

Beyond Boundaries: Envisioning Metropolitan School Desegregation in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, 1963-1974

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Abstract

From the early 1960s onward, battles over school desegregation took on an increasingly metropolitan orientation, one all but destroyed by the Supreme Court's 1974 decision in *Milliken v. Bradley*. In Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, segregationist urbanites, when faced with a legal challenge either created or made possible by black civil rights advocates, reversed course and trumpeted the advantages of metropolitan desegregation. These tactical metropolitanists recognized that a larger desegregation area reaching into the predominantly white suburbs would mean that white children would continue attending majority-white schools and they understood that stoking suburban opposition to desegregation could defeat integrationist legislation. Despite their segregationist motives, tactical metropolitanists offered a potentially productive solution capable of mitigating white flight, providing lasting integration, and aligning with the efforts of integrationist civil rights advocates in court. Uncovering tactical metropolitanism complicates our understandings of urban segregation and the sources of metropolitan reform. It suggests the need for a metropolitan history of civil rights that centers the importance of municipal boundaries in perpetuating inequality.

Keywords

suburbs/suburban, busing, metropolitanism, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, race, school desegregation

In a Michigan courtroom in 1971, a white parents' group that formed the previous year to oppose school integration, the Citizens Committee for Better Education (CCBE), made an argument that was adopted by the plaintiff National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Pointing to metropolitan demographics, the CCBE argued that any desegregation plan for Detroit's schools could not be limited to the central city alone. Although it opposed desegregation, the CCBE understood that Detroit's schools would be found *de jure* segregated. Consequently, it abruptly shifted course from protesting urban integration to demanding metropolitan desegregation. This shift was simple pragmatism, one that did not require a genuine transformation in outlook among members. The CCBE understood that a desegregation area

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reaching beyond the confines of Detroit's predominantly black public school system into the politically autonomous, virtually all-white suburbs would mean that their children would still attend majority white schools. In contrast, the vast inequalities between urban and suburban schools and the segregated housing patterns which kept African Americans largely confined to poorer central cities motivated the NAACP's embrace of metropolitanism. Despite their wildly divergent motives, the white parents and the NAACP possessed similar understandings of the interconnectedness of city and suburb. Significantly, they understood the clear and important links between metropolitan boundaries and civil rights possibilities.

This courtroom metropolitan alliance appeared to succeed in 1972 when Judge Stephen J. Roth ordered the implementation of a metropolitan desegregation busing plan involving fifty-four autonomous school districts in greater Detroit. Ultimately, the case known as *Milliken v. Bradley* ascended to the Supreme Court, where in 1974 the Court precluded including autonomous suburban school districts in Detroit's desegregation plan. *Milliken* set a judicial precedent for America's cities that had enormous consequences for the metropolitan solutions being proposed elsewhere. Despite metropolitanism's ultimate failure, the decade preceding *Milliken* was one of tremendous possibility and importance, whereby the future of metropolitan education was up for reconsideration. It was a period capable of reshaping metropolises, addressing inequality, and seizing the productive kernel from the arguments of white urbanites who lamented being forced to integrate while wealthy suburbanites and "limousine liberals" escaped responsibility.

Metropolitanism was not confined to Detroit. For a decade prior to *Milliken*, activists and school boards grappled with metropolitan desegregation in some of the nation's largest cities. Metropolitan solutions proved attractive to urbanites on all sides of the civil rights spectrum. When faced with the likelihood of mandated integration, both urban segregationists and integrationists fashioned residence- and class-based appeals that demanded suburban involvement.

Segregationist whites made metropolitan arguments most forcefully. Theirs was a tactical metropolitanism, aiming primarily to defeat suburban legislative support for integration or at least to delay the implementation of desegregation. Only secondarily did tactical metropolitanists aim to preserve white majorities in their children's public school classrooms by involving the predominantly white suburbs in desegregation. While tactically flexible, the preservation of white-majority classrooms animated their activity. Despite growing out of segregationist motivations, tactical metropolitanism contained the potential of implementation and could coalesce with the arguments made by civil rights advocates interested in metropolitan desegregation and committed to improving educational opportunities. Such contrasting motivations are visible in Boston's voluntary urban-to-suburban Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) busing program. METCO was made possible by an alliance between integrationist white suburbanites and Boston's black civil rights advocates that emerged as a direct response to the Boston School Committee's intransigence on civil rights. Yet METCO earned the support of the openly discriminatory Boston School Committee because it cemented desegregation as a metropolitan concern, reduced the Boston schools' black population by busing black students out of the city, and because the Committee thought a vast expansion of the program might provoke suburban opposition to existing integrationist legislation. Throughout Boston's school desegregation controversy, METCO had the support of a majority of School Committee members.

This article examines metropolitanism's reach, potential, and contradictions by looking in turn at Boston, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Considering its courtroom metropolitan alliance and the national precedent of the *Milliken* decision, Detroit serves as a necessary reference point. Boston deserves consideration not only because of its "busing crisis." For a decade before the arrival of desegregation busing, Boston witnessed the longest and most widespread consideration of metropolitan school desegregation remedies of the three cities. Boston's metropolitanism emerged because its School Committee's obstinacy forced civil rights advocates to look to the suburbs for support. In response, the Committee first embraced metropolitanism in the aim of

defeating integrationist legislation by antagonizing suburbanites with proposals for mandatory metropolitan desegregation. But as Boston's desegregation fight shifted to the courts, the Committee's metropolitanism carried with it the possibility of implementation. Philadelphia demonstrates both the national implications of the *Milliken* decision and metropolitanism's ability to transcend the peculiarities of local circumstances. Unlike Boston and Detroit, desegregation in Philadelphia was driven mainly by a state agency, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC), not by a conventional desegregation lawsuit. Absent a black plaintiff, Philadelphia's desegregation proceedings were dominated by a top-down process of delayed deliberation between state bureaucrats, Board of Education representatives, and the mediating Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court. But despite this structural difference, similarly diverse sources in Philadelphia suggested metropolitan solutions and considered aligning in their efforts. Regardless of local circumstance, Northern school desegregation entailed grappling with the possibility of metropolitan integration and addressing metropolitan patterns of inequality.

