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## Book Review

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## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Tragedy of the Common: Dilemmas of Public School Desegregation in Boston**

COMMON GROUND: A TURBULENT DECADE IN THE LIVES OF THREE AMERICAN FAMILIES. By *J. Anthony Lukas*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985. Pp. x, 659. \$19.95.

*Reviewed by Jonathan L. Entin\**

In September 1974, black students arriving at a previously all-white school were greeted by screaming, rock-throwing crowds. The students had come pursuant to a federal court order in a school desegregation case. The virulent opposition continued throughout the fall and into the spring. Matters got worse in the autumn of 1975 as the second phase of city-wide desegregation began. The cycle of defiance, boycotts, and violence continued for several more years. In an effort to implement his order, the district court judge threatened to imprison local education officials for contempt and ultimately placed parts of the school system in receivership.

The hostile white reaction was reminiscent of the intransigent response to desegregation decrees in the benighted South a generation earlier, but it seemed different, too. The ugly scene occurred not in Little Rock or New Orleans, not in Alabama or Mississippi, but in Boston. Boston, the cradle of liberty, where the American Revolution began. Boston, the birthplace of abolitionism, where William Lloyd Garrison burned a copy of the Constitution to protest its failure to outlaw slavery. Boston, the self-proclaimed hub of the universe, where racial segregation in the public schools had been unlawful for well over a century.<sup>1</sup> Boston, the home of John F. Kennedy, widely regarded as "our second 'Emancipator President.'"<sup>2</sup> Boston, the capital of Massachusetts, where a decade earlier the septuagenarian mother of the governor was hailed for getting arrested in a civil rights demonstration.<sup>3</sup> Boston, the largest city in the only state to vote for George McGovern over Richard Nixon in 1972.

The ironies of the situation, then, were enormous, and not only for unreconstructed Dixiecrats. A vast literature on the Boston school case has arisen.<sup>4</sup> The most celebrated item in this genre is *J. Anthony Lukas'*

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1 The pre-Civil War statute prohibiting segregated schools effectively overturned the state supreme court's ruling in *Roberts v. City of Boston*, 59 Mass. (5 Cush.) 198 (1849). See ch. 256, 1855 Mass. Acts 674 (current version codified at MASS. GEN. L. ch. 76, § 5 (1978)).

2 H. GOLDEN, *MR. KENNEDY AND THE NEGROES* viii (1964). See also *id.* at 197-98.

3 The arrest occurred in St. Augustine, Florida.

4 See, e.g., E. BUELL, *SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND DEFENDED NEIGHBORHOODS* (1982); G. METCALF, *FROM LITTLE ROCK TO BOSTON* 197-220 (1983); J. SHEEHAN, *THE BOSTON SCHOOL INTEGRATION DISPUTE* (1984); D. TAYLOR, *PUBLIC OPINION & COLLECTIVE ACTION* (1986); UNITED STATES COMMIS-

agonizingly exquisite account, ambiguously entitled *Common Ground*.<sup>5</sup> This extraordinary work, the product of seven years of effort by a former reporter for the *New York Times*, affords a uniquely sensitive insight into the Boston school controversy from the perspective of three families intimately caught up in events over which they had little or no control. At the same time, it presents a valuable, if succinct, social and political history of one of the nation's leading cities.

## I.

From a purely journalistic perspective, the story of the Boston school case is relatively easy to recount. In June 1963, the Boston branch of the NAACP asked the Boston School Committee to correct what it described as de facto racial segregation in the city's schools. Although the Committee recognized that black students were disproportionately concentrated in a few schools, it refused to accept the NAACP's characterization of the phenomenon as a form of segregation. The relationship between the organization and the Committee went from bad to worse during the ensuing months. In the November city election, Mrs. Louise Day Hicks, the chairman of the School Committee, was overwhelmingly reelected. With nearly three-quarters of the vote, she outpolled every candidate for all local offices, including the incumbent mayor.<sup>6</sup>

In 1965, following the report of an advisory committee appointed by the state education commissioner, the legislature passed the Racial Imbalance Act.<sup>7</sup> This unique statute authorized the withholding of state aid from any school system which refused to take appropriate steps to disperse minority students.<sup>8</sup> Despite the semantic compromise—the term de facto segregation was not mentioned in either the report or the Act—the School Committee remained implacable. This position proved extremely popular with the voters. The electorate returned Mrs. Hicks to office by another overwhelming margin in 1965. At the same time, the only member of the School Committee who had expressed any sympathy for the NAACP's position was defeated.

