

BLACK PANTHER HIGH: RACIAL VIOLENCE, STUDENT
ACTIVISM, AND THE POLICING
OF PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper will argue that the school district of Philadelphia built up its security program along a very distinct pathway that was largely unrelated to any real needs protection. This program played out in two distinct phases. In the late 1950s, black and white students clashed in the neighborhoods surrounding schools over integration. Black parents called upon the city to provide community policing to protect their children in the communities surrounding schools. As the 1960s progressed and the promised civil rights gains from city liberals failed to materialize, students turned increasingly to Black Nationalist and black power ideology. When this protest activity moved inside their schoolhouses as blacks simultaneously began moving into white neighborhoods, white Philadelphians began to feel threatened in their homes and schools. As black student activism became louder and more militant, white parents called upon the police to protect their children inside the school house, as opposed to the earlier calls for community policing by black parents. White parents, the PPD, and conservative city politicians pushed the district to adopt tougher disciplinary policies to ham string this activism, to which black parents vehemently objected. The district resisted demands to police the schools through the 1960s until finally caving to political pressure in the 1970s.

Data and research was pulled from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Local newspapers as well as the papers from a variety of community sources proved to be invaluable. Several pieces of secondary literature, particularly Mathew Countryman's Up South served as major guideposts in the construction of the narrative.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

**“We must face the fact that Philadelphia is not the
'City of Brotherly Love,' for we have a race problem
here as deep as anything found in Alabama.”**

Reverend Henry Nichols, Philadelphia Board of Education, 1969¹

By the early 1960s, the Philadelphia school district served nearly 250,000 students spread out over 280 schools. The district had the largest average class size and the smallest proportion of certified full-time teachers of the nation's ten largest cities.² Black students in these schools during the 1960's and 1970s enjoyed the type of protest culture usually associated with college campuses like Berkley or the University of Michigan. In the decades following the massive upheavals in the schools, the school district of Philadelphia began initiating massive and powerful security measures inside the school buildings.

This paper will argue that the school district of Philadelphia built up its security program along a very distinct pathway that was largely unrelated to any real needs protection. This program, which continues today, played out in two distinct phases. After the forced desegregation of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, black and white students clashed in the neighborhoods surrounding schools over the future of interracial education in their own city. During these days, black parents called upon the city to

¹ Wilder, John “School Progress Crippled by Passionate Confusion” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 11, 1969, Accessed January 31, 2013. www.proquest.com

² Levenstein, Lisa “A Movement Without Marches,” Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009, Pg. 128

provide community policing to protect their children in the communities surrounding schools. As the 1960s progressed and the promised civil rights gains from the city's liberal coalition failed to materialize, students turned increasingly to Black Nationalist and black power ideology. Black students and their adult allies demanded more black teachers and administrators, higher quality education for black children, better black history programs, and loosening of dress codes to allow African garb and afro hairstyles. When this protest activity moved inside their schoolhouses as blacks simultaneously began moving into white neighborhoods, white Philadelphians began to feel threatened in their homes and schools. As black student activism became louder and more militant, white parents called upon the police to protect their children inside the school house, as opposed to the earlier calls for community policing by black parents. White parents, the PPD, and conservative city politicians pushed the district to adopt tougher disciplinary policies to ham string this activism, to which black parents vehemently objected. The district resisted demands to police the schools through the 1960s until finally caving to political pressure in the 1970s.

Under the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, the city's formative governing document, the school district of Philadelphia was and continues to be run independently from the rest of the civic government. Although the city council has frequently elected to award additional funds to the schools, the school district was in no way under the city government's authority.³ Under this type of structure, the PPD was forced to treat the Philadelphia school district as it would any other private organization. Police could not

³ City of Philadelphia Home Rule Charter April 17th, 1951, Section XII
http://www.seventy.org/files/philadelphia_home_rule_charter.pdf, accessed June 4th, 2013

enter schools without a warrant or probable cause, and have been forced to leave security and safety up to the district to determine as an in-house matter.

This project falls somewhat between several rather large sets of literature, but represents a relatively unmined topic for historians. Most investigations into school policing have been undertaken by criminal justice, criminology, or educational theorists. These studies, although they are numerous, do not fully unpack the history of school security and policing, and typically investigate best practices in contemporary discipline policies, what motivates children to break rules, or current fallout from school security policy. Of primary importance to this project is the vast collection of literature on the mid-20th century urban crisis, civil rights and riot literature, as well as the overlapping historical and sociological investigation into the American carceral state.

In her 2008 dissertation, Teresa Saramiento-Brooks's investigated the school-to-prison pipeline by looking at contemporary zero-tolerance policies in schools and to determine whether violent and non-violent student misbehavior and the preventative measure imposed by schools had any correlation with the presence of school police officers, and if it differed by school location or school type. No previous study had investigated how school-based police officers affected school violence, student behavior or academic achievement, or how the presence of police affect the educational environment within a school. Violent offenses are very rare, but school disciplinary incidents are common, which leads to the popular perception that school violence is rampant.

Her empirical study of schools across the United States found no evidence that school security officers have reduced or prevented school violence. She argues that previous studies were flawed, and could not properly assign causality to the presence of an officer, even though several have attempted to do so. Her study found no correlation between school location and the presence of law enforcement; schools in rural, urban, and suburban areas were all equally likely to employ such personnel. However, Schools with higher enrollment were more likely to be assigned an officer, as were schools with a larger percentage of minority students. Her study found that zero-tolerance policies have proven to be flawed and harm overall student achievement. The school climate is negatively affected, such policies make schools less safe than those without and are the primary catalyst of the school-to-juvenile justice pipeline. Removing students from the educational environment results in a loss of learning, and administrator focus is diverted away from academic achievement and towards discipline. She determined that “the rationale for determining the use of school-based law enforcement officers is unclear.”⁴

Kathleen Nolan's 2011 book Police in the Hallways applies Teresa Saramiento-Brooks's work by taking a sociological approach to a single school in the Bronx which she code names Urban Public High School (UPHS). The school she began studying in 2004 had been recently assigned been assigned 16 police officers and an additional 20 safety agents who were all tasked with maintaining order. She refers to the atmosphere inside of the school as a culture of control, which she sees as a reflection of the greater American society's culture of control. After the 36 new security personnel were installed,

⁴ Teresa Saramiento-Brooks, Dissertation, “The School-to-Juvenile Justice Pipeline: Factors Associated with the Use of School-Based Law Enforcement Officers by the Public Schools” Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service, 2008. Print

school faculty and personnel had to defer to the officers. As a result, even minor incidents became police matters.

In 1998, New York Mayor Giuliani placed the NYPD in charge of school security. Youth gun violence peaked and leveled out nationally in 1993, yet the juvenile incarceration rate has considerably risen since. As the city rolled out an increased school policing program targeting certain schools in 2003, including the school Nolan studied, the media actively helped to construct these schools as dangerous places in need of extra law enforcement. Educational policy has become obsessed with accountability and high-stakes standardized testing. She argues that the drive and attitude to hold poorly performing schools, teachers, and administrators accountable has also been easily applied to 'out of control' and misbehaving students.⁵

Mary Burton's 1987 dissertation from the University of Hawaii had three aims: to document the changes in professional literature from 1940-1980, place those changes within the broader historical context of social, political, and economic changes in American society, and to examine the changing attitudes towards children as reflected in this study of school discipline. She argues that American political, social, and economic changes over the period studied were reflected in professional education literature which showed an increased concern for school discipline. She argues that educators shifted from discipline as their primary concern and towards controlling student behavior within the classroom. She argues that school discipline policy has not developed out of the

⁵ Nolan, Kathleen Police in the Hallways: Discipline in an Urban High School Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011

specific needs of children, rather disciplinary policy and practice have been imposed to meet the general needs of society.⁶

Civil rights historiography is also critical to contextualizing this thesis. In her introduction to Freedom North, Jeanne Theoharis explains succinctly the dominant historiography of civil rights as it had developed up to the book's 2003 publication. The civil rights movement had been understood as dichotomies of South and North, violence and nonviolence, *de facto* and *du jure* segregation, and movements before and after a turning point in 1965. Northern segregation was not labelled with “whites only” signs as it was in the South, but still operated on a strict racial hierarchy with whites atop and blacks at the bottom. Northern blacks were just as disenfranchised as their southern counterparts, but the mechanisms of segregation were not as obvious or open to scrutiny. What is more, Southern protests, like the infamous bus boycott, are given a moral authority that northern protests are not.⁷

Published in 2001, Heather Thompson's Whose Detroit? investigates civil rights activism in the Motor City, and more specifically its unionized automotive plants. Thompson argues explicitly that cities in the North were forced to deal with the same types of racial conflict and turmoil as the South after the Great Migration during World War II, and that postwar racial conflict was equally tumultuous in northern and southern cities. While Thompson begins her analysis of civil rights struggles in the 1940 and stretches the movement into the 1980s, civil rights to postwar urban decline and the urban crisis are explicitly linked as interconnected processes. She states that one literature

⁶ Alice Blanford Burton, Mary Ed. D. “The Disciplining of American School Children: 1940-1980. An Historical Study” Diss. University of Hawaii 1987. Print

⁷ Eds. Theoharis, Jeanne & Komozi Woodard, Komozi Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980 New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

focuses on how urban whites became disenchanted with liberalism due to civil rights and the war on poverty, showing that black militants were key political players. Another historiography, which Thompson gives higher value to, traces the roots of urban crisis into the 1950s, shows why whites became so hostile to great society uplift programs and civil rights, and why so many poor urban residents rioted.

Thompson traces the struggle for control of Detroit city politics by focusing on competition between four groups; white racial conservatives, progressive whites, black militants, and the black middle class, the latter three having formed a coalition by the late 1960s. By 1970, blacks in the city and the factories began to demand the as yet unfulfilled promises of the civil rights movement. This, Thompson argues, was the motivation for a growing radicalism among black militants who began to demand control of civic, and, which in the city of Detroit could be argued was and still is more important, United Auto Workers union leadership positions, forming parallel black radical worker organizations within the union. “Detroit,” she posits, “arguably more than cities usually thought to epitomize the radical 1960s, such as Berkley, witnessed militant left-wing activism in virtually every realm of civic and labor life.”⁸

Mathew Countryman's 2006 work Up South investigate the black freedom struggle in Philadelphia beginning in the 1940s and continuing through the 1970s. Countryman breaks this time period down into three distinct eras, beginning with the passage of fair housing legislation in 1948 and Democratic victories in 1951, who took their victory as a mandate to fight against corruption and for urban renewal. The lack of

⁸ Thompson, Heather, Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press) 2001, Pg. 7

tangible improvements in the lives of Black Philadelphians during these years led to a second era from roughly the late 1950s through the early 1960s. During this era, local leaders adopted black nationalist traditions or and challenged civil rights liberals, claiming that the black middle- and upper-class leadership was out of touch with the plight of the average black Philadelphian. Successes from the second era led to the third period, where black neighborhoods became increasingly militant. Grassroots activism flourished during third period, where black women led reform and urban renewal campaigns.⁹

With a few notable exceptions, historians have really only begun to investigate and analyze the origins and contours of the American penal system. Today, the American carceral system sprawls across the nation, a hungry giant that has consumed millions of Americans, mostly men of color from urban neighborhoods. There are currently 2.2 million Americans under the direct control of the state serving time as prison inmates, with an additional 7 million under state supervision through various forms of parole, probation, or short term time in county and city jail cells.¹⁰ While issues of crime and punishment have long been present in any society, the particular form of mass incarceration that is employed by the united states is a relatively new phenomenon, with explosive growth in both the number of prisoners and the prisons which house them having occurred only within the last forty years.

To understand the American carceral state, it must be looked at under the *longue duree*, beginning with the criminalization of black bodies during the Reconstruction Era.

⁹ Countryman, Matthew Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006

¹⁰ Thompson, Heather, "Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation: Why Mass Incarceration Matters in Postwar America," *Journal of American History*, December 2010, pp. 703-734, p. 703

Mary Ellen Curtin's 2000 publication, Black Prisoners and their World, Alabama, 1865-1900, as well as *Wall Street Journal* Atlanta bureau chief Douglas Blackmon's 2008 book Slavery by Another Name, focus on the use of leasing prisoners to private companies in Alabama's "black belt" counties, the area within the state with the highest densities of freed African Americans following the Civil War.

Both works posit that, in the wake of emancipation, Alabama and other states in the post-Reconstruction South used their prison systems to continue enforcement of the existing racial order. Prior to and during the Civil War, Alabama's prisoner population was 99% white. Following the war, however, African Americans became the majority of the prison population. Both of these authors connect the nineteenth century Alabama prison system to the prison industrial complex, yet Curtin does it the most explicitly. She sees one long narrative arc, connecting slavery to convict leasing to Jim Crow segregation to the racial disparity of late twentieth century mass incarceration. Blackmon and Curtin both argue that the state's use of the lease was not driven simply by economic means, but as a means of continuing slavery, as is most readily evident in Blackmon's title. Following emancipation, the state of Alabama passed a variety of laws aimed at curtailing black freedom, from vagrancy and loitering laws, to changing jobs without the permission of one's employer. Such laws were aimed explicitly at curtailing black freedom of movement and suppressing economic and social improvement.¹¹

Khalil Gibran Muhammad's 2010 The Condemnation of Blackness focuses on the years from the Progressive era to the First World War. During the early years of the

¹¹ Blackmon, Douglas A, Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II, New York: Harper Books, 2008
Curtin, Mary Ellen, Black Prisoners and Their World, Alabama, 1865-1900, The University of Virginia Press, 2000

twentieth century, crime was seen as a problem that plagued not only African Americans, but was rampant among European-born non-Anglo white immigrant communities, as was evident in federal crime statistic reports which separated categories of white native born, white foreign born, and black. Gibran argues that fundamental notions of criminality were applied differently to white immigrants and blacks. When even liberal reformers spoke of crime and criminals, they saw it as a problem of social failures and a lack of resources when their subject was white immigrants. When these same people spoke about African American crime and criminals, however, the problem was endemic to the race.¹²

Vesla Weaver's 2007 article "Frontlash: Race and the development of Punitive Criminal Policy," from the journal *Studies in American Political Development* seeks to answer the question of why America's prisons became so much larger and blacker in the second half of the 20th century. She argues that, in the wake of civil rights gains, the very same people who opposed civil rights gains were forced to adopt the new discourse, yet still managed to push racist policies, but in new coded language of fighting crime. While the existing literature typically analyzes liberalizing civil rights and repressive social controls as two independent processes, Weaver explains them as two interrelated processes.

To discuss this process, Weaver introduces the concept of the frontlash, which is quite different from the predominating backlash explanation. Metaphorically, a backlash is similar to a rubber band stretched too far; pushed too far to the left by liberal excesses,

¹² Gibran, Khalil Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010

middle-class whites snapped back to the right led by conservative law-and-order politicians. It is a conservative reaction to maintain the status quo. A frontlash, on the other hand, is preemptive, innovative, and strategic. Like water that hits a dam and must find a new route, conservative opponents of the Civil Rights movement regrouped under the new discourse and changed course.

Key to this frontlash is the way in which conservative politicians, like failed 1964 presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, attached race and civil rights to violent street crime. Weaver sees the way that crime was injected into politics during this period as another crucial time of race formation due to the ways in which criminality was tied so closely to African Americans. Just as the first civil rights victories were being won in the mid-1960s with passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, conservatives began to paint racial unrest as criminal in and of itself in a two stage process. First, conservatives stoked fears of lawless mobs of wild eyed black men storming into their neighborhoods, painting race riots in the Urban North as products of the cities' own racial generosity. This lawlessness, they argued, could only beget more violence and law breaking, and the predominantly nonviolent Civil Rights movement became connected to violence in the public mind. Once conservatives underwrote violence into the Civil Rights movement, they reversed the connection they just made, and argued that civil and racial unrest in the urban North was not due to legitimate complaints, but simply waves of street violence.¹³

¹³ Weaver, Velsa, "Frontlash: Race and the development of Punitive Criminal Policy," *Studies in American Political Development*, 21 (fall 2007), 230-265

Michelle Alexander argues in her 2011 The New Jim Crow that “like Jim Crow, [the prison system] helps to define the meaning and significance of race in America.”¹⁴ Mass incarceration, while seemingly race neutral on paper, is not just another example of a large institution that suffers from racial bias, but is actually a well designed system that has created and enforced a racial caste system over the last forty years that is on par with Jim Crow. Upon first glance, most policies that create this caste system are so well disguised as to seem unbiased. The war on drugs, for example, has been typically seen not a war against African American neighborhoods, but a response to the explosion of crack that hit American city streets in the mid 1980s. Alexander points to the fact that, although crack did come to national attention after its explosion of use in 1985, President Reagan began the drug war in 1982 at a time when drug use was actually on the decline. What is more, crack cocaine, a drug typically used by low-income blacks, is punished up to ten times more punitively than powdered cocaine, a drug typically used by wealthy white professionals.

Heather Thompson argues in her 2010 *Journal of American History* article, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters,” that any historian studying the postwar period must include the impact of mass incarceration into their analysis to accurately understand the period. Key to her understanding is the criminalization of urban spaces since the civil rights movement. Thompson articulates the criminalization of black spaces as directly corresponding to black assertions of equal citizenship nationally. She points to the fact that currently, although white students are seven or eight times more likely to use hard

¹⁴ Alexander, Michelle, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness, New York: The New Press, 2010 Pg. 18

drugs than their black classmates, black urban spaces are policed much more heavily than white suburban and rural spaces. For those white students who are unlucky enough to get arrested and charged, they are systematically less likely to be convicted, and those that are receive less punitive sentences than a black counterpart would. She argues that it is this criminalization of once prosperous urban spaces that has led to the postindustrial collapse and decay of the United States' once flourishing cities. She cites the example of Detroit's utter collapse following the 1967 race riots. Once deprived of the resources of the city's young working men thanks to incarceration, the communities and neighborhoods that relied on them collapsed, spawning more crime.¹⁵

Jonathan Simon discusses the way that crime control ideology has created a much more controlling society in his 2009 book Governing Through Crime. As politicians have embraced crime as a means of extending direct control over society, crime control has spread laterally and become institutionalized and embraced in any number of settings. Through exploitation of the electorate's fear of seemingly endless fears of victimization, crime is a significant strategic issue for politicians on both the left and right. Particularly in the wake of 9/11, officials in various institutions and settings are not scrutinized if they can claim to be doing crime prevention work, leading to claims of rights and freedom violations being ignored.