The diverse proposals for metropolitan desegregation in Greater Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia suggest a need for a metropolitan history of civil rights. A metropolitan lens allows historians to gain a deeper appreciation of the significance of municipal boundary lines and reveals that urban Americans of all stripes did not passively accept the spatial inequality characteristic of American metropolises. These metropolitan arguments also call for a broadened conception of the metropolitan reformer. Typically presented as either a progressive white-collar member of the middle-class who values efficiency and order or as a boosterish metropolitan businessperson, the stereotypical metropolitan reformer has little in common with ordinary black parents or white reactionaries. But such ordinary people were nonetheless capable of envisioning radical solutions to spatial inequality and their metropolitan proposals constituted an important contribution to ongoing city-building processes.¹

While historians continue to successfully place the North in the national civil rights narrative, until recently little attention has been given to projects of metropolitan desegregation. Books by Thomas Sugrue and Matthew Lassiter conceive of school desegregation through a metropolitan lens and link it to national political narratives. And two recent books covering regions home to metropolitan school desegregation by Ansley Erickson and Brett Gadsden testify to the value of the metropolitan approach by demonstrating that the segregative impacts of school policy cross the boundaries of district and municipality.²

Despite this nascent attention to metropolitan segregation, a metropolitan lens is missing from prominent accounts of Northern school desegregation. Matthew F. Delmont's *Why Busing Failed* discusses the inadequacy of national media coverage and the lack of a national will to achieve desegregation. Delmont places the blame for busing's ostensible failure on the news media, arguing that news coverage created a moral false equivalency between civil rights advocates and their opponents while uncritically accepting segregationists' framing of the issue as "busing" rather than integration. The term "busing" subtly shifts the focus from desegregation to the physical transporting of students. Despite this, I have chosen to use the word because it was the term most frequently used by supporters of metropolitanism, whether tactical or otherwise. Throughout each city's desegregation controversy, numerical ratios and transportation issues dominated desegregation planning. Nonbusing integrationist efforts, such as compensatory education, equal financing, and improved educational programming, took a back seat to the yellow school bus. In seeking to disperse black students throughout the metropolis, tactical metropolitanists offered busing plans rather than holistic approaches for quality integrated education.³

Although the media matters, it alone cannot explain the failure of desegregation. In Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, school desegregation failed because preserving suburban municipal sovereignty meant that desegregation did not affect residents equally. Desegregation limited to the central city codified the municipal boundary as the ending point of integration, allowing middle-class whites to flee the central cities to avoid desegregation. But busing itself did not

always fail. Busing plans affecting the entire metropolitan area have been effective in mitigating white flight, producing an integrated student body, and reducing educational inequality.⁴

Little attention has been given to projects of metropolitan desegregation in Detroit and Philadelphia. Metropolitanism falls outside of the focus of the best book on civil rights in Philadelphia, Matthew Countryman's *Up South*. Desegregation in metropolitan Detroit has been the focus of articles by historian David Riddle and former *Detroit Free Press* columnist William Grant and the subject of books by Joyce A. Baugh and Eleanor P. Wolf, none of which explicitly engage with national civil rights narratives. Riddle's causal link between the *Milliken* decision and Detroit's position as "the most segregated metropolitan area in the nation" neglects that the *Milliken* precedent applied nationally, affecting desegregation in Boston, Philadelphia, and beyond.⁵

The lack of a metropolitan focus is most notable in the voluminous historiography on the Boston busing controversy. Historian Ronald Formisano, though noting that antibusers complained about suburbanites not being subject to mandatory busing, largely overlooks metropolitanism in Boston prior to its *Morgan v. Hennigan* desegregation case. J. Anthony Lukas's magisterial *Common Ground* suggests a need for a metropolitan solution when Lukas laments the lack of black support for a metropolitan solution during *Morgan v. Hennigan*. But Lukas neglects a decade of metropolitan proposals and much of the early black struggle for better educational opportunities, efforts which urged metropolitanism almost from the outset. Delmont's *Why Busing Failed* misses Boston's tactical metropolitanism entirely and inaccurately paints the Boston School Committee as opposed to all forms of desegregation, including METCO. Metropolitanism also fails to make an appearance in a recent *Journal of Urban History* issue devoted to "Rethinking the Boston 'Busing Crisis'" that leaves the suburbs out entirely.⁶

Scholarship that does incorporate the suburbs pays little attention to metropolitan planning. Journalist Alan Lupo's *Liberty's Chosen Home* argues that when it came to metropolitan solutions, "the suburbs would have none of it." In this book about the suburbs turning away from Boston's desegregation, METCO is briefly mentioned only after three hundred pages have gone by. Former city councilor Lawrence DiCara's *Turmoil and Transition in Boston* asserts that "apart from the METCO program . . . no regional solution was ever proposed," neglecting not only the Boston School Committee's tactical metropolitanism but several legislative proposals that he supported. Historian Lily Geismer's insightful account of Boston's suburban liberals, *Don't Blame Us*, downplays the radicalism and visibility of the region's metropolitan proposals. Geismer argues that METCO's suburban supporters "never mentioned any possibility that METCO could potentially serve as a model for a two-way program." But many proponents of METCO did speak of METCO as a potential precursor to a desegregated metropolitan school district and official METCO documents and grant applications suggested the same. METCO's initial enthusiasm for the idea was tempered by the understanding that a metropolitan school district was unlikely to win the support of a majority of suburbanites. This realization similarly informed the Boston School Committee's tactical metropolitanism, which aimed primarily to erode suburban support for integration and only secondly to preserve white majorities by enlarging the desegregation area.⁷

When the Supreme Court nullified Detroit's metropolitan solution in *Milliken v. Bradley*, it all but ruled out mandatory metropolitan desegregation in Boston and Philadelphia. *Milliken* shunted metropolitanism to suburban-dominated state legislatures. These legislatures were long primed by tactical metropolitanism to defend what historian Kevin Kruse has termed "the politics of suburban secession" and reject entanglements with the central cities and their racially distinct schools. Never popular in the suburbs, mandatory metropolitanism was only possible through the courts.⁸

Metropolitanism was not a panacea. Although metropolitanism proved capable of reducing white flight and narrowing achievement gaps, it alone could not eradicate inequality.

Metropolitanism reveals an uncomfortable paradox, showing how metropolitan solutions to racial inequality coexisted with, and could grow out of, white racism. As Ansley Erickson demonstrates, though metropolitan desegregation helped, it could stitch inequality anew into the regional fabric through the discriminatory tracking of students or by disproportionately burdening black students through busing plans. Metropolitanism came packaged with damaging representations of black children as an educational burden while privileging white majorities, providing clues as to why segregationists could change course and trumpet the advantages of metropolitan integration. A conversion to metropolitanism did not require a moral commitment to integration. Evidenced by white urbanites favoring metropolitan desegregation because it would keep their children in white majority schools, the poles of segregationist and integrationist were not always as far apart as they might seem. In their advocacy of metropolitan desegregation, many white urbanites proved capable of operating on both sides of the integrationist-segregationist divide simultaneously.⁹

In examining the battles over metropolitan desegregation, the full impact of the *Milliken v. Bradley* decision becomes apparent as do the strict limits—coinciding with municipal boundaries—of civil rights in many of the nation's metropolises. This history serves as a useful reminder that the continued exclusivity of many suburbs and the spatial inequality characteristic of most Northern metropolitan areas was not a preordained outcome. Such a result required beating back challenges to the supremacy of municipal decentralization. A different outcome in *Milliken* could have resulted in vastly different metropolitan areas, where suburban residence did not entail attendance of segregated white schools and urban residence need not condemn most children to an inferior education in largely impoverished schools.

