite communications scare the hell out of Langley, Virginia and Wall Street.

Recently "Cop Watch" programs have sprung up in different cities, in which participants follow police with videocameras and distribute anti-cop pamphlets to people on the scene. I know of several militia intelligence operations that monitor federal and local law enforcement radio and fax frequencies twenty-four hours a day. They track military special training all over the country. They have become adept at predicting law-enforcement sting operations and domestic counterintelligence maneuvers by following the money trail of federal grants flowing through the Multi-Jurisdictional Task Forces. These people possess resources and hardware available to no other revolutionary movement in history. These are the serious players in the militia movement. They are far more intelligent and open-minded than the religious, the racial, and the crazy. As would be expected, many of their leaders are female, including a number of former sixties radicals and former U.S. Army officers. These "serious" militias insist that they are preparing to "Restore the Constitution," but a revolution is clearly what they have in mind.

Like the Zapatistas, the militias vow they will not strike first, but will only use violence in defense. When the battles will begin is impossible to predict. Mostly the ball is in the court of the respective federal governments of the U.S. and Mexico. If Mexican federal troops move into their strongholds in the Lacandon jungle, the Zapatistas will defend themselves (and the conflict will probably widen). The U.S. militias share no territorial imperative. The serious players say they will go to war if Constitutional guarantees such as the rights to free speech and to keep firearms are cancelled. I believe them. And as far as the kooky militias (the religious, racial, and crazy),



they could strike at anytime. Perhaps they already have. The layers of disinformation and counterintelligence surrounding the Oklahoma City bombing are currently impossible to peel.

### **A Theory For All Reasons?**

Recently there has been a small hysteria in some circles concerning a short document entitled *Leaderless Resistance*. The author is Louis Beam. Beam is the former head of the Texas Knights of the Klu Klux Klan. In 1987 he was arrested for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. (He was acquitted.) Sometime in 1992 he published his essay on revolutionary war. The concept is simple. Beam defines it as:

a system of organization that is based upon the cell organization, but does not have any central control or direction...Utilizing the Leaderless Resistance concept, all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central head-quarters or a single leader for direction for instruction.<sup>11</sup>

Beam explains that since the non-army is united in viewpoint they will react to news reports and other informational sources in a similar way. They will "Strike when the time is ripe and take their cue from those that precede them." Beam favors this "Phantom Cell" non-structure because "a single penetration of a pyramid style organization can lead to the destruction of the whole. Whereas, leaderless resistance presents no single opportunity for the Federals to destroy a significant portion of the resistance."<sup>12</sup>

Louis Beam is no mere racist leader. He is a racist non-leader with a revolutionary theory. His work is often talked about but apparently only read by FBI agents and potential terrorists. There have been reports of the document circulating in the Middle East and Latin America. Beam's theory has also been adopted by militia units from across the ideological spectrum. In the U.S. the concept of Leaderless Resistance has caused a minor outpouring of shock and condemnation. Callers to National Public Radio have actually asked idiot hacks what they could do to stop Leaderless Resistance and anti-government plots in their own neighborhoods. Numerous analogies have been made between the Oklahoma City bombing and the tactics of Mr. Beam. What no one has said is that Leaderless Resistance is one of the most

radical and revolutionary concepts ever imagined by a white man. Mr. Beam is a racial ideologue, he may beat his dogs too, but to appreciate his theory it doesn't matter. What he has come up with is the idea of an army without commanders. Leaderless Resistance should be of vital interest to anyone considering themselves anti-authoritarian. For logically, when an army without commanders wins, does it suddenly organize itself into a regime? No, it becomes a society without rulers.

The militias' grass-rooted nonorganization makes it impossible to believe they could agree among themselves long enough to ever set up any revolutionary government structure above the county level. All the better, we have no need to fear an(other) Aryan Republic. The militias will never overthrow the government in the vanguardist style. However, it is within the realm of possibility that they could very well make large portions of North America ungovernable. Whether one would favor such a nonstate of affairs depends to a large degree on how much one has to lose. The residents of Starr County, Texas, south central Los Angeles and northern Idaho might agree it would be an improvement.

The tactics of the U.S. and Mexican governments toward their homegrown rebels have been identical.

The U.S. Justice Department has used a strategy to combat the militias which it employed to great success in the crisis of 1968 to 1972. The aim is to get the leadership of the movement under federal indictment regardless of guilt. This tactic attempts to freeze the leadership and forces the movement to expend resources and slow down its operations. As of January, 1997, there were thirty-six cases pending in the U.S. against (supposed) militia groups for a variety of plots. Many, if not most, of these cases are the result of FBI sting operations and represent little more than the Feds taking out the easy marks (the gullible, the insane, the idiotic) in the militia milieu.

The Mexican government has attempted the same maneuvers, albeit at a much lower level of sophistication. They have also attempted the charade of official negotiations with the Zapatistas, negotiations which seem to be perpetually on-again-off-again. These negotiations are intended to (re)engage the EZLN into the official democratic process and isolate them from their popular support among moderate statists. These negotiations are roughly analogous to the 1994 congressional elections in the U.S., in which the media gave

much attention to the (supposed) anti-government revolution led by Newt Gingrich and his crew of sky-god-fearing stooges.

These tactics have failed, both in the U.S. and Mexico. The Zapatistas have consolidated their movement and been joined by several other guerrilla bands, all opposing the elite controllers of Mexican society. And despite the terror of the Oklahoma City bombing, the militias have grown as well, with the added serious awareness on the part of the participants that involvement in militia units can get one killed or sentenced to life in a federal gulag. But even with that shared knowledge the militias have grown and spread their web. Far from falling into stunned disarray (like the anarchists post-Haymarket or the radicals post-Kent State), the militias have grown stronger under open oppression.

At this point the Zapatistas and the militias look remarkably similar. Hounded by security forces, patronized by politicians, these women and men appear to be revolutionaries settling in for a long haul.

In late October, 1996, U.S. Representative Maxine Walters spoke on National Public Radio concerning the then-breaking story of the CIA/Contra/cocaine scheme. She said African-Americans were perhaps "behind the curve" on what was really happening in America. She said people all over the country were "waking up" to what had been portrayed in the media as "angry white middle-aged male syndrome." Perhaps forty-plus years of police-state repression is coming home to roost in Mexico, south-central L.A., the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains. The expressions will be diverse and rooted in local culture. The strains will not be synonymous. No single Big Theory unites them. Those of us who continue to dream (and work toward) the emergence of revolutionary situations welcome them all, even if we do not wish to actively sign up for any of them. For these are the expressions of the monolith cracking.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 6 January 1994 communiqué, included in Russell, Phillip L. *The Chiapas Rebellion*. Mexico Resource Center. Austin 1995.

<sup>2</sup> "They are us, we are them," by Fred Rosen. *In These Times*. Oct. 14 1996.

<sup>3</sup> "Thomas Jefferson: Radical and Racist," by Conor Cruise O' Brien. *Atlantic Monthly*. Oct. 1996.

## 50 RACE TRAITOR

<sup>4</sup> From "Pennsylvania Citizens' Militia Manual". [Http://www.users.fastnet/~klh/patriot/manual.html](http://www.users.fastnet/~klh/patriot/manual.html).

<sup>5</sup> "Understanding Chiapas," a report by Peter Rosset and Shea Cunningham, prepared for the Institute for Food and Development Policy. [Http://www.peakorg/~justin/ezln/understanding-chiapas.html](http://www.peakorg/~justin/ezln/understanding-chiapas.html).

<sup>6</sup> O'Brien, op cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "Press Statement of the Special Commission for the Promotion of the Zapatista Front of National Liberation". Sept. 4 1996. [Http://burn.ucsd.edu/%7Earchive/ats-1/1996.Sep/0041.html](http://burn.ucsd.edu/%7Earchive/ats-1/1996.Sep/0041.html).

<sup>9</sup> "False Patriots: The Threat of Anti-Government Extremists," a report prepared by the Klanwatch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Parfrey, Adam. *Cult Rapture*. Feral House. Portland, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> "Leaderless Resistance," an essay by Louis Beam. [Http://www.kaul.net/scutinizer/leaderless/leaderless\\_beam.html](http://www.kaul.net/scutinizer/leaderless/leaderless_beam.html).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 121.

# REPACKAGING SEGREGATION?

## A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey

BY JANE MANNERS

If race is America's dilemma, schools are commonly thought to be the means of the dilemma's ultimate resolution: *Bring the children together and surely they will learn to live in harmony*. But after three hundred fifty years of oppression and separation, the past forty years of fitful, reluctant efforts at school integration have given believers in such a resolution little encouragement. One of the few experiments to have prompted widespread murmurings of hope is the use of "magnet" schools to bring about "voluntary" integration by offering ancillary benefits to the recalcitrant white majority. I am a product of a magnet school system—one that has often been held up as a model of how such a system is supposed to work. This paper is a history of that system: the years of public pressure and resistance that created it, the energetic pitch that sold it, and the equivocal results it has produced.

When my parents decided to move to suburban Montclair, New Jersey, in late summer of 1983, they were attracted by many of the same things that continue to draw young, middle-class families to the town: old houses on tree-lined streets, plenty of parks and, most important, good schools. Twelve miles from Manhattan, Montclair offered them all of that, and then some. Many of the town's sprawling homes date back to the nineteenth century and its eighteen municipal and county parks boast, among other things, a nationally renowned collection of iris blossoms. Real estate agents point with pride to the town's art museum, a massive neo-classical structure that houses paintings by John Singer Sargent, James McNeil Whistler and Georgia O'Keeffe, and to its restaurants, theater companies and jazz clubs. And they speak tirelessly of the disproportionate number of artists, authors, actors and academics who live in the town.

*Jane Manners is a graduate of the Montclair public school system. This article was her senior honors essay at Harvard.*

On top of all this sophistication, Montclair offered cultural diversity. Its population of thirty-eight thousand was 69% white and 29% black. And a by-product of that diversity—the decisive factor as far as my parents were concerned—was Montclair’s integrated school system, which had recently been hailed as one of the best in the country by the Deputy U.S. Education Commissioner. Montclair’s “magnet school” system enabled my parents to send me and my brother to any of the town’s six elementary schools, regardless of its proximity to our house. Five of these schools had a specific magnet focus. The “fundamental” magnet, for example, was geared toward children whose parents felt they needed strong discipline and a rigidly structured curriculum, while the “performing arts” magnet was intended for children interested in music, dance and art. When my parents walked down the brightly-painted halls of Hillside School and sat in on an advanced-level French class for nine-year-olds, they put a deposit on a house the next day.

My parents received several pamphlets from the local “Welcome Wagon” extolling the virtues of Montclair’s magnet system. These brochures explained that the magnets had been introduced six years earlier in an effort to integrate the town’s schools without compromising the quality of education they offered. By 1983, the pamphlets proudly declared, Montclair had achieved both goals. The racial balance of each school mirrored the racial balance of the total school population, and Montclair students’ steadily improving performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills showed that the quality of education offered had in fact risen after the implementation of the magnet program.<sup>1</sup>

Magnet school programs have come increasingly into vogue over the past two decades as devices to bring about voluntary desegregation. In her book *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy*, Dr. Christine Rossell defines magnet programs as those which accomplish desegregation through voluntary school transfers that rely on parental choice motivated by incentives. Most magnet programs are established in schools in predominantly minority neighborhoods, as schools with large minority populations often acquire a reputation of inferiority that must be countered by the incentive of a specialized magnet program in order to attract white parents. Generally, predominantly white

schools do not have the same inferior reputation, and therefore do not require the incentives of a magnet plan to attract black parents. The programs often involve controlled parental choice, which allows a parent to choose a school for her child as long as her choice does not aggravate or create racial imbalance in that school.<sup>2</sup>

The main argument in favor of voluntary desegregation programs like magnet schools is that, unlike mandatory desegregation plans, voluntary plans do not result in "white flight." The commonly accepted notion of a causal link between mandatory desegregation plans and white withdrawal, espoused most notably by sociologist James S. Coleman<sup>3</sup>, posits that white parents fear their children will receive an inferior education at an integrated school in a black neighborhood, so they pull their children out of the public school system altogether, either by moving to a school district with fewer minorities or by sending them to private school. Voluntary desegregation programs like magnet schools are designed to prevent such white flight by offering white parents incentives to keep their children in the public school system.

The success of these voluntary integration strategies is a subject of debate. Some scholars, like Rossell, defend magnet schools as an ideal means by which to achieve integration, especially in Northern districts. Rossell argues that because Northern whites, unlike their Southern counterparts, are not committed to the idea of segregation, they are likely to accept an integrated school system if offered sufficient incentives, and that incentive-based voluntary integration plans in Northern school districts are more likely to achieve integration than are mandatory reassignment plans, which might drive whites out. From the research Rossell conducted in 119 school districts across the United States, she concluded that magnet programs achieved the highest degree of interracial exposure, which she defined as the proportion of students who are white in the average minority child's school.<sup>4</sup> Mandatory reassignment plans in her study often failed to integrate the district's schools, as whites fled the schools in large numbers to avoid integration. In contrast, whites in the magnet programs Rossell looked at were usually content with their district's schools, and often were eager to have their children benefit from the enhanced educational opportunities offered by the program.

Not all studies of voluntary school desegregation programs have produced such favorable results, however. Indeed, many scholars are skeptical about the efficacy of voluntary desegregation, arguing that incentives alone are not strong enough to overcome white prejudice.<sup>5</sup> Even if magnet plans do occasionally achieve an acceptable level of integration, these scholars argue, the integration may be merely superficial. Resegregation often occurs with in the school building itself, usually in the form of ability grouping.<sup>6</sup>

When I attended Montclair's magnets, I was unaware of the carefully plotted political agenda that lay at the root of the program. I simply knew that my school, Hillside, was a "gifted and talented" magnet school, as was my brother's school, Nishuane. To me, attending a magnet school meant that I was able to choose my own classes at an unusually young age, and that I was allowed to take advanced classes in a subject if I showed promise in that area. Although I knew that my school was integrated and that it was in a predominantly black neighborhood far away from the predominantly white part of town in which I lived, I did not associate Hillside's diverse student body with the magnet program.

My ignorance may have resulted partly from the Board of Education's publicity about the magnet program. The Board's pamphlets certainly mentioned the plan's twin goals of "voluntary desegregation and quality education," but they placed much more emphasis on its educational advantages. The Board felt it had to convince white parents that their children's educations would not only not be compromised by integration, but would in fact be enhanced by the special educational offerings in schools located in the other, predominantly black end of town.

My thesis looks at the historical developments that culminated in the Montclair Board of Education's adoption of the magnet system and the methods by which that system was sold to the public. Chapters One and Two provide the backdrop to the system's implementation by introducing the individuals, groups and events that advanced or delayed Montclair's desegregation. These descriptions are intended to give the reader a fuller sense of the social forces that ultimately gave rise to the magnet system. Specifically, Chapter One focuses on the history of school segregation in Montclair and describes the Board's first attempt to desegregate in 1962. Chapter Two deals with the various



unsuccessful desegregation plans proposed and implemented by the Board between 1962 and 1976, when the magnet system was finally settled upon. Chapter Three focuses on the implementation of the system itself, and the methods the Board and the school administration used to convince Montclair's white residents to send their children to magnet schools. My conclusion looks at where Montclair's ostensibly successful school integration has gone wrong—namely, in the often inadequate education it continues to offer its black students, largely as a result of resegregation by “ability” within the school building. Montclair's magnet program enabled the town to comply with the numerical goals of state-ordered desegregation, but in focusing on attracting white parents, the designers and promoters of the program caused the schools to continue to cater to the same middle-class white students they had always served best.