Over the next dozen years, the Committee adhered to its uncompromising position. First, it challenged the Racial Imbalance Act in court.<sup>9</sup> When that failed, the Committee alternately refused to comply with the law and grudgingly acknowledged its existence.<sup>10</sup> The State Board of Education ultimately withheld more than fifty million dollars from the

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SION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, DESEGREGATING THE BOSTON SCHOOLS: A CRISIS IN CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY (1975); Abrams, *Not One Judge's Opinion: Morgan v. Hennigan and the Boston Schools*, 45 HARV. EDUC. REV. 5 (1975).

5 J. LUKAS, COMMON GROUND (1985).

6 *Id.* at 124-29.

7 Ch. 641, 1965 Mass. Acts 414 (codified as amended at MASS. GEN. L. ch. 71, §§ 37C-37D, ch. 15, §§ 1I-1K (1978 & Supp. 1987)).

8 To date, no other state has adopted similar legislation. J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 131.

9 That suit proved unsuccessful. *School Comm. v. Board of Educ.*, 352 Mass. 693, 227 N.E.2d 729 (1967).

10 For further discussion of the School Committee's efforts to avoid enforcement of the state law, see *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F. Supp. 410, 417-20 (D. Mass.), *aff'd sub nom. Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 509 F.2d 580 (1st Cir. 1974), *cert. denied*, 421 U.S. 963 (1975).

Boston schools, but the extent of imbalance steadily increased.<sup>11</sup> By the early 1970s, a substantial amount of federal aid also had been cut off pursuant to title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in March 1972, a group of black parents filed suit in federal district court to compel the desegregation of the Boston public schools.<sup>13</sup> More than two years later, in *Morgan v. Hennigan*,<sup>14</sup> Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. issued a comprehensive opinion holding that the school system had been deliberately segregated by various official actions and policies. Judge Garrity found: (1) a purposely maintained pattern of overcrowded, predominantly white schools and underutilized, predominantly black schools;<sup>15</sup> (2) numerous changes in attendance district lines designed to perpetuate racial segregation;<sup>16</sup> (3) race-based manipulation of the factors governing student assignments to the city's high schools;<sup>17</sup> (4) administration of pupil transfer policies so as to promote racial concentration;<sup>18</sup> (5) substantial segregation of black faculty in predominantly black schools, which generally had relatively less experienced teachers and greater turnover than did predominantly white schools, thereby limiting the educational opportunities of black students;<sup>19</sup> and (6) intentional segregation in the city's specialized high schools and vocational programs.<sup>20</sup>

Judge Garrity handed down his ruling less than three months before the beginning of the 1974-75 school year. His extensive discussion of the merits of the case was followed by only two pages of general principles relevant to the appropriate relief.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he adopted a plan prepared by the State Board of Education under the Racial Imbalance Act as the first step in the remedial process. This so-called Phase I plan called for cross-busing between "South Boston, the stronghold of opposition to desegregation, and Roxbury, the community generally regarded as the

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11 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 132.

12 *Morgan*, 379 F. Supp. at 420-21.

13 The complaint was filed by my former colleague Roger Abrams, then a first-year associate in a large Boston law firm. Lead counsel came from the Center for Law and Education at Harvard. The case was sponsored by the NAACP, which viewed Boston as a classic example of intentional, de jure segregation. J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 218-19.

14 379 F. Supp. 410 (D. Mass.), *aff'd sub nom.* *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 509 F.2d 580 (1st Cir. 1974), *cert. denied*, 421 U.S. 963 (1975).

15 379 F. Supp. at 425-27. The School Committee, for reasons of race, avoided assigning whites from crowded schools to available seats in mostly black schools. Instead, it relied extensively upon portable classrooms to maintain existing racial concentrations. Further, construction of new buildings and conversion of existing structures into schools increased the extent of separation between black and white students. *Id.* at 427-32.

16 *Id.* at 432-41.

17 *Id.* at 441-49. Although many Boston high schools were named for specific geographic sections (e.g., South Boston), the city in fact had no purely district high schools. Instead, enrollment in these institutions was a function of a complex set of factors known as feeder patterns.