Boston

Most known for its vehemence in protesting school integration, Boston witnessed the earliest, longest, and most widespread consideration of metropolitan solutions to school segregation of the three cities. This metropolitan activity occurred because of the Boston School Committee's intransigence on civil rights, which led civil rights advocates to look to the suburbs for allies.

On June 11, 1963, the Boston chapter of the NAACP publicly accused the School Committee of operating de facto segregated schools, which the Committee promptly denied. In response, Boston's civil rights advocates banded together as the Massachusetts Freedom Movement and held a "Freedom Stayout" of Boston's public schools on June 18. Following the Stayout and multiple NAACP requests for a meeting, the School Committee finally agreed to another meeting in August. This meeting ended after fifteen minutes when the Committee refused to acknowledge what the NAACP now called the schools' "racial imbalance" to soften the blow.¹⁰

The NAACP's Ruth Batson concluded that the only reason the Committee agreed to the second meeting "was to attempt to publicly discredit the work that the NAACP has been doing with the Boston Public Schools." The Committee did just that, as following a sit-in at the Committee's headquarters on September 5, Chairperson Louise Day Hicks pledged not to "bow down to this irresponsible type of leadership exercised by the NAACP." Hicks reaped political benefits as the public face of opposition to the NAACP and civil rights. In the 1963 election, held after the confrontation with the NAACP, Hicks won an astonishing 74 percent of all votes cast, finishing first among all School Committee candidates and setting a record in Boston municipal elections.¹¹

With the election demonstrating that the majority of Boston's white voters supported the School Committee, Boston's civil rights advocates looked for allies beyond Boston's borders. While planning for a second Freedom Stayout, the Freedom Movement reached out to suburbanites. Through its press secretary, Phyllis M. Ryan of suburban Brookline, the Freedom Movement trumpeted suburban involvement in the upcoming Stayout. Twenty-three suburban communities made definite plans for enrollment in the Movement's temporary freedom schools two weeks before the Stayout. The second Stayout, on February 26, 1964, saw over twenty thousand Boston

public school students absenting themselves from the Boston Public Schools, 22 percent of the total school population. Ten thousand students attended freedom schools, of whom one thousand two hundred came from the suburbs. By 1964, Boston's school desegregation was a metropolitan concern.¹²

As a result of the Stayout, the Massachusetts Board of Education organized an advisory committee to undertake a study of "racial imbalance" throughout the state. The Kiernan Commission, as it was known after its Commissioner Owen Kiernan, defined racial imbalance as a situation where more than 50 percent of pupils were "nonwhite." The Commission found fifty-five imbalanced schools in the state, forty-five of which were in Boston.¹³

The state legislature responded to the Kiernan Report with the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965, which gave the State Board of Education discretionary power to withhold state funds should offending school committees not make "reasonable progress toward the elimination of racial imbalance." The Act adopted the Kiernan Commission's definition of a racially imbalanced school as one with more than 50 percent minority enrollment. Outside of Boston, the law passed with overwhelming support because it affected strikingly few municipalities. Only Boston, Springfield, Cambridge, and Medford possessed imbalanced schools. Most suburbs did not educate enough minority pupils to run the risk of being affected by the law. Suburban legislators could vote for the measure knowing that it would not affect their constituents.¹⁴

While the Kiernan Report challenged the validity of using segregated neighborhood boundaries to determine school attendance, white Bostonians increasingly confronted the borders separating city from suburb. Arguing that integration "rests on the total community," Boston Public Schools Superintendent William Ohrenberger blasted the suburbs "which deny housing to Negroes by means of devious tactics every bit as repugnant as the voter registration techniques utilized by some unscrupulous communities of the South." By no means, a civil rights advocate Ohrenberger cautioned against proceeding with programs that "may be socially desirable but educationally harmful," indicating that he considered integration harmful for Boston's white students. Ohrenberger's challenge to the overwhelmingly white suburbs was central to a doing-nothing, blame-shifting approach to Boston's segregation.¹⁵

Boston School Committee member Joseph Lee delivered the first articulation of tactical metropolitanism in response to the Kiernan Report and the Racial Imbalance Act. Lee's satirically titled "A Plan to End the Monopoly of Un-light-colored Pupils in Many Boston Schools," suggested telling "at least 11,958 Chinese and Negro Pupils not to come back to Boston schools this autumn." Lee proposed sending these pupils, a majority of Boston's minority students, to suburban schools. Boston would retain only the 8,547 minority pupils who attended balanced schools. Throughout the 1960s, Lee continued advocating for his metropolitan solution, with the number of pupils involved the only thing changing. Designed to undermine the Racial Imbalance Act and provoke suburban segregationists, Lee's satirical proposal nevertheless raised serious questions about the extent of metropolitan segregation.¹⁶

Lee's plan paralleled one offered by Boston Redevelopment Authority administrator Ed Logue. Logue argued that any solution to racial imbalance "must go beyond the corporate limits of the City of Boston" and he proposed that middle school children in imbalanced schools be bused to suburban schools for four years. Logue's plan excluded communities with overcrowded schools and those with a significant black population. It required that no suburb receive a number of students exceeding 10 percent of its middle school enrollment. As did Lee, Logue equated African American students with poorer educational standards and his plan disproportionately burdened black pupils by making them the sole workers of integration. Logue "entirely and unequivocally" opposed "reverse busing"—the busing of white students to primarily black schools—because "worsening the education of the white children seems to me not responsible." Metropolitanism, promising to disperse the black student population, readily coexisted with white racism.¹⁷

Logue and Lee's plans received a frosty reception from civil rights advocates. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) lamented correctly that

many people at present interpret a 'metropolitan' solution as freedom to bus Negro children up to twenty miles . . . while refusing to ask a white child to enter a bus or walk a slightly different or longer route to get to school.

Logue coined the word "scatteration" to describe his plan's dispersal of African American middle schoolers throughout metropolitan Boston. The word did not inspire confidence in Ruth Batson. "I hate the term he uses," said Batson, adding that she did not see "a sincere attempt on his part to talk to the educational problems." Logue's plan never mentioned any educational content. The plan simply involved the mathematical distribution of pupils throughout the metropolitan area. It was a busing plan, not a comprehensive plan for integrated education. Although civil rights advocates opposed the proposals offered by Lee and Logue, many enthusiastically supported the METCO, a voluntary program that bused black Boston children to suburban communities without requiring sacrifices from white children. Alongside its ability to aid Boston's compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act, METCO intended to improve black educational outcomes. Unlike Joseph Lee's proposal, METCO did not aim to antagonize the suburbs. This earned METCO the support of integrationists such as Batson, who served as METCO's executive director from 1968 to 1970.¹⁸

METCO originated from the metropolitan civil rights alliance behind the Stayout. Following the publication of the Kiernan Report and the adoption of the Racial Imbalance Act, the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights (MFFHER) called a meeting to explore educational cooperation between Boston and suburban schools. On December 3, 1965, at the behest of MFFHER, State Senate Majority Leader Kevin Harrington filed a bill enabling schoolchildren to attend public schools in communities in which the children did not reside. By January 1966, Newton School Superintendent Dr. Charles E. Brown agreed to draft a proposal seeking federal aid under Title III of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act on behalf of METCO. A recipient of federal and private funding, METCO's buses first traversed the political borders separating Boston from its suburbs in September 1966. In its first year, METCO bused two hundred twenty Boston students to seven suburbs. The following year, nine additional suburbs joined the program and METCO expanded to 425 students.¹⁹

