

GENERAL OFFICE FILE

Desegregation  
Schools  
New York City  
General  
1964

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE,  
13 NEW YORK CITY BRANCHES, BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF  
NEW YORK, January 6, 1964.

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Education Chairman, and June Shagaloff, Special Assistant for  
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I. A great gap continues to exist between the official policy of the New York City Board of Education calling for the elimination of de facto school segregation and the implementation of that policy. On May 22, 1963, the NAACP Special Assistant for Education, June Shagaloff, publicly charged that "Top school officials and the Board itself have simply failed to implement their own policy with a sense of urgency or commitment. The efforts that have been made to desegregate and to raise educational standards have fallen disastrously short of the goals established by the Board of Education in 1954."

A few weeks later, on June 14, the New York State Commissioner of Education requested all Boards of Education throughout New York State to prepare and submit plans to end racial imbalance in the public schools.

The New York City Board of Education reaffirmed the 1954 school integration policy and, on August 23, submitted to the Commissioner of Education a report proposing a plan of voluntary, free transfers for all students, effective February, 1964. The Board also announced the rezoning of one pair of junior high schools, effective February.

Beyond February, 1964, the Board offered the "possibility" of extremely limited rezoning or adaptation of the Princeton Plan in fringe areas. Finally, four basic plans of desegregation were listed, without discussion, for "Further Study."

The NAACP and the four other organizations comprising the Coordinating City-wide Committee for Integrated Schools repeated the objections to a voluntary, free transfer plan stated earlier to the Superintendent of Schools and, in protest, called for a school boycott.

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As the result of last minute negotiations between the Board of Education and the civil rights groups, held by the New York City Commission on Human Rights, on September 5, 1963, a new commitment was agreed upon and the boycott was suspended.

The September 5th commitment of the Board of Education called for the following:

1. A tentative report by December 1, 1963, and a final report by February, 1964, of desegregation plans and timetable;
2. Provision in the tentative and final plans for "a substantial, realistic and working program of integration in every school district in September, 1964;" and
3. Consultation with community and civil rights groups in the formulation of the tentative and final reports.

During September 5 and December 1, two meetings were held with the NAACP and other civil rights groups. Dr. Gross was not present at the first meeting.

Both meetings were in the nature of progress reports: school officials reported on the progress that had been made to implement the plans proposed in the August 23 report of the Board of Education to the State Commissioner of Education.

The NAACP representatives, Miss Shagaloff and Mr. Jones, at the first meeting asked for discussion of the basic design for city-wide desegregation that had been submitted, at Dr. Gross' request, by Dr. Max Wolff. Not only was there no discussion of this plan, it was even denied that such a design for city-wide school desegregation existed. The members of the Board's own Committee on Integration, including the Chairman, Mrs. Rose Shapiro, stated that they were totally unaware an overall design for desegregation existed or had been submitted to the Superintendent of Schools.

The NAACP, and other groups, clearly stated at both meetings the objections to the proposed voluntary, free-transfer plan and urged consideration and adaptation throughout the city of more meaningful desegregation plans. These basic plans of desegregation were discussed at length.

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Thus, we arrive at December 9 when the tentative December 1 desegregation plan was announced.

What plans of desegregation are proposed in the Interim December Report?

The heart of the Report calls for the same plans announced last August, the voluntary, free transfer plan and the rezoning of two junior high schools, effective February, 1964.

Reference is made to three Princeton Plans, affecting six schools, as being "under development" or "under continuing study." Five Princeton Plans, or ten more schools, are referred to as "still in their early stages." In short, we are assured by the Board that at some unspecified time there may be a possibility of desegregating the grand total of 16 schools in the entire city. Also under study, it is stated, is the possibility of an educational center. So much for the long range plans.

Appendix C lists 70 separate items described as "examples" of a "Plan for Integration" submitted by each field assistant superintendent to the Superintendent of Schools. The most generous interpretation might be able to identify 22 items, of the 70, as dealing in some way with racial imbalance. The remaining 48 items listed under "Plan for Integration" range from PTA meetings, human relations manuals, to career days and "a pilot breakfast program."

Commitments listed in the section entitled "Further Commitments Beyond Those in the Plan for Integration of August 23, 1963," Appendix B, do not list a single plan concerning school desegregation or racial imbalance.