18 *Id.* at 449-56. The court cited numerous instances in which the School Committee insisted upon retaining its generous transfer policy so as to permit white students to escape from schools with substantial minority enrollments. *Id.* at 451-53.

19 *Id.* at 459-66.

20 *Id.* at 466-69.

21 *Id.* at 482-83.

heart of Boston's black ghetto."<sup>22</sup> It was in South Boston that the violence which attracted national attention occurred.<sup>23</sup>

After the initial decision on liability was affirmed on appeal,<sup>24</sup> Judge Garrity moved toward a permanent remedy, the so-called Phase II. For this purpose, he appointed four special masters, headed by former Massachusetts Attorney General Edward McCormack, and two experts, including Dean Robert Dentler of the Boston University School of Education. After several public hearings and extensive behind-the-scenes negotiations, the masters proposed a carefully crafted plan affecting the entire city but actually reducing the amount of busing from what had been required in Phase I. Judge Garrity adopted much of this plan but made several significant changes. Among these were increasing the overall number of students to be bused and retaining cross-busing between South Boston and Roxbury.<sup>25</sup>

Phase II was met with even more resistance than Phase I had been. As a result, the court effectively found itself supervising many of the day-to-day operations of the Boston school system over the next decade. During that time, the exodus of white students, which had begun even before the *Morgan* suit was filed, continued apace. Not until 1985 did Judge Garrity issue final orders formally removing the case from the active docket.<sup>26</sup>

## II.

Any good journalist could have told this much of the story, and Anthony Lukas is a first-rate journalist.<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, then, all of these events are duly chronicled in *Common Ground*. But matters are not nearly so straightforward as the above summary might suggest. The issues in the *Morgan* case go well beyond busing and school desegregation. They go to the nature of contemporary urban life and the prospects for community renewal, concerns which occupied much of the American social and political agenda during the generation following World War II. The optimism of that period has faded. *Common Ground* helps us to understand why. Therein lies the key to Lukas' achievement.

22 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 239-40.

23 National and local press coverage of the first day of Phase I busing diverged dramatically. The local media emphasized the generally peaceful reaction throughout most of the city, downplaying the violence in South Boston. The national media, in sharp contrast, focused upon the disruptions in that neighborhood rather than upon the relatively uneventful beginning of the school year elsewhere in the city. *Id.* at 502-03.

24 Thomas Atkins, who was involved in the Boston school controversy successively as executive secretary and president of the Boston branch of the NAACP and as general counsel of the national NAACP, informs me that Judge Garrity issued over 400 orders in the course of the litigation. Not a single order was reversed on appeal, and the Supreme Court refused to review the case.

25 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 241, 243-44, 248-51. For Judge Garrity's Phase II ruling, see *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 401 F. Supp. 216 (D. Mass. 1975), *aff'd*, 530 F.2d 401 (1st Cir.), *cert. denied sub nom. White v. Morgan*, 426 U.S. 935 (1976).

26 *Morgan v. Nucci*, 620 F. Supp. 214 (D. Mass. 1985).

27 Lukas previously had won several prestigious journalism awards, including the Pulitzer Prize.

## A.

Precisely because Lukas is so outstanding a reporter, he does more than merely recite the dry history of the Boston school controversy. He sets the context in which the dispute arose by means of five chapters which focus upon the central public personalities in the affair: Mrs. Hicks, who chaired the Boston School Committee when desegregation first became a public issue in the mid-1960s and who symbolized resistance to black demands throughout the entire controversy;<sup>28</sup> Judge Garrity;<sup>29</sup> Humberto Cardinal Medeiros, the Portugese-American outsider who presided uneasily over Boston's heavily Irish and Italian Catholic community, the second-largest archdiocese in the country;<sup>30</sup> Thomas Winship, the editor of the *Boston Globe*, the city's major newspaper;<sup>31</sup> and Kevin H. White, the mayor who saw his presidential ambitions destroyed by the forces unleashed by the school dispute.<sup>32</sup>

These chapters contain numerous useful biographical details about their subjects. Some are interesting, if not altogether surprising. For example, Mayor White's father was a successful local politician (eight years in the legislature, fourteen on the School Committee, and ten on the City Council) before receiving a sinecure in state government,<sup>33</sup> while his father-in-law for many years held an important patronage position after serving on the City Council.<sup>34</sup> White himself parlayed these family contacts into a successful run for Secretary of State; soon afterward he came into discrete but unmistakable conflict with Senator Edward Kennedy, which ultimately cost White the 1972 Democratic vice-presidential nomination.<sup>35</sup>