Simon argues that furthermore, the invocation of crime is more than enough to legitimate a host of other agendas. Legislation that makes the assault of a pregnant woman that kills the fetus an independent criminal act is more about abortion and pro-life

¹⁵ Thompson, Heather, "Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation: Why Mass Incarceration Matters in Postwar America," *Journal of American History*, December 2010, pp. 703-734

politics than it is about crime control. This legislation gives support to pro-life forces on both sides of the partisan issue because it is sold as being about crime. Finally, Simon argues that crime and war have become the only vocabulary through which we can discuss the correction of societal ills. From wars on drugs, crime, and terror, discourses and metaphors for crime and criminal justice have become visible parts of a host of institutions. It is easy to move from concerns about juvenile crime, to policing the schools, to seeing academic failure as a crime for which somebody must be held accountable.¹⁶

My thesis will use the school district of Philadelphia as a concrete example to elaborate upon many of the phenomenon shown in the literature. It will answer many of the questions raised by the educational literature and give a history behind contemporary conditions. It will solve Saramiento-Brooks's question as to why the use of school-based law enforcement officers is unclear. It will show that Mary Burton is indeed correct that school policy is based upon general societal fears, not the real needs of children. It will also give concrete local context to black activists losing faith in racial liberals and the promised civil rights gains which they failed to deliver upon. It will also show a linking of civil rights activism with crime and danger, and a shift to race-neutral language in the later years studied. It will extend the work of these scholars, particularly Alexander, by giving a concrete local example of the ways in which policing and punitive discipline were motivated by racist ideology, played out along unequal lines, and resulted in far heavier punishment of black students than white.

¹⁶ Simon, Jonathan, Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY DAYS

**“There will be no more waiting;
we have waited long enough,”**

Jerome Henderson, Roxborough High Student, 1969¹⁷

In 1956, the school board issued a new policy which actively advocated the increased use of student expulsion, a punishment which had been utilized just once during the previous fifteen school years. After only one semester under the new rule, five students were banished from Philadelphia public schools¹⁸. The author of one editorial for *The Bulletin* praised the decision, but said it was only a start. The author stated that the “maintenance of discipline is an increasingly difficult job, and is particularly tough among pupils who are slow to learn. Many of them remain in school only because of the compulsory attendance law.”¹⁹ He explained that this sudden increase in delinquency was caused by “the changing nature of the city's population, partly due to increased migration from the South.”²⁰ The board also cited “the changing population of the city and the higher birth rate” as motivation for the new rule.²¹

By “changing population,” *The Bulletin* and the school board undoubtedly meant an increasingly black population. Like other major urban centers in northern states,

¹⁷ “Pupil Boycott in Second Day at Roxborough; Faculty is Accused of 'Dragging Feet' on Black History” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 16th, 1969

¹⁸ Riley, George H. “Schools Adopt Tough Policy with Rowdies” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 14th, 1957

¹⁹ “Not the Full Answer” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 15th, 1957

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Riley, George H. “Schools Adopt Tough Policy with Rowdies” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 14th, 1957

Philadelphia became home to a massive wave of black migrants moving in from the South following the end of the Second World War. In 1930, Philadelphia's black population was a mere 11.3% and increased slightly to 13% by 1940. The black population then quickly spiked, with 18.2% by 1950, 26.4% in 1960, and 33.6% in 1970.²² When Philadelphia's black population was negligible, the district used the expulsion only in one extreme case. Once the population had noticeably darkened, however, the school was suddenly perceived set upon by rowdy, unwilling students who could only be dealt with by being removed from the district.

On paper, black Philadelphia in the 1950s had a bright future. Under a new inter-racial coalition, liberals swept to power and unseated the Republican machine which had run the city for decades. The coalition government passed a new Home Rule Charter, which reduced the size of the city council and increased the power of the mayor. The coalition tasked black attorney Sadie Alexander with writing into the new charter specific provisions against racism in municipal employment, services, and contracts, and shifted city jobs from political patronage positions controlled by the city's parties to an independent civil services board. Black civil rights advocates hoped that the equality written into the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter would allow black participation in the gains of the now booming postwar economy.²³

Although Philadelphia was the first city charter to explicitly ban racial and religious discrimination in public sector employment, racial bias dictated the social order.

²² "Population Division Working Paper – Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990 – U.S. Census Bureau" U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Created February 2005 by Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, Accessed April 2nd, 2013 www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.html

²³ Countryman, Mathew Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 13

While the City of Brotherly Love may not have had whites-only signs over the bathroom doors, this was only because deeply entrenched housing patterns made them unnecessary. A 1958 investigation found only two non-whites living among the 4202 housing units surveyed in the high-end center city district.²⁴ According to the 1960 Census, 75% of all dilapidated housing units in the city were occupied by black residents.²⁵ Even with so many safe guards and anti-discrimination laws in place, little had changed under the new Home Rule Charter after a nearly a decade of liberal coalition leadership.

Under the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, schools are funded based upon the property taxes of a local school's boundary areas.²⁶ This led to a situation in which rich neighborhoods had rich schools and poor neighborhoods had poor schools. In 1959, at seven of the nine schools with per-capita expenditures of \$250 per student, the majority of the student body was white, while all fifteen schools below \$250 per student served black students.²⁷ Such a system further entrenched segregated housing patterns and discourages would-be urban trail blazers from moving into and gentrifying lower income areas. Under a system in which every school receives equal funding per capita, working- and middle-class white families may have been tempted by cheap housing to move into a black neighborhood. Under the Philadelphia system, even the most liberal of whites would be hard pressed to sacrifice their child's education for more affordable housing.

Some of the most violent and explosive days in the school district of Philadelphia

²⁴ Countryman, Mathew Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 68

²⁵ Levenstein, Lisa "A Movement Without Marches," Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009, P. 5

²⁶ City of Philadelphia Home Rule Charter April 17th, 1951, Section XII, Chapter 3, Section 12-305 http://www.seventy.org/files/philadelphia_home_rule_charter.pdf, accessed June 29th, 2013

²⁷ Levenstein, Lisa "A Movement Without Marches," Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009, P. 128

arose in the days following the 1957 forced desegregation of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. Students in Philadelphia were active participants in what newspapers throughout the city referred to as “the Little Rock crisis.”²⁸ Blaming “the southern situation” for tensions in Philadelphia and other northern cities, Mayor Richardson Dilworth called the racial tensions in the city the worst that they had been since the 1920s.²⁹

Students in the city's school system, particularly those attending schools in South Philadelphia, were keenly aware of the struggle taking place south of the Mason-Dixon. Throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1960s, these schools were engulfed in a near-constant state of racial tension, and emotions ran particularly high during the Little Rock Crisis. Located near the Italian Market neighborhood, Bok Technical High at 10th and Washington Avenue, and South Philadelphia High at Broad and Snyder, were two schools with predominantly black student bodies located in a nearly all-white area of town.³⁰

Driven by conflicting views of how to deal with segregation in their own city, fighting broke out among students for several weeks surrounding the turmoil in Little Rock. Police commissioner Thomas J. Gibbons described the atmosphere in Philadelphia schools as “explosive.” He explicitly credited Little Rock for the rising tensions, along with “rumors which fly from mouth to mouth and get kids excited.”³¹ Police received

²⁸ “Youth Fights Erupt Anew; Break Out Near South Phila. High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 25th, 1957

“Boy, 14, Hurt in School Fight in Overbrook; 2 Youth Battles Reported in South Philadelphia” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 26th, 1957

²⁹ “Mayor Calls Racial Tension Worst in 30 Years” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 17th, 1957

³⁰ Countryman, Mathew *Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 237

³¹ “Youth Fights Erupt Anew; Break Out Near South Phila. High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September

dozens of reports based on such false rumors throughout the week.³² On the 24th of September, “wild demonstrations” erupted at South Philadelphia High. The following day, 25 policemen assisted with herding students in and out of the building at dismissal time. Despite the extra security, a number of fist fights broke out between white and black students in the surrounding neighborhood.³³ Police officers narrowly averted several “near riots” throughout the week.³⁴ One black student was hospitalized after the bus he was riding on was pelted with bottles and rocks, sending shards of glass flying. The police presence remained high as four precincts swarmed the neighborhood with 250 officers.³⁵ According to Commissioner Gibbons, the battalion was there simply to direct traffic.³⁶

South Philadelphia High was not the only school to receive extra police support during these days of conflict. Police conducted patrols in the areas around city schools for the duration of that week at most high schools.³⁷ Officers chased away “a score of white youths” from South Philadelphia's St. Maria Goretti High on September 26th. Students were held at the Catholic school for an additional 20 minutes past their dismissal time as they waited for the mob to disperse.³⁸ That same day, 25 black and 12 white students battled at West Philadelphia's Overbrook High during their lunch hour, sending

25th, 1957

³² “Boy, 14, Hurt in School Fight in Overbrook; 2 Youth Battles Reported in South Philadelphia” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 26th, 1957

³³ “Youth Fights Erupt Anew; Break Out Near South Phila. High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 25th, 1957

³⁴ “Red Car Patrols Keep All Quiet on Teen Front” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 28th, 1957

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ “Police Blanket S. Phila to Halt Further Rioting” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27th, 1957

³⁷ “Red Car Patrols Keep All Quiet on Teen Front” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 28th, 1957

³⁸ “2 Boys Seized in Pupil Attack; Victim Hurt in Gang Fight at Overbrook” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 27th, 1957

white student Joseph Della Barba to the hospital.³⁹ Officer Thomas Chisolm of the Juvenile Aid Bureau questioned the students involved and arrested the two students who hospitalized the young man.⁴⁰

Fighting in black sections of North Philadelphia proved to be particularly brutal.⁴¹ Police officers arrested ten students after fights in the neighborhood sent three white students to the hospital on September 29th. Among the injured was 15-year-old William Fluck, whose spinal cord was partially severed. According to *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, one of Philadelphia's more popular daily newspapers, all of the fights appeared to be random attacks by groups of young black men upon white passers-by. The article dedicated the bulk of its space to describing the three white victims.⁴² It mentioned a black boy who was beat up and hospitalized by six white youths, but he was only given a quick mention, almost in passing. The message that the paper sent to its Philadelphia readership was that bands of young black marauders were roaming the streets north of Market severing the spinal cords of young white students. Even the title of the article, “3 Injured by Youth Gangs in Chain of Revenge Fights,” only tallied the white victims.⁴³

While students fought in and around South Philadelphia High during the fall of 1957, roughly 250 black residents met at Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church to discuss the problems with the school and what could be done to curb racial tension at the embattled school and throughout the city. Many of those in attendance addressed their

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ “Boy, 14, Hurt in School Fight in Overbook; 2 Youth Battles Reported in South Philadelphia” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 26th, 1957

⁴¹ Countryman, Mathew “Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia” Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 170

⁴² “3 Injured by Youth Gangs in Chain of Revenge Fights” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 30th, 1957

⁴³ Ibid

fears and concerns over safety. One of their main concerns was of the influence of “outsiders.” The school's principal addressed the group, saying that the students were good boys and girls, and that the trouble came from outsiders, not the students within. Seventeen-year-old South Philadelphia High student Gwendolyn Burns also addressed the crowd, saying that there had been more racial tension during the current semester than in her previous three years. She said there was much more to the story than the principal admitted, but agreed with him that it was due to the influence of these outsiders and troublemakers who did not attend the school.⁴⁴

The city's liberal government agencies quickly worked to stem the violence taking place in and around its schools. The city's Commission on Human Relations hosted a meeting of local community leaders at the mayor's reception room in city hall to discuss ways to stem the violence. In his invitation, the chairman of the commission praised the schools and the police for maintaining order and preventing the further spread of violence, yet still sought the help from powerful local civil rights leader Floyd Logan, a longtime advocate of integrated education in Philadelphia.⁴⁵

By the 1958-1959 school year, in wake of the racial fighting surrounding the Little Rock Crisis, the school board expanded the number of schools under the daily watch of armed, uniformed officers from the PPD from eight to ten.⁴⁶ In an article titled “Pupils Behave When Police Watch School,” *The Bulletin's* white writer Peter Binzen added that the officers' main duty was to prevent trespassers from mingling with students

⁴⁴ “Residents Air Racial Tension; Discuss School in S. Phila.” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 1st, 1957

⁴⁵ October 9th, 1957, “Letter to Floyd Logan,” Floyd Logan Papers, Folder: General Correspondence 1957, Box 2, ACC 469, Temple University Special Collections Research Center (TUSCRC)

⁴⁶ Binzen, Peter “Pupils Behave when Police Watch School” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 2nd, 1959

before and after school.⁴⁷

Tensions in and around South Philadelphia schools did not diminish after Little Rock. The 1960 stabbing of John A. Campliglia, Jr., led to several fights at South Philadelphia High throughout the week of March 22nd. Despite the repeated clashes in the school, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction David Horowitz reportedly found no evidence of racial tensions within the school.⁴⁸ PPD Chief Inspector Albert J. Trimmer, on the other hand, described the situation in both white and black neighborhoods in the surrounding area as “explosive.”⁴⁹ The department sent all available units from the traffic division to patrol the streets in the area under orders to stop all cars with teenagers to search them for weapons. Officers were also operated under instructions to break up all groups of more than two teenagers, and a squad car was sent to each of the neighborhood's junior and senior high schools to preempt any trouble.⁵⁰

Under pressure from both black activists and white racial liberals and conservatives, Superintendent Wetter stated publicly that he personally was in favor of ending segregation in the school district of Philadelphia, and indeed agreed that it was an import and pressing matter. In an attempt to ease pressure from racial conservatives, however, he said that he would outright oppose any attempt to force a plan of integration into the district. The Education Equality League, an influential advocate group for integration, retaliated publicly, claiming that only through directed, forceful, and rapid measures could the district bring integrated education to Philadelphia in compliance with

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Binzen, Peter, “No Tension at S. Phila. High, School Officials Insist” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 22, 1960

⁴⁹ “Extra Police Sent to S. Phila; Will Search Cars, Disperse Gangs” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 22nd, 1960

⁵⁰ Ibid

Brown v. Board of Education. In a press release, the group added that neither the *Brown* ruling, nor the constitutions of the nation or the commonwealth made provisions for gradualism.⁵¹

The fight against school segregation brought together some of the most powerful activist groups in Philadelphia.⁵² The West Philadelphia Schools Committee (WPSC) was formed in 1960 and quickly became one of the loudest and most well-respected advocates for black students in the city. While the WPSC was founded explicitly with the aims of ending school segregation, the radical activist group Coalition for Racial Equality (CORE) was also fighting to improve conditions in the schools and the city at large.⁵³ In a June 1962 letter, CORE publicity chairman Stanley Diamond wrote that “the placement of pupils and teachers in the public school system is a matter of concern to [CORE]....There is extensive segregation of races in the Philadelphia school system, and the board has adopted a clear *laissez faire* attitude towards this, which means that progress is likely to come about slowly, if at all.” Superintendent Wetter claimed that he had received “confusing and conflicting requests” from concerned groups, effectively cleaning his hands of the matter. CORE invited the WPSC and other groups to strategize with them at a Rittenhouse Square meeting room the following week.⁵⁴ In addition to this larger Rittenhouse square strategy meeting, the WPSC met with representatives from

⁵¹ May 19th, 1960 “Statement Issued to the Philadelphia Tribune” Floyd Logan Papers, Folder: General Correspondence 1960, Box 2, ACC 469, TUSCRC

⁵² West Philadelphia School Committee Records, TUSCRC, Accessed June 13th, 2013
www.temple.edu/collections/scrc/west-philadelphia-sch

⁵³ June 14th, 1966 “Letter to Helen Oakes” West Philadelphia Schools Committee (WPSC) Papers, Folder:1966 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

⁵⁴ June 4th, 1962 “Letter to John Marshall, Chairman” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1962 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

CORE and the NAACP in a smaller session that same week.⁵⁵

Even with the provisions written into the city's governing documents by racial liberals, few practical changes affected black Philadelphians in any material sense. Although it was illegal for the city to discriminate in construction contracts, they still relied on closed-shop unions, all of which were white-only. As late as 1963, the city didn't employ a single black skilled tradesman. Between the 7,300 members of the unions for electricians, steamfitters, and plumbers, one black electrician was able to present a union card.⁵⁶ It is clear that the district had little interest in assisting racial liberals in correcting these employment biases. As late as 1968, all of these major unions used classroom space for evening apprenticeship training classes.⁵⁷

West Philadelphia in particular saw the city's largest growth in non-white population. Although opponents of segregation claimed that this was due to southern migrants, the 1960 census showed that only 3.6% of the entire city's black population had moved there from the South during the previous five years. A mere 9% of black elementary students, 70% of middle school students, and 66% of high school students attended integrated schools in 1963, compared with 7.8% of students in Southern schools.⁵⁸ By 1964, schools serving students in black West Philadelphia had become

⁵⁵ June 11th, 1962 "Minutes of Education Meeting" WPSC, Folder: 1962 Meeting Minutes, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

⁵⁶ Countryman, Mathew "Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia" Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 170

⁵⁷ Gillespie, John T. "Union Denied School Space; Bias Charged" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 24th, 1968

⁵⁸ May 16th, 1963 "Statement of the West Philadelphia School Committee, to the District One Sub-Committee Appointed to Review the Non-Discrimination Policy of the School District of Philadelphia" WPSC Papers, Folder: 1963 Statements of the West Philadelphia Schools Committee Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC
Countryman, Mathew "Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia" Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 136

grossly overcrowded, while schools in white South Philadelphia remained at or below capacity.⁵⁹ The school district used \$31M [2013 equivalent: \$235.99M], over half of its 1963 building budget, to build schools in all-black neighborhoods, resulting in yet more segregated schools for decades to come.⁶⁰ This type of system could not be seen as “passive or neutral, but in practice [contributed] to the growth of segregation and inequality of opportunity.”⁶¹

Major fighting erupted early in the school year beginning in 1963. Eight separate incidents of racially motivated fighting broke out at Bok on October 1st. In each of these cases, white students either attacked or threatened their black classmates. According to Larry Groth, a representative of the city's Human Relations Commission, the incidents occurred in retaliation for a fight between three black boys and a group of white boys at a playground near the school. One of the white students was hospitalized for bruises to the face and a stab wound to the back. The 24 black boys involved were all charged with aggravated assault and battery, inciting to riot, conspiracy, and disorderly conduct.⁶²