Over the objections of Louise Day Hicks and School Committee Chairman William O'Connor, the Boston School Committee endorsed METCO and sought to coopt it as part of the Committee's responsibility to reduce racial imbalance. The Committee's 1966-1967 Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance, required by the Racial Imbalance Act, trumpeted METCO. Declaring its "enthusiastic support" for METCO, the Committee requested additional state funds that would allow METCO to expand its operations. The Committee also sent a letter to sixty-two suburban school committees that urged their participation in METCO and called on the state to "exercise leadership in the development of a metropolitanistic approach to eliminating racial imbalance in public schools." Quoting the Kiernan Report, the openly discriminatory Committee reminded the state that "racial imbalance is the responsibility of all citizens in the Commonwealth." So long as it involved either antagonizing the suburbs or incorporating them into a remedy, Boston's segregationists readily coopted and amplified integrationist arguments.²⁰

With each passing year, the Boston School Committee's calls for metropolitan solutions continued gaining strength. In tandem with its metropolitanism, the Committee resisted undertaking meaningful intradistrict integration. With William O'Connor's retirement and Louise Day Hicks's election to Congress in 1970, the Committee's two main opponents of metropolitanism could not temper its tactical metropolitanism. John Kerrigan emerged as the Committee's most prominent member and most vocal advocate of metropolitanism. A vociferous opponent of plans

to integrate Boston's new Joseph Lee School, in March 1972 Kerrigan proposed busing black Boston students to the suburb of Dover. Dover was home to Massachusetts Governor Francis Sargent, a liberal Republican who opposed repealing the Racial Imbalance Act. According to Kerrigan, his busing proposal aimed "to test the governor to see if he is a real liberal." When the Committee's reneging on its commitment to balance the Lee School led to the NAACP filing the *Morgan v. Hennigan* suit in March 1972, the Committee quickly joined with Kerrigan in requesting that seventy-five suburban municipalities be named its codefendants. The Committee based this move on Detroit's *Bradley v. Milliken* proceedings, in which Judge Stephen Roth ruled on March 28, 1972, that remedying Detroit's segregation required metropolitan busing. In light of the Detroit case, the Committee's request carried with it the possibility of mandatory metropolitan desegregation. Not indicative of a newfound commitment to civil rights, the strength of the Committee's support for metropolitan solutions went hand-in-hand with the strength of the challenges to its segregated system.²¹

Although its initial filing supported metropolitan solutions, the NAACP opposed the School Committee's request to make suburban communities parties defendant because it did not want suburban involvement in the early stages of the trial. The NAACP remained open to metropolitan solutions, however. It reasoned that the addition of seventy-five new defendants would be unnecessarily burdensome and maintained that the presence of the state of Massachusetts as a defendant left the metropolitan option open. The NAACP's efforts in Boston mirrored its strategy in *Bradley v. Milliken*, where it made metropolitan arguments in the case's remedial proceedings, and where restrictions were placed on intervening suburban defendants who were only allowed to join the case in its later stages. NAACP lawyers hoped to replicate this situation in Boston. Judge W. Arthur Garrity sided with the NAACP and ruled against the Committee's request. In light of both NAACP and School Committee strategy, a tactical alignment between the two would only be possible in the remedial hearings following a finding of de jure segregation.²²

Prior to a finding of de jure segregation, Kerrigan coupled his metropolitan advocacy before the court with transparent efforts to arouse suburban opposition to integration. On becoming School Committee Chairman in January 1974, Kerrigan immediately proposed a tenfold increase to the METCO program. Although METCO had grown to bus one thousand nine hundred children to twenty-nine suburbs, Kerrigan argued that this represented mere tokenism, the educational equivalent of businesses placing "a black receptionist and a few black secretaries in the front office." The nineteen thousand students Kerrigan wanted bused to the suburbs constituted more than half of the black enrollment in Boston.²³

METCO resisted being coopted by the Boston School Committee, choosing instead to emphasize its voluntary nature in the face of its own diminishing suburban support. The effects of the Committee's tactical metropolitanism on suburbanites contributed to METCO's stance. In December 1971, an internal METCO report noted that suburban "support and interest in the METCO concept . . . is not as strong as it could be." The report questioned whether "METCO can take its continued existence for granted." In light of its weakened support that led to an inability to attract new participating communities, METCO abandoned its goals of metropolitan integration. By the height of the busing conflict in March 1975, METCO asserted that "METCO was never intended to become a metropolitan school district" and argued that metropolitanism should not "be corrupted by attempts to make it primarily a desegregative tool." This was a sharp departure for an organization devoted to a metropolitan approach for the sole purpose of providing integration.²⁴

Historian Lily Geismer argues that METCO's proponents never advocated two-way busing or a metropolitan school district. METCO's cofounder Leon Trilling avoided taking a public stand on a metropolitan school district or two-way busing. Similarly, Ruth Batson avoided mentioning her support for a metropolitan school district "because everybody goes crazy when you say it." But other founding officials were not similarly restrained. Newton School Superintendent Dr.

Charles E. Brown, the author of METCO's successful federal funding proposal, told the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in October 1966 that "we have got to think in larger geographical terms if we are going to provide integrated education" and that "there would be real benefits in . . . a metropolitan school district." METCO's initial proposal for the community of Lincoln stressed the advantages of "a centrally administered metropolitan system" but noted that suburbs might not accept a metropolitan district "without a prior demonstration in the Boston area that a suburban busing program is workable." METCO would be that demonstration project. An internal document prepared for the Carnegie Corporation, an important funding source, included news reports on METCO that touted the value of a metropolitan school system. With METCO relying on suburban support, the Boston School Committee's tactical metropolitanism aroused suburban fears of mandatory desegregation and a corresponding loss of autonomy. These fears led METCO away from ambiguity on mandatory metropolitanism to a commitment to voluntary metropolitan solutions alone. Mandatory metropolitan desegregation would only be possible through the courts.²⁵

As METCO reaffirmed its support for voluntary measures, Boston politicians increasingly adopted the Boston School Committee's mandatory metropolitan arguments. In August 1971, State Representative Paul Murphy of Boston, the House Democratic Whip, filed a bill requiring that suburban communities accept black students from Boston's schools and send an equal number of white children to Boston. Boston Mayor Kevin White supported the Murphy Bill and saw metropolitanism as an opportunity to provide redress to the region's financial inequities. Noting that wealthy Brookline spent \$1,471 for every school child in 1971 to Boston's \$935 despite having a lower tax rate, White argued that "there will not be equal educational opportunity until Boston's children have an opportunity to mix educationally with Brookline's." White drew on sociologist James Coleman's work to argue that the value in socioeconomic integration required metropolitan solutions. Sincere in his desire for metropolitan solutions, White nevertheless echoed tactical metropolitanist justifications.²⁶