## The Beginnings of Integration

When Superintendent Walter Marks proposed the magnet school concept to the Montclair Board of Education in the spring of 1976, the atmosphere surrounding the Montclair schools was far from today's self-congratulatory brightness. In the eyes of many residents, Montclair public education was at a crossroads. For more than a decade, the Board of Education had been under a court order to desegregate the schools. They had implemented several integration policies, ranging from a district-wide voluntary enrollment plan to one that required the busing of all elementary students. Each ultimately proved unsuccessful. Montclair parents—white and black—were getting tired of the never-ending changes and the constant uncertainty about which school their children would attend the next year and which new curriculum they would be subjected to. A few of these parents—most of them white—had already given up on the public schools entirely and enrolled their children in nearby private schools.<sup>7</sup> These withdrawals led the Board to conclude that to prevent large-scale white flight from the public schools, the next integration plan that the town implemented had to make white parents happy.

As in most segregated Northern school districts, racial separation in Montclair's schools resulted from residential

segregation rather than legally encoded discrimination. In contrast to the South, where dual school systems—one for whites and one for blacks—were often written into the lawbooks, Northern school districts commonly made use of gerrymandered student-attendance zones that intentionally separated black and white neighborhoods. This policy was often supplemented by optional attendance zones that enabled whites who lived nearest to a predominantly black school to send their children elsewhere. The absence of legal segregation often made Northern discrimination less acute, but it also made discrimination harder to identify and eradicate. In Northern school segregation cases, it often took years for the prosecuting lawyers to prove the school system's intentional manipulation of black and white catchment areas. For this reason, Supreme Court decisions intended to further desegregation often had more of an impact in the South than they did in the North. By 1970, Southern schools were "far more desegregated than those in any other region," with New Jersey schools in particular lagging far behind.

In Montclair, residential segregation had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century, when blacks first moved to Montclair to work as household servants. Those blacks who did not live in the houses where they worked moved into the southeast corner of town, joining the swelling ranks of Italian immigrants who worked in a nearby mill. Blacks gravitated towards the southeast section of Montclair not only because of the relatively cheap housing, but also because white owners and realtors refused to sell or rent them homes in any other neighborhood.

This residential segregation guided the development of Montclair's schools from their inception. The first few black and Italian children in Montclair, if they went to school at all, simply attended the neighborhood school nearest to their homes. By 1887, however, Montclair's newly formed Board of Education deemed the population of blacks and Italians in Montclair's southeast corner large enough to warrant the erection of the Cedar Street School, later renamed Nishuane, in the heart of one of Montclair's poorest Southeast neighborhoods. As with Montclair's other neighborhood schools, the Cedar Street School offered kindergarten through ninth grade, so its students would only mix with Montclair's more prosperous white students when they reached the town's high

school.<sup>8</sup> Nine years later, the Board built another K-9 school called the Maple Street School—later renamed Glenfield—in a nearby neighborhood, intending that it should serve the same population. By providing the Italians and blacks with schools in their own neighborhoods, the Board prevented the integration of schools in Montclair's wealthier neighborhoods.

To ratify this segregation, the Board established the boundaries of school districts to correspond as precisely as possible with the lines that divided neighborhoods according to race and ethnicity. For those few middle-class white families whose homes fell outside of a middle-class white school district, the Board adopted a policy allowing them to send their children to a school outside their district. This policy, referred to as the "optional area" system, lasted until the early 1950s.

The Board also took more drastic measures to prevent integration, such as its 1949 decision to convert a former mansion in Montclair's south end into the Southwest School. By the late 1940s, most of the southeast corner's Italian residents had moved to other parts of Montclair, leaving the area around Nishuane and Glenfield almost entirely black. The only part of Montclair's south end that was not predominantly black was the southwest corner, in which many of Montclair's impressive estates were located. According to C.Y. Treene, a Montclair resident during the 1950s, the Board encouraged the township to purchase and convert the mansion to provide these wealthy white residents of the south end with an all-white elementary school. "The really rich traditionally lived in [that area of] Montclair," Treene explains, "and they sent all their children to private school.... Well, a lot of the owners of these houses died or moved away [in the late 40s] and no one would buy the houses. They were big, they required a lot of upkeep, and you'd have to send your children to private school, because [the local schools] were all or mostly black by then—they were not desirable schools. So [the township] reduced the taxes in [that part of] Montclair considerably and they bought the Southwest School, so that those families could send their kids to elementary school there. And it really saved the town to do that." In opening the Southwest school, the Board encouraged white families to invest in Montclair by promising their children an all-white education.

Little had changed by the early 1960s. Residential segregation was still virtually complete; in 1964, only 53 of Upper Montclair's 11,160 residents were black, and the majority of them were domestic workers. That same year, a black prospective homebuyer reported to Montclair's newly-organized Fair Housing Committee that a white realtor had frankly told him that he could not show blacks any houses north of Montclair's unofficial color line, and an informal poll found that approximately seventy-five percent of Upper Montclair's white residents would object to having black neighbors. Given the recalcitrance of Montclair's residential segregation, it is hardly surprising that while the town's population in 1961 was 24% black, the student body at Glenfield School was 90% black.

The first public protest against Montclair's thoroughgoing segregation came from a group of Glenfield parents who raised the issue at a School Board meeting in May of 1961. The group had been formed by Harris Davis, a former Glenfield PTA president and treasurer and the parent of a Glenfield graduate. Davis had become concerned about the district's segregation when his daughter Lydia brought home her first report card from Montclair High School. At Glenfield, Lydia had been an outstanding student, earning A's in all her classes and receiving numerous awards for her achievements at the end of ninth grade. At the high school, however, Lydia was getting D's in her classes. At first, Davis reasoned that Lydia's poor grades were simply a result of normal difficulties associated with moving from one school to another. When Lydia's grades did not improve during the spring marking period, however, Davis began to wonder if perhaps personal adjustment problems were not the sole cause of Lydia's poor performances. Perhaps, he wondered, Lydia's D's were a symptom of the inadequate academic preparation she had received. Why, after all, should students who had not performed nearly as well in Montclair's other junior high programs be outperforming Lydia now? Maybe, Davis concluded, the fault lay in the inadequate education the Glenfield junior high program offered its students.

Suspecting that Glenfield's racial makeup had something to do with its inferior educational preparation, Davis decided to organize a group of Glenfield parents to bring Glenfield's inadequacies to the attention of the Board. The members called themselves the Parents' Emergency Committee to emphasize their sense of urgency. On May

29<sup>th</sup>, the Committee presented its complaint to the Board and School Superintendent Clarence Hinchey, focusing on Glenfield's substandard curriculum. Hearing the group's case, Hinchey agreed that Glenfield did indeed offer its students an inferior education. He labeled the situation acute and agreed with the Committee that action had to be taken immediately to correct the situation.

The action Hinchey proposed when he met with the Committee a month later was not exactly what the members had in mind. Hesitating to act "without careful consideration," Hinchey had decided to appoint a committee of Montclair citizens, including the chairman of the local branch of the NAACP, to assess the situation at Glenfield and propose a solution by the following June. The committee would be headed by former town commissioner Philip B. Taylor and would be divided into five subcommittees to investigate every aspect of Glenfield's troubles. Some action, he assured the Parents' Emergency Committee, would be taken "by next Fall," some fifteen months later.

Davis and his co-members were not satisfied. Arguing that Hinchey and the Board were simply "delaying a solution," the Parents' Emergency Committee determined to take matters into their own hands. Joining forces with the Montclair branch of the NAACP, the Committee members set out to study the situation on their own. Together, the two groups spent the summer investigating Montclair's other, whiter K-9 schools to determine what educational opportunities they were offering that Glenfield was not.

Their investigation turned up disparities similar to those found in "separate but equal" systems in the South. The schools in Montclair's white neighborhoods had newer supplies, more rigorous curricula, better facilities and more experienced teachers than Glenfield and Montclair's other black schools. The predominantly white schools received new textbooks and furniture on a regular basis, while Glenfield had to be content with hand-me-downs. During the 1930s, Glenfield was the only school designated by the Board to house a vocational school specifically for "handicapped and troublesome boys," and its curriculum in the 1960s still contained several extra courses in carpentry, printing, and auto mechanics—subjects clearly intended to prepare students for the workplace rather than the college classroom. Where white schools had new science laboratories, extensive libraries, and fully-equipped

gymnasiums and cafeterias, Glenfield had exposed and leaky pipes, faulty toilets, and a run-down gymnasium that converted to a cafeteria during lunch hours. Finally, Glenfield's teaching staff did not have the same credentials as those in other schools, leading Davis and many of his neighbors to suspect that the Board considered Glenfield an unofficial training ground for teachers new to the district. Davis and others believed these newcomers were sent first to Glenfield and then promoted to a school in a whiter part of town once they had passed Glenfield's test.

When the NAACP and the Parents' Emergency Committee presented their findings to the Board on August 17<sup>th</sup>, they demanded to know why nothing had been done before to correct such an obviously separate and unequal school system, which clearly ran contrary to the spirit of the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. "Could the situation at Glenfield have been permitted to continue and worsen," the NAACP asked the Board, "because the student body is predominantly Negro?" Rather than wait an entire school year for the report of the Board's Taylor Committee, which had yet to have its first organizational meeting, the NAACP decided to propose its own remedy for Glenfield's ills. It called for the immediate abandonment of Glenfield's junior high and the dispersal of its students among the town's three remaining junior high schools.

Once again, Hinchey and the Board agreed that Glenfield's problem was "acute," and once again, they assured the Glenfield parents that they would take corrective action. However, they also stressed the need for deliberation, explaining that they felt it important that "all citizens understand the needs [of the school system] and have a chance to express their opinions on the solution proposed. This procedure takes time." Their own reservations, the Board explained, stemmed from their feeling that to redistribute the town's junior high school students on such short notice was not "educationally sound." Just as they had in June, Hinchey and the Board promised the NAACP and the Parents' Emergency Committee that some action would be taken by the 1962-63 school year.

Convinced that this was another unnecessary delay, the Committee once again took it upon themselves to provoke action. For the first six days of the 1961-62 school year, they organized a boycott of Glenfield, and only decided to send their children back to

school on the seventh day because they did not wish “to further jeopardize the students any more than they have already been jeopardized by an inadequate school.” In their next move, several members of the Committee called for the resignations of Hinchey and several members of the Board at a public Board meeting on September 12<sup>th</sup>. One member of the Committee explained their request by saying that Glenfield’s present situation demanded immediate action; it was “not a matter for careful consideration, but...a violent emergency.” Reverend D.C. Rice, representing a group of ministers of predominantly black Montclair churches, took this explanation one step further. He backed the call for Hinchey’s resignation by explaining that “If you want to go after the headache, you go to the head. If you want to cure the headache in Montclair schools, go after the head.” He warned the group of Glenfield parents to “watch out for the double cross. Set a time limit for something to be done. Your battle is just beginning.”

Rice’s admonition to guard against “the double cross” by setting a time limit suggests that he was familiar with the type of delaying tactics he felt the Montclair Board was using. Reluctant school boards around the country had employed similar techniques. In Prince Edward County, Virginia, for example, the local school board first delayed the integration of their schools and then sabotaged it, refusing to levy taxes for mixed public schools and thereby forcing their closing in 1959. In many segregated school districts in the South, the vague wording of the Supreme Court’s 1955 *Brown II* ruling, which told segregated school districts to desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” allowed most Southern federal courts to delay desegregation cases and ultimately to order only limited changes. This common scenario was not unlike the situation unfolding in Montclair. Like reluctant Southern judges, Hinchey and the Board were postponing any actions that would desegregate Montclair’s schools. Rice’s warning suggests he feared that the end result of Montclair’s desegregation efforts might also mirror the limited changes brought about by similar efforts in countless Southern districts.

Rice and his fellow protesters had a good reason to believe that the Board’s hesitation was simply dilatory: the solution that had been proposed by the Parents’ Emergency Committee and the NAACP involved sending black students across neighborhood

district lines into predominantly white schools. For two of the town's three remaining junior highs—George Inness and Hillside—would not have caused a radical change, as both were situated in attendance zones that were already somewhat integrated. That year, George Inness's student population was 18% black and Hillside's was 60% black. This was not the case with the third junior high school, however. Mt. Hebron—located in the heart of Upper Montclair—was still 100% white, and many of the parents of its pupils wanted to keep it that way.

The Parents' Emergency Committee continued to apply pressure to the Board throughout the fall and winter, urging them to take some corrective action. Finally, in February of 1962, the Board proposed a plan that Hinchey and his administration had devised for implementation that fall, should the Taylor Committee fail to come up with an acceptable alternative. Under Hinchey's plan, Glenfield's junior high students would be divided between Hillside and George Inness, depending on which school was closest to the student's home. Mt. Hebron was to be left untouched on the grounds that it was "already crowded beyond its normal building capacity and faced an unknown situation next year from nearby parochial schools." Pending the report of the Taylor Committee, the Board voted four-to-one to accept Hinchey's proposal for implementation that fall.

The only member of the Board to vote against Hinchey's plan was Bessie Marsh, the Board's first and only black member. To explain her negative vote, Marsh said simply, "Mount Hebron children need interracial exposure." Apparently, Marsh did not consider Mt. Hebron's alleged overcrowding or the nebulous threat from parochial schools significant enough to excuse the continued isolation of its all-white student body. Indeed, even Hinchey himself did not consider Mt. Hebron's overcrowding an overriding problem, judging from his immediate dismissal of a suggestion that Mt. Hebron might decrease its numbers by sending some of its students to Glenfield. Hinchey explained that such a shift would be too difficult because of the "transportation problems" it would involve. By dismissing so quickly a feasible plan for the alleviation of Mt. Hebron's overcrowding, Hinchey showed that he was not as concerned with the reduction of Mt. Hebron's student population as he was with preventing Mt. Hebron's integration.



In April, two months ahead of the time Hinchey had originally promised, the Taylor Committee presented its solution to Glenfield's problems. At a public hearing with twenty-five hundred in attendance, the Committee called for the construction of a new junior high and high school complex to serve all of Montclair, a project that would cost the town \$3.85 million. This building, the Committee explained, would end Glenfield's troubles and fully integrate the Montclair schools starting in the seventh grade. To build this new complex, however, the Board first had to receive the consent of Montclair's taxpayers, in the form of a bond referendum to raise funds for the construction. Because of the project's expense, the Committee stressed, the junior high complex was an objective "for the future," once its construction had been approved by voters. Until this unspecified future date, the Committee suggested that the Board implement a plan almost identical to the one originally proposed by the Parents' Emergency Committee and the NAACP. Starting in the 1962-63 school year, they suggested, Glenfield's junior high should be closed, leaving the town's three remaining junior highs to house all seventh, eighth and ninth graders. To make room for these additional junior high students, in already crowded Mt. Hebron, thirty-two of the school's elementary students would be transferred to nearby Bradford School, which was also 100% white.

The response of the overwhelmingly white audience upon hearing the committee's report was largely negative. Of the eighteen community organizations that expressed a position on the proposal, only six endorsed it. Opponents of the plan, issuing statements that declared it to be a "hasty, radical departure from the neighborhood school program," drew the heaviest applause. Soon after the plan was announced, two community groups formed to respond to the Taylor Committee's report. The "Citizens For the Taylor Report" supported the proposed transfer of students, while the "Committee For Neighborhood Schools" opposed the plan. Interestingly, both groups agreed on the long-term, single junior high aspect of the plan; what they could not agree on was the plan's immediate changes. Apparently, the potential construction of an integrated secondary school complex was not a prospect that worried the Committee for Neighborhood Schools. After all, the construction depended on the willingness of Montclair's taxpayers to fund it, and would therefore be the subject of greater debate when the bond referendum was

voted on.<sup>9</sup> In the immediate future, however, there was a potential switch away from neighborhood schools that required no such voter consent. Understandably, it was on this issue that the Committee for Neighborhood Schools decided to focus its energies. Along with the Citizens for the Taylor Report, the Neighborhood Schools Committee embarked on a major publicity campaign intended to sway the Board's final decision, which was scheduled to be announced later that month.