A number of students were severely injured by their classmates in and around the school. Police officers in the area discovered several heavily armed black students; one armed with a meat cleaver, another a length of lead pipe, and two others with knives. Two black girls confronted 16-year-old Frances Corretini and then slashed her with a

⁵⁹ September 9th, 1964 “Letter to George Hutt from Terry Chisolm, Commission on Human Relations” WPSC, Folder: 1964 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

⁶⁰ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

⁶¹ May 16th, 1963 “Statement of the West Philadelphia School Committee, to the District One Sub-Committee Appointed to Review the Non-Discrimination Policy of the School District of Philadelphia” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1963 Statements of the West Philadelphia Schools Committee” Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

⁶² “12 Extra Police Sent to Bok to Stop Racial Incidents” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 2nd, 1963

razor between classes. They accused her, ironically enough, of spreading a rumor that they were carrying razor blades. In the nearby neighborhood after school was dismissed, six black students attacked and hospitalized 14-year-old Frank Baldino. Several other white area residents were assaulted and hospitalized by groups of black teenagers the same day.⁶³ Similar attacks injured five more white students on October 7th, twice occurring inside the school itself.⁶⁴

The PPD effectively put embattled South Philadelphia on lockdown. More than 100 policemen kept watch and maintained order amongst the students, more than doubling the number of regularly assigned officers in the area. 65 black parents, some of whom had “large dogs on leashes,” waited at the previously besieged St. Maria Goretti High at dismissal time in order to protect their children.⁶⁵ At South Philadelphia High, 1,550 students out of 4,500 failed to report to school that Friday.⁶⁶ Students continued to battle through the end of that calendar year. Police reported a total of 27 injuries incurred during 26 separate assaults by early December. Police confiscated 19 knives, 7 pipes, 7 bats, 2 rifles, and 2 revolvers from students. On just one Thursday in early December 1,800 students were absent from South Philadelphia High, and 600 out of 2100 were absent from Bok.⁶⁷

Residents and parents called upon the police for increased protection. At a small meeting on October 2nd, 12 white mothers from the neighborhood near South Philadelphia High met to demand extra police presence surrounding the school. Although there were

⁶³ “Girl Slashed at School; Extra Police for S. Phila.” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 4th, 1963

⁶⁴ “1,550 Absent at Southern After Racial Incidents” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8th, 1963

⁶⁵ “Girl Slashed at School; Extra Police for S. Phila.” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 4th, 1963

⁶⁶ “1,550 Absent at Southern After Racial Incidents” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 8th, 1963

⁶⁷ Levy, Paul “Send Pupils to School, S. Phila Parents Urged” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 12th, 1963

already six police officers assigned to patrol the area outside of Bok and South Philadelphia Highs, the mothers contended that this was not a large enough force in light of the eight racial incidents that had occurred the previous day at Bok alone⁶⁸. Other parents took more direct measures. While violence raged, a mob of “terrified parents” marched on a neighborhood police station to have their demands heard. These parents shouted and protested until dispersed by over 100 officers. Detectives continued to patrol a 50 block radius surrounding the station to maintain order and disperse any more trouble before it reappeared⁶⁹.

Three days later, Superintendent Wetter met with 200 angry white South Philadelphians at a town-hall-style meeting. The residents showed up en masse to demand greater protection inside the schools and on school grounds. Wetter defended the schools with what was becoming a familiar refrain and stated that the problem was not inside the hallways but in the street and the areas around the schools. Sitting opposite from Dr. Wetter was City Council President Paul D’Ortona. The councilman fundamentally disagreed with the superintendent and placed the blame for violence in the schools upon the students within Bok and South Philadelphia Highs. He had promised to send all of the required officers to the two schools but faulted the school board for barring police from entering inside.⁷⁰

Bok Technical High School in particular represented the most obvious forms of the separate-but-unequal aspects of the Philadelphia school system throughout the 1950s and into the 1970s. While black students were generally tracked into technical schools

⁶⁸ “12 Extra Police Sent to Bok to Stop Racial Incidents” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 2nd, 1963

⁶⁹ Jansen, Peter A. “Phila Schools Escape Trend of Violence” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 29th, 1964

⁷⁰ “Wetter Defends School, Says Trouble is Outside” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 5th, 1963

rather than college preparatory schools like Central High or Masterman, Bok Tech became a repository for black students destined for a life of un- or underemployment. According to a 1966 report, Bok students tested far lower than students at other technical schools throughout the city. The school did not offer classes in new or burgeoning technologies, while Dobbins, a technical school across town with a much larger percentage of white students, educated students in the latest technologies and techniques. Dobbins had several computers and offered computer classes, but Bok did not even own a single computer. All of its equipment was outdated or entirely nonexistent. The automotive repair department, for example, did not teach students how to repair the newest types of engines due to lack of equipment. Graduates had higher levels of unemployment and lower paying jobs for those who did manage find a job.⁷¹

The 80% black Bok Technical High School was located in a neighborhood that had historically been an all-white, ethnic Italian neighborhood. The school drew students from all around the city, most of whom took the Broad Street Subway south and walked the remaining ten blocks to school every morning and afternoon. By the 1960s, white neighborhood residents began to fear for loss of this neighborhood identity as a place for whites, and took the black students at Bok as a challenge to their local cultural hegemony. When white administrators at Bok ran the school as a place for underachievers, the neighborhood's white Italian residents saw the students as a minor nuisance and largely ignored them in passing. As black parents increasingly demanded more control and a bigger stake in the school by the mid-1960s, white residents suddenly began to resent

⁷¹ May, 1966 "Report-Edward Bok Technical High School" Floyd Logan Papers, Folder: Bok Technical High School Report, Box 21, ACC 469, TUSCRC

these students passing through their neighborhood much more. By 1968, these complaints to the city and PPD had doubled from previous measurements.⁷²

Despite the violent clashes in South Philadelphia during the 1963-1964 school year, the school district positioned itself as having largely evaded the violence which had struck other big-city schools. Administrators placed the blame on civil rights activism in other cities for the problems and violence plaguing their schools. Deputy Superintendent for Instruction Horowitz publicly stated that increased attacks on teachers in cities like New York and Chicago were a direct result of public school boycotts led by civil rights leaders.⁷³ Citing statements from teachers, police officers, and administrators, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* argued that, while attacks on teachers were common elsewhere, Philadelphia suffered only isolated instances. The author speculated that this was due to an increased police presence. By 1964, each of the city's high schools had one police officer stationed at the school full time, and the school board had recently issued a strict policy mandating the arrest of any student who threatened a teacher.⁷⁴

The district may have been able to avoid violence that school year, but North Philadelphia was plunged into chaos as black residents rioted and looted white-owned businesses for three long days. On the evening of August 28th, 1964, police officers responded to a call regarding a car stalled at the corner of 22nd and Columbia to find a drunk black couple fighting in the street over their current predicament. The situation quickly spiraled out of control when onlookers attempted to intervene as the officers attempted to arrest the couple, which brought yet more nearby people into the fray. By

⁷² Countryman, Mathew *Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 237-248

⁷³ "Horowitz Links Boycotts to Assaults on Teachers" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 19th, 1964

⁷⁴ Jansen, Peter A. "Phila Schools Escape Trend of Violence" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 29th, 1964

midnight, 600 of Philadelphia's finest, along with K-9 units and fire hoses, attempted to regain control. The crowd of mostly women, teenagers, and younger children didn't disperse until well after sunrise the next morning. By the end of the weekend, 308 black Philadelphians waited in jail cells, two lay dead, and 339, 100 of whom were cops, were treated for wounds. The city estimated damages at \$170M [2013: 1.277B], and only 54 of the 170 businesses in a five block radius from the riot's epicenter survived.⁷⁵ Of those, 52 were black owned, one was a Chinese restaurant that hung up a sign saying “we are colored too,” and the other was an osteopathic surgeon who was later indicted for performing abortions.⁷⁶

Although it took a drunk couple arguing over their failed car to spark the riot, the true roots of the problem ran much deeper. Residents living in the area of the riot zone earned on average \$3,352 [2013: \$25,188] annually, 30% less the citywide average.⁷⁷ Blacks in North Philadelphia faced 2-3x higher unemployment than the city's average. Families paid 35% or more of their annual income on low quality housing, while the US Labor Department recommended that people only spend 20-25% on housing.

In a 1964 survey by the city's Commission on Human Relations, rioters from North Philadelphia said that they were attracted to Malcolm X's idea of self-defense because they were angry at Martin Luther King and other nonviolent civil rights leaders for their failure to respond to attacks on black activists. “Those who couldn't march rioted.” Expressing the frustration at scores of liberal promises which failed to develop,

⁷⁵ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

⁷⁶ Countryman, Mathew Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 156

⁷⁷ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

Cecil B. Moore said that the motto was transitioning from “we shall overcome” to “we shall overrun.”⁷⁸ A local attorney and president of the Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP, Moore had long been seen as a controversial militant figure in Philadelphia race politics.

The NAACP president charged Rizzo with using “storm-trooper tactics” in his raids against black businesses in West Philadelphia as a captain in the years prior to his appointment.⁷⁹ Moore had previously protested Tate's appointment of Rizzo to Deputy Police Commissioner, which was done as a counter to his Republican opponent's law-and-order campaign in the 1963 mayoral election. After the riot, a new class of white ethnic politicians used such campaigns as a thinly veiled way to reach a nervous white electorate. Even before the riot, whites were afraid. They were afraid of the ethnic changes taking place in their neighborhoods and schools. They were afraid that liberals in city hall had mistakenly restrained police actions against blacks in the days leading up to the rebellion in North Philadelphia. They were afraid that this restraint forced the police to hold back, turning white businesses into empty shells.⁸⁰ They were afraid for the future. They were afraid of the future.

On October 8th, 1964, the 65-year-old Wetter tendered his resignation as superintendent of schools effective the following August. Although the district was deeply divided and in conflict over racial matters, he denied that his decision had anything to do with the “racial crisis...that [had] appeared in the news in recent

⁷⁸ Countryman, Mathew Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 172

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Countryman, Mathew Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 164

months.”⁸¹ After serving in the position since 1955, Wetter had become deeply at odds with the school board over racial conflict in his schools. Several members had publicly called for his resignation. The NAACP had recently accused him of bigotry and continuing segregation in the schools. Many of those close to the white superintendent, including several close black associates, disagreed, saying that he had made positive changes for racial conditions in the district.⁸² Wetter handed the reins to the massive system over to Charles T. Whittier in August 1965.

Nearly a decade after *Brown v. Board*, the Philadelphia board of education finally implemented a plan to force integrated student bodies. The district deployed a teacher transfer program beginning in the 1966-1967 school year.⁸³ Staff integration, meaning that elementary schools had no more than 80% of one race and 90% in high schools, was achieved in all schools with predominantly black student bodies. Only schools with mostly white students still needed more black teachers to be considered integrated, due to a dearth of certified black teachers. Although this plan did bring more integrated faculty to school, it was done without regard to teacher quality or experience. Among predominantly black elementary schools, 63% had more than 10% substitute teachers, compared to 29% of white schools. Among black middle schools, 75% had over 10% of teaching positions vacant, while only 37% of white schools were short on teachers.⁸⁴ Although the plan brought about quick success, it was scrapped after two years of

⁸¹ O'Rourke, Lawrence “He Asks Board to Relieve him Next August; Says Racial Tensions had no Connection with his Decision” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 8th, 1963

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ 1966, “Transfer Plan for 1966-67” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1966-67 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

⁸⁴ October 30th, 1966 “Letter from Helen Oakes to Bill” WPSC Papers, Folder: Oct-Dec 1966 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

pushback from the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and fears of a mass exodus of qualified staff members arose.⁸⁵

In addition to a teacher transfer program, the district began a bussing program to transfer students from overcrowded, underfunded West Philadelphia schools. 656 elementary and junior high students from West of the Schuylkill River spent the 1966-1967 school year at underutilized buildings in South Philadelphia. With the exception of Vare Junior High, none of the South Philadelphia schools on the receiving end needed to use portable classrooms, thanks to ample unused space.⁸⁶

White youths reacted violently to perceived invasions into their sovereignty. In October 1966, white youths attacked students in the neighborhood of the all-girls Kensington High at Cumberland and Amber in North Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood. Hordes of white boys ripped at the black girls' clothes, splashed them with paint, and chased them with large, angry dogs. Residents told a reporter for the influential local black paper, *The Philadelphia Tribune*, that the attacks started earlier in the week. According to the witnesses, after a white man tossed a heavy chair at a young black girl, her mother came to her defense and retaliated by turning a ladder into a projectile. After the incident, residents spread rumors of gunfire and police sexual harassment of black teenage girls. Perched atop a roof less than two blocks from the school, two white boys pelted black students Helen Milligan and Theresa Demby with glass bottles full of paint. Officers took Theresa to the local precinct, where no effort to

⁸⁵ Gillespie, John T "Teachers Reported Willing to Accept Forced Transfers" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 15th, 1968

⁸⁶ January 2nd, 1966 "Memorandum Re: Additional Space in West Philadelphia" WPSC Papers, Folder: 1966 Correspondence, Box 1 ACC 306, TUSCRC

find the boys was made. Several other girls also reported assaults on their way to and from school.⁸⁷

According to residents, police cleared blacks off the streets at night under threats of arrest. Whites were far and away the majority in Kensington in 1966, and the few black residents felt forced to turn to community assistance in the light of police failures. Students at Kensington High reported that their only hope of protection came from black boys who attended nearby Edison and Ben Franklin high schools, but police barred them from the area. Students also claimed that the police made no real effort to protect the girls or find their attackers. One witness reported that police officers broke up a group of black men, one of whom happened to be a probation officer for the PPD, as they stood on a street corner to protect a group of children playing nearby. Police frisked the children and sent them home as well. Residents also reported that police officers on foot and in squad cars then escorted a small mob of white teenagers after nightfall as they shouted racist and White Power slogans down the street they had previously cleared of the black residents.⁸⁸

A few weeks later, in late October 1966, *The Tribune* referred to Bartram High, located in an all-white community in Southwest Philadelphia at 67th and Woodland streets, as a “keg of racial dynamite.”⁸⁹ Gangs of white students shouted “White power” and beat up several black students as they waited alone in the school yard. In retaliation, black gangs attacked white students on their way home from school. Following the

⁸⁷ Coleman, Chet “Racist Hoodlums Terrorize Kensington High School Girls” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 8th, 1966 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Wilder, Brantley J. & Peters, Art “Bartram Keg of Racial Dynamite; 890 Students Remain Home Fearing Worst” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 22nd, 1966 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

fights, 800 students, most of whom were white, stayed home from school⁹⁰. Once considered a progressive school with a nearly integrated student body of 3,600, the school now only employed 20 black teachers on a faculty of 160

Writers for *The Tribune* cited several possible sources for the increased tension in the hallways that fall. They speculated that it could have been caused by increasingly frequent calls for black power by militant leaders throughout the city, Martin Luther King's march into an all-white Chicago community, increased anti-black KKK activities in Pennsylvania, or the stoning of a black family after they moved into the Kensington neighborhood. When asked about the cause of the strife, many of the black students reported that they were treated differently and more harshly than their white classmates by faculty, administration, and police. In any disturbance, they claimed, the black student was given the blame and treated much more punitively than white students involved in the same incident. All week, increased area police patrols and watchful detectives from the PPD's Juvenile Aid Division waited outside the school at dismissal times.⁹¹

With so many problems over segregation, the board of education's selection of Whittier as superintendent was clearly a stop-gap measure to find a candidate more capable of bringing integrated education to the city. Merely one year into Whittier's two-year contract, board members again began interviewing candidates for the district's top command.⁹² The board searched out candidates with three qualifications, including a

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² October, 1966 "Letter from Helen Oakes to the Executive Board" WPSC Papers, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

proven commitment “to racially integrated education” and “a reputation in the educational establishment for being 'mavericks.’”⁹³

After narrowing the field down to three candidates, the board appointed Mark Shedd to a three-year contract during the heavy days of November 1966. Shedd came to Philadelphia after overseeing the desegregation of the much smaller Englewood, New Jersey, school district. In Philadelphia, Shedd promised to take a “hard line” in achieving “maximum feasible integration and high quality education throughout the school system.”⁹⁴ Part of this hard line was the decision to send his own children to black schools. Nancy and Dale Shedd attended the 90% black Roosevelt Junior High School, while Daniel Shedd went to class at the 69% black Germantown High school near their home.⁹⁵

If he had not yet figured out the herculean effort required to ease the racial tensions in Philadelphia's public schools, he would certainly learn in the days before taking control. Students scuffled in the hallways at South Philadelphia High between classes on Monday, April 3rd, 1967. As fights flashed throughout the day, 23 white and one black student were injured before school was dismissed early. School officials did not offer a reason for the fighting, but *The Tribune* discovered that most of the students believed the trouble was rooted in the report that one of the schools English teachers made remarks about black inferiority during a class lecture. On a staff of 400, only 21 faculty members at the school were black. Some teachers blamed Cecil B. Moore for his

⁹³ Delone, Richard H. “3 Candidates Preempt Field for School Job” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 20th, 1966

⁹⁴ Delone, Richard H. “Board Gives Him Contract for 3 Years” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 30th, 1966

⁹⁵ Wilder, John “New School Superintendent Sending his Children to 90% Negro School” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, September 12th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

remarks that Principal Sidney Wagman should be fired from the school district for trying to cover up the affair. The school reopened the following day under heavy police scrutiny, both inside and out.⁹⁶

A few weeks later, on Friday April 21st, 1967, students at North-West Philadelphia's 95% black William Penn High School bristled with tension.⁹⁷ Students were already upset over the fact that quite a few of their classmates were being bused across town. A number of incidents occurred on Monday, and tensions remained high at the school for the remainder of the week.⁹⁸ At the end of the week, the school proceeded with its previously scheduled Miss William Penn beauty pageant. Halfway through the contest, officials at the school postponed the event after it began running long. Supervising faculty dismissed the 1,500 students in attendance to their classrooms and instructed them to return to the auditorium after school, when the pageant would resume. 1000 of the attendees complied, but the remaining 500 refused. Students raced through the hallways, disrupted classes, and destroyed school property. They pulled fire alarms in the building twice, both times forcing an unnecessary temporary evacuation of the building. By 11:40, the school's administration gave up on restoring order and dismissed students early, while 50 policemen and non-teaching assistants worked the crowd.⁹⁹

While it may seem like a small-scale teenage riot or simple youthful

⁹⁶ Coleman, Chet "23 Whites, 1 Negro Injured in South Philly High Riot: School Ordered Closed to Prevent Spread of Violence and Bloodshed" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 4th, 1967. Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

⁹⁷ "William Penn High Teachers Demand Ouster of 17 Whites" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 21st, 1968 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

⁹⁸ While there are a number of articles in *The Philadelphia Bulletin* covering the events that occurred at William Penn during this week, the paper does not go into detail about the exact nature of Monday's incident which caused students to be so upset and emotional for the remainder of the week. Unfortunately, no other records or coverage other than this mention could be found by the author. I speculate that they were clashes over bussing.