Other chapters, particularly the one on Louise Day Hicks, are genuinely eye-opening. Widely regarded as a reactionary and a bigot,<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Hicks appears at first blush to be typical of Boston's small-time electoral hacks, trading on family connections to launch her career. Like Mayor White, her father was prominent in local politics, but William Day was more a revered father figure known throughout South Boston simply as "the Judge" than a party organization man.<sup>37</sup> In many ways, however, Mrs. Hicks emerges as the most complex public personage in the book. Ironically, she was originally elected to the School Committee in 1961 as a reformer who actively courted black votes.<sup>38</sup> A decade earlier, she had entered law school as a thirty-six year-old mother of two sons, an almost

28 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 115-38.

29 *Id.* at 222-51.

30 *Id.* at 372-404.

31 *Id.* at 473-508.

32 *Id.* at 585-623.

33 *Id.* at 589-90.

34 *Id.* at 140-41.

35 *Id.* at 587-89, 593-95. The conflict arose from White's endorsement of Edward McCormack, the nephew of then-Speaker John McCormack, over Edward Kennedy for the Democratic nomination to fill the unexpired portion of President John Kennedy's term in the Senate.

36 Lukas quotes various local and national critics who likened Mrs. Hicks to Adolf Hitler, Bull Connor, and Joseph McCarthy. *Id.* at 116.

37 *Id.* at 116-17. So prominent was William J. Day that one of the main roads in South Boston bears his name.

38 *Id.* at 123.

unheard of step then and unusual enough even today. More remarkably, her study group included three black students.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps these facts help to explain why, even at the height of her notoriety, she rebuffed repeated overtures from George Wallace.<sup>40</sup>

The insights in these chapters go well beyond the merely biographical, however. They also provide a concise introduction to the long-standing conflict between Boston's ethnic Irish and patrician Yankees, an excellent discussion of the growth and evolution of the Catholic archdiocese (including its fragile economic situation when Cardinal Medeiros succeeded the widely admired Richard Cardinal Cushing on the eve of the *Morgan* litigation), and an informed account of the vicissitudes of the local media. In short, this is a very useful introduction to the real city that is Boston.

## B.

Even more impressive than this overview of local social and political history, Lukas combines that big picture with the experiences of three quite different families who struggled to live through these troubled years: The McGoffs, a white family living in the predominantly Irish enclave of Charlestown; the Twymons, a black family in the once-fashionable and newly gentrifying South End; and the Divers, who moved into the South End relatively early in the process of gentrification. The most striking characteristic of *Common Ground* is the book's format: not a strict chronological account, but an interlocking series of chapters focusing alternately upon each family. Twenty-four chapters—eight on each family—comprise the core of the book.

As with the chapters focusing on the more prominent figures, however, these central portions deftly interweave intimate biography with broader themes. For example, Lukas provides a detailed and sympathetic history of Charlestown, an isolated but historic neighborhood, site of the Battle of Bunker Hill in the eighteenth century, target of nativist Protestant enmity leading to its annexation by the City of Boston in the nineteenth, and increasingly alienated and parochial as it declined economically through much of the twentieth.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, he affords perceptive insights into the social cleavages in Boston's black community, which grew rapidly between 1940 and 1960 and which included an extraordinary number of figures who went on to national prominence.<sup>42</sup>

Still, the most compelling aspect of *Common Ground* is its focus upon the experiences of the three families. Astonishingly, these are actual people who shared their most private feelings with the author and allowed him to use their real names. The courage these persons have demon-

39 *Id.* at 119-20.

40 *Id.* at 128, 135. By contrast, several other prominent local politicians, including two of her colleagues on the School Committee, made no attempt to hide their crude racism. *See, e.g., id.* at 132, 137-38.

41 *Id.* at 74-79, 141-45, 151-59.