By this point, Boston's metropolitanism engaged a national conversation about metropolitan desegregation. When Detroit's *Milliken* case ascended to the Supreme Court, the City of Boston offered an *amicus curiae* in support of cross-district busing. The *amicus* brief spun Boston's metropolitanism as a "commitment to metropolitan approaches to education substantially predating a desegregation lawsuit in which its School Committee is presently a defendant." With *Milliken* before the Supreme Court, metropolitan solutions had the real possibility of being implemented and the City of Boston was actively pushing for their implementation. Boston's metropolitanism, far from being an outlier, paralleled and increasingly converged with similar developments in other cities.²⁷

As predicted by the Boston School Committee, metropolitan desegregation proposals, whether tactical or otherwise, provoked suburban opposition. The suburban dominated state legislature defeated the Murphy Bill by a vote of 156 to 60. Nearly all of the state's Republicans united in opposition and the Democrats split along regional lines. A majority of suburban Democrats opposed the measure, while it attracted considerable Boston support. In the face of metropolitan desegregation proposals, legislative attempts to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act became an annual rite of spring in the early 1970s. Suburbanites increasingly supported the repeal efforts. By 1972, only Governor Sargent's veto allowed the punitive aspects of the Act to remain, testifying to the effectiveness of tactical metropolitanism in weakening suburban legislators' support for the law. Taking stock of a 1973 demonstration against the Act that attracted scores of suburbanites, many of whom traveled to the State House on school buses chartered for the occasion, one woman from suburban Westwood asserted that "a real grassroots movement is underway to prevent forced busing." When in 1974 the School Committee's confrontations with the State Board of Education resulted in a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court order that required extensive busing, the state legislature responded to the order by voting to repeal the Act, putting

Sargent on the spot once again. On May 10, 1974, Sargent announced his intentions to repeal and replace the Act. Sargent indicated that an acceptable replacement would guarantee every child a choice of an integrated education, but not mandate integration. The suburbs would participate in Boston's desegregation, but only voluntarily through METCO, which Sargent proposed to give an additional \$6 million.²⁸

Sargent's actions did not prevent busing in Boston. Given the Boston School Committee's openly segregationist acts, there was little doubt about the verdict in *Morgan v. Hennigan*. Ruling against the Committee in late June 1974, Judge W. Arthur Garrity only had a little more than two months until school began in September to impose a remedy. He turned to the only available plan, the same State Board of Education busing plan that prodded Sargent's proposed repeal of the Racial Imbalance Act. The state plan, pairing black Roxbury and white South Boston, became known as Phase I. Although Garrity had earlier ruled against the Committee's request to make suburban communities defendants in the case, the Judge left the possibility for metropolitan desegregation open. Referring obliquely to *Milliken*, a footnote in the court's opinion noted that "the ordering of busing across governmental boundary lines—the transportation of students between the suburbs and the city—remains of challengeable validity." In June 1974, Boston's tactical metropolitanism would no longer be able to defeat integration, but metropolitan busing remained a possibility for Phase II.²⁹

Philadelphia

While the Boston School Committee first trumpeted METCO, the metropolitan discourse arrived in Philadelphia. Although battles over school desegregation had been raging for years, no major metropolitan desegregation proposals were made until the Urban League of Philadelphia's radical proposal to reconfigure Philadelphia's schools entered the political mainstream in 1967.

As in Boston, Philadelphia's challenge to regional school district boundaries emerged out of civil rights advocates' fruitless years of advocating for desegregation. The Urban League first took aim at Philadelphia's school building plan in 1962, arguing that the Board of Education did not take into account the possibilities for desegregation in selecting school sites. In 1962, black children accounted for 51 percent of Philadelphia's public school enrollment, a level that would mark the entire system as racially imbalanced were Philadelphia subject to Massachusetts' Racial Imbalance Act. Seventy-one percent of Philadelphia's black pupils attended schools with black populations between 90 and 100 percent while 62 percent of its white students attended schools with less than 10 percent black pupils. Faced with such figures, the Urban League's 1962 criticism revealed a fatalism about desegregation, believing it "impossible at the present time to achieve desegregated elementary school bodies." As a result, the League's suggestions merely involved finding "creative means to facilitate intergroup contact" and it asked the Board to desegregate those schools that it could. A system of neighborhood schools, no matter the adjustment of boundaries, could not fully integrate Philadelphia's schools. Quickly, this realization led the Urban League to demand a "radical departure in building planning" in February 1964.³⁰

The Urban League's "radical departure" called for the creation of a school system composed entirely of educational parks. Consisting of several schools on a common site, each park would contain eight elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools. Parks would be located in sections of the city where the pupil composition could reflect the overall racial composition of the city's schools. Philadelphia's most prominent interracial human rights organization, the Fellowship Commission, provided considerable support for educational parks. Although it did not desire transforming the entire system into one of parks, in April 1967 it called for the Board of Education to establish enough parks to educate one hundred thousand pupils. Although this represented a diminution of the Urban League's proposal, its suggestions went beyond the League's in another way. The Fellowship Commission envisioned these parks drawing pupils

from Philadelphia's parochial schools and its inner suburbs. The Fellowship Commission challenged the separation of city and suburban school systems—the first of the metropolitan appeals that increasingly characterized Philadelphia's struggles over school integration.³¹

Both the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission had reason to be hopeful for the prospects of educational parks in 1967. In the hopes of financing its 1967-1972 capital plan, the Philadelphia Board of Education asked voters to approve a bond amendment to the city's Education Home Rule Charter that would increase the borrowing power of the school district to \$150 million and allow it to construct several new neighborhood schools. The 1967 battle over the charter amendment became a referendum on neighborhood schools. A coalition of civil rights groups branded itself the Coalition for Integrated Quality Education and fought vociferously against the Board of Education's borrowing plans.³²

Faced with the mounting opposition to the school board's capital program, in May 1967 Board of Education President Richardson Dilworth revealed that the Board's new budget included a plan to construct three experimental educational parks. Previously, these parks had not been in the budget. Given that Dilworth opposed educational parks, their inclusion was entirely due to the bond campaign. One year previously, Dilworth called educational parks "destructful [*sic*] of our city and its neighborhoods" and "Soviet" in concept. Ultimately, voters approved the charter amendment in May 1967, affirming support for neighborhood schools. Never possessing the support of the white community, the "vote no" campaign could not succeed. Going forward, while black protest increasingly veered toward a black power and community control orientation, Dilworth became the new face of metropolitan school desegregation in Philadelphia.³³

As in Boston, mandatory desegregation prodded white urban metropolitanism. A PHRC order to the Philadelphia Board of Education provided the impetus for Dilworth's embrace of metropolitanism. In February 1968, the PHRC ordered the School District of Philadelphia to prepare a desegregation plan by June 30, 1968. After receiving an extension, the Board released its plan in September 1968. Although limited in action for Philadelphia's inner-city schools, this plan challenged the structure of the region's school systems, attacking the artificial boundaries separating the overwhelmingly white schools of the suburbs from Philadelphia's majority black schools.³⁴