⁹⁹ "Penn High Shut as Girls Race in Halls" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 21st, 1967

disobedience, this incident became much more complicated after police arrested local CORE leader William Mathis the next day on charges of inciting riot at William Penn High. Earlier in the week, Mathis had met with Vice Principal Mary Pauline Dunn to discuss the school's busing situation. Objecting to the forced bussing, Mathis warned that his group had planned “abrasive action” if a resolution was not found. As students milled about the school yard after the second false alarm that Friday, witnesses reported seeing Mathis working the crowd as faculty readmitted students into the building in small groups to retrieve their belongings. Although Mathis denied the accusation, Philadelphia Police Sergeant Joseph Davis of the Civil Disobedience Squad quoted him as encouraging students to disobey police orders. Sgt. Davis promptly arrested Mathis and took him from the scene.¹⁰⁰

A few weeks later and several miles away, the powder keg that was Bartram High School exploded on Friday, May 5th, 1967. A group of 15 white boys carrying pipes, sticks, clubs, belt buckles, and radio antennas met a crowd of black students as they left an annual school dance. The angry whites chased and beat dozens of black youths as some fought and others fled. Witnesses claimed that white residents poured out of their homes and cars to join the fray. One of the black students received hospital treatment for a razor blade gash, while other boys and girls suffered bruises and cuts inflicted by pipes, sticks, and fists. The only reported arrest was one black youth charged with disorderly

conduct. The young man, who said he was beaten by police at the scene, was discharged

¹⁰⁰ “CORE Leader Arrested in School Disturbances” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 22nd, 1967

after a preliminary hearing.¹⁰¹

Fighting persisted in the hallways when school resumed on Monday and continued until school administrators called for the district and the PPD to restore order. The police sent in uniformed and plainclothes officers, while the district sent a detachment of its own plainclothes security guards, the non-teaching aides.¹⁰² Many of the black youths involved in the fights reported bitterness and anger, not from the Friday night raid, but because not a single white perpetrator was arrested.¹⁰³ Over the weekend, rumors emerged among the students that white students from nearby the West Catholic High were planning to invade Bartram. To ease tensions and prevent the rumor from coming true, Vice Principal Brother Jerome of West Catholic called for a police detail to be present at the school throughout the week.¹⁰⁴

In late June 1967, students in Steven Harlem's English class fought their battle along different lines. Students created and disseminated a magazine covering a variety of controversial topics ranging from sex, drugs, and Vietnam, to local problems with race, integration, and busing. When administrators within the school discovered the publication, they instructed Harlem to destroy any and all copies. When Harlem, a new teacher in the district, refused on the grounds that students had a right to express themselves on such issues, administrators at the school promptly fired him for his lack of compliance.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ "Blood Flows as Policemen and Whites Beat Students" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 9th, 1967. Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

¹⁰² "Pupils Scuffle at Bartram High" *The Philadelphia Bulletin* May 8th, 1967

¹⁰³ Wilder, John Brantley "Catholics Support Program to Prevent Bartram Race War" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 13th, 1967. Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ "Shedd Reinstates Teacher Fired Over Class Essay" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 23rd, 1967

In under a week, Superintendent Shedd reinstated the dismissed teacher and commended the young educator for instilling in his students “an enthusiasm for self-expression.”¹⁰⁶ Peyton Gray, a long-time Philadelphia teacher and regular contributor to *The Tribune*, praised Harlem and his decision not to confiscate his students' work of self-expression. He accused Harlem's detractors of stifling student creativity, calling the parents, teachers, the district, and the new teacher's union “old-timers” who were attempting to force conformity of education onto students. Thanks to Shedd and this “newcomer” Harlem, “a new day [was] coming to Philadelphia!”¹⁰⁷ Within a year, the board changed the official policy to allow students to create, publish, and disseminate petitions and pamphlets on school property and within schools as long as they were not “obscene... libelous... or [would] inflame or incite students to disorder.”¹⁰⁸

While students fought at Bartram and William Penn and Harlem's students proudly read their magazines, their adult advocates continued fighting the district.¹⁰⁹ In June 1967, Philadelphia voters were asked if they wanted to increase the district's debt limit by an additional \$150M [2013: \$1.046B] for building projects.¹¹⁰ Of proposed 33 new buildings, 23 would have fallen along segregated boundary lines, four within desegregated areas, and six along questionable lines.¹¹¹ The West Philadelphia Schools

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Gray, Peyton Jr. “Peyton's Place” *The Philadelphia Tribune* July 8th, 1967, Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁰⁸ Gillespie, John T. “Schools at Fault, too, Shedd Says in Growth of Unrest Among Pupils” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 29th, 1968

¹⁰⁹ 1967, “Correspondence from Arthur Wells, Chairman of the North Philadelphia Schools Committee” WPSC Papers, Folder: School Charter Amendment Question Fliers, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹¹⁰ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm
1967, “Earl's Signs” Flier, WPSC Papers, Folder: School Charter Amendment Question Fliers, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹¹¹ 1967, “Why NO to the School Charter Amendment!” WPSC Papers, Folder: School Charter Amendment Question Fliers, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

Committee called the plan a lynching by segregation and helped lead the effort to defeat the ballot initiative when it was voted down that June.¹¹²

Racially motivated fighting broke out again in South Philadelphia early the next school year. On September 30th, about 40 policemen rushed to the corner of 12th and Bigler St. in South Philadelphia in response to one such fight. The fight was the main event for several smaller fights which had broken out along Snyder Avenue between 7th and 10th streets before a football game between Bartram and Bok Highs. As black students gathered on the field, they were met by a group of white students, fueled by a false rumor that a white boy was stabbed at Bok earlier in the day. Police believed that the rumor originated from an outbreak in the lunchroom at Bok the previous day in which plates were thrown and both black and white students shoved, punched, and knocked each other to the ground. Newly appointed Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo personally led a contingent of police to patrol the area in and around the field until after the game ended.¹¹³

Fighting continued at South Philadelphia High early the following week. Of the 3,969 students there, roughly half were black. Two black and one white boy began fighting around 11:30 am in the yard during lunch, which quickly turned into an all-out brawl for the 200 students present. It was broken up by faculty, who then sent students back to their classes. A half-hour later between periods, fights again broke out in the hallways and spread to the cafeteria and back again to the schoolyard. According to a statement released by the school district, the fighting mostly involved black students

¹¹² June 1st, 1967 "Memo" WPSC Papers, Folder: 1967 Meeting Minutes and Announcements, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹¹³ "White, Negro Youths Clash in South Phila." *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 30th, 1967

pushing and hitting their white classmates without provocation. Eleven white boys were sent to the school nurse, and almost all of them reported being approached by groups of four or five black boys as they walked down hallways¹¹⁴.

Principal Wagman called police per procedural guidelines, which required a school make the call if the principal believed that they could not handle a problem on their own. 200 officers rushed to the school by cars, wagons, and bus. Another busload stood by a few blocks away while 15 policemen patrolled the halls. Commissioner Rizzo remained on the scene until his officers restored order. The school was gradually closed during the afternoon, and at about 1pm, white parents arrived to pick up their children. The commissioner arranged for a police detail to remain at the school the following day, while schools were already scheduled to be closed Thursday and Friday for Jewish holidays.¹¹⁵ In this particular case, when white students were in danger, the Commissioner personally made sure that a large force of his men remained on site, a service that time and time again was denied to black children in similar situations.

On October 27th 1967, a reported 250 students left Gratz High during their lunch period to attend talks given by several black power leaders at a playground across the street.¹¹⁶ On their way out of the building, one of the students pulled a fire alarm in an attempt to bring the rest of the 4,000-member-strong student body out to the meeting. Teachers stationed themselves at every exit to intercept students and redirect them back to class and repeated the measures ten minutes later when students pulled another false

¹¹⁴ "6 Boys Hurt in Fights at South Phila. High" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 3rd, 1967

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Gillespie, John T. "Schools Fail in Teaching Negro History, Shedd Says" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 13th, 1967

alarm.¹¹⁷ The group of participating students marched around the school twice, after which about 150 finally rallied across the street to hear the speakers. Walter Palmer of the Black People's Unity Movement and CORE's William Mathis spoke to the students about Black Power and Black Freedom issues. The two men called for an all-black board of education, and Mathis dispersed pamphlets from CORE.¹¹⁸

After school was dismissed early in an “atmosphere of restlessness,” Palmer and student leaders met with Principal Robert Hoffman and 4th district Superintendent Dr. Ruth W. Hayre to discuss their concerns.¹¹⁹ Students wanted a say in the type of curriculum taught in the school as well as the speakers at school assemblies. They objected to saluting the American flag on religious grounds and demanded new black history courses to be taught by black teachers. Although it was the school board's official policy that students were to salute the flag, Hayre agreed that if students brought in written confirmation of their religious beliefs, they could be excused from the requirement. After the meeting, Hayre said the feelings of self-expression that prevailed among young people, already running high, were intensified at Gratz due to the pressures of “what they call black culture.”¹²⁰ Gratz High was a majority black school located in what had once been a white neighborhood but was currently undergoing a rapid change in demographics.¹²¹ Like Bok Tech, this made the school an emblem for a loss for white residents.

Although students were boisterous yet organized throughout the day, police

¹¹⁷ “200 Gratz Students Stage Black Power Demonstration” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27th, 1967

¹¹⁸ “250 at Gratz Quit School to Hear Protests” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 27th, 1967

¹¹⁹ “200 Gratz Students Stage Black Power Demonstration” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27th, 1967

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ Countryman, Mathew “Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia” Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 237

presence around Gratz remained heavy after the PPD received a tip about a possible demonstration. 30 police officers stood ready in the immediate vicinity of the school. As students left the building at their early dismissal time, they were greeted by “at least a dozen vehicles from various police units, including the Civil Disobedience Squad and the Gang Control Unit.”¹²² With such a large police battalion on hand, it is not at least a bit ironic that one girl who attended the rally astutely observed that “we are not dropouts, but we are being forced out by strict discipline over minor infractions.”¹²³

On November 13th, 1967, Dr. Shedd addressed a small group of 60 black student leaders at a town hall style meeting at the school. The meeting focused primarily on race and the effect of race problems on the future of the city's schools. In addressing one of the main demands made by Philadelphia's black students, Shedd said that adding black history courses and relieving the problem of overcrowding would answer the question “can we make it?” on race relations.¹²⁴ A female student from Gratz asked how student leaders could cope with racial incidents and rumored “takeover plans” by militant gangs or “groups such as the Black Guard.”¹²⁵ Echoing law-and-order concerns among many white Philadelphians, Shedd responded that “it is our duty to ensure the safety” of everyone in the school. He admitted that he was unable to understand “this whole thing,” and doubted that anybody in his administration entirely could. Perhaps thinking aloud, he asked, “What is 'black power,' for instance?”¹²⁶

¹²² “250 at Gratz Quit School to Hear Protests” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 27th, 1967

¹²³ “200 Gratz Students Stage Black Power Demonstration” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27th, 1967

¹²⁴ Gillespie, John T. “Schools Fail in Teaching Negro History, Shedd Says” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 13th, 1967

¹²⁵ Helsel, Jack “Student Leaders get Answers from the Man at the Top” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 13th, 1967

¹²⁶ Ibid

In the final days of October and into early November 1967, Cecil B. Moore began touring city high schools as part a failed mayoral bid. Candidate Moore did not seek or receive permission from the district for the wildcat demonstrations, yet Shedd's administration decided that it would be best to down play the importance of the speaking events, allow students to attend, and avert the potential for student violence. At each event, Moore and students were greeted by 25 PPD officers and a dozen of the district's non-teaching assistants.¹²⁷

One of the most vocal opponents to Moore's speaking engagements was the Philadelphia Home and School Council, which served as a citywide umbrella organization for Philadelphia's many neighborhood home and school associations. Although it was fairly conservative in its stance on most issues, the group did position itself as a biracial one; its executive board was roughly half white and half black, and it even had one Puerto Rican in a leadership position.¹²⁸ In her letter to President Ewing, member Florence Nicholson expressed her fear of Moore's activist work at Edison High:

“I feel that his visit was pointless and without meaning or purpose as far as the students are concerned....What has been done cannot be undone, and I feel as though it would be wise to drop this matter as soon as possible. I am satisfied having been assured by you during our telephone conversation that there would not be a repetition of a situation such as this.”¹²⁹

board of education member William Ross agreed, stating that “we show a poor example to our children when we bow to demagogues such as Mr. Moore.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ November 6th, 1967 “Letter to Mrs. Ewing, Home and School Council President” Philadelphia Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence, 1967, Box 7, ACC 331 TUSCRC

¹²⁸ November 28th, 1967 “Letter to the Board of Education,” Philadelphia Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence November 1967, Box 7, ACC 331 TUSCRC

¹²⁹ November 16th, 1967 “Letter to Mrs. Ewing,” Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence November 1967, ACC 331, Box 7, TUSCRC

¹³⁰ November 13th, 1967, “Letter to Mrs. Ewing,” Home and School Council Papers, Folder:

CHAPTER THREE

TURNING POINTS

“Today's students have experienced the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the new left and the new right...we can no longer expect them to remain placid, unquestioning kids.”
 -Dr. Mark Shedd, Philadelphia School Superintendent, 1970¹³¹

In the summer of 1967, black America burned. Detroit, Watts, Newark New Jersey, and 125 other major American cities descended into anarchy. President Johnson and countless other white Americans blamed black nationalists for stirring up trouble. Experts appointed to the Federal Kerner commission, however, cited the same factors which led North Philadelphia to ruin in late August 1964: pent-up rage at *de facto* segregation, discrimination in jobs and housing, and police brutality.¹³² While black Americans had dealt with such indignities for centuries, it was the more recently promised but undelivered improvements that sparked so many uprisings during that long, hot summer. Because decades of racial liberalism had failed to bring any meaningful changes to black employment and educational opportunities, cities like Detroit and Philadelphia departed from integration and moved toward black nationalist ideology. After years failure, black Americans turned away from Martin's clasped hands and towards Malcolm's raised fist.

With these rebellions fresh in the public's mind, roughly 3,500 of Philadelphia's

Correspondence November 1967, ACC 331, Box 7, TUSCRC

¹³¹ “Comments” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 16th, 1970

¹³² Thompson, Heather *Whose Detroit?* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 2001, P.47

high school students, most of them black, left their classes at schools all around the city to rally in front of the Board of Education Building at 21st street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in the heart of Center City.¹³³ Student leaders, barring white journalists from entering the building, met with Superintendent Shedd personally to discuss the demands which moved them to protest.¹³⁴

This mass gathering and the meeting with Shedd represented three months' worth of planning by the Black People's Unity Movement to win more control for black parents and teachers while extending their message of black solidarity to the city's black youth.¹³⁵ Almost all of their complaints related to specific problems facing black students in Philadelphia's segregated schools. Students pressed their demands for the teaching of black history as part of the regular history curriculum and demanded the hiring of more black teachers, principals, and administrators. While the district's student body was 60% black by 1967, only a paltry 23% of teachers were black.¹³⁶ Students rallied for community control of black schools, which had dropout rates three times higher than schools with predominantly white student bodies. Students also requested that the dress code be relaxed to allow the wearing of African garb and Afro hairstyles.¹³⁷

While it is unclear exactly what happened next, the end result is hardly in contention; the student demonstration turned into an outright riot. Throughout the day,

¹³³ "Rizzo Blasts Black Power, Tells Court of Pupil 'Mob'" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 12th, 1967

¹³⁴ Kabungo, Elijah Joy "Student Leaps from Window to Join Melee" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 18th, 1967

¹³⁵ Countryman, Mathew "Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia" Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 228

¹³⁶ "Shedd Expects 70% Negro Pupils Here in 5 Years" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 26th, 1967
Evans, Orrin "52 Negro Teachers Support Pupils, Demand Rizzo's Ouster" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 25th, 1967

¹³⁷ Countryman, Mathew "Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia" Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 224

George Fencel and his Civil Disobedience Squad of plain-clothes officers remained at the building to maintain order.¹³⁸ The play-by-play of the November '67 riot bears a striking resemblance to its August '64 counterpart. After police arrested a student for allegedly running across the tops of cars snapping off a radio antennae, student protestors surrounded the arresting officers. At this point, a nearby contingent of uniformed policemen entered the fray. Several busloads worth of officers armed in full riot gear charged the crowd with their nightsticks bared, beating boys and girls as they fled. While Fencel took public responsibility for calling the battalion of riot police to the scene, it was Commissioner Rizzo who ordered the charge.¹³⁹ Witnesses initially gave conflicting reports as to who voiced the actual order, but Rizzo can be heard in local news footage instructing his officers to “get their black asses.”¹⁴⁰ And get their black asses he did. Police hit, kicked, and beat students and their adult advocates as the crowd fled through Center City. Student protestor Paula Webster's earrings were torn from her ears after she was knocked to the ground by police.¹⁴¹

The next day, violence erupted at high schools throughout the city. At South Philadelphia High alone, tussles resulted in eight injuries – including a teacher and a non-teaching assistant – and ten arrests, six of which were of black boys. At the request of Principal Wagman, Commissioner Rizzo sent in five busloads carrying a total of 250 officers in the name of keeping order. Most of these men patrolled the area around the

¹³⁸ Gillespie, John “Dilworth Blames Police; Rizzo Cites his Warning” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 17th, 1967

¹³⁹ “Fencel Takes Responsibility for Calling Police to Rally” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 19th, 1967

¹⁴⁰ Countryman, Mathew “Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia” Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 226

¹⁴¹ “Photo Standalone 16 – No Title” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 21st, 1967, Accessed January 27th, 2013. www.proquest.com

school, while six patrolled the hallways. That morning, 1,370 students failed to report to class, and 40 students, both white and black, were removed by their mothers before lunchtime. Fights also broke out at Edison High, but no injuries were reported.¹⁴²

The day following the disastrous demonstration, Superintendent Mark Shedd quickly announced his plans to resume talks with student leaders. During the Saturday announcement, Shedd said that he and the student leaders had been making progress before police charged the crowd, and he wished to continue addressing their grievances. Shedd also sympathized with black students, citing the problem of “mistrust” of the white community felt by many black young people.¹⁴³

This idea of mistrust was a reiteration from a statement he issued earlier in the week, just days prior to the ill-fated demonstration. “The high degree of alienation felt on part of Negro students has created a serious situation in the city's public schools.... It is there, and it is explosive.”¹⁴⁴ To ease this alienation, he suggested changes in the curriculum to better reflect contributions of African Americans, one of the very demands to be put on his desk by student activists.¹⁴⁵ Upon resuming talks, Shedd did in fact meet some of the students' demands. Previously, the administrators and faculty at individual schools wrote dress code policy for their students. Throughout the district, not one school at any level allowed what *The Philadelphia Bulletin* referred to as “full African costume.” Upon concluding the meeting, school board officials agreed to amend the

¹⁴² “Pupils Battle 2d Day in Row at South Phila.; 250 Police Rushed to Restore Order; 8 Hurt, 10 Arrested” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 21st

¹⁴³ Hayes, Robert J. “Dr. Shedd to Seek New Student Talks” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 19th, 1967

¹⁴⁴ “Shedd Warns of 'Alienation' Felt by Negro” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 15th, 1967

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

dress code to allow African style clothing throughout the district.¹⁴⁶

After Shedd and student leaders reached an accord and came to an agreement, the administration continued its talks with students at a seven-day retreat convened at a mansion in the city's posh Chestnut Hill neighborhood. School board officials met with ten student organizers, three West Coast sociologists, and ten community and Black Power leaders to discuss the problems with race in their district.