In spite of the Committee for Neighborhood Schools' attempts, in late April the Board voted to adopt the Taylor Committee's proposal. For the coming school year, the dispersal of Glenfield's students would be determined by lottery. The parents of each Glenfield student could express their first, second and third choice of schools, which would be accommodated as long as an equal number of students were being sent to each.

Following the announcement of this plan, Mt. Hebron parents and members of the Committee for Neighborhood Schools flocked to the Board's next meeting, intent on preventing the student transfer. Ostensibly protesting the shift of the thirty-two Mt. Hebron elementary students to Bradford, the parents left any mention of race out of the discussion. Instead, they referred to race in coded terms, demanding to know why Montclair's white residents, who comprised "76% of the population [were] given a problem to satisfy 24% [Montclair's black population]," and asking "If a small pressure group can make the Board close Glenfield, why can't this pressure group make the Board keep these pupils in Mt. Hebron?" Ironically, one father attempted to pressure the Board by warning the members that in transferring the Glenfield students, they were "establishing a precedent of yielding to pressure from parental groups."

Despite these and other objections, the Board did not alter its plan. Glenfield's junior high grades were to be closed in the fall of 1962, and their students distributed equally among Hillside, George Inness and Mt. Hebron. For the first time in Montclair's history, black students would attend school in Upper Montclair, comprising 10% of Mt. Hebron's population.

## Montclair's Early Attempts at Desegregation

Having closed Glenfield's junior high grades, intending to transfer their students to Montclair's three remaining junior highs, the Board thought that it had solved Montclair's segregation problem. The demands of the Parents' Emergency Committee and the NAACP had been met without terrible inconvenience to white parents. Starting in the seventh grade, Montclair's schools would be nominally integrated, and in the spring of 1962, Montclair's white and black communities seemed content.

In June, this image of contentedness was shattered. That month, five Mt. Hebron parents filed suit against the Board in an attempt to have its plan declared unlawful. In presenting their case—entitled *Morean et. al. v. Board of Education of Montclair, NJ*—to a U.S. District Court judge, the parents made no mention of any objection to the integration of their schools, but rather focused their argument on a supposed violation of Constitutional rights. They claimed that the Board had denied their children their fourteenth amendment rights by not granting them the same school choice that it had granted Glenfield's students.

By leaving any explicit mention of race out of their objections to the student transfer, the Mt. Hebron parents avoided accusations of racism. Just as the Committee for Neighborhood Schools had done when they objected to the transfer of Mt. Hebron's elementary students to Bradford, the *Morean* parents targeted an ostensibly non-racial concern arising from the Board's desegregation plan. In so doing, the Mt. Hebron parents were able to attack integration in a way that would convey, in coded terms, the genuine source of their frustration without bringing the controversial topic of race into the discussion. As historian Raymond Wolters points out in his analysis of the desegregation of Delaware's New Castle County school system during the 1960s, "in contrast to Southerners, who routinely emphasize the importance of race, people in [the North] generally maintained that race was of little consequence." In a society that paid lip service to racial equality, Montclair's anti-integrationists knew that overt references to race would be counter productive, perhaps discouraging the support of would-be allies who did not

themselves wish to be labeled racist. Instead, by calling up the race-based fears and prejudices of their white neighbors with insinuation and subtle references to race, the Committee for Neighborhood Schools and the *Morean* parents hoped to swell their ranks without incurring charges of racism.

The different ways in which whites in Montclair and whites in the South expressed their resistance to integration does not mean that the reasoning behind their objections was different. Although Northerners often shied away from voicing overtly racist sentiments, many of them harbored prejudices identical to those of their Southern counterparts. The difference between one Southerner's pronouncement that "our primary duty was to provide for our children as best we could. Most blacks were so far behind our children academically and differed in mores and cultural attainment. There was nothing good that our children could gain from interaction with blacks" and a Montclair resident's explanation that by opposing integration she wished "to reverse the declining achievement levels which have to be a concern to every Montclair parent" is purely semantic.

White parents in town had a history of keeping their children as separate as possible from blacks. At the integrated high school, many white parents had for years forbidden their children to attend integrated extracurricular activities, and according to a 1964 Community Audit, "indications that white parents fear friendships that result from integrated social contacts" existed in the junior high schools as well following their integration. Stories describing instances in which black students were either not invited to a white friend's house because of a white parent's intervention or turned away from the door with an implausible excuse were still common in the mid-60s, leading one school principal to comment "If the adults were to stay out of the picture, we wouldn't know there was a color problem."

If these white parents needed evidence to back up their fears that integration would compromise their children's educations, they could simply compare the academic performances of blacks and whites at the high school level. The performance gap there was undeniable, as few blacks scored well enough on standardized tests to qualify for advanced classes. This disparity in high school performances could easily lead white parents to conclude that black

students had an inferior educational capacity, and that integrating the schools in the lower grades would only jeopardize their own children's educations. Should supposedly inferior academic ability not prove a strong enough argument against integration, white parents could call upon the records of the Health Department as well, which in 1962 found that 71% of the tuberculosis cases and 70% of infant mortalities in Montclair were located in the 18% of the town covered by the predominantly black southeast corner. From these statistics, white parents could easily conclude that black people in Montclair would not make fit schoolmates. As the Virginia lawyer arguing in favor of segregation in *Brown II* explained it, white families were naturally hesitant to send their children to school with blacks because of their inferior educational capacity and their high "incidence of disease." Such fears fueled the negative reaction of Mt. Hebron parents to the prospect of integration in 1962, and similar fears continued to stymie attempts to desegregate Montclair's schools for the next fifteen years.

In January of 1964, the bond issue needed to build the Taylor Committee's proposed junior high complex was defeated by a solid block of white Montclair voters, an outcome which necessitated the continued dispersal of Glenfield's junior high students to Hillside, Mt. Hebron and George Inness. In May of the same year, the judge of the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in the Board's favor in the *Morean* case. He declared that the fourteenth amendment rights of Mt. Hebron students had not been violated, and told the Board that in the future it could and should take race into account when deciding school assignments, as long as the intention was to achieve racial integration. The Court thus ordered the Board to continue its desegregation attempts in the wake of the bond referendum's defeat, and gave race an explicit prominence that many Montclair whites had sought to disguise.

Following the judge's ruling, Superintendent Clarence Hinchey accepted a position in another school district and Robert W. Blanchard was hired as Montclair's new superintendent. Interpreting the judge's ruling literally, Blanchard immediately began preparing a plan that would attack school segregation in Montclair on the next level: the elementary schools. Of the town's eleven elementary schools serving grades K-6 in 1964, four were 100% white, two were 70% white, one was 85% black and two were 90% black. In

January of 1965, Blanchard presented the “Montclair Education Plan” to the Board for its approval. Under this plan, Hillside and Mt. Hebron—two of the three schools that had absorbed Glenfield’s junior high population—would be converted to middle schools to serve all Montclair fifth and sixth graders, and—should Montclair voters choose to issue bonds for the \$4.3 million bill—a new, centrally-situated school would be built to house grades seven and eight. George Inness, the remaining junior high, would serve all of Montclair’s ninth grade pupils and would be incorporated into the high school, which was located directly across the street. In addition, fifth and sixth grade students from predominantly white Edgemont elementary school would be bused across town to predominantly black Nishuane elementary school to participate in a special educational program.

If the white parents’ reaction to the earlier integration of Mt. Hebron was any indication, they were not likely to be pleased by the Montclair Education Plan. Blanchard did not need the voter approval to bus white Edgemont students to Nishuane, but he did need the votes of Montclair’s white majority for a bond issue to construct the proposed seventh and eighth grade complex. Judging from the defeat of the previous referendum earlier that year, white Montclair was not going to be willing to pay for an extensive desegregation plan. To win their approval, Blanchard had to make whites enthusiastic about his plan.

To inspire this enthusiasm, Blanchard began by assuring white parents that enhanced educational benefit, not integration, was the primary goal of the Montclair Education Plan. In an official statement printed in *The Montclair Times*, he said, “racial imbalance cannot assume the same priority” as the other needs the plan was designed to fulfill—namely, “an improved educational program and the facilities for such a program.” The most contentious element of the proposal was the busing of Edgemont’s white students to predominantly black Nishuane, and Blanchard devoted most of his energies to persuading the town to accept this transfer. He repeatedly reminded parents that at Edgemont, students were subject to terrible overcrowding that rendered teaching ineffective and forced the school to house its library in a corridor. At Nishuane, he assured them, the facilities would be more than adequate, enabling the school to offer each student a first-rate education. What’s more, he

said, new programs were to be implemented at Nishuane, some of which would use team teaching, an innovative new concept "drawing on the skills of specialists in various disciplines." On top of all this, Blanchard promised to introduce ability grouping at Nishuane in the fifth and sixth grades, earlier than at any other Montclair school.

The promise of ability grouping, or tracking, was a crucial component of Blanchard's plan. It was intended to persuade white parents that integration would not compromise their children's education. Blanchard and other proponents of the Plan repeatedly singled out this aspect of the educational program at Nishuane, stressing that the children in this program would be "the only fifth and sixth grade students in town who will be grouped by ability to progress at their own rate of development...." White parents who feared that black children might slow their own children's academic advancement now had the assurance that their own children would not be forced to share a classroom with any black child of inferior educational capacity. With all 'inferior' students excluded from the advanced ability classes, white parents might be confident that their own children would be challenged even more than they had been in untracked, all-white Edgemont.

Some Edgemont parents endorsed Blanchard's plan. Two committees, the Citizens for Quality Schools and Edgemont Parents for Better Education, formed to promote the plan among their neighbors. Both groups stressed the need for a solution to Edgemont's overcrowding, the educational benefits of ability grouping, and the fact that neighborhood schools would be maintained for kindergarten through fourth grade. In addition, the Citizens for Quality Schools argued that the new plan, by improving Montclair's educational system, would raise property values. "Good schools are the most important single factor influencing the decision of families looking for a place to live," a spokesperson for the group explained. "Rejection of the Montclair Education Plan would have a serious adverse effect on Montclair property values."

Despite these few proponents, however, most Edgemont parents did not welcome the changes of the Montclair Education Plan. A poll by the Edgemont Parent -Teacher's Association showed that of the 246 parents who responded to the poll, 169 opposed busing their children to Nishuane. A group calling itself the "Committee of

Edgemont Parents for Neighborhood Schools” suggested several alternatives to the Plan, including the use of barracks-like relocatable units to give Edgemont more space, redistricting Edgemont’s attendance zone, and extended school hours. In addition, the Montclair Property Owners’ Association opposed the plan, and 53 households of the 57 contacted in Edgemont’s neighborhood said that they were against the busing measure as it might harm property values in the area. For no reason, said both of these groups, should children so young be forced to ride a bus to school.

By making busing the focus of their opposition, these groups used a relatively minor issue to resist a plan that would further integration. The bus trip from Edgemont to Nishuane was not long—approximately three miles separated the two schools—nor would it require children to arrive at school any earlier than usual. Moreover, the use of buses to transport children to and from school was not a novel concept in Montclair, as many students in town had been bused to and from private and parochial schools for years. Indeed, when the state legislature passed a “Fair Busing Act” the following spring, mandating that each town’s Board of Education provide transportation for students going to public and private schools, more than half the applications the Montclair Board received were from parents applying to send their children to private schools in other towns. Apparently, when busing would take children to expensive, elite private schools, Montclair’s parents had no objections to the time or the distance involved. It seems that, in the words of one Montclair parent, “white parents were not concerned with the bus ride; it was ten to fifteen minutes tops. They were worried about what their kids were going to find when they got off the bus.”

Despite the opposition, the Board voted on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1965 to implement the aspects of the Montclair Education Plan that did not require a bond referendum—including the busing of the Edgemont fifth and sixth graders—explaining that the Plan “takes care of the problems we face in a progressive and inclusive fashion.”

Having thus contravened the vocal wishes of white parents this once, the Board appeared to grow skittish when it faced another racial issue the next month. The members of the Board were to choose their new president. Ordinarily, this election would have



been no contest, as the office routinely passed to the current vice president. In February of 1965, however, the normal progression was complicated by the fact that the current vice president happened to be Bessie Marsh, the Board's only black member, and its most vocal proponent of the Edgemont busing. In praising the Board's vote to adopt the busing measure, Marsh said that the Board had already taken "too long a time...in studying and listening to plans...we must take the lead and act in the interest of all of the children." Electing a black woman who favored urgent desegregation would surely incite more unwanted debate.

Mindful of this consideration, the Board decided not to elect Marsh. Instead, the night before the vote, one of Marsh's fellow Board members put a note in her mailbox, telling her that Montclair was "not ready" for a black Board president. The next day, the Board elected a white man, Donald Super, to serve as its new president. As far as the Board was concerned, it could not have chosen a leader better equipped to appease the white community. In direct contrast to Marsh, Super had stated that his primary concern in the recent busing controversy was the accurate representation of the views of Montclair residents. "As a board member," he told the largely white audience that attended the meeting at which the Board accepted the busing plan, "I have needed to know what you think...as one basis for constructive action, and I have spent many hours in doing just that." By electing Super, the Board sent a message to the members of Montclair's white community, assuring them that the Board would continue to listen to "what they think."

Despite the Board's attempt to please Montclair's white voters, the bond referendum was defeated by a significant margin in March of 1966. The vote again broke down along racial lines, with the majority of whites voting against the plan and the majority of blacks voting in its favor. The deciding factor in the outcome was the turnout—in the first ward, the district that encompassed Upper Montclair, 67% percent of those eligible voted, while in the fourth ward, which included the largely black southeast corner of town, only 45% voted.

In keeping with its cautious record, the Board waited to propose its next desegregation plan until it was forced to later that spring. In April of 1966, several members of Montclair's black community, angered by the Board's delays and by its passing over Bessie Marsh,

decided to force the Board into action. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, twenty-four black parents filed a petition with the New Jersey State Commissioner of Education, charging the Board with “the maintenance of segregated schools” by “refus[ing] to formulate and to put into operation effective plans and procedures to eliminate the existing pattern of racial segregation.” Allying themselves with the local branch of the NAACP, they accused the Board of “dragging its feet” in its desegregation attempts.

To keep the Board from offering the petitioners a token plan, NAACP president Joe Greene gave the Board specific desegregation requirements. In a statement issued in May of that year, he called for a desegregation plan that would render each school’s racial makeup a reflection of the racial makeup of the whole of the Montclair school district, which in 1966 was approximately 33% black.

The black parents’ plan to force the Board to act was successful. While the petition was awaiting a decision from the State Commissioner, the Board quickly devised another desegregation scheme, presenting the “5-3-4 Plan” to the community on May 24<sup>th</sup>. This plan, to be put into effect at the start of the 1967 school year, proposed to diminish segregation by sending first through fourth grade pupils from the largely black Rand elementary school to the largely white Watchung and Edgemont elementary schools, sending Watchung fifth and sixth graders to Rand, and sending fifth and sixth graders from predominantly white Southwest elementary school to Nishuane to participate in its special education program. Once again, to induce white parents to send their children to a largely black school, Blanchard and the Board used the lure of improved educational opportunities at Nishuane, which had already been publicly lauded by the parents of the white Edgemont students enrolled in the program. A similarly innovative educational program for fifth and sixth graders was adopted at Rand, to accommodate the influx of white students from Watchung. Nothing was offered to the parents of the Rand children who would be shifted to predominantly white schools, presumably because the Board and Blanchard assumed that Montclair’s black parents were so eager for any desegregation measures that they would not oppose busing their children—even those as young as five years—to a predominantly white school with a better reputation and better facilities.