This radical challenge to regional educational boundaries emerged in a document that contained much ambivalence about integration. The Board pledged to maintain its policy of no "reverse busing" and downplayed the need for integration by suggesting that a "growing and articulate segment of the black community" simply wanted improved education "with or without integration." The plan did propose a measure of integration within the Philadelphia schools by proposing to pair black and white schools for part-time desegregated learning experiences, estimated to be at most once or twice per week. Its most radical proposal suggested finding a "means of exchanging pupils" across municipal boundaries, "enough to be a meaningful proportion of the pupils in the city and suburban schools." The plan noted that the thirteen independent school districts adjoining Philadelphia educated a total of 96,885 pupils, of whom only 4,613 were "nonwhite," below 5 percent of the total student body. In contrast, Philadelphia's public schools now educated 279,774 students, of whom 162,733 were "nonwhite," 58.2 percent of the total. In light of these numbers, the Board argued that the suburban schools were segregated in the metropolitan context and claimed that the 58 percent minority Philadelphia schools "cannot successfully desegregate," while the "districts adjoining Philadelphia cannot, by themselves, desegregate their wholly white schools." By 1971, the Board eschewed partial or voluntary measures and called for the adoption of new metropolitan school districts, each containing a slice of Philadelphia.³⁵

Any metropolitanism ran afoul of the PHRC. In March 1968, the PHRC developed a set of desegregation guidelines for Pennsylvania's public schools that explicitly declared that the work of "coping with segregation rests with local school authorities." Although Dilworth broadened the definition of "local" to mean the interconnected metropolitan region, the PHRC steadfastly

maintained that local meant the existing municipal boundaries. Despite the PHRC's refusal to entertain metropolitan solutions, events in Philadelphia continued to demonstrate metropolitanism's broad constituency, encompassing civil rights advocates, centrist school authorities, and eventually the representatives of white backlash.³⁶

The Dilworth Board's perceived willingness to concede to the demands of black students prodded an already extant white backlash to civil rights. But the political representatives of this backlash quickly emerged as a major voice of metropolitan reform. Attacking the Board's links to black civil rights proved a major theme of Frank Rizzo's successful 1971 mayoral campaign. The Philadelphia Board of Education, by virtue of the mayor's ability to appoint its members, became itself a product of the white backlash which elected Rizzo mayor. Although Rizzo engineered the removal of Dilworth and his integrationist Superintendent of Schools Mark Shedd, Rizzo's Board echoed the metropolitan arguments made by its unpopular predecessor. Like the Boston School Committee, it embraced the opportunity to weaken suburban legislative support for integration and advocated metropolitan desegregation only in the face of mandatory desegregation. As did Dilworth, it argued that integrating a majority-black system on its own was an impossibility. But in contrast to the situation faced by the Boston School Committee in *Morgan v. Hennigan*, the PHRC did not raise the issue of de jure segregation, press its case with alacrity, or show any willingness to consider metropolitan solutions, allowing the Rizzo Board's metropolitanism to be primarily a tactic of indefinite delay.³⁷

The backlash Board's metropolitanism rested upon two pillars. It claimed that compliance with the PHRC's order within the city was impossible due to demographic and financial realities and that the State of Pennsylvania possessed the responsibility for providing its children with an integrated education. Echoing arguments made in the Detroit case, the Philadelphia Board argued that the state permitted the "creation and perpetuation" of suburban school districts which "resulted in State-imposed segregation of school children by creation of artificial, highly arbitrary, and racially discriminatory boundaries." As a remedy, the Board asked for "the formation of a Metropolitan School District for the entire area."³⁸

Key civil rights groups echoed the Rizzo Board's metropolitanism. The Fellowship Commission and the North Philadelphia NAACP called for metropolitan desegregation and weighed filing new litigation. In 1974, the North Philadelphia NAACP petitioned the PHRC for a metropolitan solution, arguing that the state "maximized racial segregation" by allowing separate school boards for Philadelphia and its suburbs. It combined its call for metropolitan desegregation with an accusation that the Board of Education was not committed to any form of desegregation, lamenting its failure to file a lawsuit or introduce legislation needed to bring about regionalization. Concurrently, the Fellowship Commission urged the Board to take all necessary legal steps to produce "the earliest possible establishment of a metropolitan school district." Although doubting the Board's commitment to desegregation, the Fellowship Commission considered working with the Board to produce a metropolitan plan. In March 1974, its president raised collaborating with the Board of Education and others "in a lawsuit requiring the Commonwealth to establish one or more metropolitan districts." As did the NAACP, the Fellowship Commission doubted the Board's commitment to integration. It proposed that the legal collaboration only proceed if the Board undertook "bona fide efforts" to accomplish intra-system integration by busing for overcrowding, pairing schools, and constructing educational parks. Disagreeing with the Rizzo Board's motivations, the Fellowship Commission nevertheless supported its metropolitanism.³⁹

Although initiated by state action rather than a legal complaint, metropolitanism in Philadelphia would be influenced by the Supreme Court's *Milliken* decision. In his decision on the Philadelphia Board's appeal of the legality of the PHRC's order, Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court Judge Roy Wilkinson noted that the option of including suburban districts in a central city's desegregation plan "is now in litigation" and "presumably will be decided by the United States Supreme

Court within the foreseeable future.” Wilkinson left the metropolitan option on the table for the time being, though the PHRC could not be counted on to press for it. Whether the North Philadelphia NAACP or the Fellowship Commission would succeed in securing metropolitan desegregation in proposed alternate litigation would depend in large part upon the outcome of *Milliken*.⁴⁰

Detroit

Of the three cities, Detroit arrived last to debating metropolitan school integration. The Detroit Board openly desired integration. The Board’s integrationism meant it took longer for it to run afoul of civil rights advocates, delaying the confrontation necessary for a widespread consideration of metropolitan desegregation. In Boston, metropolitanism arrived because of the black campaign against the segregationist Boston School Committee, while the Philadelphia Board embraced metropolitanism in the face of a desegregation order. Despite Detroit’s tardiness, the metropolitan arguments made there would travel to the Supreme Court and have the most lasting national implications, directly affecting the possible remedies available in Boston and Philadelphia.