The retreat was fairly uneventful, and newspaper coverage was generally positive. Community activist groups like the West Philadelphia School Commission also supported the retreats. Their leader, long-time advocate for integrated education Helen Oakes, referred to the summit as a “unique opportunity to deal with the problems in our schools.”¹⁴⁷ *The Tribune* later discovered that the PPD installed an undercover agent at the meeting, unbeknownst to school board officials and participants. As he had publicly stated in the past, Rizzo intended to keep tight surveillance on all militants, and the black power leaders in attendance no doubt fell into this category for the Commissioner.¹⁴⁸

The protest-turned-riot marks a clear watershed in the way Philadelphians spoke about their schools and the students therein. Black Philadelphians overwhelmingly charged the PPD and Commissioner Frank Rizzo with overreacting and creating a panic. The PPD and the school board each levied charges at one another. White Philadelphians, for the most part, blamed the board of education and Superintendent Shedd and their permissive attitudes for the outbreak of a downtown riot.

¹⁴⁶ Corr, John P. “Schools OK African Garb for Students” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24th, 1967

¹⁴⁷ March 11, 1968, “Letter to Dr. Mark Shedd,” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1967 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹⁴⁸ “Leaders Paid \$350 Each to Discuss Race Problems and the School System” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 19th, 1967, www.proquest.com

The black community almost unanimously called for Commissioner Rizzo's resignation for his handling of the situation.¹⁴⁹ They accused him and the officers present of brutality and blamed the Commissioner for starting the riot by ordering his men to charge. Within 24 hours of the riot, local civil rights leaders filed a formal complaint with the city's Commission on Civil Rights.¹⁵⁰ Helen Oakes penned a letter to Mayor Tate on behalf of the West Philadelphia Schools Committee demanding Rizzo's ouster. She praised school board President Dilworth¹⁵¹ and Superintendent Shedd for listening to the students' concerns.¹⁵² Letters poured into the *Philadelphia Tribune*, and by a three-to-one margin were highly critical of the way the PPD handled the events. Among those in the minority group, "only a small percentage" fully supported their actual tactics on the day. One public school teacher offered her support to the Commissioner, but withheld her name out of fear of "retribution at the hands of student black power advocates."¹⁵³

The protest which came to be referred to simply as "the events of November 17th" continued to inspire student activism throughout the city. The following Monday, a group of about 30 black students from Benjamin Franklin High protested in front of the police administration building at 8th and Race streets in Center City. That same day, a group of almost 300 black students at Edison High gathered in the courtyard at lunchtime, angry

¹⁴⁹ Lear, Len "Beating of Students Condemned: Opposition to Commissioner Rizzo Mounts in City" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 21st, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 2013 www.proquest.com

¹⁵⁰ Gillespie, John "Negro Leaders Complain to Civil Rights Commission" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 18th, 1967

¹⁵¹ Richardson Dilworth was elected to two mayoral terms and was forced to resign in 1958 per rules of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter banning officials from serving in one office while running for another. After his failed gubernatorial bid, he served as School Board President. "Politics: Another Try" *Time Magazine*, Friday, January 26th, 1962

¹⁵² November 21st, 1967, "Letter to Mayor Tate" WPSC Papers, Folder: 1967 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹⁵³ "Rizzo Controversy Remains Hot; Letters to Tribune Keep Coming" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 28th, 1967

over police actions taken against their friends and classmates at the board of education building. Before long, students pelted a nearby police patrol car with bottles, rocks, plates, and any debris they could get their hands on. Police responded to the scene with 20 cars, and officers with night sticks drawn spent the next 15 minutes restoring order. Superiors then ordered their squad to leave the school and arrested two boys as they left.¹⁵⁴

While black students were again uprising in their lunchrooms at Franklin and South Philadelphia Highs, activists circulated several different pamphlets to students at black high schools throughout the city. One packet called for the dismissal of Rizzo and the dropping of all criminal charges levied against students. Out of frustration with the promised civil rights gains that city liberals were unable to deliver, another pamphlet declared that the previous Friday's protests were a sign that the black youths of Philadelphia would no longer stand for the system of "miseducation" imposed upon them by the city's white leadership.¹⁵⁵ All of the pamphlets encouraged students to seek out self-education at black community centers and to attend yet more protest rallies. The local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Philadelphia Anti-Draft Union, the Progressive Party, and Philadelphia Youth Against War and Fascism all stamped their names on the pamphlet.¹⁵⁶

That week, more than 1,000 mostly white students picketed in front of the police headquarters building to protest police tactics at the board of education. Students came from high schools throughout the city and were joined by a contingent of college

¹⁵⁴ "Pupils Pelt Police; Erupt at Southern; Negro Boys Picket Police Headquarters" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 20th, 1967

¹⁵⁵ "Pupils Urged to Enroll at 'Black Centers'" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 20th, 1967

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

students, university professors, and their own instructors. A teacher who wished to remain anonymous told *The Tribune* that “We [teachers] know better than anybody that these black kids have no chance to express their thoughts about controversial issues freely. These schools are more like jails, and the kids hate them. They tried to express themselves freely last Friday, and the way they were treated is the way dissent is usually treated here – with brute force.”¹⁵⁷

The violence inflicted upon these young students by the police incited black Philadelphia to anger over police brutality that they saw as so endemic to the city's justice system. Marvin Burak expressed his anger at the police and their actions on a radio talk show.

“By his unwarranted police action [at the Board of Education Building,] Frank Rizzo has endangered the life of every policeman, because the citizens of Philadelphia are no longer going to stand by and watch their children being beaten...Policemen are not rich; they are not living in big mansions, and they cannot afford to hire bodyguards. They can be knocked off, one by one.”¹⁵⁸

Temple University student Timothy Booker, in a letter to *The Tribune*, also expressed his anger with the racial conditions in the city. Booker speculated that blacks had learned that the best way to combat racism was to actively strive for political, economic, and intellectual power, like the students engaged in the 11/17 protest. He asked, “Is this the reason for the permittance [sic] of the gorilla [sic] tactics of Police Commissioner Rizzo at the school board Building last Friday?”¹⁵⁹ The alumni association of Philadelphia's

¹⁵⁷ Lear, Len “White Teachers Back Negroes, Blast Rizzo” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 25th 1967 Accessed October 31, 2012. www.proquest.com

¹⁵⁸ Lear, Len “Beating of Students Condemned; Opposition to Commissioner Rizzo Mounts in City” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 21st, 1967, Accessed January 31st, 2013 www.proquest.com

¹⁵⁹ Booker, Timothy “Says Citizens Can't Tolerate Rizzo's Rowdies” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 28th, 1967, Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

historically black Lincoln University condemned the commissioner for leading an armed assault on peaceably assembled students. In their formal statement, they blamed the commissioner for fomenting the tensest racial climate the city had ever seen.¹⁶⁰

A number of community groups, both black and white, also voiced their support for the student's activism while blasting police tactics. Barely a week after the 11/17 protest, 1,000 demonstrators descended upon city hall to protest police brutality. The event was organized by a Temple University professor and drew an almost entirely white crowd of middle-class activists. The Pennsylvania chapter of the Episcopal Society for Cultural Unity and the staff of the Pennsylvania Advancement School both issued public statements in support of student activists.¹⁶¹ The Student Association of the School of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania voted and issued a letter to the editor condemning the actions of the PPD as unnecessary force and supportive of the students' rights to assembly and free speech.¹⁶² Alton Lemon of the Ethical Society issued a letter to the editor with the same sentiment.¹⁶³

Superintendent Shedd received a wave of black support for his handling of student protestors.¹⁶⁴ While Rizzo and white media outlets were busy portraying the students as dangerous criminals prone to riot, Shedd invited the students back into his

¹⁶⁰ "Lincoln Alumni Urge Removal of Frank Rizzo" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 2nd, 1967, Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁶¹ Hunter, Joe "Negroes, Whites Join Hands in Blasting Police Tactics" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 21st, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com
Cohen, Martin "School Faculty Praises Shedd for Courage" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 28th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁶² Letter to the Editor, "Penn Students Join Angry List" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 30th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁶³ Lemon, Alton, Letter to the Editor, "Ethical Society Supports Students" *The Philadelphia Tribune* December 26th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁶⁴ Cohen, Martin "School Faculty Praises Shedd for Courage" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 28th, 1967; et. al. Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

office to continue discussing their needs and proposed changes to improve their own education. Black student Evelyn Dashlell viewed the student leaders as important activists in the larger black freedom struggle. She praised Shedd for resuming talks and voiced affirmation of the rights of these students “to voice the many important concerns relative to all 'BLACK' people here in Philadelphia.”¹⁶⁵ The West Philadelphia Schools Committee also officially supported Shedd in a public statement. Chairman Helen Oakes commended Shedd for resuming talks and objected to police brutality. She further called upon Shedd and the district to implement the students' demands, not simply listen to but politely ignore them.¹⁶⁶ Jeffery Oakes, President of the Dimmer Beeber Junior High School Student Association, wrote Dilworth to thank him for his strong support of high school students and Dr. Shedd for meeting with the students. He and his organization wrote that they believed students had a right to protest and express their views.¹⁶⁷

Mainstream coverage of the protest was almost universally supportive of police tactics. What support the young protestors received from white Philadelphia was lacking from the pages of both *The Bulletin* and *The Inquirer*. Letters to the editor in these papers reflected fear of the young activists and anger at the district for what they perceived as an utter lack of discipline. In his letter, Philadelphian Joseph W. Albrecht charged that the ACLU and several other rights organizations failed to realize that a consensus of people in Philadelphia agreed that removing “such an effective commissioner” as Frank Rizzo would have amounted to a “victory for the lawless element and a defeat for the law

¹⁶⁵ Dashlell, Evelyn, Letter to the Editor “Mother Affirms Students' Rights” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 28th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁶⁶ November 21st, 1967 “Letter to Dr. Mark Shedd” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1967 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

¹⁶⁷ November 22nd, 1967 “Letter to Richardson Dilworth” WPSC Papers, Folder: 1967 Correspondence, Box 1, ACC 306, TUSCRC

abiding citizens of Philadelphia.”¹⁶⁸ Mr. and Mrs. Paul Morrone denounced “the school board, Dilworth, Shedd, and all loud-mouth critics of Commissioner Rizzo.”¹⁶⁹

One of the most common themes in writing about the student protestors was depicting them as more threatening by stripping them of their youthfulness. In writing and speaking about the students involved, the white community spoke about them explicitly not as children, but as capable, threatening adults. Just as he had at the School Board Building, Rizzo personally led the charge of rhetoric, testifying that he “found a howling mob of completely undisciplined men and women, or minors in age, but adults in physical stature.”¹⁷⁰ Vassil J. Mirsch wrote to the editor, stating that

“the raid on the Board of Education Building and the Center City riots were a disgrace. The 'Children' [sic] should have been in school—getting schooling which they lack. Civil disobedience by students should not exist, nor be tolerated. Three cheers for Commissioner Rizzo for controlling the disorder before it got out of hand.”¹⁷¹

A representative from the Neighborhood School Association, a local community group, issued a similar statement at a public meeting of the board of education. The representative wished to

“remind the board of education that these so called 'innocent children' who took part in the disorder in front of the Board of Education Building last Friday are the same extremist elements that have caused riots in South Philadelphia High School, Bartram High, etc., and have increased racial and religious tensions in many schools in this city.”¹⁷²

During a counter-protest on November 23rd, 18-year-old John Canterbury's encounter with one of these large, “adult” black youths sent him to the hospital in need of

¹⁶⁸ “Letters to *The Bulletin*” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 22nd, 1967

¹⁶⁹ “Letters to *The Bulletin*” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 22nd, 1967

¹⁷⁰ “Rizzo Blasts Black Power, Tells Court of Pupil 'Mob'” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 12th, 1967

¹⁷¹ “Letters to *The Bulletin*” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 22nd, 1967

¹⁷² “School Board Members Call Dilworth 'Timid'” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 20th, 1967

stitches. Canterbury led a noisy march of white students to the police administration building and then on to city hall to show their support for Rizzo. He was confronted by a group of black high school students when he broke off from the group at 10th and Sansom to his parked car. One, whom *The Bulletin* referred to as “a six-footer wearing earrings through pierced ears, a goatee and dressed in black leather,” asked him about the rally sign he was still carrying. The young man slashed Canterbury with a pen knife after he voiced his support for the Commissioner.¹⁷³

The most sensationalist coverage of the student riot came from *The Bulletin* on November 26th, 1967. The article, “Caught up in a Street Riot: How it Looked to the Victims” took up well over half a page to tell vignettes and first-hand stories from those involved. Almost each and every one of these stories, save for the “rioter” involved, tell the story of frightened, helpless white people who were savagely attacked by wild black teenagers for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Of the “at least” 41 injured, “27 of them, who [were] white, had nothing to do with the rally.”¹⁷⁴ The highlight of the article came from 57-year-old Frances Friedberger, a white woman who

“was attacked...when she walked into a mob of between 200 and 300 youths.... She said the members of the mob certainly did not look like children, as some of their leaders refer to them. She said some of the youths had goatees and were shouting 'Black Power!' Police said that many of those in the mob were armed with bottles, switchblade knives and bullhorns.”¹⁷⁵

The solution to preventing such incidents in the future, according to white parents, the PPD, and City Hall, was a complete public crackdown on the schools. City Council

¹⁷³ “Rizzo Backers Stage Rally; Leader Knifed” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 23rd, 1967

¹⁷⁴ “Caught up in a Street Riot: How it Looked to the Victims” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 26th, 1967

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

President D'Ortona, lamenting the lack of “respect for law and order in our schools,” offered the justification that “if we act like hoodlums, the police have a right to beat us down.”¹⁷⁶ Students from South Philadelphia High and their fearful mothers petitioned Dilworth with a list of demands at an open meeting with the school board president. The 50 women present, all white, presented Dilworth with a list of demands, including relief from overcrowding, removal of “detrimental outside influence,” added police protection, stricter discipline, ID cards for all visitors, and electronic weapon scanners. In their coverage of the meeting, *The Bulletin* made sure to clarify that “the reference to outside influence was understood to mean militant civil rights leaders coming into the schools.”¹⁷⁷

On November 22nd, the Philadelphia Home and School Council again presented Shedd and Dilworth with an angry letter, this time credited to the “Parents and citizens living in the area of South Philadelphia High School, who are very much concerned with recent events which have occurred too many times in our school.” The letter presented a list of 14 demands, including an alleviation of overcrowding, “Police protection until there is permanent peace,” “More discipline in the school, by teachers,” “Identification cards, with pictures, to keep non-students out of the school,” and the installation of weapons detection systems and harsh retribution for students caught with concealed weapons. They also demanded the “removal of all detrimental outside influence” and “ridding the classrooms of all troublemakers,” both of which could only mean action from militant or radical civil rights activists.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Aubin, Henry “D'Ortona Raps Shedd's Action in Disorder” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 23rd 1967

¹⁷⁷ Gillespie, John T. “Mothers ask More Police at S. Phila High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 27th, 1967

¹⁷⁸ November 22nd, 1967 “Letter to Richardson Dilworth and Mark Shedd,” Philadelphia Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence November 1967, Box 7, ACC 331, TUSCRC

Dilworth rejected the idea of weapon scanners out of fear of making “the school like a military barracks or a police setup.”¹⁷⁹ Black Philadelphians agreed, and objected outright to Rizzo's recent proposal for the PPD to take control of security and disciplinary measures in the schools. An editorial for *The Tribune* cautioned that “the turning over to the police full responsibility for order and safety in the schools would becloud the 'atmosphere of freedom for the teacher and student' which is essential to the 'education for a full life and responsible citizenship in a free society.’”¹⁸⁰ Among *The Tribune's* black readership, the majority who had expressed their opinion overwhelmingly opposed the idea.¹⁸¹

Much of the blame for the student activism on November 17th, 1967 was given to militant civil rights leaders entering the schools. Within mere days, John Harrington, head of the local branch and national president of the PPD's Fraternal Order of Police labor union, blamed “the members of the board of education [for permitting] rabble-rousers to infiltrate the schools and incite the pupils to acts of anarchy.”¹⁸² Several dissenting members of the school board rapped their president and superintendent for their “timidity” in permitting “militant civil rights leaders to address schools during the mayoral campaign.” Board member William Ross declared that “the disruptive influence of adult agitators must be stopped. Children should not be used as pawns of pressure groups.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Gillespie, John T. “Mothers ask More Police at S. Phila High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 27th, 1967