Although the "5-3-4 Plan" did increase Montclair's racial integration to some extent, it did not meet Greene's call for representative racial balance. Determined to force the Board to enact substantive changes in the Montclair schools, the parent petitioners continued to press their case with the state Department of Education. On Aug. 19, 1968, the State Commissioner ruled in their favor, saying that "It is well established that [Montclair's racial segregation] incontrovertibly constitutes a deprivation of equal educational opportunity for children of the minority race, that persistence of such circumstances is unlawful, and that the respondent has an affirmative duty to eliminate or alleviate such conditions to the extent that it is reasonable, practicable and educationally sound to do so....For the reasons stated, the Commissioner finds and determines that the '5-3-4 Plan' proposed by the respondent is insufficient and therefore unacceptable." The Commissioner ordered the Board to clear all future desegregation plans with him before suggesting them to the public.

In the three years following the Commissioner's mandate, the Board found itself in a bind. On the one hand, the Court had ordered it to desegregate; on the other hand, Montclair's white community was becoming increasingly resistant to desegregation. Several incidents in 1968 heightened Montclair's racial tensions, making many white Montclair residents more wary of further integration. In July, riots in nearby Newark had provoked three young black men to break six or seven shop windows in the southeast corner of Montclair, and the general consensus among several white "prominent citizens and officials" was that full-scale rioting in Montclair had been prevented only by the intervention of the town's Republican black mayor. That fall, the Black Student Union at the high school staged a four and a half hour sit-in in the school's amphitheater, threw food and trays in the cafeteria, and "initiated a series of reportedly unprovoked attacks...upon white students." Without questioning the reasons behind these incidents, fearful white parents demanded that the Board "take immediate corrective measures" to ensure the safety of their children. In September of 1969, the leaders of the predominantly black "Head Start" pre-school program in Glenfield School had staged marches and sit-ins at the Board building to protest the program's substandard accommodations in the school's basement, encouraging parents to

participate in the protests with signs that read, "If you're black, you'll be there!" In each of these instances, Montclair's white community became more fearful of black unrest, and this fear translated into increased pressure on the Board to maintain segregated schools.

The Board was not able to yield entirely to this pressure. According to the Commissioner's 1968 mandate, it was required to continue its desegregation efforts. The Commissioner had not specified, however, a date by which this desegregation had to be accomplished, and this leeway enabled the Board to delay for two years before proposing its next plan.

Finally, in the spring of 1970, the Board prepared two more desegregation plans, labeled the "preferred" and "alternate" plans. Under the preferred plan, Hillside and Mt. Hebron would be renovated and converted into grades 5 through 8 middle schools, for a substantial cost requiring voter approval. The alternate plan, which would be implemented only if the voters rejected the preferred plan, proposed the dispersal of Glenfield's elementary school students—90% of whom were black—to all-white Mt. Hebron and Bradford and 95% white Northeast. Like the earlier dispersal of the Glenfield junior high students, the alternate plan offered white residents a desegregation plan that would not involve the transfer of white students to black schools, but which would instead place the burden of desegregation on blacks. Past experience suggested that the alternate plan was the only one that had any hope of implementation, since Montclair voters did not have a history of voluntarily funding large-scale integration programs. In offering the preferred plan, the Board was doing little more than making a token nod at substantial desegregation.

As expected, the town defeated the preferred plan later that year. Rather than implementing the alternate plan, however, the Board instead went ahead in September of 1971 with the "interim" plan, which was essentially the alternate plan with some modifications.<sup>10</sup> Like the alternate plan, the interim plan effected little change in the Montclair schools. All fifth and sixth graders were consolidated in three schools, leaving grades K-4 untouched and allowing five elementary schools to remain over 75% white. As its name suggested, the interim plan functioned largely as a stalling

technique, delaying substantial integration while ostensibly complying with the Commissioner's mandate.

The Commissioner was not satisfied, however, and continued to apply pressure to the Board to take further corrective measures. In response to this pressure, the Board instructed the schools' new superintendent, James Adams,<sup>11</sup> to devise a more satisfactory integration plan in the fall of 1971. Six months later, in the spring of 1972, the Board voted to accept the plan that Adams proposed. Unlike the interim plan, Adams' plan required the busing of both white and black children to achieve integration, and unlike the preferred plan, Adams' plan did not require the voters' consent. Under the "Plan of Action," as Adams termed his proposal, Montclair's nine elementary schools (K-4) were to be grouped into three "clusters" containing three schools each. Each of these elementary schools bused one grade of students to a different school within its cluster, starting with second grade. The clusters were deliberately grouped so that predominantly black and predominantly white schools traded students.

For the first time in Montclair's history, the Board had adopted a plan that required the busing of very young white children to predominantly black schools—a requirement that many white parents were unwilling to accept. The Board's vote to adopt the Plan in February of 1972 sparked the formation of several opposition groups, most notably "Better Education for All Montclair," or BEAM. In opposing the plan, BEAM members stressed their desire for educational excellence, which they felt would be compromised by the Plan. BEAM's goal, as defined by its president Rosemarie Campana, was

to reverse the declining achievement levels which have to be a concern to every Montclair parent. We're sick of mediocrity when we were promised excellence. We want to reverse the discipline problem in our schools. We want to reverse the trend of de-emphasizing the basics in education and bring them to the forefront where they belong. Lastly, we want to eliminate the bus schedules our second, third and fourth graders must follow. Busing for racial balance has been condemned by...over 70% of the country as a whole. We believe busing for racial balance to be morally and educationally wrong....[the Board's] callous

attitude toward the majority point of view on forced busing has served to compound our current problems.

Although BEAM was formed to oppose integration, it did not specifically identify integration as its target. Rather, like its ideological predecessors “Edgemont Parents for Neighborhood Schools” and the “Committee for Neighborhood Schools,” BEAM’s spokespeople used code words to convey their actual objections while avoiding charges of racism. In Campana’s carefully worded statement, “mediocrity,” “discipline problem,” and “de-emphasizing the basics” were all code words for Montclair’s real ‘educational’ problem: the integration of the elementary schools. By identifying the problem as declining educational quality, rather than integration, BEAM attempted to secure for itself the ethical highground—no one could fault a person lobbying for higher educational quality for the town’s youth. Indeed, Campana’s condemnation of busing as a “moral wrong” implicitly extended to the integration that it brought about—for the harm it was doing to the white children of Montclair.

Led by BEAM, the Plan’s opponents succeeded in influencing a significant portion of Montclair voters against mandatory desegregation. The 1972 Town Commission elections, held in May—only three months after the Board had accepted the Plan—reflected this opposition. Peter Bonastia, an incumbent who campaigned solely on his opposition to “busing little children,” was elected mayor, and four other anti-busing newcomers unseated the remaining incumbents, ousting from office a political coalition that had long controlled the Town Commission. According to a local political activist, the election result was directly attributable to the upper middle-class white population, as lower middle-class whites and blacks were “effectively disenfranchised...by apathy.” Whether it was apathy or—as one pro-Plan member of the Board suggested—it was the opposition’s “superior organization,” Montclair had elected a Town Commission that had pledged its four years in office to restoring neighborhood schools.

The Commission’s authority over the schools was indirect—it appointed members of the Board of Education who made the policy decisions. But Bonastia and the Commission members wasted little time in exercising the authority they had. On August 6, they voted to increase the number of Board members from five to seven and to

shorten the length of their terms from five years to three. The aim, as Bonastia himself explained, was to “give control of the Board of Education into the hands of those committed to a neighborhood school policy.” This decision meant that in two years, the Board would have an anti-busing majority, and could begin to undo the desegregation that had taken place in the Montclair schools up to that time.

By mid-1974 six of the seven Board members were opposed to busing, and four of them had close ties to BEAM. Immediately after gaining the majority, the Board’s anti-busing members, with the Town Commission’s support, began to undermine the Plan of Action. In campaigning against the Plan, the Board, the Commission and the anti-busing groups used a new tack. They argued that the Plan’s forced busing was harmful not only because of the added expense, extra time and potential danger involved in busing itself, but because of another danger only recently recognized: white flight.

White flight had first become a prominent issue in Montclair just after the implementation of the Plan of Action, when Mayor Bonastia made a point of Montclair’s declining student enrollment. Superintendent Adams had attributed the falling numbers solely to a declining birthrate, but Bonastia cited them as proof that white parents had chosen to remove their children from the integrated public schools to place them in private or parochial schools. Bonastia’s warnings were quickly picked up and echoed by anti-busing groups throughout the community. BEAM president Campana repeatedly warned that Montclair had long since passed the notorious “tipping point” of a 39% minority student population. After this point, Campana warned, “studies indicate [there will be] a precipitous, wholesale white withdrawal with rather disastrous results.” Campana and her BEAM co-members urged their white neighbors to take heed of the “national scene,” which in the mid-70’s was becoming increasingly concerned with the white withdrawal that often appeared to result from mandatory desegregation plans. Two nationally publicized articles proclaiming the failure of mandatory desegregation plans—David Armor’s “The Evidence on Busing” and Professor James Coleman’s *Trends in School Desegregation, 1968-1973*—claimed that white flight from districts that had implemented such plans was so widespread that several districts had been left virtually all-black. Both Armor’s and

Coleman's theses received so much publicity that they were principal witnesses at Senate hearings on busing held in 1972 and 1975. Thus, although virtually all evidence of white flight had been gathered in urban rather than suburban school districts, and although no such "wholesale white withdrawal" had occurred in Montclair by 1974, the rhetoric of white flight was so prevalent that many Montclair residents—the Board included—felt that such a withdrawal was imminent if they did not act quickly to restore neighborhood schools.

In September of 1975, the Board took its first step towards preventing white flight by adding a "freedom of choice" policy to the Plan of Action. Under the amended Plan, parents could opt to send their children to a school other than the one in their cluster, as long as their switch did not create or aggravate racial imbalance. Required by the Commissioner's mandate to include this last provision, the Board evaded its enforcement by using a loose interpretation of racial imbalance. Of the eighty student reassignment applications it accepted in the fall of 1974, twelve did in fact aggravate racial imbalance. The Board decided to allow these transfers anyway, pending the State Commissioner's approval. Should the Commissioner choose not to create controversy over a mere twelve students, the Board would have successfully begun to dismantle Montclair's desegregation policy.

Unfortunately for the Board, the Commissioner did object to the transfer of the twelve students. In July of 1975, he rejected the Board's Freedom of Choice Plan, and ordered it to devise a desegregation plan in which each school's racial balance would reflect the 40% black / 60% white balance of the district as a whole. Under legal obligation, the Board grudgingly instructed their new superintendent, Walter Marks, to devise such a plan for the 1976-77 school year.

## The Marketing of the Magnet Program

When the New Jersey State Education Commissioner asked the Montclair Board of Education to devise a new plan for integrating grades K-12 in September of 1975, the majority of the Board members were determined that this new plan should not involve the forced busing of elementary students. Employing the



tactic that anti-busing candidates had used so successfully in their 1972 Town Commission campaigns, the Board's busing opponents repeatedly framed their position on busing in terms of advocating "quality education" rather than opposing integration. As BEAM-affiliated Board member Catherine Porcelli explained in a statement given upon her appointment in September of 1975, "Busing is not the major issue before us; the most important [thing] is to make certain that we are providing the best education for all children." In choosing Montclair's new desegregation plan, Porcelli and her anti-busing co-members were determined to choose a plan that had precisely the goal hinted at in Porcelli's statement: improved educational quality through diminished use of busing.

To develop such a plan, the Board called upon a man they must have felt was perfect for the job: Superintendent Walter Marks. Marks had first come to Montclair in 1972 to serve as the curriculum director, and had been named superintendent after James Adams accepted another position in a Florida school district in 1974. The Board had initially recruited Marks after learning about the program for gifted students that he had implemented at the Beechwood Public Schools in suburban Cleveland. In the wake of the implementation of Adams' Plan of Action, the Board must have been particularly eager to offer such additional educational opportunities for high-achieving students, hoping thereby to allay anxious white parents' fears of educational mediocrity brought about by integration. The 1972 Board, in short, hired Marks to bolster Montclair's educational credentials and to prevent white flight—two of the aims the 1976 Board hoped to achieve with its new desegregation plan.

Marks faced a difficult position when he set out to design this new plan in February of 1976. If the Board could have its way, it would eliminate busing entirely, yet the State Commissioner had specifically said that Montclair's new plan must leave each school with a racial make-up similar to that of the district as a whole—a directive to which a plan without busing could not possibly adhere. To complicate matters further, the state legislature had voted to cut \$1.8 million from Montclair's 1976-77 school budget.<sup>12</sup> Somehow, Marks had to come up with a plan that would be conservative enough to appeal to the anti-busing Board, rigorous enough to meet the guidelines set by the Commissioner and frugal enough to be

financially feasible under the district's tight new budgetary constraints.

In a speech to the predominantly-white Montclair Lions and Kiwanis Clubs in December of that year, Marks questioned the virtues of busing and of the Adams Plan's discontinuous elementary school program, under which children were removed from their neighborhood schools for one year out of five. Although he did not say specifically how he intended to correct these problems, Marks did assure his audience that "every possible alternative" was under consideration, and left his listeners with the impression that Board and the administration hoped to develop an alternative to busing in the near future.

Marks proposed five integration plans to the Board—the blue, the green, the gold and two red plans—letting the members themselves select the one they wanted. He presented the five plans to the Board in a public meeting on April 8, 1976. The plans covered a wide spectrum of options, ranging from the red plans, in which all busing for integration would be stopped and all nine neighborhood schools would be kept open for an additional \$400,000, to the blue plan, in which mandatory busing for integration would increase, five elementary schools would be closed so that each school could approximate the racial breakdown of the district as a whole, and no extra money would be required. Neither of the red plans achieved the integration goals specified by the Commissioner, leaving Nishuane's minority population at 93% and Bradford's at 6%. Nor was either red plan economically feasible under Montclair's current reduced budget, and both ran the risk of forfeiting the state and federal aid Montclair received for its desegregation efforts. The blue plan was similarly unrealistic, for although it was economically feasible and met the Commissioner's integration requirements, it called for the busing of between four hundred and six hundred students for five of their elementary school years—a feature that would certainly not appeal to Bonastia's Board. This left the gold and the green plans for the Board to choose between. Unlike the red plans, both the gold and the green plans were economically feasible, and unlike the blue plan, both required only a minimum amount of *voluntary* busing.

Both of these plans utilized the magnet school concept, which had been receiving increasing national attention as a feasible

alternative to forced busing since their successful implementation in Tacoma, Washington and Portland, Oregon. In the wake of the violence and protest that had accompanied widely reported attempts to desegregate through the use of mandatory busing in Boston and Louisville the previous fall, politicians on both sides of the political spectrum were adopting an anti-busing platform. In September of 1975, President Ford had criticized the courts for their actions in Boston and Louisville, saying that they had mandated unnecessary busing without looking for better alternatives, and two months later at the National Democratic Issues Conference, Democratic Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas had attacked busing as a "bankrupt social policy." The 1976 Democratic Party platform, adopted without a floor fight, stated that "the Democratic Party will be an active ally of those communities which seek to enhance the quality as well as the integration of educational opportunities. We encourage a variety of other measures, including the redrawing of attendance lines, pairing of schools, [and] use of the 'magnet school' concept."

