

# A CITIZEN & A TAXPAYER PART II

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald



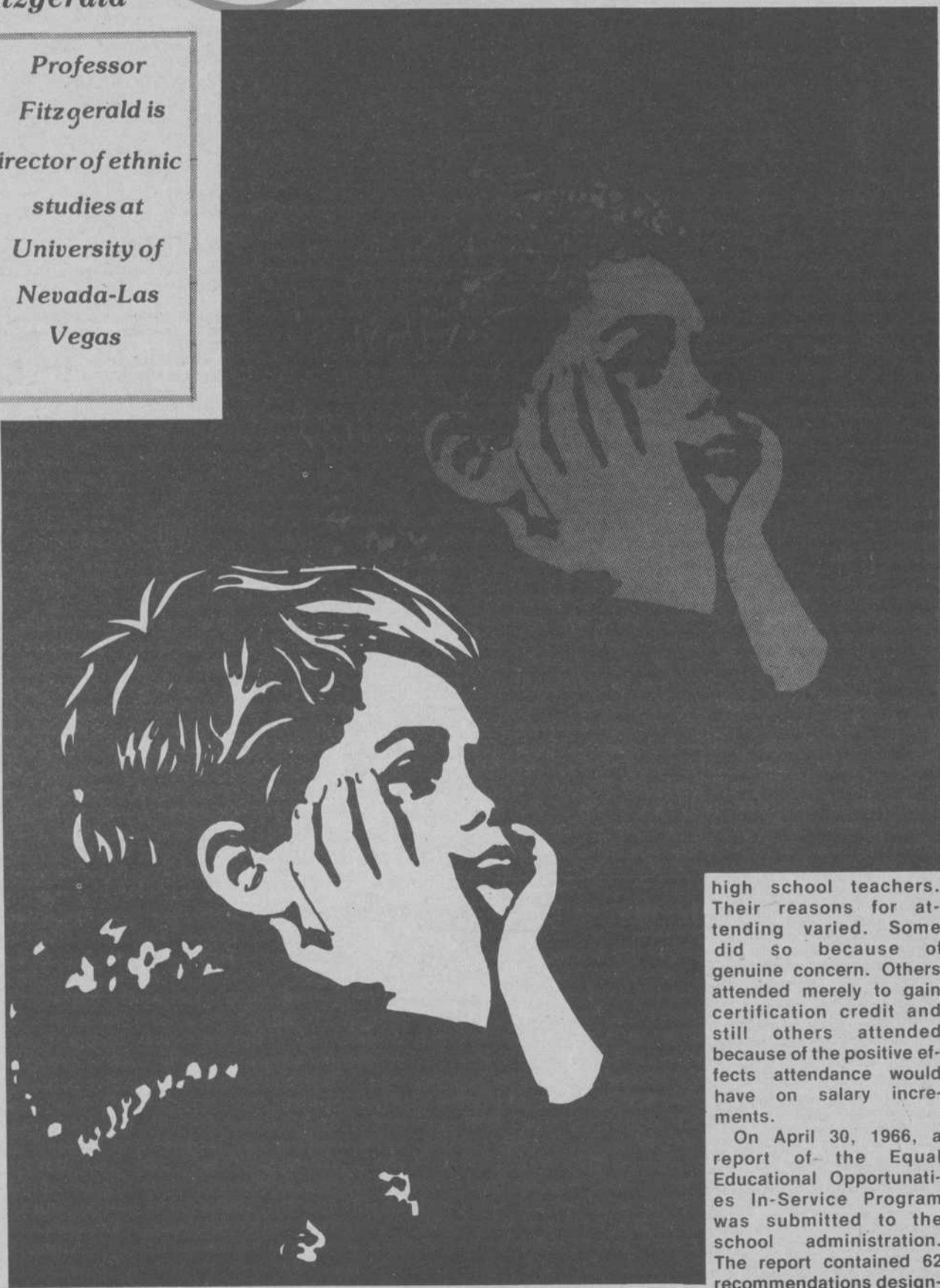
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final report on a series of articles dealing with school integration and the political ramifications that were involved. Part I of this series was published in the LAS VEGAS SENTINEL on June 20, 1980.

Being present at the facility did not necessarily insure integration would take place. There were additional needs which had to be met. There were conditions which had to be addressed on legal, educational and social grounds.

The legal aspect was considered in the Courts. Here in Las Vegas, the plaintiffs included the joint suits brought in the name of the NAACP by attorney Charles Keller and the League of Women Voters with attorney Frank Schreck. The defendants were the Clark County School District and associated citizens groups who were opposed to integration in one form or another.

The educational area was that which had to be addressed by the classroom teachers. Most of them had attended universities at a time when such courses as tools necessary to teach their concerns for the role of Ethnic or Black Studies in a multi-cultural school they would be expected to have not been a part of the setting. In response to fill during integration. Most that realization, teachers 1965, an in-service



portunity for a practical and a real participation in the management of their schools.

2. Transportation for minority groups who wish to participate in extra curricular activities is non-existent.

3. There is a lack of Negro personnel in counseling, administration and faculties of all schools.

4. PTA and other groups have not yet presented any programs on Ethnic relations, integration, civil rights, etc.

5. Children in segregated schools have no knowledge of Negro history and/or biographies of Negro heroes.

No action was taken on these recommendations.

A second area of educational concern had to do with administration. The school environment was in a process of change. It was a time for enlightened leadership. Little was forthcoming.

There were social problems. Black children, during the elementary grades, had attended segregated schools. White children, obviously, had done the same. Each had misconceptions of what the other was all about. In the secondary schools there was little interaction between the two groups. Blacks were bused in, attended classes, congregated among themselves during lunch hour, back to classes and back to the buses. It was almost as though they had to be out of town before dark.