¹⁸⁰ “Editorials and Comment: School is No Place for Uniformed Police” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 23rd, 1967 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*

¹⁸² “School Board Members Call Dilworth Timid” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 20th, 1967

¹⁸³ Gillespie, John T. “Shedd Restates Schools' Need for Discipline” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 21st, 1967

Shortly after 11/17, Cecil B. Moore and Dick Gregory addressed students at Germantown High. Within days after these “Negro militants” addressed the 63% black school, the parents of 22 white girls requested transfers of their daughters to nearby Northeast High, which had only 30 black students among 4,000.¹⁸⁴ Although the school was too crowded to accept transfers from outside its immediate boundary lines, these parents took advantage of a rule which allowed a parent to transfer their parental authority to another adult within the school's catchment if the student lived there on a full time basis.¹⁸⁵ The school board denied 12 of these applications on the grounds that the students were not spending enough time with their new “parents” and accused them of taking advantage of a loophole.¹⁸⁶

Northeast High was in fact founded on this type of white retreat from black students. In 1954, when black students began to move into the neighborhood surrounding Northeast High, the alumni association petitioned the school board to build a new Northeast High seven miles away in a middle-class white and Jewish neighborhood. The school's colors, trophies, songs, alumni funds, and two thirds of its teaching staff were transferred to the new \$7M [2013: \$60.62M] school under the Northeast High tag, and the old building was renamed Thomas Edison High.¹⁸⁷ The now-black student body

¹⁸⁴ Gillespie, John T. “Board Revokes Transfer of 12 White Girls” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 3rd, 1968

¹⁸⁵ April 1st, 1964, The School District of Philadelphia, Office of the Superintendent “Administrative Bulletin No. 24: Procedures for Admission and Transfer of Pupils to Other than Neighborhood Schools, Regular Grades” Floyd L. Logan Papers, Folder: Pupil Distribution Statistics, 1964-1966, ACC 469, Box 23, TUSCRC

¹⁸⁶ Gillespie, John T. “Board Revokes Transfer of 12 White Girls” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 3rd, 1968

¹⁸⁷ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

staged a strike once this newly resegregated school opened up under a new name with inferior staff and funding.¹⁸⁸

The Philadelphia Home and School Council again hit hard on the idea. In addition to objecting to separate black history courses, the group called for a ban preventing “militant civil rights leaders” from entering public schools during school hours. They argued that “persons should not be permitted to remain on school property during school hours unless authorized by the principal for valid reasons... At no time should our children be used by any persons or groups.” The group voted and issued the statement by unanimous decision.¹⁸⁹

Upon learning of the 11/17 demonstration while it was still in the planning stages, Commissioner Rizzo advocated for an injunction barring civil rights leaders from setting foot upon school property.¹⁹⁰ The school board resisted the idea in those days in early November and did not seek one. Within days following the 11/17 protest, Mayor Tate issued a public statement denouncing the inaction of the school board. “They've known about this for some time, and they've been reluctant to bring the police into it.” Tate further went on to explicitly clarify that by “this” he meant “the black power situation.”¹⁹¹

In a quick reversal in the days immediately following the 11/17 protest, the school board immediately sought and received a temporary injunction against local activists William Mathis of CORE and Walter Palmer of the Black People's Unity Movement.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Levenstein, Lisa *A Movement Without Marches*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009, P.

¹⁸⁹ November 28th, 1967 “Letter to the Board of Education,” Philadelphia Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence November 1967, Box 7, ACC 331, TUSCRC

¹⁹⁰ Gillespie, John T. “Dilworth Blames Police; Rizzo Cites his Warning” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 17th, 1967

¹⁹¹ “Mayor Says School Board Chief is Meddling” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 19th, 1967

¹⁹² Harmon, Gordon Y. “Judge Keeps Ban on Protest at Schools; 100 Witnesses set to testify Against 4,

Two weeks after the initial temporary injunction, the Honorable Alexander F. Barbieri made the order permanent and larger in scope. In addition to being barred from entering school buildings, the two men were no longer legally permitted to set foot on any sidewalks in front of or across the street from school buildings, incite students to tardiness or absenteeism, advocate violence, or engage in any other activities which interfered with the “regular and proper use of school buildings.”¹⁹³ With such broad language, the court order effectively forbade the two from any form of activism or organization with school-aged students.

As popular support for these injunctions barring all civil rights activists began to garner momentum among the Philadelphia public, the school board quickly reversed its stance on the matter and actively sought one from the court. After district officials received a tip from the PPD that anti-draft and pro-peace organizations had planned several rallies in front of a number of schools on Monday, December 4th, President Dilworth announced that the school board was currently considering a court order banning “disruptive activities” by “outsiders.”¹⁹⁴

On December 21st, 1967, city courts also ordered an injunction against Black Panther founder Stokely Carmichael at the request of Mayor Tate. The order banned the man who *The Bulletin* lovingly referred to as a “Black Power agitator” from making any public appearances and speeches or organizing any demonstrations within the city of

Board Lawyer Says” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 25th, 1967

¹⁹³ “Court Widens Injunction on School Rallies” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 8th, 1967

¹⁹⁴ Gillespie, John T. “Schools Issue Ban on Rallies by ‘Outsiders’” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 1st, 1967

Philadelphia.¹⁹⁵ Although the 11/17 riot was not mentioned as direct motivation, it can only be assumed that fear of such “agitation” of students served as a factor.

While the finger pointing after the riot faded, concerns over race problems and outsiders remained high during the coming years. On December 12th, 1967, a group calling itself “Concerned Teachers of South Philadelphia High School” hosted a meeting of parents and residents in the neighborhood to solicit suggestions on how to reduce racial tensions within the school and throughout the city. The group's primary concern highlights an interesting development in the Philadelphia police force. Their main community concern was “Philadelphia's racial unrest, which has presented the city with costly expenditures in extra police equipment.”¹⁹⁶

Among this extra equipment was Rizzo's requested \$1 Million [2013: \$6.92M], a significant portion of which was earmarked for two anti-riot tanks, already on order when the Concerned Teachers hosted their meeting.¹⁹⁷ The vehicles were bullet proof and could transport up to 15 fully armed men into the very heart of a riot, lay down barrages of tear gas, and extinguish fires. They came equipped with a public address system, machine gun turret, and six gun ports. Civil rights leaders vehemently objected to their purchase on behalf of the young black citizenry, who could be the only intended target for this deadly force.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ “City Gets Injunction Against Carmichael” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 21st, 1967

¹⁹⁶ “South Phila. High Teachers Plan Meeting to Discuss Methods of Easing Race Tensions in School” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 12th, 1967 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

¹⁹⁷ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

¹⁹⁸ “Rizzo May Buy Deadly Anti-Riot Tanks Despite Civil Rights Aides Opposition” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, December 9th, 1967 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

Injunctions and tanks could not expel black power from the Philadelphia school district. Black Power advocates set aside February 21st, 1968, as a black national holiday, and actively encouraged students to participate. Organizers handed out two sets of leaflets to young people in black schools and neighborhoods urging people to boycott school or work, pray, fast, study black history, and wear black arm bands as a visible symbol of racial solidarity. The holiday, initially set to honor the third anniversary of Malcolm X's assassination, was expanded to include all "black heroes."¹⁹⁹ An earlier version of the pamphlet called on participants to actively boycott white-owned businesses in addition to the boycott of school and work in honor of Malcolm X.²⁰⁰

The school board did not greet the holiday warmly. When questioned about the event, Dilworth replied that "we're certainly not going to give any permission for [students] to stay out of school for this. We let them out for national holidays prescribed by law and this isn't anything like that."²⁰¹ In preparation for expected tensions and conflict, the district deployed extra non-teaching aides throughout the city. The actual day of protest was met with moderate participation and no reported violence. Throughout the city, absentee rates ranged from a mere 1% to 19% higher than the same day during the previous year. At the city's 12 high schools with predominantly black student bodies, absenteeism averaged only 11% higher. In their public statement, school district representatives made sure to downplay the influence of black power. They elaborated

¹⁹⁹ Daughen, Joseph R. "Negro Pupils Urged to Take Protest Holiday Wednesday" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16th, 1968

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Ibid

that they were unsure how much of the absenteeism was a result of the holiday, and how much was due to the record cold winter weather.²⁰²

By 1968, black students began to formally organize inside the schools during school days. Black student unions (BSU) served as an important means of organizing for black student activists within city schools. Students of Germantown High formed the city's first officially recognized BSU in the spring of 1968. The club consisted of just over 20 members, including two white girls²⁰³. The union was not officially recognized by the school, due to the fact that such an organization violated the district's policy on banning exclusionary clubs. Shedd reversed school policy and approved the club after he reviewed their constitution, which encouraged students of all races to join and strove to serve as a venue to improve tense racial conditions within the school.²⁰⁴ The club's only previous supporters outside of its membership were the Germantown Community Council, and official approval from the school board presented black students activists with an incredible opportunity for organization and outreach.²⁰⁵

As part of a 1968 Negro History Week celebration, the BSU at Germantown High organized an assembly with the permission of the school's black principal Samuel Beard. The first half of the program featured the Harlem's Arthur Hall Dancers. For the innocuous dance troupe's encore, students brought in Jeremiah X, a black power advocate and minister at a local mosque. *The Philadelphia Tribune* called X "one of the most feared and respected Blackmen [sic] in town to those who really know what is going on

²⁰² "Negro Holiday is Observed Quietly Here" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 21st, 1968

²⁰³ "School urged to Recognize 'Black Union'" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 23rd, 1968

²⁰⁴ "Black Student Union Indorsed by Shedd" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 31st 1968

²⁰⁵ "School urged to Recognize 'Black Union'" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 23rd, 1968

in Black Ghettos.” When X spoke, “all hell broke loose. Negroes cheered. Whites revolted. Teachers shuttered.”²⁰⁶

Shortly after Jeremiah Hall set hell loose upon Germantown High, two highly respected educators, Mattie Humphrey and Charles Lawrence, discussed urban problems as guest speakers in a social studies class at suburban Lower Merion High School. The pair had been invited by the school to bring “a relevant educational experience to the students,” but were attacked the next week by *The Main Line Chronicle*, a suburban newspaper, as “black racists...a draft-evading Negro and a colored graduate from a hotbed of communism...who have infiltrated our facilities.”²⁰⁷ Lawrence had studied at the University of Michigan and was at the time of his speaking a law student at Yale. *The Chronicle* printed a cartoon called “Invitation to Trouble in our Public Schools.” It showed a “sinister-looking man with a 'leftist teacher' tag attached to his foot as he painted the words 'soul brother' on the front doors of Lower Merion High School.”²⁰⁸ It continued by outright assailing black history classes and called the two invited guests “apologists for arson and plunder.” They argued that such people should not be allowed into Lower Merion schools any more than “a representative of the Ku Klux Klan.” The Main Line NAACP and the ACLU denounced *The Chronicle's* editors and “a group of suburban teachers” wrote a letter of scathing criticism to *The Tribune*.²⁰⁹

Merely two weeks after Humphrey and Lawrence stirred fears of Black Power among white parents in Lower Merion's, a group called The Citizens Committee on

²⁰⁶ Gray, Peyton “Peyton's Place: Germantown Muslim” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 27th, 1968
The Philadelphia Tribune, January 27th, 1968, Accessed March 4th, 2013 www.proquest.com

²⁰⁷ Lear, Len “Rights Group Denounces 'Main Line Chronicle'” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 20th, 1968
Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ Ibid

Public Education in Philadelphia claimed to have found “separatists in the Black Power movement...affecting the safety of students” at Germantown High.²¹⁰ They claimed to have found evidence that the Afro-American Society, a “militant civil rights organization,” was recruiting students during school hours.²¹¹ Their greatest concern was that these militants were not students at the school. The group also mentioned the appearance in November of Cecil B. Moore and the 11/17 protest as major factors in student unrest. They cautioned that “if this trend [were] allowed to go unchallenged, it [would] inevitably destroy the quality of teaching and cause more restlessness and worry than [had] already been observed” at the school.²¹²

The group claimed that residents felt that the presence of Germantown High School had a negative influence on not only the students at the school but the local community at large.²¹³ Located roughly seven miles from Center City, Germantown is a bedroom community in the city's northwest section. By 1968, the student body at Germantown High had grown to two-thirds black, while the once-lily-white neighborhood was quickly become home to an increasing number of black residents.²¹⁴ Like the communities surrounding Gratz and Bok Highs, residents there were happy to ignore the black students as long as they were contained in an underperforming school under white leadership. Only in the face of a loss of white territory combined with

²¹⁰ Gillespie, John T. “Citizens' Group Fears Violence at Germantown High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 11th, 1968

²¹¹ Ibid

²¹² Ibid

²¹³ Ibid

²¹⁴ Countryman, Mathew *Upsouth: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, P. 238

increasing demands by black parents for actual influence did white parents begin to see Germantown High's negative effect on the neighborhood.

White parents showed that they had the ability to protest just as loudly, if not as frequently, as any young black student. Shortly after school resumed in September 1968, a large group of white parents from the city's northeast section staged a protest rally at the Board of Education Building. In this protest, a large group of white parents became “unruly” and hurled inflammatory racial statements. George Fencil, already on the scene with his Civil Disobedience Squad, did not feel the need to call for backup from Rizzo this time around, despite the fact that many observers reported his men being physically pushed around by the white protestors.

Protestors soon became so rowdy that they broke a window on the Board of Education Building, which prompted Shedd to call the police for intervention. Rizzo brought in a squad of uniformed men, but kept them around the corner.²¹⁵ When black students protested for civil rights the previous fall, they were met with a harsh and violent suppression, even though they were mostly ordered and well behaved. In the view of the PPD and white parents, such incidents were examples of dangerous outsiders infiltrating the schools and agitating students. When the protestors were white and actually did become unruly, the city, PPD, and other whites in power did not see a need to reel them in.

Less than ten months after the infamous 11/17 protest, *The Tribune's* Lawrence Geller could not resist the obvious comparison in his editorialized coverage of this white

²¹⁵ Geller, Lawrence “Point and Counterpoint: Whites Storm Bd. of Ed. But Rizzo was Unruffled” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, September 28th, 1968 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

protest taking place in the same spot. “The thing that stuck out in [Geller’s] mind was the polite behavior of the police towards this unruly mob which was in stark contrast to the police brutality perpetrated against black youth at the same spot last November 17.”²¹⁶ The student protestors of 1967 were mostly orderly, and Fencil called for reinforcements after he reported seeing a black youth on the roof of a car. Shedd disagreed with the need for police. Geller speculated that if 1968’s white rally had been antiwar, led by blacks or hippies, Rizzo would not have hesitated to bring out the night sticks in a reprisal of the previous year’s school board melee.²¹⁷

In what had come to be an almost annual tradition of racially motivated fighting, on Wednesday, October 8th, 1968, white residents fought with police officers when they prevented the angry residents from physically attacking and throwing stones at black students on their way to the now 88% black Bok High.²¹⁸ The school district ordered Bok and South Philadelphia Highs to close early on Thursday October 10th, and remain shuttered until the following Monday. Racial fighting resulted in 20 arrests and seven injuries over the course of two days.²¹⁹ Press coverage traced the disturbance back to a dance held by a black fraternity one month earlier at the Wilson Park community center. As the dance got out at 11:20pm, a large group of white youths waited for the black dancers inside. The two groups of youths quickly erupted into a large brawl, throwing bricks and bottles. Witnesses and those involved accused the police of arresting far more blacks than whites.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Ibid

²¹⁸ “Group Leaves After Plea by Rights Leader” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 16th, 1968

²¹⁹ “Racial Disorders Afflict 6 Schools” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 10th, 1968

²²⁰ Grimes, Paul “Discord Grows in South Phila, as Black Pressure Increases” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 10th, 1968

Disorder and discord spread again throughout the city's high schools to Edison, Overbrook, Kensington, and Dobbins highs after the closing of Bok and South Philadelphia High. Prompted by false rumors of a white boy being stabbed, white students walked out of class at around 11am on October 10th, 1968 at Overbrook High. Several fist fights broke out as they left. Just before noon, across town, 200 black students refused to return to class after a false fire alarm at Edison High. They marched to Kensington High School for Girls before continuing on to Dobbins High.²²¹ The following day, Superintendent Shedd addressed students in the afflicted schools via closed-circuit television. He appealed to the students for calm, and said that “we [the district, its faculty, staff, and students] are being put to a severe test to see if we are capable of seeing public education work in Philadelphia, or if we have to knuckle under to the small but strong forces of bigotry and anarchy.”²²²

Six days later, more than 2,000 mostly white residents and parents attended an anti-integration meeting at South Philadelphia High. Attendees objected to the bussing of black students from West and North Philadelphia and called to keep South Philadelphia for South Philadelphians. Among other demands, these protestors called for a racial balance of at least 40% white students within five years and a beefed up security detail with an additional 25 non-teaching aids and five security officers. The white parents also demanded that buses be used to transport those black students who did not live in the immediate vicinity of the school to prevent them from walking through ten blocks of white turf between the subway and school. Three black parents tried to speak at one

²²¹ “Racial Disorders Afflict 6 Schools” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 10th, 1968

²²² “Shedd Addresses Pupils Over TV, Appeals for Calm” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 11th, 1968

point during the meeting, but all were silenced by an angry white woman with “this is *our* meeting.”²²³

Upon the meeting's dismissal, 1,000 whites in attendance refused to leave the auditorium. The crowd dwindled over the course of the evening, but 11 hours later, 125 recalcitrant attendees-turned-protestors remained. The crowd only dispersed when Clarence Farmer, executive director of the city's Commission on Human Relations promised them a meeting with Superintendent Shedd and five other school board members.²²⁴

At that promised meeting, Shedd agreed to deliver the security muscle and to add more local white students to the school, increasing white enrollment to 25%. While the angry crowd happily accepted the offer for extra security, the increase in white students still left too many young black students traveling through their white neighborhood.²²⁵ In protest of the school board's refusal to meet their demands, a group of angry South Philadelphians led a white power march around the school over the weekend under the eye of Fencil and his Civil Disobedience Squad. One thousand white protestors, a few playing fife and drum and waving American flags, marched from 7pm to midnight as they shouted racist slogans from a truck draped with a “Wallace for President” banner.²²⁶

A number of black community groups also held meetings to discuss the same problem and possible solutions. At a meeting led by CORE's William Mathis and a black teachers group called “Teachers Concerned,” black South Philadelphians planned a

²²³ “Group Leaves After Plea by Rights Leader” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 16th, 1968

²²⁴ “Negro City Official Praised for Easing Tensions at Bok High” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

²²⁵ “Group Leaves After Plea by Rights Leader” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 16th, 1968

²²⁶ “1,000 March in South Phila. March to Demand Bok Stay Closed” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 13th, 1968

boycott of white stores in the city's Italian Market neighborhood. The strip of stores on 9th street between Washington and Ellsworth streets catered to black customers but refused to hire them. Black residents at several other meetings, two of which Commissioner Rizzo personally attended, demanded better police protection. Meeting with the Greenwich Neighbors Citizens Concerned Committee, local black leaders grilled the Commissioner on the lack of police protection for their children traveling to and from school. Meeting with the Black Coalition on a similar topic, Rizzo promised that “anyone, black or white, that starts anything out there will get one warning and then they are going to jail.”²²⁷

Several other groups made more drastic requests. The entire faculty and staff at Bok voted to petition Mayor Tate to declare a state of emergency in the South Philadelphia community.²²⁸ Cecil B. Moore publicly chastised the mayor for not having already done so.²²⁹ Led by black school board member Rev. Henry Nichols, 25 of the city's black leaders implored Pennsylvania Governor Raymond Shafer via telegram. The group begged the governor to declare a state of emergency and deploy the Pennsylvania National Guard to South Philadelphia to protect their children where the city and PPD would not.²³⁰

School reopened at Bok and South Philadelphia High the following Monday without incident. Other schools throughout the city experienced continuing disturbances.