Magnet schools seemed to be a way to achieve what had previously proved impossible: the voluntary integration of Montclair. BEAM and Montclair's other anti-busing groups would be delighted that Montclair had finally done away with the hated "forced busing" of the Plan of Action, while the Commissioner and those citizens who stressed the urgent need for desegregation would be pleased with the new levels of integration achieved by the magnet schools. In addition, all parents would be pleased with the new emphasis on quality and the innovative educational techniques used by magnet schools. To Marks, the need for magnet schools seemed clear, and he must have felt confident that the Board would see the situation as he had.

Marks miscalculated. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1976 the Board voted four-to-three in favor of the revised red plan. Essentially, the revised red plan and the original red plan were the same; the only difference between them was the inclusion of five magnet schools in the revised version. All nine elementary schools were to be left open, mandatory busing would cease, and the only attempt the district would make to integrate its schools would be to offer five magnet schools and a "freedom of choice" policy, under which parents could request that their children be permitted to attend a school other than the one to which they were assigned.

The week before, four of the five incumbent Commissioners, all of whom were anti-busing, were voted out, replaced by the four members of the Montclair '76 United slate, a group "seeking to provide a new moderate leadership for the community" and to "achieve the best quality of public education for all our students...by adhering to existing state guidelines directed towards achieving racial balance in our schools." As one newly-elected Commissioner put it, the vote was the old Board's "last hurrah....It was their last act of defiance" in the face of their imminent replacement.

Marks did not hide his dismay at the Board's decision. He warned the Board in a speech following their vote that the adoption of the red plan might result in the loss of more than \$2 million in state and federal money for school programs. He announced that he could not support the red plan, since its five magnet schools required more preparation than he had time for. "In the past," he explained, "I have stated that, given time and energy, I could make two magnet schools work by next fall—now we need five. In this town, I do not believe that voluntary integration will work."

By publicly announcing his disapproval of the Board's decision, Marks distanced himself from a plan that he had in fact developed. Judging from his speech's reception and from the signs held up by several members of the audience urging the Board to retain the Plan of Action for one more year, public sentiment was against the red plan. Despite general discontent with the selected red plan, however, the Board did not initially give any indication that it would reverse its decision. It was not until May 27<sup>th</sup>, when a group of mostly black parents and other citizens staged a day-long sit-in at the board office to protest the adoption of the red plan, displaying signs reading "1976 not 1954, Integration not Segregation" and telling various board members to "go to hell," that the Board finally entertained the possibility of reconsidering its decision. Marks allied himself with the protesters, choosing not to remove them from the board office on the grounds that "they were entitled to demonstrate their opinions." Realizing that the community disapproval was not going to simply disappear, the Board agreed to call an emergency meeting, at which a representative from the protesting group presented the board with a resolution calling for the rescinding of the red plan and the continuance of the Plan of Action for the 1976-77 school year. The

board capitulated, and on the night of June 1<sup>st</sup>, they voted six-to-one to endorse the modified green plan for the 1977-78 school year.

The modified green plan differed from the revised red plan in two respects. Like the red plan, it allowed freedom of choice for grades K-8, it incorporated magnet schools into its integration plan, and it did not require mandatory busing. But the date of its implementation—the 1977-78 school year, rather than the red plan's 1976-77—allowed Marks an additional year to plan the program. And, unlike the red plan, the green plan specified a level of integration—25% minimum minority enrollment—which, although it did not meet the Commissioner's 40/60 guideline, did at least match the numbers achieved by the old Plan of Action. The Board, still dominated by Bonastia's appointees, must have recognized the similarities between the red and the green plans when it voted to accept the green. Ostensibly, they were acting in the name of "compromise," while in reality they were again voting for what was most dear to them: the end of forced busing.

In spite of the plans' similarities, Marks was quick to laud the superiority of the green plan. Directly following the Board's vote, he made a speech citing the various features of the green plan about which he felt "particularly good," including "the return of the fifth grade to the elementary schools, the restoration of the missing grade established under the Plan of Action, the importance placed on Early Childhood Center, the providing of adequate educational opportunity for academically gifted youngsters, and the opportunity to further programs in the performing arts." Not coincidentally, Marks' list cataloged specifically those elements of the green plan—the uninterrupted, extended elementary school experience, the absence of which he had earlier lamented to the Lions and Kiwanis Clubs, and the academic and artistic advantages—that would most likely appeal to those parents who doubted the educational quality of integrated schools. By attempting to sell his magnet schools to those residents of Montclair who were traditionally opposed to desegregation, Marks had already begun to fulfill his promise to devote "time and energy" to making the magnet schools work. In this way, Marks hoped to make possible what he had just a few weeks earlier said was impossible—voluntary integration in Montclair.

From a 1975 survey taken among Montclair residents with children in the public schools, Marks and his administration knew

that the majority of white parents thought that the schools did not pay enough attention to gifted children, and that many black parents felt that the schools needed to focus more on basic skills. Accordingly, Marks and his colleagues decided to design their magnets to improve these two areas. Of the three magnet schools they established, they labeled two “gifted and talented” and one “fundamental” to indicate their differing emphases. Prior to the implementation of the magnet program, the “gifted and talented” elementary magnets, Nishuane and Hillside, had two of the highest percentages of black students in the district. These two magnets were thus designed to appeal to white parents who felt that their “gifted and talented” children<sup>13</sup> were not receiving enough attention in the schools. The “fundamental” magnet, on the other hand, whose rigid discipline structure and attention to the three R’s was designed to appeal primarily to black parents, was located in Bradford school in an all-white section of Montclair. The basic design of the magnet schools made apparent the different groups to whom Marks had to sell each program; the only thing left up to Marks was the selling.

Salesmanship was Marks’ forte. Accompanied by a group of teachers whom he had released from teaching duty for the planning year, Marks visited integration plans in operation throughout the country, reporting back to the community on the plans that would best suit Montclair. He applied for and received a federal grant, funded by the Congress in August of 1976 as an amendment to the federal desegregation assistance program, that was specifically designated for districts attempting to implement magnet school programs. Along with the Board, he created a task force of Montclair citizens to study the plan and to suggest modifications, and he set up numerous informative meetings and publications to ensure that the public remained abreast of the development process. He solicited the advice of officials of the state Education Department’s Office of Equal Educational Opportunity, as well as municipal officers, local individuals and citizen groups like the PTA and the Board of Realtors, to whom he made sure to stress the importance of community support. Marks also devoted a good deal of time to informal “living room chats”—discussion groups held mostly in the homes of white parents—and to one-on-one meetings with influential citizens.

According to Mary Lee Fitzgerald, who replaced Marks as Montclair's superintendent in 1981, "Marks wasn't terribly concerned about the blacks. He'd throw [them] a few crumbs here and there—that was the way he was operating." In Fitzgerald's eyes, Marks' inattention to the black community stemmed from his view, shared by the Board, of what constituted Montclair's most pressing need at the time—the need to convince the white community to keep their children in the Montclair public schools. The black community, after all, wasn't threatening to go anywhere; it was the wealthy white families from Upper Montclair who appeared to be preparing to pull their children out. If white children did in fact leave the Montclair schools, the Board feared, the resulting racial imbalance would give predominantly black schools a "badge of inferiority." How to prevent this white withdrawal was the problem Marks had been hired to solve in the first place, and it was the problem to which he devoted most of his "time and effort" in campaigning for the magnet schools.

The selling points Marks came up with to advertise his schools in the white community were ingenious, ranging from small schedule changes to extensive curriculum innovations. Each element of the magnets was designed specifically to make that school appealing to a particular audience. For example, knowing that many of the white mothers in Upper Montclair did not work, Marks decided to start the two gifted and talented magnets at 9:15 A.M. rather than the customary time of 8:30 A.M., thereby hoping to attract specifically those nonworking mothers who did not need to send their children to school before the workday started and who would thus appreciate the later hour. He also shifted particular teachers to draw white parents. Those with the best reputations among white parents at Mt. Hebron, Bradford, and Montclair's other traditionally white schools he moved to largely black Nishuane and Hillside. He located the towns' only pre-kindergarten classes in Nishuane and Bradford, the two magnets for younger children, hoping that parents who were attracted by the idea of enrolling their children in a free, full-day early childhood program would simply decide to keep their children in the magnet program once they reached kindergarten. In keeping with the ideas of the magnets themselves, the pre-K course at Bradford offered a more traditional curriculum, while the pre-K course at Nishuane offered French,

Spanish, and other less orthodox programs. Marks also improved the physical plants of the gifted and talented schools, which had been among the most dilapidated of the Montclair schools. Hillside gained a science center and brightly painted murals on its walls and both Hillside and Nishuane were given dance studios. In short, as Fitzgerald put it, "Marks was able to make [white] people put their kids on a bus across town by taking everything out of the neighborhood schools. He made the other options so grim."

The most significant thing Marks took away from the neighborhood schools was the creative element of their curriculum. According to Fitzgerald, Marks took practically all "art and music" out of the white neighborhood schools and moved them to the "gifted and talented" schools across town, along with several curricular innovations. If you wanted your child to begin studying French and Spanish at a tender age, you sent her to the gifted and talented magnets; if you wanted your child to receive instruction in the performing arts, you sent him to the gifted and talented magnets; if you wanted your child to do experiments involving the "undersea world" in a new science center, you sent her to the gifted and talented magnets.

For most white parents, the most appealing aspect of the gifted and talented curriculum was the institution of the "ABC" program. Starting in pre-K, students spent half their day in required "Basics" classes and half their day in electives, called "Aesthetics," which included courses like "Cookbook to Culture" to "Math Magic," in which students got a chance to explore their "gifts and talents" in a variety of areas. If a student found that she was particularly "gifted" in a certain area, she, her teachers or her parents could recommend her for the elite "Creative 'I'" program in that subject. If she passed the admission test, she was eligible for advanced courses in that subject; if she did not pass, her parents received a letter from the school encouraging her to reapply if she so desired.

The ABC plan, with its focus on "individual interests and talents," was the linchpin of Marks' magnet school strategy. By assuring white parents that their "gifted" children would finally receive the special attention they had been denied for so long, Marks hoped to persuade them that the magnets were worth a trip across town. The promise of the "Creative 'I'" program was especially appealing for this reason, for it meant the introduction of classes



grouped by ability. White parents who feared that black children would not meet the academic standards of their own children now had the assurance that, by nominating their children for “Creative ‘I’” classes, they could ensure that their own children would continue to learn in a challenging academic setting. Any ‘inferior’ students would be weeded out so that their own children would be challenged at least as much as they had been in their all-white neighborhood schools. The Board, after all, had already made a point of saying that racial balance would *not* be required in individual classrooms:

A school-by-school enrollment in which minority-majority ratios vary no more than 15 percent from the district-wide ratio is sufficient and a similar class-by-class requirement, while desirable, is not mandatory....even in those instances in which classrooms...in schools do not fall within 15 percent of the district-wide ratios there will be sufficient co-mingling of pupils to develop desirable interpersonal relationships in special programs, assemblies, field trips, lunchrooms, playground activities, career awareness seminars, counseling services, art, music, enrichment periods, learning center and library activities.<sup>14</sup>

True desegregation, in other words, would only be mandated in non-academic settings, so that white parents could rest assured that integration would not impinge on their children’s education.

Marks’ plan worked. During the first year of implementation, all parents received their first choice of school, and more students were bused across town voluntarily than had been bused under the Plan of Action—a total of twenty-five hundred, approximately seven hundred more than the Board had originally sought. A racial balance of no less than 28% and no more than 54% minority population was established in each school, achieving the breakdown specified by the green plan, and by 1980, these figures had improved to 37% and 55%, respectively. The plan’s success was so striking that in May of 1978, less than a year after its implementation, Montclair was the site of a three-day conference focusing on the town’s desegregation plan, attended by two hundred educators from around the country.

Building on this success, Marks decided in 1978 to magnetize the middle schools, designating Glenfield, which would have had a

90% minority enrollment under a neighborhood school program, as another gifted and talented magnet and Mt. Hebron, which was located in an all-white section of Montclair, as a fundamental magnet. To bolster Glenfield's appeal to white parents, Marks immediately embarked on an extensive renovation project, installing a new gymnasium, dance studio, auditorium and planetarium. He also added the ABC program to Glenfield's curriculum, and he specified that the school's particular focus would be the performing arts. According to Gail Ciecierski, a Mt. Hebron teacher at the time, this decision had a significant impact on Mt. Hebron. Prior to its magnetization, Ciecierski explained, Mt. Hebron had had a thriving performing arts program. In order to ensure white enrollment at Glenfield, however, Marks ended Mt. Hebron's performing arts program entirely, isolating all creative opportunities for Montclair's middle school students at Glenfield. To take music, drama and art, as well as advanced classes, Montclair's white children had to get on a bus.

In 1981, Marks left Montclair to assume a position as superintendent of the Wake County, N.C. school system, which recruited him to solve a de facto segregation problem similar to the one in Montclair. To replace him, the Board hired Mary Lee Fitzgerald, then the assistant superintendent of schools in Norwalk, CT. Fitzgerald had the credentials the Board was looking for. She worked in a school system known for its successful "freedom of choice" policy and especially for its "achievement" program, which enabled bright students to take certain classes at the level for which they felt suited. Previously, she had been the principal of a New Jersey school that contained six "choice" subschools within its walls, and she had written her doctoral dissertation on the cognitive learning differences among children. Clearly, Fitzgerald recognized the need for choice among schools, and she had had plenty of experience in implementing successful choice programs. To continue to draw white parents into Montclair's magnets, the Board needed someone with exactly Fitzgerald's credentials to run their system.

As Fitzgerald saw it, the magnet schools had three aims. They had to ensure the schools were racially balanced, improve the quality of the education for all students, and have a positive effect on the whole community. It was her job to make sure the magnet schools

achieved these aims by doing two things: she had to keep the schools good, because “with any integrity [she] couldn’t sell integrated schools if the schools were poor,” and she had to “spend a lot of time with people who weren’t in the schools, like the Board of Realtors—in meetings, churches, and at other social settings—selling the idea to the community.” Fitzgerald saw it as her responsibility to keep the community “viable,” which meant, essentially, to prevent white withdrawal. “When you’re the superintendent, wealthy white parents have got you where it hurts,” she explained, “because they can take their kids out and put them in private school.”

To prevent this white flight, Fitzgerald picked up selling the system where Marks had left off. Her top priority was appeasing white parents, and she set about doing this in a variety of ways. She hired several new staff members, reputedly replacing one black woman fundraiser with the explanation that “the district needs a white Protestant male as a fundraiser.” To show both white and black members of the community that she could “walk the walk and talk the talk,”—in other words, that she took the virtues of integration to heart—she intentionally bought a house in a middle-class black neighborhood and became involved in several black organizations. And most significantly, she continued to expand the magnet program. Responding to pressure from “influential white parents in Upper Montclair” who felt that their neighborhood schools were being “left out,” Fitzgerald decided in 1985 to magnetize all of Montclair’s remaining elementary schools. In 1987, she opened a public Montessori program in Edgemont, an elementary school that was “becoming too black,” and she also started ability-grouping at Mt. Hebron, whose minority enrollment had been steadily increasing since 1978.

By magnetizing all schools, by opening Edgemont’s Montessori, and by starting ability grouping at Mt. Hebron, Fitzgerald was attempting to make each school equally appealing to white parents, so that racial balance<sup>15</sup> in each school and in the district as a whole would be maintained. She and her administration frankly admitted that they wanted to give young white professionals just moving to Montclair a reason to put their kids in the system, a decision that these parents might be afraid to make if they saw “classrooms half filled with minority children.” As Fitzgerald and her staff explained,

"Some new parents view placement in a desegregated school as an academic risk for their children." To assure these skittish new parents that their children's educations would not be compromised by integration, the magnet schools (with their covert promise of ability-segregated classrooms) had to be appealing enough to overcome the initial shock of seeing an integrated classroom.