42 *Id.* at 53-60, 164-70. Among the best-known blacks who spent time in Boston during this period were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (who received his Ph.D. from Boston University), Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakhan.

strated in this regard should serve as a humbling reminder to those who might be inclined to pass harsh moral judgments; there can be no more stark reminder about the hazards of living in glass houses. This is not, however, an oral history; the book is Lukas' account.<sup>43</sup>

Lukas selected the families less for their representativeness than for the peculiar intersections of their lives. Thus, Lisa McGoff, following the lead of her mother, who had taken an active role in the Charlestown affiliate of the city's principal antibusing organization, became a prominent student leader at Charlestown High School at a time when Cassandra Twymon was being bused there under Judge Garrity's Phase II order. Meanwhile, the Twymons lived just a few blocks from the Divers, who had become neighborhood activists in the South End.

Having chosen these families, Lukas elegantly develops the inconsistencies and ambivalences in their lives. His discussion of the McGoffs is particularly effective in this respect. Mother Alice and daughter Lisa, despite their adamant opposition to Judge Garrity's order, did not have the traditional set of hard-core racist attitudes which Northerners came to associate with die-hard Southern segregationists.<sup>44</sup> Alice, a widow with seven children, lived amicably in a public housing project which had a number of black families.<sup>45</sup> Despite her opposition to "forced integration" and her increasing disillusionment with her Church and the Democratic Party in which she had been raised, she was troubled by the extreme racism of some antibusing leaders.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Lisa played a prominent role in student demonstrations and disruptions at Charlestown High School during her junior year.<sup>47</sup> Yet she was extremely upset when some of her fellow students savagely beat a black lawyer during an antibusing protest in front of City Hall.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, as senior class president the following year, she tried to discourage disorder and promoted traditional morale-building activities that reached out to at least a few black students; at one point she refused to participate in a school boycott which her mother had helped to organize.<sup>49</sup>

The Twymons also struggled against seemingly overwhelming problems. Rachel Twymon found her faith in integration sorely tested when her two daughters were bused to schools in Charlestown under the Phase II order. Cassandra, the elder daughter, previously had attended school with whites in other parts of the city without major incident. In Charlestown, by contrast, she was greeted by the unremitting hostility of

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43 As Lukas explains in an Author's Note, "[a]ll [the] characters are real, as are their names, the places where they live, the details of their personal lives. Nothing has been disguised or embellished. Where I have used dialogue, it is based on the recollection of at least one participant." *Id.* at vii.

44 This conclusion is consistent with the findings of studies of racial attitudes undertaken contemporaneously with the *Morgan* litigation. Bostonians, even at the height of the busing controversy, expressed greater racial tolerance than did residents of other comparable cities. D. TAYLOR, *supra* note 4, at 44-50. Moreover, although antibusing attitudes were related to racial bias, opposition to busing was very strong even among the least prejudiced respondents. *Id.* at 55-59.

45 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 147-52.

46 *Id.* at 265, 455-57.

47 *Id.* at 304-15, 318-23.

48 *Id.* at 324-25.

49 *Id.* at 540-41, 547-49.



her supposed classmates and their families. Mrs. Twymon served on the high school's parents council, which had been established to help implement the desegregation order, but virtually no whites would have anything to do with the endeavor.<sup>50</sup>

Rachel Twymon's difficulties went well beyond those associated with desegregation, however. Her ne'er-do-well husband abandoned her, leaving her with six children to raise. In chronically poor health, she came to rely increasingly upon public assistance and subsidized housing, an especially galling fate for a native Bostonian from the city's old black middle class.<sup>51</sup> Her sons became involved in crime, and her daughters began experimenting with drugs and sex.<sup>52</sup> These problems strained Rachel Twymon's already awkward relationship with her sister, who had herself been the victim of racially motivated violence when she and her husband bought a home in a previously all-white neighborhood.<sup>53</sup>

The Sisyphean lives of the McGoffs and the Twymons may have merely anthropological interest to most of the likely readers of this book. The experience of the third family, on the other hand, should strike very close to home. Colin and Joan Diver were young professional idealists who wanted to make the city a more humane place in which to live. Colin, inspired by Kevin White's almost facetious challenge to the editors of the *Harvard Law Review*, spurned an offer from an elite Washington law firm to join the mayor's staff.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Joan took a position with a foundation willing to support innovative programs of community renewal.<sup>55</sup> Before long, the Divers had bought and restored a magnificent old townhouse in the South End, an area of increasing racial, ethnic, and class diversity. They sent their elder son to the Bancroft School, an experimental and interracial public school which owed its existence in large measure to the persistence of the pupils' sophisticated and well-connected parents.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, the apparently wide gulf between the Divers and the other families proved more illusory than real. Like the McGoffs, Colin and Joan strenuously sought to preserve their child's neighborhood school intact once desegregation began.<sup>57</sup> Of course, the Bancroft School was already thoroughly integrated, whereas Charlestown High School was not. Still, each family valued the convenience of having one's children close to home in a community each regarded as unique. And like the Twymons, the Divers became increasingly disturbed by the rise in crime in the South End.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, those problems led Colin and Joan to leave the city for a nearby suburb.