²²⁷ Geller, Lawrence “Students 'Take Control' at Ben Franklin High” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 15th, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2012 www.proquest.com

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ Wilder, John “Leaders Criticize Cops' Handling of Bok Uproar” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 12th, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2012 www.proquest.com

²³⁰ Wiley, Doris B. “Negroes Ask Shafer to Alert Guardsmen” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 11th, 1968

As black students from Olney traveled home on busses after school, white students threw rocks through their windows, showering the students with glass. At 11:10 am at Franklin High, roughly half of the white teachers walked out after black students held several meetings in which they barred classroom doors and demanded that the 80% white faculty become 100% black.²³¹ Students there later held an “all-Negro workshop” to discuss the situation across town at Bok.²³² About one-fourth of the 2,000 students present that day attended the session after classes were dismissed. Frank Sullivan, head of the teachers' union, claimed that the meeting at Franklin was led by a small minority of students under the influence of “outsiders.”²³³

Superintendent Shedd personally invited Richard Davidson, an outspoken Black Power advocate, to speak to the 70% white Olney High in an effort to ease tension after success with such tactics in a previous situation. Shedd later admitted that inviting the “Negro Militant” who was free on bail for inciting riot on 11/17 was a tactical error.²³⁴ White parents agreed, and over 1,000 attended a meeting with the Superintendent to ask why he would invite such a radical into their school. Parent Morris Kaplan demanded that such “trouble makers be arrested,” and two white students suggested a larger police presence in the school.²³⁵

Those who couldn't attend the meeting with Shedd hosted and attended similar discussion groups at their local community schools to discuss Davidson's talk as well as the racial situation at Bok. Randolph Scott, Vice President of the student senate at Edison

²³¹ Headline cut off...“Franklin, Olney, Edison Disrupted” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 14th, 1968

²³² Ibid

²³³ Ibid

²³⁴ “Shedd Admits Error in Letting Militant Speak” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 17th, 1968

²³⁵ “Shedd Admits he Erred in Letting Militant Speak”, *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 16th, 1968

High said “one thing we don't want is policemen around the building waiting for us. We feel the teachers, students, and parents can handle this without Rizzo.”²³⁶

Charles A. Peruto, an attorney representing a citizens' group of white residents near Bok, received the biggest applause of the night when he spoke at a city council meeting. He and his group demanded a better racial balance in the city's schools and more guards. Peruto demanded greater student discipline and for students to be expelled for serious misconduct. He also warned his fellow citizens against listening to “crackpots” who would incite them to riot, protest, or demonstration, adding “we don't want outside agitators coming in” either.²³⁷

In a written letter to Dr. Shedd, Mrs. Phyllis Zimmer, president of the Benjamin Franklin Home and School Association, wrote to voice several objections on behalf of her membership. The group demanded that the district “prohibit the deliberate stirring up of hatred for whites by forbidding black militants and other leaders to speak at school assemblies.” The group also outright objected to the use of busing for the sole purpose of forcing integration at Benjamin Franklin High School, and demanded an end to the practice.²³⁸ Ben Franklin High was one of the major hubs of Black Nationalist activity in the Philadelphia school district, and Mrs. Zimmer was certainly confronted with it on a much more frequent basis than parents at the white Northeast High.

²³⁶ Ibid

²³⁷ McKenna, Daniel J. “Keep Out 'Extremists,' He Demands” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 27th, 1968

²³⁸ November 15th, 1968 “Letter to Dr. Shedd,” Philadelphia Home and School Council Papers, Folder: Correspondence November 1968, Box 7, ACC 331, TUSCRC

CHAPTER FOUR
CRACKDOWN CITY

“This Black Power that sometimes resorts to violence can't be allowed. This 'kill whitey,' 'Uncle Tom,' and 'burn down the city' – that power has to be crushed.”
-Frank Rizzo, Police Commissioner, 1967²³⁹

In direct response to this massive outbreak of fighting in October 1968, Mayor Tate, Commissioner Rizzo, and the city council urged the school board to ratify a proposal which would have granted the PPD jurisdiction inside every school in Philadelphia. The proposal called for a number of radical changes to school security structures. Under the proposed structure, the 330 non-teaching aids already in place in the schools were to be integrated into the PPD's ranks in what the mayor called a “therapeutic step.”²⁴⁰

In addition to transferring disciplinary authority to police themselves, the proposal also called for the formation of parental watchdog groups “to establish factual accounts of school conditions” and the district's Office of Integration and Inter-Group relations to be transferred to the city's Commission for Human Relations. Tate also called for detention centers for unruly students to “isolate rebellion from the rest of the student

²³⁹ “Rizzo Blasts Black Power, Tells Court of Pupil Mob” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 12th, 1967
Statement was made in response criticisms of his handling of the student demonstration at the Board of Education Building on November 17th, 1967

²⁴⁰ “School Police 'Compromise'” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 23rd, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2012 www.proquest.com
Gillespie, John “Tate Tells School Board to Restore Order, Safety” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 25th, 1968

body” and strict discipline for disruptive students. Protecting schools from outsiders remained a key focus, as the bill called for “vigorous prosecution” of trespassers and student ID cards to identify outsiders, even though the school board policy already prohibited students from attending unauthorized political rallies during school hours and prohibited “outside agitators” from entering schools entirely.²⁴¹ The school board voted to reject Tate's proposal and continued to determine policy within the schools.²⁴²

The black community vehemently objected to the Mayor's bill to “inject the city government – especially the PDD – into the affairs of the schools” and applauded the board for retaining its independence. Principals throughout the district called wearing of ID cards with pictures, names, and ID numbers “demeaning and undemocratic.”²⁴³ Black school board member Nichols said the plan to force students to carry ID would make Philadelphia “resemble South Africa” and promised to personally lead a mass burning of the cards if adopted.²⁴⁴ Charles G. Simpson of the city's Fellowship Commission on civil rights commended the school for rejecting the proposal. While he welcomed the cooperation of police when the situation required it, he feared that turning the children of Philadelphia over to the PPD would destroy the “atmosphere of freedom for teacher and

student which is essential for education...in a free society.”²⁴⁵ An editorial for *The*

²⁴¹ Lordan, Francis M. & Corr, John P. “Tate Urges Board to Let Police Direct Security in School” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 25th, 1968

Gillespie, John “Board Reasserts Right to Police City Schools” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 28th, 1968

²⁴² Gillespie, John “Board Reasserts Right to Police City Schools” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 28th, 1968

²⁴³ “Tate's Proposal Vetoed by School Board” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 16th, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

²⁴⁴ “School Police 'Compromise'” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 23rd, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2012 www.proquest.com

²⁴⁵ “Editorials and Comments: School is No Place for Uniformed Police” *The Philadelphia Tribune*,

Tribune agreed, and praised the school board for its decision.²⁴⁶

After the school board's veto, City Council President D'Ortona threatened to withhold an additional \$30 million [2013: \$200M]²⁴⁷ which the City Council had promised to the 1968-'69 school year budget. D'Ortona justified that he would not fund a school board that refused to beef up security while “this [was] going on.” *The Bulletin* clarified that by “this,” “D'Ortona was referring to the racial troubles which [had] afflicted many of the city's high schools for the [previous] 10 days.”²⁴⁸ He charged that the school board allowed “extremists to poison the minds of pupils by permitting them to speak in the schools,” and demanded that “the board of education restore order and discipline to the city's public schools and that 'extremists' be kept out of them.”²⁴⁹

The school board scrambled to find a compromise to maintain funding. Members proposed instead to hire an additional 218 school security officers to be stationed full-time in the 18 “most critical schools.” These officers would answer directly to the school board, not the PPD. Although the board initially considered posting teachers outside of schools to identify non-students, this idea was shelved because the district's contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers expressly prohibited using teachers for any type of neighborhood security away from the school.²⁵⁰

School board President Dilworth and Commissioner Rizzo came to a compromise

November 23rd, 1968 www.proquest.com

²⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁷ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

²⁴⁸ McKenna, Daniel J. “Keep Out 'Extremists,' He Demands” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 27th, 1968

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ “Tate's Proposal Vetoed by School Board” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 16th, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2013 www.proquest.com

during a closed-door meeting in mid-November 1968. The Commissioner offered to provide uniformed police to be deployed in schools under the direction of the principal, not the PPD. The mayor declined to deploy the men throughout the district, but added that the board may later deploy them if principals and faculty at individual schools deemed it necessary. Under this new plan, police began patrolling the area around 12 of what the school board deemed to be “trouble schools.”²⁵¹

The board later opted to add several other security measures in addition to the optional police involvement. The proposal added \$6.5 Million [2013: \$41.12M] to the district's \$242 Million [2013: \$1.53B] budget.²⁵² Additional salaries alone added \$1.4 Million [2013: \$8.9M] to the 1968-'69 operating budget.²⁵³ The district scrambled to find the funding necessary to implement these changes. To pay for the additional security force, the board opted to lay off half of the city's truant officers. Most truant officers worked in black neighborhoods, where the officers would be disproportionately cut. A truant officer's main mission was to get students to return to school, as opposed to a security officer's mission of enforcing strict discipline upon rule breakers already there. Truant officers continued the work of the school counselors by going into a student's home and frequently found workable solutions which resulted in the student returning to class. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania required a bachelor's degree plus two years'

²⁵¹ “School Police ‘Compromise’” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 23rd, 1968 Accessed January 27th, 2012 www.proquest.com

²⁵² “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

²⁵³ *Ibid*

Gillespie, John T. “More Projects Face Cutback, Shedd Warns” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 13th, 1968

experience in teaching, social work, counseling, or psychology to serve as a truant officer.²⁵⁴

This represents a critical example of how the Philadelphia board of education allocated funds for security. The truant officer, whose mandate was one of civil service, worked to get kids back into school and uplift the community, rather than to punish them. In the face of calls from the white community to increase security under an ever-tightening school budget, these black voices calling for social services were silenced in favor of punitive policing. Truant officers were also cut from white neighborhoods, but black neighborhoods lost officers at much higher rates when the number of students served was taken into account.

These measures did not entirely please City Council, who still feared another outbreak of inter-racial fighting. Under pressure from the Council to spend an additional \$1.5 Million [2013: \$9.45M] on security outlays, the district agreed to implement yet more security measures the following spring, 1969.²⁵⁵ The board of education established 21 disciplinary teams of teachers in the city's high schools. The teams were created as an alternative to a plan involving the hiring of an additional 200 security guards. Teams were each given an annual budget of \$3,000 [2013: \$18,978] and the “power to recommend the arrest, suspension, or expulsion of offending pupils.”²⁵⁶ In their coverage here, *The Bulletin* explicitly chose to use *arrest* as the leading item in the toolkit for

²⁵⁴ Wilder, John Brantley “Half of Truant Officers Face Axe Next Month” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 5th, 1968 Accessed October 31st, 2012 www.proquest.com

²⁵⁵ Gillespie, John T. “School Board Averts Strike by Teachers” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 7th, 1969
 “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

²⁵⁶ Ibid

“Gillespie, John T. “Schools Forming Disciplinary Teams” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 11th, 1969

dealing with student rule breakers, tapping into the increasingly punitive demands of conservative white parents.

Breaking rank with the rest of the school board in February, President Dilworth said in a statement that the schools were primed for anarchy that spring, due to the fact that these “agitators” had been active in at least five of the city's schools.²⁵⁷ By May 1969, Dilworth stated in a KYW-TV interview that it was mostly luck which kept the schools safe. He further elevated his initial estimate to nine high schools and numerous junior highs that were targets of SDS. He claimed that the Temple branch of the “radical student organization,” along with a few other unnamed groups, was initiating a “very big drive” to cause “explosions” aimed at inciting students to violence.²⁵⁸

Perhaps one of these “explosions” was the Philadelphia-based Black People’s Unity Movement's three-day International Black Power Conference, convening again on X's birthday to honor black leaders who had died in the pursuit of peace and freedom.²⁵⁹ Working with school administrators that May, organizers of the three-day holiday received permission from the board of education to use the auditorium and gym at the 99% black Benjamin Franklin High.²⁶⁰ While the group planned other events at other locales as part of the event, Franklin was chosen as its focal point after student petitions to rename the school Malcolm X High reached the board of education. Principal Leon Bass described the celebration as a “positive gesture to honor those who fought for

²⁵⁷ “Dilworth Fears School Disorders Here” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 28th, 1969

²⁵⁸ “Dilworth Says Pupils Resist SDS Agitators” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 12th, 1969

²⁵⁹ Countryman, Mathew “Up South”

²⁶⁰ Lewis, Claude “Widow Defends Malcolm X in Talks at Franklin High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 28th, 1969

freedom.” He saw “no reason for anyone to become alarmed when black people get together to celebrate. This is a positive program for all our citizens.”²⁶¹

While the International Black Power Conference intended to only get students involved after the end of the school day, scores of student activists arrived. Roughly 400 marched out of their classes from schools around the city and gathered at Franklin, where they hung a large banner which read “Malcolm X High” over the school's moniker. Clarence Farmer of the city's Human Relations Committee pleaded with students to return to their classes and wait for the regularly scheduled program. Students remained orderly in their disregard for Farmer, but a contingent of policemen remained on patrol near the school and made no reported arrests. After the end of the school day, an additional 200 students arrived, and most of the police had left the area.²⁶² At the end of the year, Franklin High invited Malcolm X's widow to deliver that year's graduation keynote speech, where she used the occasion to defend her late husband. The graduating class of '69 presented a life-sized bust of Malcolm X to the school as their official class gift and a physical reminder of their effort to rename the school in his honor.²⁶³

Despite their stated goals of racial unity and their officially sanctioned status, Black Student Unions remained controversial in light of such Black Power activism. Given the deep and very recent history of racial clashes and conflict at Olney high, the school's club came under particularly close scrutiny. During a particularly tense period of

²⁶¹ Lewis, Claude “Black Holiday Fete Set at Franklin High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 21st, 1969

²⁶² Lewis, Claude “Negro Pupils March to Honor Malcolm X” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 21st, 1969

²⁶³ Lewis, Claude “Widow Defends Malcolm X in Talks at Franklin High” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 28th, 1969

race relations in May 1969, the student government formed its BSU without first receiving approval from faculty.

The next two weeks were, according to 28-year-old teacher Russell Kelner, “intolerable.”²⁶⁴ Instructors confiscated a pamphlet called “People's News Service...Black Panther,” which demanded the resignation of a black non-teaching assistant. According to the confiscated pamphlet, the assistant was a “lying petty pig...a beast punk who, if he keeps barking around, will be gassed.”²⁶⁵ Thomas McGill, faculty adviser of the club, denied that his students had any connection to the document. McGill claimed the flier was printed off campus, and confiscated copies were given to school district security and the police. Kelner and the city's teachers' union publicly credited the new club with not only the pamphlet, but for stirring up the racial anxiety at the school which later led to the stabbing of a white student.²⁶⁶

The following November, the now 50-member-strong BSU at the predominantly black West Philadelphia High organized a boycott against American History teacher George Fishman.²⁶⁷ Students in his classes had repeatedly requested that Fishman discuss black history and important black historical figures, but he declined. Students also requested a “representative of the militant Black Panther party be invited to speak to them.”²⁶⁸ A union steward from the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers claimed that Fishman passed the request on to the principal, who failed to act upon it. When 18-year-old Richard Lawrence asked his teacher about the omission of black historical figures, he

²⁶⁴ Gillespie, John T. “Olney High Staff Divided over Racial Unrest Charges” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 28th, 1969

²⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ “24 Boycott W. Phila Class as 'Not Relevant'” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 20th, 1969

²⁶⁸ Ibid

responded that such a topic was not important. Lawrence further claimed that Fishman left out large portions of black history, and that his lessons covering 1865-1900 did not mention a single black historical figure.²⁶⁹ Students also accused Fishman of discouraging discussion and dismissing then subsequently ignoring students who raised controversial issues. For Negro History Week, Fishman played a recording of slave spirituals, which he stopped short after students became too noisy for his tastes.²⁷⁰ Principal Walter H. Scott appointed a committee of five students to help draw up a lesson plan, which student Robert Beaty claimed Fishman never consulted. Scott said that Fishman, who was working on a doctorate in education at the time, was “scholarly, but difficult to relate to,” and supported his transfer.²⁷¹

On October 20th, 1969, students walked out of Fishman's class in protest. Of the 30 students in his morning class, all but six left the room to study and read about black history in an adjacent room. After rallying in the reading room, students held an impromptu march through the halls and around the building. Students also boycotted Fishman's four remaining classes that day. In classes which ranged in size from 30 to 35 students, one session saw as few as two attendees, while the largest of the day only had seven in attendance. Four black adults also picketed outside of the school later in the day. In addition to their explicit curriculum demands, students insisted that Fishman be replaced and transferred to a different school.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Wilder, John Brantley “Students Call Teacher 'Racist' and Boycott Classes: Principal Suggests Teacher's Transfer for Good of School” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 21, 1969, Accessed October 31, 2012 www.proquest.com

²⁷⁰ Gillespie, John T. “Pupils Defend Stand on W. Phila. Teacher” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 24th, 1969

²⁷¹ Gillespie, John T. “Relevancy to Black Pupils Key Issue in Teacher Shift” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 23rd, 1969

²⁷² “24 Boycott W. Phila Class as 'Not Relevant'; Teachers Threaten Strike”, *The Philadelphia Bulletin*,

Such a walkout was unprecedented and drew attention throughout the city. president Frank O'Sullivan of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers threatened to muster the full strength of the union through a city-wide strike if Fishman was forcibly transferred. "I think [teachers] face the possibility of student-control of schools," O'Sullivan said. "No teacher is safe in that situation."²⁷³ The struggle to maintain authority certainly is a part of teaching, but simple student control is not what frightened O'Sullivan. Had the students been middle-class whites, he likely would have commended them for taking an interest in shaping their pedagogy. When, however, the students were black nationalists, O'Sullivan used these words as a coded message to stifle black activism.