## Conclusion

The implementation of Montclair's magnet school system has been hailed as a success story by educators and scholars across the country. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized three of Montclair's elementary schools as "Blue Ribbon Schools," and the Montclair school system was singled out by *Money Magazine* as one of the most effective in the state. Even during the 1980s, when the Reagan administration made substantial cutbacks in its education aid, Montclair continued to receive millions of dollars in federal aid under a special program designated specifically for magnet programs, and Barbara Bush visited Glenfield School in 1988 to celebrate its educational innovation.

Yet Montclair's story is not entirely one of success, as several recent magazine articles have noted. In November of 1996, articles about Montclair appeared in both *New York* and *New Jersey Reporter* that mentioned a salient flaw in Montclair's school system: resegregation within the school building. Starting in pre-kindergarten, Montclair offers electives in which students are divided according to ability. As the students get older and their work becomes more difficult, the racial divide between ability groups becomes increasingly apparent. By the time these students reach Montclair High School, this racial divide is impossible to ignore: in a school with a minority population of 51%, the honors classes are 80% white.

Other examples of resegregation within the school building are similarly undeniable. Disproportionate numbers of black students are placed in special education and basic skills improvement classes, and the Montclair High School National Honor Society, with a membership of approximately 150 students, rarely has more than three black members per class. In the three graduating classes from

1988 to 1990, a total of 8 black and 115 white students were ranked in the top ten percent.<sup>16</sup>

This problem does not exist only at the high school. Classes are segregated in the elementary and middle schools as well, especially at the “gifted and talented” magnets that offer “Creative ‘I’” classes to the students deemed most capable. In the Nishuane “gifted and talented” elementary magnet, for example, there were nearly twice as many white students as black enrolled in “Creative ‘I’” classes for the 1990-91 school year. These statistics only paint part of the picture. Undocumented work groups within the classroom based on perceived reading or math ability levels also break down along racial lines, with the composition of the higher level groups being almost entirely white.

The combination of segregation both within the school building and within the classrooms themselves renders the physical integration of Montclair’s schools largely meaningless in terms of equalizing educational opportunity. Whites still learn primarily with whites in the higher level classes, and blacks still learn primarily with blacks in the lower level classes. This segregation is often not a result of differing ability, but of other, external forces that determine a child’s class schedule. Segregation, for example, is often enforced by parental involvement, as white parents far more often than black parents apply pressure to the school’s administrators to see that their children get the best teachers and the advanced classes. Glenfield School, for example, is currently grappling with resegregation issues, as each year growing numbers of white parents march into the principal’s office in late August to make sure that their children are assigned the “team” of teachers with the best reputation. To keep these white parents in the public school system, Glenfield’s administrators attempt to meet their demands, thereby exacerbating racial imbalance within the classroom.

Anxious white parents are not the only reason for Montclair’s resegregation. Black parents who attempt to get involved in their children’s education are often deliberately shut out of traditional parent leadership organizations, such as the Parent-Teachers’ Association and School Review Boards. Nancy Winkler, a white parent whose children were reassigned to the predominantly black Rand School under the “5-3-4” plan in 1967, recalls that prior to its integration, Rand had very active black parent leaders. Following the

implementation of the "5-3-4" plan, however, these black parents were almost completely dominated by the white parents of the newly imported students, so that the "political force, and the power, and the input of the black leadership of the Rand community went out the door." Lydia Barrett, the black Glenfield student whose father initiated the entire desegregation process in 1961, told a similar story about the ostracizing of black parent leaders after integration. When the magnet program was implemented, Barrett, who by that time had two children of her own in the Montclair schools, chose to send her son to Edgemont School, a neighborhood school in a predominantly white section of town. She recalls noticing that the first time she attended a School Review Committee meeting, the mothers on the all-white committee were "shocked" by her presence. When Barrett next attempted to attend a Committee meeting, she found that the meeting place had been unexpectedly changed. "After personally racing all over the school looking for [the meeting]," Barrett recounted, "I found them meeting in a closet in the back of a classroom. Now, I am not a black [person] who subscribes to paranoia-government genocide type of theories, but I believe those women moved that meeting on purpose. Technically, there was integration, but nobody had really accepted it, not in any real way."

Montclair's teachers and administrators are also at times responsible for the classroom segregation in Montclair schools. Most of the responsibility for nominating students for advanced level classes rests with the teachers, the majority of whom are white, and many Montclair teachers and administrators are too quick to assume that their black students will be unable to perform at the level of white students. There are exceptions, of course. Several teachers make a concerted effort to encourage black student achievement, and one school principal personally monitors standardized test scores to spot potentially high-achieving black students who had not been previously selected for advanced classes. But such teachers appear to be a small minority. Experiences like the following, recounted by Barrett, are common. When Barrett's son Issa was in the eighth grade, he was one of the best students in his class. Upon arriving at the high school the next year, however, he found that he had been recommended for low-level math classes by his middle school teacher. When Issa brought this to the attention of his guidance counselor, the counselor made no attempt to switch Issa into a

higher-level math class, and instead suggested that perhaps he would be more comfortable in a lower level English class as well. It was not until Barrett herself went into the school to correct the situation that Issa was switched into the appropriate math class. According to Barrett, incidents like this have been common in the high school since she was a student there in the 1960s, and are now occurring with increasing frequency in the middle schools as well. "The guidance counselors see a black kid sitting in front of them," Barrett explains, "and they assume the mistake is the advanced level class, not the remedial one."

Montclair teachers and administrators have made attempts to rectify the racial imbalance within the classrooms. In 1993, one teacher proposed detracking the ninth grade English curriculum at the high school in favor of a "World Literature" class for all ninth graders, regardless of their recommendations and test scores.<sup>17</sup> The Board voted to implement the new program at the start of the 1993-4 school year. This vote sparked a town-wide debate over the virtues of tracking. The anti-tracking side argued that teaching children at the remedial level "is making a statement that all children cannot learn," and more significantly, is racist. According to David Herron, a proponent of the World Literature class, "desegregation in Montclair stopped at the schoolhouse door," and the World Literature class was the first step towards bringing it inside.

The pro-tracking side, composed largely of white parents, argued essentially that the World Literature curriculum was being "dumbed down" for black students. The parents of approximately one hundred white students pulled their children out of the public schools entirely, fearing that their children's educations were being sacrificed to political correctness. One white student even told her father that "all [she] had to do was write a twelve-page paper on how evil white people are and [she]'d get an A." Some black parents also objected to the detracked curriculum. They argued that there was nothing wrong with acknowledging smarter students, and that the Board's presumption that integrated classrooms required the abolition of ability grouping was an insult to the intelligence of black people.

As these manifold objections to the World Literature class suggest, Montclair is far from reaching a solution to its resegregation problem. Detracking classes would put black and white students in

the same classroom, but it would also do away with one of the pivotal incentives that induced white parents to enroll their children in integrated schools in the first place: the promise of ability grouping. And so the achievement gap between the races continues to plague Montclair schools. Recently, this gap has led to another problem: the growing numbers of middle-class black parents who are withdrawing their children from the public school system, or “bright flight,” as Montclair High School principal Elaine Davis terms it.<sup>18</sup> Since the mid-1980s, the schools have been losing more black students than white students. Enrollment figures from the 1990-91 school year show that of the thirty-two students who left the district before entering middle school, twenty were black, and of the thirty students who left the district before entering the high school, eighteen were black. Personal anecdotes suggest the reason behind this decline in black enrollment. Joan Schneider,<sup>19</sup> a Montclair middle school teacher, recalled a time when a mother of one of the black boys in her class came to seek her advice on whether or not to enroll her son in a private high school. The woman explained to Schneider that she had always been a proponent of public education, but that she was worried that her son’s grades would suffer in the high school as a result of peer pressure to underachieve academically—a pressure that black males experience especially keenly. After having listened to the woman’s concerns, Schneider advised her to enroll her son in the local private school.

Barrett recalled a different story reflecting the decline in black enrollment. She described a conversation that often took place between her and her sons during the late 80s, when they were students at the high school. “My sons would come home from the high school complaining that there were no black girls for them to date, because I, like everyone else, wanted them to date black girls. I said, ‘What do you mean there are no black girls?’ I figured out what they meant is there are no black girls like them, because all the educated, middle class blacks had left.” The educated, middle class black parents Barrett refers to left the schools for the same reason that the mother Schneider described chose to enroll her son in the local private school: they doubt the public schools’ ability to offer their children a first-rate education, especially in the face of peer pressure to the contrary among Montclair’s effectively segregated black students. These parents can afford private education, and they



fear that by allowing their children to remain in the resegregated public schools, they are condemning them to a second-class education in lower-level classes.

*"Put the dumb colored children in with the dumb white children, and put the smart colored children in with the smart white children—that is no problem."*

NAACP LAWYER THURGOOD MARSHALL

When Thurgood Marshall uttered these words during the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case forty-three years ago, he was being pragmatic. To Marshall, his opponents' argument that black students' inferior educational levels rendered integrated education impossible was merely a tactic to avoid desegregation, to which Marshall saw ability grouping as the perfect counter-argument. He could not have known that two decades later, the ability grouping that he had advocated would result in the resegregation of black and white students within the school building. Such resegregation, as it has occurred in Montclair, has diminished the overall benefits of an integrated school system and has restigmatized blacks with the "badge of inferiority" that Marshall fought so hard to eradicate.

The Montclair school system is in a bind. To keep white students in the schools, it must maintain ability grouping, as was shown by the spate of white withdrawals following the detracking of ninth grade English. On the other hand, by keeping ability grouping in its current form, Montclair will continue effectively to resegregate its students within its school buildings, thereby denying its black students equal access to a quality education. And enrollment statistics suggest that this resegregation encourages middle-class black parents to withdraw their children from the schools—a trend that will widen the achievement gap between the schools' upper middle-class whites and the black "underclass."

As the system is now, the resegregation that has occurred within the buildings themselves has enabled Montclair schools to serve best the same segment of the population they served best thirty-five years ago: the white middle-class. The town's experience in those thirty-five years is a dismaying reminder that, in spite of some good intentions and what at first looked like a promising idea—magnet schools—no real resolution of Montclair's, and America's, racial dilemma will be quickly or easily sold.

## NOTES

We have reduced endnotes to a minimum. Most of the information was drawn from the *New York Times*, the *Montclair Times*, and personal interviews.

<sup>1</sup> In 1983, 49% of the town's 5,609 students were black. *Montclair Public Schools Actual Enrollment 1963-1985*, chart (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1985); *A System of Choice* (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1980); *An Historical Perspective of Montclair's Magnet School System* (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1995). Beatriz C. Clewell and Myra F. Joy, *Choice in Montclair, New Jersey: A Policy Information Paper* (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1990) 45.

<sup>2</sup> Christine H. Rossell, *The Carrot or The Stick For School Desegregation Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990) 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Coleman's work on white flight achieved such broad acceptance that he was called as the principal witness at the 1975 Senate hearings on school busing. However, sociologists such as Gary Orfield argue that no definitive causal link between mandatory desegregation and white flight has ever been established, and that whites are fleeing urban areas regardless of school integration. James S. Coleman, Sara D. Kelly, and John A. Moore, *Trends in School Segregation, 1968-73* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1975); Gary Orfield, *Must We Bus?: Segregated Schools and National Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Rossell prefers measuring the interracial exposure in a school district rather than the index of dissimilarity, the other measure commonly used. She explains that since the index of dissimilarity represents only the proportion of black students who would have to be reassigned in order to have the same proportion in each school as in the whole school district, it does not account for instances in which white flight has occurred, rendering the attainment of racial balance within an all-black school system meaningless. Measuring interracial exposure avoids this pitfall, as this measure accounts for white flight as well as for racial balance. Rossell 35.

<sup>5</sup> For a deeper analysis of the failings of voluntary desegregation plans, see David J. Armor, "White Flight and the Future of School Desegregation," *School Desegregation: Past, Present and Future*, eds. Walter G. Stephan and Joseph R. Feagin (New York: Plenum Press, 1980); Charles S. Bullock, "Desegregating Urban Areas: Is It Worth It?," *School Desegregation: Shadow and Substance*, eds. Florence Levinsohn and Benjamin Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); George R. Meadows, "Open Enrollment and Fiscal Incentives," Levinson and Wright; Gary Orfield, *Desegregation and the Cities, the Trends, and the Policy Choices* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1976); and Christine H. Rossell and Willis D. Hawley, "Policy Alternatives for Minimizing White Flight," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 4 no. 2 (1982): 205-22.

<sup>6</sup> Resegregation and tracking are discussed at length in J. Eyler, V. J. Cook, and L.E. Ward, "Resegregation: Segregation Within Desegregated Schools," *The Consequences of School Desegregation*, eds. Christine Rossell and Willis Hawley (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983) 126-62; and Jeannie Oakes, *Multiplying Inequalities: The Effects of Race, Social Class, and Tracking on Opportunities to Learn Mathematics and Science* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> From 1970 until 1976, public school enrollment dropped by approximately 200 students a year. *Montclair Public Schools Actual Enrollment 1963-1985*, chart (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Only the town's elementary and junior high schools were segregated, as there was and continues to be only one high school to serve all of Montclair.

<sup>9</sup> The bond referendum was ultimately defeated by Montclair voters in January of 1964. *Evolution of the Montclair Public School System's Desegregation Plan* (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1995) 1.

<sup>10</sup> The Board voted to bus all Montclair fifth graders to either Nishuane or Glenfield, both of which were predominantly black, and to bus all sixth graders to Hillside, which was approximately 37% black. By calling this new plan the Interim Plan, the Board suggested that further desegregation efforts would be made. "A Comparison of Racial Distribution," chart, 1 Oct. 1970.

<sup>11</sup> Adams replaced Blanchard in late 1971, for reasons none of my sources were able to name. The Board did not publicly voice disapproval of Blanchard, and thus it seems likely that Blanchard left the district voluntarily.

<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, this money was not cut from Montclair's budget, as the legislature, acting on an order from the N.J. Supreme Court, voted to reallocate the amount of state aid given to school districts. Richard Lee, "School Budget Cuts Projected," *The Montclair Times* 29 Jan. 1976.

<sup>13</sup> According to the Montclair philosophy, all children had a gift and a talent; it was up to the schools to identify and hone them. Although in his testimony given in *Montclair Concerned Citizens Association et al. v Board of Education of the Town of Montclair*, Marks criticized other gifted and talented programs that he visited during the planning year for being "elitist" and requiring students to meet certain standards before they were admitted, he did not demur from using the gifted and talented label in Montclair. Thus, even though Montclair's gifted and talented schools did not have special requirements for admission, they still conveyed to Nishuane, Hillside and Glenfield parents the idea that their children were receiving an elite education.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Bonsal qtd. in *Montclair Concerned Citizens Association, petitioners et al. v. Board of Education of the Town of Montclair, New Jersey, respondent*.

<sup>15</sup> Since 1983, the minority enrollment in each school had been no less than 45% and no greater than 56%; the racial balance in the school district as a whole had stayed constant at exactly 50/50. *Elementary Enrollments By Schools*.