While the experts argued the pros and cons of integration at the Court House, and while teachers' recommendations were being ignored for four or more years,

high school teachers. Their reasons for attending varied. Some did so because of genuine concern. Others attended merely to gain certification credit and still others attended because of the positive effects attendance would have on salary increments.

On April 30, 1966, a report of the Equal Educational Opportunities In-Service Program was submitted to the school administration. The report contained 62 recommendations design-

ed to aid in school integration. Among them interest shown by teachers could be found the That program was through following.

of the participants were Jr. 1. Students have little op-

conditions were reaching the boiling point.

Walter Baring was saying that "busing students is unconstitutional," while others were of the opinion that "integration is a thing that must be done by choice and not by force because that is the only way it will work."

While those jewels were being tossed about, an automobile, belonging to a white student at Western High School, was firebombed. A confrontation between 200 students followed. The police arrived. An ultimatum to disperse was issued. White students went home and black students were arrested. Who bombed the car was not made clear. The racial atmosphere was such that since it was a white student's car it "stood to reason" the blacks had done the deed.

Prior to saying "court is now in session," the judge usually will bang his gavel. A warden, at an infamous western prison used to braggingly say that he would "punch an inmate in order to get their attention." A drill sergeant simply says "tenshun." In these, and other instances, the initial objective is to get the attention of the audience.

The decade of the '60s is generally referred to as the decade of the Civil Rights Movement. The State Democratic Chairman, had to inform the candidate that "all unlawful acts of violence and disorder are already outlawed."

Some parents were keeping their children Black Americans "if things were really that bad." The majority of Americans were not cognizant that there were, indeed, problems. The to achieve integration it would require "arbitrary zoning and cross The "mar-busing." The District was asking the public to "boycotts,

"Give us more time." Everyone had known, since 1954, that that day was coming. How much time did they need? Another fifteen years and then another? How many additional generations of children would be required to grow up in an environment where their chances of being racist were so great?

The practice of procrastinating placed pupils in a position which precluded the propensity of them and their parents from putting off positive steps towards a more progressive pedagogical pedantry.

There was a breakdown in communications between authorities and the Black community. This is apparent even in the fact that one is distinguishable from the other. The latter had attempted to warn the community of its dissatisfaction with the prevalent system. The former was convinced that the problem would somehow go away. It did not. Conditions became progressively worse. The Black community was not observing any real reciprocity with the white component of the community at large in solving the integration crisis.

The condition in the schools became a major political issue. Some politicians capitalized upon the fears of the community. They stressed the symptoms of the condition and avoided, like a plague, the causes.

and yes, even the "riots" in urban areas occurred partially in order to illuminate the problems of Blacks and other racial minorities.

During the height of these efforts, legislation and other positive changes did take place. The racial climate did begin to improve. But, at what a price.

In 1968, a film titled "Cool Hand Luke" flashed across the silver screens at thousands of theatres across the United States. One of the truly memorable lines of the '60s was uttered by the warden of the penitentiary depicted in that film.

Strother Martin said: "What we have here, is a breakdown in communications." Subsequently that line was echoed across the country whenever there were misunderstandings.

## How Black Students Are Comparing

In 1979-80, 2,150 of the 41,000 junior and senior high school students left Clark County schools, with the highest number — 872 — dropping out at age 17. This was followed by 581 at age 16, 476 between ages 18 and 20, and 11 at age 21 or above, reported Bob Ranney, director of pupil personnel services.

Of the 2,150, 42 percent, or 903 were female and 58 percent, or 1,247 were male. These numbers equal 4.2 percent of the junior and senior high female population and 6 percent of the male population.

By percent, the top

seven reasons for dropping out were:  
-47 percent or 1,013 students for lack of attendance.

-17 percent or 366 for general disinterest.  
-13 percent or 284 for working and/or apprenticeship program.

-7 percent or 166 who needed to work to assist their families.  
-5 percent or 128 to enroll in adult education programs.

-2 percent or 48 for marriage.  
-1 percent or 36 because of pregnancy.

Seventy-four percent of the dropouts were white,

Blacks were made to appear to be a "lawless" Vegas, skirted the issue. breed intent only with They attempted to do destroying the everything but adhere to "cherished institutions" the dictates of the court. which have helped make Voluntary integration, this country what it is — prestige schools and the racist. Politicians at-introduction of innovative tempted to convey to the materials and teaching general populace that in- techniques were tegration, as a solution to designed to entice white the segregationist ills of parents into voluntarily the country, was not enrolling their children in "White America's" formerly predominantly responsibility. Black schools of the

An incantation con- "Westside." demning the Federal government's intrusion Following the Western into the affairs of the in- High "riot" events moved individual several states on to other secondary could be heard from every schools, One Rancho "soap box." The High student put it well demagogues of our time when he said: "Our fight made "hay" on the is not with white students situation. They were of but with white racism." the collective mind that The enemies of empathy "so long as it was to their in education elicited ef-benefit, federal in- forts in evading the edicts volve ment was of the experts. They palatable." Those directly managed to buy some responsible for the ad- time but it would not be ministration of the enough.

17 percent were black, 6 221,000 Hispanic males; percent were Hispanic and 257,000 Hispanic and the remaining 3 per- females. cent were of other races.

For 1978-79, the period for which the latest national figures are available, in the 16-17 age bracket, there were 3.5 million white males; 3.4 million white females; for black females. 582,000 black males; -36.6 percent for Hispanic 587,000 black females; males and 39.6 percent 278,000 Hispanic males; for Hispanic females. and 232,000 Hispanic females. Guessing why Clark County's figures are lower than the national, and 19-year-olds that Ranney said this district school year show 3.4 million white males; 3.5 million white females; High School and allows 493,000 black males; pregnant females to 572,000 black females; remain in school.