Since 1964, Detroit possessed an actively integrationist school board. In 1965, the Board inaugurated two programs—Projects 1 and 2—designed to promote racial integration in its schools. Project 1 focused on racially transitioning neighborhoods and sought to prevent resegregation by improving area schools and providing increased funds for in-service training on intergroup relations for school personnel. Project 2 sought to provide a semblance of “biracial” integrated education for the clear majority of “pupils who reside in areas where residents are entirely or predominantly of one race.” Project 2—quickly renamed the Shared Experiences Program—paired white and black schools in integrated learning experiences outside of the classroom to develop “skills necessary to successful and productive citizenship in an integrated society.” In the 1966-1967 school year, the Shared Experiences Program involved over twenty-three thousand students.⁴¹

Individuals within the Detroit schools recognized the limitations of these programs. Black Board member Dr. Remus Robinson cast the lone vote against the projects, calling for a more far-reaching effort because the two programs were not “an adequate plan towards integration.” The Board’s Task Force on Quality Integrated Education concurred. In February 1968, the Task Force argued that integration within the municipal boundaries alone was impossible. Given Detroit’s black student population of 56.7 percent and rising, the Task Force concluded that any integration plan should “include large numbers of pupils presently studying outside of the public school system, and the Detroit School District must move to develop on an interschool district basis.” Although Philadelphia’s Board of Education required a legal mandate to come to this conclusion, school authorities in both cities concurred on the impossibility of intracity school integration in light of metropolitan residential patterns.⁴²

The Detroit Board did not act on the Task Force’s recommendations, but it soon produced its own modest intracity integration plan. Following black demands for community control of Detroit’s schools, Michigan Governor William Milliken signed Public Act 244 into law in August 1969. Act 244 divided the Detroit school system into semiautonomous regions and delegated the task of devising boundaries to the Board of Education. In a significant departure from its legislative mandate, Board President A. L. Zwerdling saw the Act as an opportunity to “maximize the opportunity for an integrated experience for all public school children.” Lamenting that Act 244 did not allow for the crossing of municipal boundaries, Zwerdling proceeded with planning integrated decentralized regions within Detroit itself. On April 7, 1970, the Board released a modest integration plan which altered feeder patterns at eleven city high schools and sent roughly nine thousand students to schools other than the one they currently attended, to massive opposition.⁴³

Although black power advocates opposed the April 7 Plan, the overwhelming face of opposition was white. White opponents, working through Detroit's longstanding segregationist civic and homeowners' associations, launched the CCBE to fight against the April 7 Plan. The CCBE aimed to recall the four members of the Detroit Board who voted in favor of integration. It succeeded. On election day, more than 60 percent of voters chose to remove the four integrationist Board members from office. Voting results revealed a stark racial divide, with white areas of the city voting in favor of the recall at a ratio as high as six-to-one, while black neighborhoods recorded similar margins against. Yet the recall campaign was not needed to defeat the integration plan. Prior to the election, on July 7, 1970, Governor Milliken signed Public Act 48, which overturned the April 7 Plan and shortened the terms of Board of Education members.⁴⁴

Within a year of recalling integrationist Board members from office, the CCBE transformed itself into Detroit's staunchest supporter of metropolitan integration. This was a change of tactics, not a change of heart. CCBE members remained animated by a commitment to majority white classrooms for white children. A legal challenge, secretly spurred by the NAACP and the integrationist Board of Education in its final days in office, provided the impetus for the CCBE's transformation. On August 18, 1970, the NAACP filed the suit first known as *Bradley v. Milliken*, charging state authorities and the Detroit Board with perpetuating *de jure* segregation within Detroit's schools. At trial, plaintiffs did not limit their evidence to violations of the school authorities, marshalling evidence of residential segregation throughout metropolitan Detroit. This evidence included the continuing use of restrictive covenants by the Burton Abstract and Title Company, suburban Grosse Pointe's notorious "point system," in use from 1943 to 1960, which worked to exclude African Americans and Jews from the community, and the role played by the Federal Housing Administration and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in advancing discriminatory mortgage policies.⁴⁵

The CCBE joined *Bradley v. Milliken* as an intervening defendant to fight against desegregation. Its Motion to Intervene argued that students "have a constitutional right under the Fourteenth Amendment to attend the school nearest their home" and stated that the CCBE's official purpose was preserving neighborhood schools. The CCBE quickly discarded its defense of neighborhood schools in favor of its actual purpose: maintaining white majority classrooms for white children.⁴⁶

Realizing that it would lose the case, the CCBE began advocating for metropolitan solutions in July 1971. It was the first party in the case to do so. CCBE lawyer Alexander Ritchie prodded the group's transformation. Although Ritchie claimed to undergo a genuine transformation in outlook, he did not see a similar shift in those he represented. Ritchie persuaded the CCBE membership that a desegregation area reaching into the predominantly white suburbs would maintain white majorities in their children's schools. Telling members that "This case is going down the tubes!" Ritchie asked whether "you want your kids to go to school where they're the minority in a basically black school system, or do you want them to go to school where you're still the majority?" After Judge Stephen Roth found Detroit's schools *de jure* segregated on September 27, 1971, Ritchie proposed incorporating sixty suburban school districts in a metropolitan busing remedy producing a 60 percent white and 40 percent black student body. Others within the CCBE wanted whiter schools. CCBE Chairman Aubrey Short presented a plan that involved eighty-five school districts and called for a 79 percent white student population. Not indicative of a genuine commitment to integration, CCBE members were free to elect politicians demanding an antibusing amendment to the U.S. Constitution and to support segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace's 1972 campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination while demanding metropolitan desegregation in court. Wallace won Michigan's Democratic Primary, carrying all counties except Washtenaw. Wallace won 66 percent and 53 percent majorities in suburban Detroit's Macomb and Oakland counties, respectively. That Wallace won a 46 percent plurality in Wayne County, home to Detroit's sizable black population, suggests the depth of his support among

Detroit whites. The results suggest that many CCBE supporters voted for Wallace, indicating that their metropolitanism did not extend beyond the courtroom.⁴⁷

The post-recall Detroit Board of Education echoed the CCBE's transformation. Ironically, it was Detroit's regional school boards, the product of the community-control school decentralization measure, that pushed for metropolitanism. Following two days of meetings in November 1971 between the regional boards and their citywide counterpart, regional board members voted sixteen to five to demand the submission of a metropolitan plan to Judge Roth.⁴⁸

The NAACP joined Detroit's courtroom metropolitan alliance in the case's remedial hearings. Although authoring its own intracity plan, the NAACP chose to champion metropolitanism because intracity solutions would not "accomplish now the greatest possible degree of actual desegregation." To buttress its metropolitanism, the NAACP provided new evidence drawn from a 1959 school boundary guidebook indicating that black children from the suburban Carver School District were assigned to black schools in the city because no white schools would take the children. "These black children did not trip (nor, subsequently did their buses pause) on the school district line," the NAACP told the court.⁴⁹

In the *Bradley v. Milliken* remedial hearings, the plaintiff NAACP, defendant Detroit Board of Education, and intervening CCBE all argued that any school desegregation plan for Detroit should not be limited to the central city alone. That each group arrived at this argument differently is a testament to how divergent motivations—be they a quest for racial justice or a segregationist desire for majority-white schools—could nevertheless produce comparable results.