<sup>16</sup> Students are ranked by their grade point averages, which are determined by using a weighted scale in which grades in honors level classes are weighted more heavily than those received in regular or remedial level classes. Thus, the underrepresentation of black students in the top ten percent of their classes is directly related to their underrepresentation in advanced level classes. *Top 10% Percent of Graduating Class: Montclair High School, 1988-1990*, graph (Montclair: Montclair Public Schools, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> The discussion of the World Literature class was drawn from Craig Horowitz's article and Michael Callahan, "The Best of Intentions," *New Jersey Monthly* May 1995: 65-93.

<sup>18</sup> Davis qtd. in Walter Fields, "The Myth of Montclair," *New Jersey Reporter* Nov./Dec. 1996: 20.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Schneider is an alias.

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# CONSTRUCTIVELY DEMOTED

BY THOMAS LANDEFELD

A recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the University of Michigan faces three lawsuits from former professors alleging racial basis. I am the plaintiff in one of the three suits, and nominally what is known as “white” in this country. As Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, I mounted an active effort to recruit minority students, and voiced concern about the lack of adequate efforts at retention. I insisted on the need, when considering a candidate for admission, to take into account factors besides grades and standardized test scores, looking at qualities and experiences relevant to both medicine and humankind.

When the Assistant Dean for Student and Minority Affairs resigned, I was appointed Interim Assistant Dean. In that position I spoke in defense of three Black students who had been recommended for dismissal. I also called a meeting of minority students to discuss their concerns, which led to a letter from the students to the University President. I wrote numerous letters to campus and local publications denouncing racial bias, and testified on the subject before the Michigan House Appropriations subcommittee on higher education. Although I thought I was doing exactly what the Assistant Dean for Minority Affairs was supposed to do, people in the Administration asked why I was “stirring up those people?” It quickly became evident that I was not one of the “old boys”; in fact, I was acting like one of “those people.”

What does the system do with someone who is considered a threat? As a tenured professor, I could not be dismissed without cause. I could, however, be marginalized, disenfranchised, and eventually ostracized. In effect, I was constructively demoted.

When the Department appointed to a position concerned with minority admissions a colleague who had been reported to have made anti-Black remarks, I wrote a letter to the Department Chair expressing my concerns. Instead of speaking to me or investigating the charges, the Chair went to the Professor, who went to the Provost, who distributed a letter to the Department denouncing me

*Thomas Landefeld is Professor of Biology & Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, California State University-Dominguez Hills.*

or making “serious” and “unsubstantiated” charges. The Department refused to recommend me for promotion to full professor, because I was spending too much time in administrative work. The Provost backed the Department, telling me to get my promotion by doing more research, after which I could direct my efforts toward “other” activities. This was in spite of the University mandate to increase diversity. I was also denied normal pay raises.

As a member of the Medical School Admissions Committee and chair of the subcommittee charged with reviewing minority applications, I had contacted colleagues across the country, particularly at Black colleges, to arrange visits to their institutions. Despite my considerable success in establishing a University presence in minority programs, I was directed to cease recruiting *any* students to *any* programs at Michigan, and was falsely accused of misrepresenting myself. When I filed a formal grievance, the Review board refused to consider that aspect associated with the prohibition of recruiting. *Four* separate faculty groups stated that the order warranted a violation-of-tenure hearing, but the University refused, hereby thumbing its nose at the faculty tenure system.

After serving on almost every committee in the University relating to minority affairs, including Martin Luther King Day Planning, Review of Minority Fellowships and Applications, etc., I was removed from all administrative responsibilities in the University, the Medical School, and the Department. When the mother of a Black student demanded I be present at a meeting about her son, the Dean replied that I could attend but could not speak.

If being a traitor to whiteness means fighting so hard against white supremacy that I have jeopardized my own ability to draw on the privileges of the white skin, then I would say I qualify. Unequivocally it has been worth it. There are indeed risks in confronting conformity, but there are also many rewards. I have been ready not only to accept the rewards but to pay the price.

I believe I helped to bring about individual improvements at the University of Michigan Medical School; programmatic change, however, was more difficult. In an effort to effect the latter, I chose to file a lawsuit. I relocated to another university, not because of the harassment but so I could continue to wage the struggle in this critical area.

# review

*THE REDNECK MANIFESTO*. Jim Goad. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. 274pp. HB \$22.

BY JOANNA BROOKS

For anyone who's wondered if he or she just might be a redneck and a race traitor at the same time, *The Redneck Manifesto* is important reading.

Author Jim Goad announces, "I come with a chip on my shoulder and a sledgehammer in my hand ready to bust some ideological kneecaps." His prime target is one of the nation's favorite caricatures—the "Angry White Male," a racist backwoods bomb-building know-nothing conjured up by a nation sick of its own racial reasoning. This reductionist scapegoating, Goad argues, obscures the real source of our social woes: "What portion of lowbrow white rage has NOTHING to do with nigger hatred and instead bubbles up from the accumulated traumas of being a historically shit-upon laboring class?" "Good ol' boys" don't belong to the "old boys' club," he reminds us. We'd do well to remember that "white trash" and "white cash" hardly speak to each other, let alone consciously collude against the public interest.

Readers will cheer as Goad drives a class wedge into the construction of whiteness. But what next? If you've ever wondered what post-whiteness might look like, pay attention. Meet the "Redneck." According to Goad, the Redneck's not nearly as ignorant as the press makes him out to be. There is Redneck history—Goad takes us from serfdom to convict labor and indentured servitude in 37 pages. There is Redneck ethnography—grotesque physiognomy, monster trucks, methamphetamine, snake handling, and the *Weekly World News*, all described here in loving detail. There is Redneck theory—or, rather, conspiracy theories. And just because you're paranoid, Goad argues, doesn't mean the Feds aren't out to get you.

Indeed, it is invigorating to hear someone as sharp-witted and hard-headed as Goad (think Archie Bunker meets Theodore Kazcynski) talk back to decades of Steinbeck-style enlightened pity and Beverly Hillbillies lampoon. Poor whites, after all, are more likely to be written about than to write about themselves. However, in order to construct a "redneckedness" useful to the white working-

*Joanna Brooks is a graduate student at UCLA.*

class, the author must pave over some very tricky issues. His redneck history stalls out at 1800, perhaps because the picture gets significantly more complicated after that. Never mind the Potato Famine, waves of immigration, industrialization, eugenics, the Dust Bowl, deindustrialization, and so forth. No talk about the very real possibility that with the G.I. Bill, a union card, and a little racial privilege on his side, the descendent of rednecked poor folks could “pass” for white, if he kept his mouth shut and smiled right. In lieu of accounting for histories, Goad cultivates a fictive common genealogy, from which all rednecks supposedly inherit a basic consciousness—the know-how of people used to falling down, staying down, and beating each other down.

The historical romance of *The Redneck Manifesto* gets dangerous when it starts sounding like Birth of a [Redneck] Nation. Goad tries to turn the cosmic joke of poor white “identity”—you can’t get there from here; or, as far as we know, we’ve always been here and we always will—into an end-times ideology. Yes, the economic draft sacrifices poor boys to multinational corporations. Yes, the export of “American” manufacturing jobs has wrecked the “Live Better-Work Union” dream. Yes, Virginia, there is a class war. In Goad’s version, however, it has more to do with headbutting rich white males than with building the “minorities plus rednecks” coalition he proposes. There are reasons for this—the machineries of race and class clash and cooperate in complicated ways. Not all rednecks are poor whites; not all poor whites are rednecks; and I bet poor white women have another side of the story to tell. It’s one thing to claim an experience (an oppression?) specific to poor whites; it’s another to take a hard look at the ways whiteness (not to mention gender—which Goad doesn’t) can modify one’s class interests.

Indeed, Goad’s otherwise straight-ahead, twelve-cylinder juggernaut breaks down precisely where he confronts “whiteness.” In his chapter “Me and the Blacks,” he laments that

Euro-Americans are more or less FORBIDDEN to mention being white unless it’s in an apologetic, shuffling, “Yes, Massa” tone...I didn’t even want to be white until you told me I couldn’t. I’ve heard several black people mention the ‘white community,’ but no white person that I know considers themselves to be a



member. Where is the White Community? Is that a village somewhere in Nebraska?

Rather than exploding whiteness the way he blows up other ideological booby traps, however, Goad plays racial apologist. He asks, does being pale-skinned, thin-lipped, and freckled mean that you have to feel guilty about slavery? If whites can't be proud of whiteness, he continues, isn't that some kind of reverse discrimination? Goad writes,

Black pride, like all hues of pride, isn't inherently good or bad; it's how it's used. What's sociologically curious is that it's flourishing in a climate where ethnic self-esteem is prohibited for whites....The moment that white supremacy crashed to the ground, black supremacy seemed to rise from the ashes.

And when precisely did white supremacy "crash"? When did whiteness become an "ethnicity" and not just a phenotype? Black supremacy, white supremacy—it's all good? Can't we all just get along? Not unless you like hanging out with Tom Metzger.

In this "white identity" flame war, Goad reserves his harshest fire for the "Guilty White Male." Those *angst*-loving hipsters and weepy sons of Harriet Beecher Stowe are, the author claims, just as racist as their country cousins, but nowhere near as honest about it: "The Guilty White Male's wholesale bashing of whiteness will never change the fact that HE'S WHITE....If he could change his skin color, he probably would, but for now he's stuck. By objectifying whiteness, he's fooled himself into believing he must be something else." In fact, Goad argues, "most white liberals I've known are whiter than me"—"narrow-minded, born to privilege, bad dancers." And according to that logic, Goad probably isn't so white after all. If he could just get over his biological determinism, he'd probably find a little more room for negotiation. What's so useful about an identity anyway—even one of the rednecked sort? When push comes to shove, nobody cares about your family tree, even if it looks more like a briar bush than a plantation magnolia.

The author of *The Redneck Manifesto* knows this. He knows working-class whites find themselves, at this point in history, sitting in the waste dump for the nation's race and class war. Perhaps that's why, by book's end, Goad wants out of the whole bloody mess. His modest proposal: make the "Guilty White Male" just as plausible a

scapegoat as the “Angry White Male,” send the liberals off in chain gangs to pick cotton, and maybe they’ll get a little sun in the process. And what for the rednecks? Biology is destiny, according to Goad. It’s survival of the fittest, and who knows how to rough it better than poor whites? Let them take to the hills, reclaim their hillbilly birthright. “Rural redneck individualism,” he proclaims, his tone growing slightly less cynical. “*Montani semper liberi.*”

But property in Idaho is hard to come by these days. The federal government is swallowing it up, while enclaves of Earthfirsters and white-Zionists try to defend their covenant communities against the encroachment of a much more complicated social reality. As mobilizing as its author’s anger seems, the *Manifesto* serves finally to remind its readers that even an errand into the wilderness can’t build a better whiteness. You just can’t get there from here.

# letters

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**Editors' note.** The good people at Postfun set up a website for Race Traitor. Many people write to us through it, and we write back when we can. Some of the following letters are from the website.

## **CONSTANT VIGILANCE**

My husband and I moved to the west side of Michigan at the time of his retirement from General Motors. It was a totally naive move, as we did not know that this side of the state was so conservative. In the Detroit area I would frequently encounter white people who always assumed that because I was white I felt the same as they did when they mentioned blacks. But at least in Detroit I felt that not all white people were like that. I guess it is only through constant vigilance that our viewpoint can at least be heard.

*S.H.*

## **BREAKING OUT**

I've just finished reading the book you had published in 1996. I have been searching for a way, for a means of becoming free, for understanding who I am. This book has helped me immeasurably. I have white skin, but I can no longer be "white." I have been a member of the white club for 43 years, and here in Minnesota we have a very high degree of feeling as though we are open, progressive and "nice" to all of those who are not "white." However, I have never trusted this feeling and now I need to find a way to break out of this "white lie." Your anthology is helping me to do this. Thank you to all involved.

*Paul W. Bollmeier  
St. Paul, Minn.*

## **THEORETICAL HOME**

I am so supportive of what Race Traitor does. Reading the book has inspired me greatly; I now have a theoretical home for the many thoughts I have harbored for some time. I am actively trying to apply this idea while living in Birmingham, Alabama. The beauty of this idea continues to inspire and influence. Thank You.

*Coe Douglas  
Birmingham, Ala.*

**NOT CLEAR**

I read your website and I'm not sure I'm quite clear on its message. Is the point to suggest that anyone who is fair skinned should be removed from the face of the planet, much akin to Hitler's genocide? Or is it meant that groups like the Ku Klux Klan should be abolished and we should remember that we are all equal? Many of the principles and ideas I do agree with. I happen to be a sixteen year old female of British/Irish and Bohemian descent. I am prejudiced against the prejudice. Does this make me one who should be "abolished" because of the colour of my skin? If so, I believe that you are as bad as the KKK, in your own way. If I have misjudged you or insulted you, my apologies. Thank you for your time.

*Peace,  
Samantha*

**Editors' reply.** Thank you for your letter. To answer your question, we are not against anyone for the color of his or her skin. In our view, whiteness is not a matter of skin color but of social status. We are against conferring social privileges on people because of their color. We believe that to eliminate the privileges of whiteness is to abolish the white race, and that is what we want to do. To offer a parallel, we are against monarchy, but that does not mean we want to kill the king or queen. It simply means we want to get rid of crowns, thrones, inherited titles and the rest of the trappings of royalty. Of course in the past some kings or queens have chosen to die rather than live their lives as ordinary citizens without titles, but that was their choice. You say you are a 16-year-old female of British, Irish, and Bohemian descent. Without whiteness, you could still be all that, and a lot more.

**REPLY**

Thanks for returning my letter. I do understand your point and am all for your ideas.

*Peace, Samantha*

**THE WHITE RACE**

Hello, I'm 16 and I'm not sure I understand what this page is about. When you say "the white race" do you mean only those who use privileges given to them because of their lighter skin? So I may be white, but I may not be in the white "race." I am very much for civil rights and equality, and don't take part in the racial superiority attitude I've seen by other whites; in fact it disgusts me, and I will

tell people not to talk like that around me, and tell them why they shouldn't talk that way. Please explain to me.

*Jason*

**Editors reply.** You've pretty much got the idea. For us, being white is not a skin color but a state of mind, and accepting the privileges of whiteness. We think that if you fight as hard as you can against those privileges, even to the point of risking your own ability to receive them, then you are on your way to becoming unwhite. Please keep in touch. Our aim is to build a movement, and to do that we need the participation of people like you.

### **COOL**

Almost all my friends are African-Americans. When my boyfriend called my friend a "nigger," I got really mad. I kicked him in the knee and told him I didn't want to be with anybody who treated other people like they were lesser. Then I left and never talked to him again. I think a lot of white guys are racist. I don't see as many white women like that. But not all white guys are bad. All my black friends hang around this white guy, Chris, and he's cool. And I'm a white girl and they hang out with me.

*Mia*

### **CAMPUS ABOLITIONISTS**

I am a student at Texas A&M. For a while now I thought I was the only one who had the idea of the abolishment of race, and then read about you and the *Race Traitor* newsletter. I now know that I am not alone and that there are many more like me. Can you please tell me about any readings or internet resources I should look at? Any place either in writing or public to express ideas with others that you know of on this topic? Any help you would give me would be appreciated. I just shudder when people start to talk about "black or white tv shows," or "interracial marriage." To me, these distinctions have never made sense. A&M is a truly friendly and accepting place, and there are possibilities for an abolitionist society. Don't know how far I can get, but for myself and others, I have to try my best.