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50 *Id.* at 278-82, 288-300.

51 *Id.* at 61-66, 176-79.

52 *Id.* at 413-21, 558-61, 567-75.

53 *Id.* at 511-35, 575-83.

54 *Id.* at 42-44.

55 *Id.* at 339, 347-49.

56 *Id.* at 330-32.

57 *Id.* at 327-29, 334-36.

58 *Id.* at 425-27, 444-49, 627-34.

## III.

By now it has become almost fashionable to criticize the effort to desegregate the Boston schools as misguided at best.<sup>59</sup> At the end of a decade of instability bordering on chaos, the system had lower overall enrollments, blacks and other minorities made up more than half the student population, and genuine integration seemed further away than ever. Was it all a mistake? Lukas does not answer this question; he is, after all, a gifted reporter with a gripping story to tell. But *Common Ground* forces the reader to confront this ultimate issue.

The plaintiffs in the *Morgan* case presented overwhelming evidence of intentional acts by which the Boston School Committee maintained and perpetuated racial separation within the system.<sup>60</sup> Even if a reasonable person might disagree with Judge Garrity's interpretation of any individual item of evidence, liability was clear. No one seriously challenges this conclusion. The debate has to do with the remedy. Was it really necessary to assign lower-class blacks and lower-class whites to the same schools, particularly in neighborhoods such as South Boston and Charlestown where violence was extraordinarily likely to occur?

Lukas suggests that Judge Garrity chose so extensive a remedy out of concern that more limited relief leaving a substantial number of essentially one-race schools would be overturned on appeal.<sup>61</sup> Even if a less drastic remedy had been imposed, widespread resistance probably would have resulted. In South Boston, for example, the St. Patrick's Day parade was marred by racial incidents in both 1964 and 1965, a full decade before busing began.<sup>62</sup> And Charlestown had a long history of hostility (and of violence) not only toward blacks but also toward Italians.<sup>63</sup> In these areas, at least, any difference in response to a more limited desegregation order likely would have been one of degree, not of kind.<sup>64</sup>

An alternative criticism holds that the plaintiffs and the court focused too much upon body counts—getting black and white students into the same classrooms—and not enough upon improving the education provided to disadvantaged black students.<sup>65</sup> Whatever merit this

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59 See, e.g., Marek, *Education By Decree*, NEW PERSP., Summer 1985, at 36.

60 See *supra* notes 9-23 and accompanying text.

61 J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 250.

62 In 1964, bricks, bottles, cherry bombs, and other missiles were thrown at a NAACP float that had been entered in the parade to honor the recently assassinated President Kennedy. In 1965, a similar barrage greeted marchers from the Catholic Interracial Council. The marchers included 150 priests in clerical garb. *Id.* at 384-86.

63 For a discussion of the experience of blacks and other nonwhites in Charlestown, see *id.* at 155-59. For a discussion of the enmity between the Irish of Charlestown and the Italians of the nearby North End, particularly in Charlestown High School, see *id.* at 154-55, 286-87.

64 Differences of degree are not trivial, of course. Just as Alice and Lisa McGoff were uneasy over the excesses of some antibusing leaders, see *supra* text accompanying notes 45-49, there were deep divisions both in Charlestown and city-wide between the so-called moderate and extreme opponents of busing. J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 264-65, 450-58. It is possible that a less drastic remedy would not have offended at least some of the moderates, which might have left the extremists somewhat isolated. It is also possible, however, that the extremists, some of whom were members of gangs and other groups operating near or beyond the edge of the law, still would have resorted to violence.

65 There was substantial debate among black groups in Boston over the relative desirability of integration and various forms of community control of the schools. J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 242-43,

criticism may have rests upon the assumption that the overall quality of the Boston schools could have been upgraded by some less drastic means.