The CCBE's submitted metropolitan plan bore the imprint of integrationist educational professionals. Dr. Richard Morshead, a member of Detroit's Region Seven Board of Education and a faculty member at the University of Michigan's Dearborn Campus, led a team of specialists that formulated the CCBE's metropolitan proposal. Morshead's integrated team included several of his academic colleagues as well as representatives from the Detroit Public Schools. The authors had little sympathy for the CCBE's motives and evidenced trepidation about their association. In a letter to Ritchie that accompanied the plan, Morshead wrote that

it should be clearly understood, Mr. Ritchie, that in submitting this document to you, its authors are not necessarily endorsing any of the educational or political views, other than a commitment to metropolitan school desegregation, which might be held by your clients.⁵⁰

The NAACP based its own metropolitan plan off of the CCBE's submission. The CCBE's proposal included sixty-two school districts with 777,000 students, of whom 25.4 percent were minority. The NAACP's plan involved fifty-four school districts, 780,000 pupils, and a 25.3 percent black student population. So analogous were the plans that Judge Roth called their geographic coverage "roughly approximate." The NAACP not only found the CCBE's submission workable, it felt that the CCBE's transformation aided it in court. Recognizing the CCBE's influence on the litigation, NAACP counsel Paul Dimond noted that "if there hadn't been an Alex Ritchie in this case, we would have had to invent one." In March 1972, Roth ordered the adoption of the NAACP's metropolitan plan. Following a series of state defendant appeals, the case headed to the Supreme Court.⁵¹

Deus Ex Milliken

By the time that Judge Stephen Roth ordered a metropolitan remedy in *Bradley v. Milliken* in March 1972, school boards in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia all urged metropolitan solutions to school segregation. Although Boston and Philadelphia's efforts had been transparently premised on defeating suburban support for integration, Roth's ordering of a metropolitan plan indicated that tactical metropolitan remedies offered a viable partial solution to public school

segregation that would maintain white majority schools. Roth's decision made tactical metropolitanism's secondary aim—that of preserving white school majorities—take precedence over its goal of defeating integration. Immediately, the Boston School Committee moved to attach the suburbs to its *Morgan v. Hennigan* case and civil rights groups in Philadelphia considered working with that city's Board of Education to induce a metropolitan remedy. In a conventional desegregation lawsuit, tactical metropolitanism could not defeat an integrationist mandate or indefinitely postpone desegregation. Rather, metropolitanism offered a solution to metropolitan educational inequality capable of integrating schools, mitigating white flight, and productively building on the grievances of white urbanites who lamented being forced to integrate while suburbanites escaped responsibility.

Although metropolitanism was being shorn of some of its most pernicious tactical aims in court following Roth's decision, mandatory metropolitan desegregation never arrived in the three cities. On July 24, 1974, Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart joined Republican President Richard Nixon's four appointees in ruling against the metropolitan solution in *Milliken v. Bradley*. The Court claimed that "No single tradition in public education is more deeply rooted than local control over the operation of schools," and emphasized the administrative difficulties inherent in consolidating independent districts. The majority's decision drew on the Court's 1972 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* ruling. Although the remedy in *Swann* provided for metropolitan busing in greater Charlotte, North Carolina, this occurred because the metropolis was governed by a single school district. In *Swann*, the Court acknowledged that violations in one part of the school district naturally affected the district's other schools, but the effects of discrimination legally stopped at the school district boundary, wherever drawn. By remaining autonomous, metropolitan Detroit's suburban school districts were sufficiently insulated from mandatory metropolitan integration. While perpetuating the myth of suburban racial innocence, the Court provided a clear lesson for segregationist suburbanites: by preserving autonomy from the central city and maintaining a predominantly white population, integration could be avoided.⁵²

Milliken ended the metropolitan ascendancy. While pushes for metropolitan desegregation continued, they increasingly focused on the legislative realm, where suburban voters outnumbered urban ones and courtroom alliances such as Detroit's could not be replicated. Following *Milliken*, even sincere metropolitanism succumbed to the logics of tactical metropolitanism. Urban metropolitanism provoked a bipartisan suburban opposition, ensuring that mandatory metropolitan desegregation was only possible through the courts.

This suburban opposition had lasting city-building implications, exacerbating segregation and the divisions between the cities and their suburbs. In the face of a bipartisan attack on the PHRC, only Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp's vetoes of 1974, 1975, and 1976 maintained the PHRC's ability to compel desegregation. Shapp vetoed the legislation against the PHRC not because integration was law but because the NAACP had threatened to file a federal suit should he fail to do so. In defending his veto, Shapp celebrated the PHRC as a "buffer" that kept alternate challenges, such as those considered by the Fellowship Commission and the North Philadelphia NAACP, "out of federal courts" and prevented mandatory busing. Although ensconced in the safety of the *Milliken* precedent, Detroit's suburbanites defeated regional planning initiatives that promised links with the city. Suburbanites saw metropolitan desegregation busing lurking behind regionalism. Opposing the creation of a new regional planning body in 1976, Macomb County Commissioner Richard D. Sabaugh warned suburbanites that "[w]e must never let up, because, once we do, the buses will roll." In Boston, nontactical metropolitan proposals such as the Daly-Sullivan Bill of January 1975, which required all suburbs with a median family income higher than the metropolitan average set aside up to 10 percent of their classroom seats for black and white students from Boston, fell to a bipartisan suburban opposition. Although METCO remained, testifying to the persistence of a strand of Massachusetts liberalism, its period

of expansion came to an end. Left to the voters, mandatory integration remained a purely urban concern.⁵³

Although metropolitanism failed in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, grappling with these metropolitan proposals is crucial for a deeper understanding of the limitations of Northern civil rights and the persistence of metropolitan inequalities. In each of the three cities, a diverse spectrum of sources—ranging from self-interested urban segregationists to committed civil rights advocates—stressed the need for metropolitan remedies to school segregation. Their metropolitanism drew on the politics of race, class, and residence to articulate a vision of metropolitan reform that was very nearly realized in Detroit in *Milliken v. Bradley* and on the table in Boston and Philadelphia. A metropolitan lens also provides the knowledge that a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations, including those without the slightest attachment to civil rights goals, fought the separation of the nation's metropolitan areas into what Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall's *Milliken* dissent called “two cities—one white, the other black.” These proposals, part of an ongoing process of city-building, remind us that the starkly segregated metropolises and fragmented regional service structures of today were not preordained outcomes.⁵⁴

Until Americans have a deeper understanding of the consequences of privileging suburban autonomy over civil rights and see that individuals of all stripes and motivations could collaborate in producing lasting solutions to structural inequality, the problems of America's deeply unequal metropolises will remain intractable. Regardless of motivation, metropolitanists authored proposals capable of providing significant redress to educational inequality while mitigating white flight. Far from one-dimensional opponents, urban antibusers traversed the surprisingly fluid boundary between integrationist and segregationist as it suited them. In one of the overlooked ironies of civil rights history, when faced with black demands for educational equality the “antibusing” villains proved tactically flexible authors and supporters of radical solutions capable of addressing metropolitan inequality, all in the aim of preserving white majorities. It is a further irony that their plans involved a tremendous amount of busing.

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Notes

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