*Matthew Sezonov*

I learned about RT through a lecture given by Ishmael Reed at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon last winter. I think Ishmael Reed's work is incredible, so much so that I was too shy to go up to

him after the talk and ask for the *Race Traitor* address. Because of this behavior, I left the talk thinking he'd said, "Race Trader." I pondered the significance, possibility and strangeness of trading races, looked for it on the net, told a professor about the dilemma and was finally corrected. I'm starting a group on racism at the University of Oregon. I'm an International Studies graduate student. I'm thinking of calling it, "Bomb the White House." I have a German friend who is doing her PhD in sociology on the construction of whiteness and racism within German feminism. We're going to collaborate a bit. I want to put flyers up in all of the departments on campus because I'm interested in an interdisciplinary format. I hope to watch films, exchange readings, do some public/unsanctioned art and develop a web page for *Race Traitor*-like groups on campuses to build an international alliance. What do you think of this last idea? Do you all have any advice? Thanks for putting out such a great journal.

*Jenifer Vernon*

*Eugene, Ore.*

*jvernon@darkwing.uoregon.edu*

**Editors' reply.** Our main advice to anyone forming an abolitionist group on campus is Be Bold—clearly your inclination given the name you have chosen for the group. Did you see the article on Abolitionism on Campus in issue number seven?

### SUBMISSIONS

I am a graduate student examining whiteness and the environment. An article, tentatively titled "Whiteness and Greenness," has been percolating for some time, and I wondered if you would be interested in something along those lines. If you have any particular needs, please let me know.

*Robert Paton*

*Berkeley, Cal.*

**Editors' reply.** We welcome submissions from readers. You can send material on a floppy disk with just about any program, along with a hard copy, or by email. The article you mention sounds interesting.

### LOGIC, TRUTH, AND REALITY

We are the Indigenous people of this continent who have been made foreigners in our own land. Someone wrote to us recommending

your site. At last some sanity. Sometimes I wondered where logic, truth, and reality had gone when it comes to Europeans. I thought that maybe all of these centuries of invasion, theft, genocide, enslaving, and lies had made you all into some sort of intellectual nazis. But there is hope for the human race with just the little I have read from your pages. May Ometeotl, God, the All-Sacred, keep you in your courage and help you find more knowledge.

*Olin Tezcatlipoca*

<http://www.mexica-movement.org>

### **MUSIC**

It is music to my ears to hear someone saying all of the things your organization is saying. I am proud to be who I am, a Human being, and if that involves being a race traitor, I'm proud to carry the label. Rock On!

*The Plague*

### **STIR FRY**

I just finished reading *Race Traitor*, the anthology. I could not put it down once I started it! I have recommended it to a new group I'm in, here in Sacramento—all of us met at a Stir Fry Seminars diversity workshop. I feel like a race traitor. My husband is African-American, I consider myself Italian (although born in this country) not white, and I am much more comfortable in groups with people of color. Please put me on your mailing list. Thank you for your publication and your inspiration to be an abolitionist.

*B.B. Hill*

*Sacramento, Cal.*

### **DILEMMA**

I have been in the face of the very dilemma you have been writing about for several years now. I and several of my friends founded a S.H.A.R.P. (Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudices) chapter in Tallahassee, Fla. The groups of nazis and Klansmen are very well hidden and make their presence known only when they are sure they will have the upper hand. Fortunately, they never really knew when we would be there. On several occasions, we have had confrontations with one or more of them, usually ending with the police being called.

In Sept of 1996, a bar called the Cow Haus opened around the corner from F.A.M.U., a mostly-black college. This club was our

stomping grounds and several of us worked there for free. This is when our true battles began. It was widely known that the Cow Haus would be a live music venue. This posed a problem for the city council, as many touring bands come through town, attracting various crowds. At least twice a month, we would have a big ska show. Ska, being the biggest threat to racism since the NAACP, is no good for the reason that Tallahassee is a racially biased town. As soon as we opened, certain bars and other places around town were practically boycotted by the students because they were publicized by us as being owned or operated by Klan or Nazis. In one instance, a flyer showing a local tattoo artist with his shirt off almost got him killed. He has Nazi tattoos all over his chest and upper arms, but was in the process of backing out. (So he told me; last I heard, he was in jail in Tampa for a hate crime of some sort.) The tattoo shop that he worked at now does a mere fraction of the business that it once did.

Even for all these successes, I am faced with a problem. How can I justify hating another man for his beliefs, especially when my beliefs are that we should all be seen as equals regardless of beliefs or color or anything else. I mean, I'm sure the local nation of Islam isn't gonna throw their arms around me the next time I see them, and I don't hate them, yet a nazi is this really huge threat to me for some reason. I think that racism in all forms is really shitty, yet I look down on certain members of my own race because they are so proud of their own skin tone. Is that hypocritical? Is it a contradiction? If yes, is it truly justified? Please give me some insight on these matters, if you can. In the meantime, I'll keep fighting for what I feel is right and just. At least I know my enemy is weakened by their backwardness and I am strengthened by it.

*Arlo Neuman*

*SHARP and SPAR (Skinhead Punks Against Racism)*

**Editors' reply.** The writer brings to mind Huck Finn, who was also made to feel guilty for doing the right thing. You could not pick better enemies than those who attack black people on the street and want to build death camps for any they regard as inferior. We admire you for fighting to make the streets safe, and we think you should be proud of yourselves.



**IS THERE ROOM?**

I am a 38-year-old professional white male and I think you are the best thing going in terms of new progressive ideas. You have “hit the nail on the head” exactly as to what needs to be done to solve the problem of race in the USA: White people need to dismantle whiteness. Perfect! My question is: Is there room in the New Abolitionist movement for non-Marxists? I am all for dismantling the white race, but I do not equate that with, necessarily(!), dismantling capitalism. I think that a Marxist analysis of the power structures of a society is valuable, but I do not think it is the only valid perspective. Keep up the good work! You guys give me great hope.

*John Otteson  
Raleigh, N.C.*

**Editors’ reply.** As the song says, “All God’s children got a place in the choir.” In our opinion, the New Abolitionist Movement needs the participation of Marxists, Christians, Buddhists, nudists, and everybody else who wants to eliminate the privileges of the white skin. The editors of RT have learned not to judge people by their labels.

**ELATED**

More power to the Race Traitors. As an activist of color, I am elated that there are formerly “white” people dealing with the structural issues of racism and confronting the bullshit of identity politics.

*Gopal  
Berkeley, Cal.*

**SKEPTICAL**

As an African-American man, I was puzzled and interested in the premise that the authors explored in *Race Traitor*. It is interesting to hear “white” people discuss and explore “whiteness” and its effects on humanity. However, the book fails to deal with the important fact that most “whites” enjoy being “white.” The average “white” man or woman is made to feel better about him/herself because of exaltation of “whites” in this society.

The authors fail to provide any motivation as to why any “white” would purposefully give up this right (if they could?). “White” supremacy in America inherently says that if you’re “white” you’re smarter, better-looking, more honest, etc. than any

person of color. The privileges of being white are so numerous and so ingrained in the lives of “whites” that most “whites” don’t consider them as privileges but rights. The book said that only a small percentage of “whites” would be required to topple the caste system. However, it seems to me that getting a small percentage of whites is as difficult as getting the entire group. Let me know what you think.

*B.W.*

**Editors’ reply.** Only the person wearing the shoes can tell if they hurt. For whatever reason, there have always been so-called whites who were not happy with their membership in the white club. Our aim is to bring those people together with each other and with all opponents of racial oppression, and break apart the system. There is good reason to be skeptical about our chances of winning, and it makes no sense for us to argue about it. All we ask from those who share our goal is their good wishes.

#### **DOUBTS ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Your article, “Until It Hurts” [RT5], expressed ideas I firmly held to be true. However, I subsequently had a discussion with a couple of friends, during which they made me seriously question the actual benefits of affirmative action. Their opinion was that, number one, it actually does not do its beneficiaries any favours (gratuities do not foster meaningful individual advancement, and are even patronizing) and number two, the role of the state should be to ensure that no one gets refused opportunities simply on the basis of their race, sex, sexual orientation, etc., but should go no further. They maintained that no real improvements would be made through affirmative action, and that the only thing we can and should do to rectify the situation is to create a climate in which the oppressed are free to recover. I am having trouble with this. It seems incredibly callous for those who had and still have the power to accept no responsibility in remedying what harm they caused, but is intervention the answer?

*J.M.*

**Editors’ reply.** Affirmative action, like any reform under existing conditions, is necessarily limited in what it can accomplish. In general, our complaint is not that there has been too much of it, but that there has not been enough. If your friends are genuinely concerned with breaking down the system of white supremacy and not merely with protecting their place in it, let them make a list of all

the advantages that have come their way because they are white, and strike hard against them. When they have eliminated them all, we can discuss dropping the demand for affirmative action for black people and other victims of racial oppression.

### **ANOTHER CORNER**

A brilliant intervention. It would be interesting to see the response of Australians to your ideas, particularly given the public race debates we are currently witnessing. Race is profoundly significant yet stunningly misunderstood in Australia, both in relation to Asian immigration and the Native Title justice struggles of Aboriginal peoples. Your point of view is definitely an amazing provocation to anyone trying to grapple with social issues down in our confused corner of the Asia-Pacific.

*Daniel Cass  
Australian Green Party*

### **QUESTIONING APPROACH**

I am a student at Sydney University, involved with anti-racist groups in the Students' Representative Council. I found *Race Traitor* extremely intriguing. I had never read anything similar to it. You used the phrase "abolish the white race" and argued that this was a better stand to take than "smash racism." "Smash Racism" is actually the name of a group I'm involved with. Racism has been an increasingly pressing concern for student activists because of the rise of "racist" and conservative phenomena in Australia. Perhaps you've heard of Pauline Hansen and her cronies—the "One Nation" Party. Reading your articles has made me question the effectiveness of our approach. I can see the tension you point out between fighting for equal treatment/opportunities for all regardless of colour, and implicitly maintaining the assumption of the natural existence of "race." Reading your page has made what I have always assumed seem rather weak.

What do you think is the best way to get rid of "racism" and its attendant stereotypes on campus? Most students, especially and not surprisingly white ones, insist that racism is not a problem. White Australians already feel threatened that their privileges, "the rights they've worked so hard for," are being corroded by new immigrants who "live off welfare" and create "ghettos" and don't assimilate. How do you go about telling these people that their privileges derive from their membership in the "white club" and that when you look at

the big picture it really is inhumane? My worry is that it will go against white people's instincts for self-preservation.

I realize that this is probably not the first time you have heard these concerns, but I would greatly appreciate your thoughts about a future tack our "Smash Racism" group could take.

*H.T.*

*Sydney, Australia*

**Editors' reply.** The essential difference between anti-racism and abolitionism is that the former focuses on explicit "racists" and policy initiatives of the Right—things like California's Proposition 209 and the One Nation Party in Australia, whereas abolitionism focuses on the way the mainstream institutions of the society reproduce racial oppression through their "normal" operation, without explicit racial ideology. In this country the public schools, operating according to so-called race-blind criteria, are doing more harm to black people than the KKK and the "far Right," and the same is true for the welfare department and the medical industry, not to mention the criminal justice system. We are no experts on Australia, but the same must be true there. After all, haven't the Conservative and Labour Parties been ruling there for decades and working together to build an entire social structure of white supremacy—long before Pauline Hansen came along? We believe that it is necessary to challenge the mainstream institutions that reproduce racial oppression, utilizing legislative initiatives, legal challenges, direct action, and any other means that will be effective. Yes, such a course will go against white people's racial interests, more than "anti-racism" does. But if people who now think of themselves as "white" can imagine being something else, and act on that dream, then they will discover a range of possibilities far greater than mere "whiteness," which must be unsatisfactory, like any attempt to build an identity based on what one is not.

#### **FAILURE OF THE NATION STATE**

In Australia there's a specificity about national guilt in relation to Aboriginal people that is above and beyond issues such as multiculturalism. Actually, they try to disguise the issue behind questions of colour, culture, ethnicity, etc., and make Aborigines just another minority rather than the living embodiment of the nation state's failure of legitimacy. To that extent, it resembles the situation with Native Americans, except that there isn't a local equivalent to African Americans. (Our slaves were "white" convicts, so emancipation "worked.") In an odd sort of way, Aborigines (who are

also called Black) span roles that in the U.S. are divided between Native Americans and African Americans. Rather than a one-drop rule, here we have had the reverse, a genocidal program of assimilation that has sought to eliminate Aboriginal people by "breeding them white." Policies toward Native Americans have, of course, been very similar.

P.W.

*Melbourne, Australia*

### **RESTORED HOPE**

*Race Traitor* brings together the most profound statements I have ever read put together by people who choose not to be white. You have restored my hope for what human beings could evolve to on this planet. Please put me down for a sub and send me all the back issues. Use the extra money to send copies to women, children, and men in prison.

*Sapphire*

*New York City*

**Editors' note.** Sapphire is the author of *American Dreams* and *Push*.

**Editors' note.** The second part of Loren Goldner's article, "Race and the Enlightenment," will appear in the next issue. The first part, "From Anti-Semitism to White Supremacy," appeared in number seven.

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WASH

LIST

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MARKET

LIE

HUMOR

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JACK

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The Race Traitor web site mirrors the journal explaining what we believe, featuring articles and editorials from the journal, information about back issues, and providing useful links and resources. The site also features the book *Race Traitor* with links to purchasing information.

A simple navigation bar allows you to easily traverse the site. Text and image artwork in the margins illustrates the subtleties of issues involved. The example on this page refers to color and language; blackmail, whitewash, etc.



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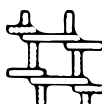
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# ROUTLEDGE

## **Race Traitor**

Edited by  
**Noel Ignatiev**  
and **John Garvey**

"*Race Traitor* is among the strongest, funniest and most politically charged critiques of whiteness to appear since slave storytellers spun out the "Master and John" tales. Throughout its brief existence as a just-above-ground journal, it has combined penetrating articles on the history and sociology of race with inspired manifest, telling cultural commentaries and frontline reports from the struggle to abolish whiteness."

— David R. Roediger, *University of Minnesota*, author of *The Wages of Whiteness*

Working from the premise that the white race has been socially constructed, *Race Traitor* is a call for the disruption of white conformity and the formation of a New Abolitionism to dissolve it. In a time when white supremacist thinking seems to be gaining momentum, *Race Traitor* brings together voices ranging from tenured university professors to skinheads and prison inmates to discuss the "white question" in America. Through popular culture, current events, history and personal life stories, the essays analyze the forces that hold the white race together and those that promise to tear it apart.

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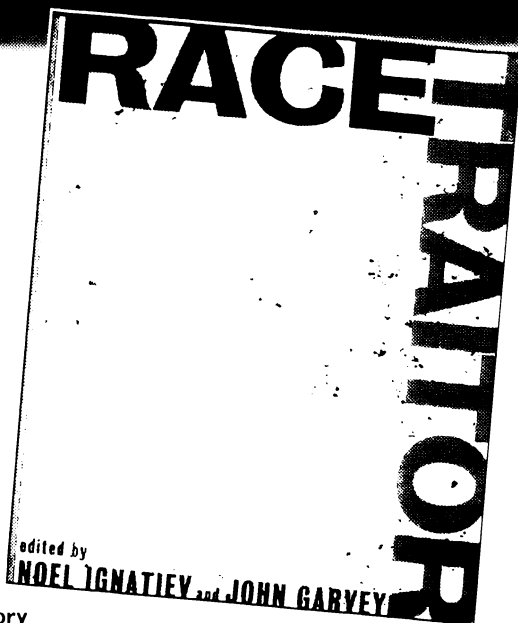
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# WHAT WE BELIEVE

The white race is a historically constructed social formation. It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, that is, to abolish the privileges of the white skin. Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

**Race Traitor** aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

The editors publish in *Race Traitor* that which they think will help to build a community of readers. Editorial opinions are expressed in editorials and unsigned replies to letters.

**journal of the  
new abolitionism**