This assumption cannot be tested, but I suspect, for two reasons, that it was false. The first is somewhat personal. My father attended Boston English High School, one of the oldest and most famous public schools in the country,<sup>66</sup> half a century ago. Even then he was forbidden to read Shakespeare for pleasure in study hall. The teacher who imposed that ban went on to a long career at the highest administrative levels in the Boston school system, retiring some years after the NAACP first raised the de facto segregation issue in 1963.

The second, and more general, reason relates to the low priority which educational concerns have enjoyed in Boston throughout this century.<sup>67</sup> The School Committee traditionally paid very little attention to policy or curricular matters. Instead, the members devoted themselves to personnel questions, which primarily involved the dispensation of patronage jobs to persons who could assist their campaigns for reelection or higher office.<sup>68</sup> In these circumstances, it seems unlikely that the Boston school system would have instituted significant reforms.

Moreover, regardless of the validity of this assumption, there was ample reason to question the effectiveness of mere tinkering with the existing school system when the NAACP was making its crucial tactical decisions in Boston. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, respected empirical studies suggested that educational reforms would have only modest effects upon student achievement and future success.<sup>69</sup>

From this perspective, the Boston school desegregation suit made perfectly good sense. If, as W.E.B. DuBois long ago observed, "[t]he Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools . . . [but] Education,"<sup>70</sup> and if Boston's white-dominated school system could not be counted upon to implement significant reforms for black pupils, then only a fundamental assault upon the underlying structure could bring about the needed changes.

Events, of course, did not develop as the architects of this approach had expected. Community leadership failed: the School Committee

296. For criticism of civil rights lawyers for seeking desegregation rather than improvement of predominantly black schools, see Bell, *Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation*, 85 YALE L.J. 470, 477-93 (1976).

66 For a brief history of English High School, see J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 111-12.

67 An indication of the importance that at least one Bostonian attached to education during the busing controversy can be gleaned from the graffiti that Rachel Twymon observed on a wall at Charlestown High School: "Be illiterate. Fight forced busing." *Id.* at 281.

68 *Id.* at 121-23. See generally P. SCHRAG, *VILLAGE SCHOOL DOWNTOWN* 51-73 (1967).

69 See, e.g., J. COLEMAN, E. CAMPBELL, C. HOBSON, J. MCPARTLAND, A. MOOD, F. WEINFELD & R. YORK, *EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY* 21-23, 290-330 (1966) (suggesting that content of curriculum and extent of school resources are only slightly correlated with academic performance); C. JENCKS, M. SMITH, H. ACLAND, M. BANE, D. COHEN, H. GINTIS, B. HEYNS & S. MICHELSON, *INEQUALITY* 17-29, 89-97, 146-51, 180-90, 220-25 (1972) (suggesting that education has comparatively little influence upon extent of social and economic inequality). But see Glazer, *Education and Training Programs and Poverty*, in *FIGHTING POVERTY* 152, 155-61 (S. Danziger & D. Weinberg eds. 1986) (reviewing more recent empirical studies suggesting a stronger relationship between educational inputs and academic outcomes).

70 DuBois, *Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?*, 4 J. NEGRO EDUC. 328, 335 (1935).

adopted a strategy of Massive Resistance; other local public officials waffled; and at a crucial period during Phase I the President of the United States gratuitously criticized Judge Garrity's busing order. Perhaps the Church could have kept the lid on the violence, but Lukas suggests that even this was a false hope long before the busing began.<sup>71</sup>

Worse than that, matters proved to be much more complicated than anticipated. What appeared to be a strictly racial conflict turned out also to contain important overtones of social class difference. *Common Ground* helps us to understand these uncomfortable facts not simply intellectually but viscerally. This is a gripping, painful account of real people struggling to come to grips with a world that seems to be collapsing around them. No one can read it without grieving for a lost faith in our various simple truths.

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<sup>71</sup> See J. LUKAS, *supra* note 5, at 389 ("by 1969 it was probably too late" for the Church to have "halted Boston's lurch toward race war"); *id.* at 399 (By 1974, "the time had long since passed when any Archbishop of Boston could settle [racial] questions by mere fiat. The Church no longer played a decisive role in most [Catholic] Bostonians' lives.").