

**MINORITY REPORT**

**CENTURY-OLD SCHOOL FOR BLACKS SUDDENLY BECOMES UNFIT WHEN JUDGE ORDERS WHITE STUDENTS BUSED TO RAMSHACKLE BUILDING**

*By James E. Alsbrook*

Black parents of children attending public schools are facing the increasingly important decision of whether they want comfort and convenience for themselves or educational equality for their children.

The problem is compounded by the recent establishment of "Christian" schools for blacks and special schools for black boys who appear to be trouble-prone or otherwise in need of special attention.

But the problem confronting most black parents centers on the idea that the route to equal educational opportunity frequently requires the busing of school children. Busing requires that parents get their children off to school early in the morning. Early departure for the bus ride requires getting up from bed earlier than would be necessary if the children were sent to a neighborhood school. Getting up earlier probably means less sleep and less "family time" and this loss is understandably hurtful to parents holding jobs with work hours that do not fit well with the busing schedule.

Add this to the loud and chronic complaint that public schools are "going down hill." Then maybe you have a black school board member who is elected "at large" (meaning elected not by your area but by the total population of the city or district—black and white) and this black candidate wants "white" votes to win.

This black school board

member could be honestly convinced that neighborhood schools are equally good throughout the district—or this member may talk about the merits of neighborhood schools in order to win white votes. If this person glorifies neighborhood schools to win white votes, he or she goes to the black parents complaining about the trouble with busing and praises the neighborhood school advantages such as travel time saved, safety, nearness to home and other pluses for neighborhood schools.

The theme is familiar. Blacks and whites with a financial or political stake in perpetuating segregation use various lines of argument against busing for equal access to good education. Some say "a black child does not have to sit by a white child in order to learn." That is true, but it misses the point.

Black children sat by black children for more than one hundred years in shabby buildings with poor books and poor teachers and could not catch up with the national average because of the planned and built-in deficits of poor buildings, poor equipment, poor books, scarce supplies and poorly trained teachers—all controlled by white men. Moreover, black children need the experience of competing and interacting with whites and others in order the function maximally in integrated society they will face later.

Another argument is that black children learn better from

black teachers because they understand each other and the black teachers function as surrogate parents. In a few cases this is arguably true, but it also misses the point that black children, like their parents, need to face "real life" situations as children and must learn that they can compete and win academic

and physical contests with white and others. Also they must not be psychologically damaged by segregated and relegated to inferior facilities and surroundings. In America, racial integration implies racial equality.

A startling example of the immediate benefits of integrated education took place years ago

during my limousine ride from the Charlestown, S.C. airport to the University of South Carolina. I saw a building with old, faded bricks on one side and new bricks on the other. I asked the driver whether a storm or quake damaged the building.

He answered, "Yes—the storm of integration." He said

the building was more than one hundred years old and the new part was added quickly when the whites in the suburbs learned that their children would be bused down there. The school board reovated the building, added new books, teachers and rooms, threw out the old toilets and generally made it first class.

*In Celebration of  
African American  
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