In response to O'Sullivan's threats of strike, nine students, including 16-year-old West Philadelphia High Student Body President Robert Williams, held a press conference at the headquarters of Citizens for Progress, a West Philadelphia civic organization sympathetic to their cause. The students stood by their boycott and demands to transfer George Fishman. They objected to the threatened strike as "scare tactics." Williams denied charges that students had harassed Fishman and defended the walkout and boycott as an orderly protest.²⁷⁴

The day before the walkout, students, parents, and school officials met at a nearby church to discuss the students' problem with the relevancy of Fishman's instruction. After catching advanced word of the planned protest thanks to this meeting, the school district deployed an additional 20 security guards to the school, which more than doubled the

October 20th, 1969

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ Gillespie, John T. "Pupils Defend Stand on W. Phila. Teacher" *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 24th, 1969

normal battalion of eighteen on the day of the student boycott.²⁷⁵ The day following, Fishman reported to an empty classroom while the security officers and non-teaching aides remained on duty.²⁷⁶

Students continued to boycott Fishman's class and protested in the halls for two weeks following the initial walkout, although not nearly to the same extent. One hundred guards employed by the school and officers from the PPD protected the Board of Education Building based upon rumors of “possibly thousands of black student” protestors as they awaited Dr. Shedd's decision on November 10th. The student turnout was relatively small, and was mostly made up of sympathetic young whites.²⁷⁷ Superintendent Shedd, citing insufficient grounds under the union's contract regarding forced transfers, denied Fishman's transfer.²⁷⁸

The anger surrounding Shedd's decision spilled out of the schools and into the black community at large. At a meeting of four hundred concerned citizens, parents, and students at the nearby Irvine Auditorium in West Philadelphia, Cecil B. Moore addressed the crowd. He urged students to return to class and stated that that it was “up to [their] parents and concerned citizens” to deal with the administration and Fishman.²⁷⁹ The ever-controversial Moore, with his gift for hyperbole, called it “a rape of education and a

²⁷⁵ “24 Boycott W. Phila Class as 'Not Relevant'; Teachers Threaten Strike”, *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 20th, 1969

²⁷⁶ Wilder, John Brantley “Students Call Teacher 'Racist' and Boycott Classes: Principal Suggests Teacher's Transfer for Good of School.” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 21, 1969, Accessed October 31, 2012. www.proquest.com

²⁷⁷ Wilder, John “Controversial Teacher Stays at W. Phila Hi” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 11th, 1969, Accessed January 31st, 2013 www.proquest.com

²⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁹ Gillespie, John T. “Fishman to Remain at School” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 11th, 1969

burglary of ambitions.” He also referred to the teachers' union as “a bunch of draft dodgers and homosexuals.”²⁸⁰

Black Student Unions throughout Philadelphia continued their demands for black history that fall semester. Sponsored by the Roxborough High BSU, 90 students, 70 of whom were black, met in the school's lunchroom on December 16th, 1969. Students later moved to the auditorium to protest a lack of black figures in regular American history courses. In a prepared statement, the club's president Jerome Henderson demanded that black history be taught five days a week in every history class. “There will be no more waiting; we have waited long enough,” the impassioned young man exclaimed.²⁸¹ Although curriculum planners added black history to the history program at the school, woven into the standard material, students claimed that teachers ignored ample opportunities to teach black history and did not spend enough time on those black historical figures who did come up. Principal Claude V. Schoenly asked students to appoint representatives to meet with administrators to work out a solution. He also said that, on some days, it was impossible for teachers to touch on black history and that the boycott stemmed from “agitation” from outsiders in the community. George Miller, of the school's disciplinary committee, said that the school was “in chaos.”²⁸²

The BSU was equally active at Germantown High after students returned from Christmas break in 1970. In early February, club president William Simons received an arrest warrant and suspension for assault after allegedly hitting social studies teacher

²⁸⁰ Dyke, Katarina “Negro Leaders Assail Fishman Ruling” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 12th, 1969

²⁸¹ “Pupil Boycott in Second Day at Roxborough; Faculty is Accused of 'Dragging Feet' on Black History” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 16th, 1969

²⁸² Ibid

Henry Wagner after he told the student to move along in the school's hallway. The student requested a transfer to a different school. Sponsored by the BSU, about 50 students held a protest rally in the school's main lobby. Organizers addressed their classmates with a bullhorn urging them to “put the school back in the hands of the people and eliminate institutional racism.”²⁸³ After roughly 30 minutes, Principal Santee Ruffin requested that students return to their classrooms, and they complied.²⁸⁴

Across town, roughly 35% of the 4,000 students at Olney High were black, and only a few belonged to the BSU in 1970.²⁸⁵ The club faced particular scrutiny in February when school officials shut down a program celebrating Malcolm X's birthday after students became too rowdy. Later that day, a fight involving “hundreds” was narrowly averted, and a student was stabbed in the shoulder the following week. While it is difficult to tie all of the events directly to the BSU, teachers met with student representatives from the club to discuss the situation. One teacher said that faculty members “thought this group was going to promote black pride. Instead, they turn out to be an organization dedicated to making black students separate from everyone else.” A black teacher cautioned against lumping BSU members into the same category as the growing number of gangs in the neighborhood, but others among his colleagues insisted that the group was still a threat, even if it was not a gang related one.²⁸⁶

That spring of 1970, the most dramatic activity from any BSU in the city took place at Gratz High. With the exception of a single white girl, the student body was

²⁸³ “Pupils Hold Rally Against Teacher at Germantown” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 10th, 1970

²⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁵ Rafsky, Robert “150 Teachers 'Rap' at Olney Over Hostility Among Pupils” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 25th, 1970

²⁸⁶ Ibid

100% black, the principal was black, and 70% of the faculty were black. After a tip from Commissioner Rizzo, Superintendent Shedd ordered the club to remove any and all racial slogans it had posted. The basement room the club used for meetings had mostly innocuous slogans, like “to all brothers,” but also had a caricature of a policeman labeled “your enemy,” dressed as a pig with gun in hand and head smashed by a spiked club. To the left was printed, “Kill the Pig before he kills you, Nigger!” *The Philadelphia Bulletin* elaborated that “nearby was drawn a hand clutching a bloody dagger, with the legend: ‘War is hell, give it back to the white man. Power to the black people...or?’” Shedd said that “this appeared to me to come from the outside community, maybe the Black Panthers.”²⁸⁷ The principal explained that while a slogan about stockpiling guns until the proper time was objectionable, the main message which the club was trying to project was misinterpreted and poorly worded. He said that the main message was one against internal violence, self-hatred, and gang violence, and to know the real enemy.²⁸⁸

By this time, the school board began to cave to parental and political pressure to remove “outsiders” and “agitators” from their halls. In the late spring of 1970, two student leaders, two teachers, and two community group representatives received court injunctions barring them from organizing protests after staging a demonstration at Olney High.²⁸⁹ The six individuals led roughly 300 students in a sit in at the school and demanded more fair discipline for black students, a modernized curriculum, removal of

²⁸⁷ Brunt, Bayard and Gaudiosi, Albert V., “Remove Racial Slurs, Shedd Orders Gratz” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 5th, 1970

²⁸⁸ Ibid

²⁸⁹ There were most likely other uses of court injunctions to bar students and other community leaders from organizing in schools after precedent was set following 11/17. The author was unable to find actual rates or other instances, but speculates that it most likely did occur.

racially insensitive faculty and staff, and the employment of black administrators.”²⁹⁰

Principal Mervin L. Krimins told *The Bulletin* that it was “unfortunate [that the six] were all black, because it was a biracial demonstration.”²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ “Olney Pupils, Shedd to Air Grievances” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 5th, 1970

²⁹¹ Ibid

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“We've given up rights that belong to us. We've disregarded the values and feelings of people who live within the law. We've shown too much compassion.”

-Frank Rizzo, Police Commissioner, 1970²⁹²

The influence exerted by Philadelphia Police Commissioner Francis Rizzo looms large over this narrative, first as a beat cop, then as commissioner. It is fitting, then, to end it with Rizzo as mayor. Some Philadelphians remember Frank Rizzo as a racial profiler who unfairly targeted blacks. Others remember him more fondly as an equal opportunity bully who targeted hippies, peace protestors, and any other dissenting groups who dared raise their voices in the City of Brotherly Love.²⁹³ By whichever light he is remembered, South Philadelphia's native son represents the epitome of the law and order politician. He served two terms as mayor, beginning in 1972, by leveraging his image as a tough-on-crime, gritty beat cop to win over a frightened white electorate.²⁹⁴

Frank Rizzo made criticism of the lack of discipline in the school district of Philadelphia a key pillar of his 1971 mayoral campaign.²⁹⁵ Four years after the fact, he not only defended his response to the school board demonstrations on November 17th, 1967, but integrated it as a major talking point for his platform.²⁹⁶ While he was commissioner, Rizzo was continually butted

²⁹²

“Rizzo Calls 'Police State' Tag Untrue” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 2nd, 1970

²⁹³ Paoltonio, S.A. “Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America” New York: Camino Books, 1993

²⁹⁴ Gaughen, Joseph R. and Binzen, Peter “The Cop Who Would be King: Mayor Frank Rizzo” New York: Little Brown, 1977

²⁹⁵ Padwe, Sandy “My Philadelphia: Tough Sales Job for Mr. Shedd” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 28th, 1971

²⁹⁶ Hine, Tom “Educator Under Fire Running City Schools is 'Impossible'—But Mark Shedd isn't Giving Up Yet!”

heads with the Philadelphia board of education, Superintendent Dr. Mark Shedd, and school board President Richardson Dilworth. As a mayoral candidate, he threatened to “run [Dilworth] and several other board members out of town with the dirt he had collected on them.”²⁹⁷ Before Rizzo could make good on his repeated threats to get rid of Shedd personally, although he did not have the official authority to do so under the Home Rule Charter,²⁹⁸ the superintendent issued his resignation in early 1972. Shedd was replaced by George Costanzo, a man who vowed to not follow the permissive attitudes and policies of the old board.²⁹⁹ Reverend Henry Nichols was not reappointed to the school board and was replaced by the mayor with Phillip Davidoff, who pledged to support the new boss's disciplinary programs.³⁰⁰

George Fencil followed a similar career trajectory. After proving his mettle to the city in his work policing kids as head of the Civil Disobedience Squad, he was appointed to chief of school security by the board of education in 1983. Fencil made massive and lasting changes to school security policy in the two years he served as chief. He professionalized the force by requiring training at the Philadelphia Police Academy. Graduates were then released to the district as licensed private patrolmen with full police powers of arrest on properties owned or leased by the Philadelphia school district. Upon his untimely death at age 59 in 1985, the board of education released an official resolution praising the chief for his service. Now a member of the board, longtime advocate for integrated education and Rizzo critic Helen Oakes prepared and wrote the resolution praising the school security head and a letter to Fencil's grieving family.³⁰¹

The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 3rd, 1971

²⁹⁷ “Shedd, Nichols Support Dilworth” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 21st, 1971

²⁹⁸ City of Philadelphia Home Rule Charter April 17th, 1951, Section XII, Chapter 3, Section 12-301
http://www.seventy.org/files/philadelphia_home_rule_charter.pdf, accessed June 4th, 2013

²⁹⁹ “Panthers Join Black Boycott” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 7th, 1971

³⁰⁰ Smyth, Jack “Davidoff Expects Stricter School Discipline” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 9th, 1972

³⁰¹ January 6th, 1985 “School Board Resolution Prepared by Helen Oakes” WPSC Papers, Folder: Fencil, George, Box 15, ACC 707, TUSCRC

The same year that Shedd tendered his resignation in 1972, a nationwide report showed that black students received twice as many suspensions as their white classmates. The report studied a total of 2,908 districts with a total enrollment of 23.9 million students from both the North and the South, which accounted for half of the nation's school children. According to the report, blacks made up 27% of the total student body but accounted for 37% of expulsions and 42% of suspensions. Schools surveyed lost an aggregate 3.6 million school days to punishment. White students accounted for 62% of the total student body, but received 53% of all expulsions and 51% of all suspensions. Suspensions given to black students averaged 3.5 days out of school per infraction, while black students received on average, 4.5 days per infraction.³⁰² Philadelphia's contributions to the numbers can surely be traced back to the 1956 changes in suspension motivated by “the changing nature of the city's population.”³⁰³

City Council did not give up their attempts to increase police presence in the district after the PPD's failed 1968 coup. In January 1971, city councilman Isadore H. Bellis introduced a bill that imposed a maximum penalty of \$300 [2013: \$1,897] and 90 days in jail for school trespassers.³⁰⁴ Only students, faculty, staff, and those pre-approved by the principal would be allowed on school grounds under the new bill.³⁰⁵ Entrants into any building were required to obtain “the express approval of the principal or person in charge within 15 minutes.”³⁰⁶ Previous policy held that administrators were to avoid calling the police if they felt that they could deal

³⁰² Mathews, John “Black Pupils are Suspended at Twice the Rate of Whites” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 7th, 1975

³⁰³ “Not the Full Answer” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 15th, 1957

³⁰⁴ “Consumer Price Inflation Calculator” United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

³⁰⁵ McKenna, Daniel J. “School Board Backs Bill to Keep Out Trespassers” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 11th, 1971

³⁰⁶ “School Security Bill is Signed” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, March 27th, 1971 Accessed January 31st, 2013 www.proquest.com

with the situation themselves. Under the new bill, failure to alert police would make the principal liable for the trespasser's actions.³⁰⁷

Mayor Tate signed the bill into law that March with the support of the board of education and the greater Philadelphia community.³⁰⁸ Ervin Kermis, principal of Olney High, spoke out in favor of the bill. Kermis had testified against trespassers at several criminal trials, but each one was thrown out of court as there was no law against entering public buildings.³⁰⁹ The 50-member Greater Olney Community Council voted unanimously to release its public support in favor of the punitive bill.³¹⁰

Though the days of Frank Rizzo and forced busing are long gone, the days of the school cop are seemingly here to stay. Today's classroom in Philadelphia is under the sovereignty of Zero Tolerance, a harsh policy of brutal discipline which can only be described as draconian. According to the Philadelphia based legal help group, the Education Law center,

“Philadelphia has become an outlier. There may be no other large, urban school system that matches the district in its promotion of Zero Tolerance and in the heavy use of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, disciplinary transfers to alternative [disciplinary] schools, referrals to law enforcement, and school-based arrest.”³¹¹

The district employs a small army of “657 personnel, including 408 school police officers and 249 school security officers.”³¹² These school police officers are employed by the school district

³⁰⁷ McKenna, Daniel J. “School Board Backs Bill to Keep Out Trespassers” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 11th, 1971

³⁰⁸ Ibid

³⁰⁹ Ibid

³¹⁰ “Olney Council Asks Law to Bar School Intruders” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 21st, 1971

³¹¹ Educational Law Center, The, et. al. “Zero Tolerance in Philadelphia: Denying Educational Opportunities and Creating a Pathway to Prison” January 2011

³¹² Ibid

of Philadelphia, not the PPD. For the 2010-'11 school year, security outlays cost the city of Philadelphia \$43 million, man three times the budget for school psychologists.³¹³

During the 2008-2009 school year alone, the Philadelphia school district reported 4423 incidents involving law enforcement officers, 2943 of which resulted in arrest.³¹⁴ Philadelphia's children are arrested at three times the rate of the rest of Pennsylvania and are twice as likely as other Pennsylvanians to be arrested when law enforcement officers do become involved.³¹⁵ Punishment is handed out in a very uneven way, harkening back again to the 1972 study on school suspension. For every 100, black students received 3.4 arrests, 35 out-of-school suspensions, and 1.1 expulsions. Latino students received 1.6 arrests, 23 suspensions, and .5 expulsions. White students received 1 arrest, 14 suspensions, and .2 expulsions. Asians/ Pacific Islanders received 0.3 arrests, 5 suspensions, and ZERO expulsions.³¹⁶

There have and always will be very serious security and safety problems to be dealt with in any school. This was true in 1963, it is true in 2013, and it will be true in 2063. Currently, the district hands out brutal punishments to students as young as six years old for infractions as minor as chewing gum in class or possession of a cell phone, just as students in the 1960s were punished for speaking their minds or attempting to defend themselves.³¹⁷ School security is yet again in the news, bold new safety schemes are yet again being proposed, and we are yet again speaking of it in terms of outsiders and intruders. The citizens of the United States have become afraid of their own children. The district will undoubtedly continue to have sky high rates of

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Ibid

³¹⁷ Ibid

arrest until we remember that we are in fact speaking of children, not numbers, even if we are speaking about “a six-footer wearing earrings through pierced ears, a goatee and dressed in black leather.”³¹⁸

³¹⁸ “Rizzo Backers Stage Rally; Leader Knifed” *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 23rd, 1967

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