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II. The Interim December Report basically is no more and no less than a progress report on plans which have been repeatedly rejected by the NAACP since last August as totally and woefully inadequate to meet the critical problem of de facto school segregation. The exact same plan of voluntary, free transfers that was proposed in August was proposed again in December. The Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education have failed to fulfill the commitment made on September 5, 1963 to provide a city-wide desegregation plan and timetable. The Board of Education, instead, has simply proceeded as if the September 5th commitment had never been made and, in fact, did not exist.

The NAACP, together with the other groups of the Coordinating City-wide Committee for Integrated Schools, twice led picket and sit-in demonstrations to protest the violation of the September 5 commitment, and to make clear our insistence upon a real and meaningful plan of desegregation.

The voluntary free-transfer plan, the heart of the August and December proposals, has proven to be the least effective plan of school desegregation wherever it has been used.

First and foremost, this plan shifts the responsibility for desegregation from the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools to individual parents, and enables school officials to abandon a critical educational responsibility. In terms of results, it is a piecemeal, less than token plan. While the plan theoretically provides for free movement in any direction, from white to Negro schools as well as from Negro to white schools, it is common knowledge that the movement of pupils will be extremely limited and one way only. It leaves intact schools with small decreases in enrollments, still segregated in fact. This plan in no way whatsoever changes the basic pattern of racial segregation in the schools.

The NAACP has repeatedly urged the Board of Education to adopt desegregation

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plans which are (1) comprehensive and city-wide in scope rather than token, piecemeal approaches for a selected handful of schools in the city, and (2) based on assignments rather than the voluntary choice of parents. We are seeking and insisting upon the adaptation of administratively sound and effective desegregation plans which would result in a fundamental change in the racial pattern of the schools. These plans include:

city-wide rezoning;

the Princeton Plan for large groups of schools in Negro, changing, and white residential areas (area pairing of schools);

reorganizing the grades of schools (i.e. establishing central 4-5-6-grade schools);

reducing the grades of elementary schools;

changing the feeder patterns of elementary to junior to senior high schools, and rezoning all junior and senior high schools;

converting secondary schools to specialized schools serving larger areas.

All of the above approaches, which have been discussed time and time again with school officials, are relatively short range plans. Long range proposals, in addition to site-selection and other school building programs, include the challenging concept of educational centers, locating clusters of elementary and secondary schools on attractive grounds in the centers of segregated Negro residential areas, provided with highly desirable educational offerings and drawing students from a large attendance area. This plan might even be considered a "saturation" approach for desegregation.

Many of the basic plans will obviously necessitate the transportation of pupils, but pupil transportation is hardly a new concept to American public school systems. Hundreds and hundreds of all-white school systems in the United States use buses to transport children to school. Nor is the pupil transportation required under a Princeton Plan for large groups of schools the same as "bussing" if the latter is intended to mean the exchange of white and Negro pupils from very distant parts of

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the city. Let everyone remember, however, that here in New York City, as elsewhere, many, many white parents transport their children every day from their home to private schools in a distant part of the city.

"Bussing" is not the issue, but it has been used and misused to justify the status-quo of school segregation. It has been used and misused to cloak the basic question: What plan CAN most effectively achieve meaningful desegregation throughout the City?

The commitment that must be made is not to the myth of bussing or cross bussing from one end of the city to the other, and this has never been proposed, but to the recognition that de facto segregated schools harms all our children, white and Negro. The commitment must be to formulate administratively and educationally sound plans of desegregation throughout the city, adapting the many different basic plans to the schools as they now exist.

As for plans which assign children to schools, sometimes called mandatory assignments if the issue is one of desegregation, this is exactly how almost all public school systems in this country are organized. In New York City, children are now assigned to school on a mandatory basis.

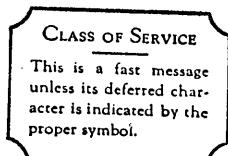
Nor is there a choice between the twin issues of eliminating existing segregation and raising educational standards of neglected schools. Both are absolutely essential — together. A reorganization of neglected Negro, or white, schools in terms of personnel, curriculum, or teaching methods — in short, the best so-called "saturation" program — without a meaningful plan of desegregation is no more than the old separate-but-equal doctrine. Racially segregated schools are inherently unequal. Integration is an integral part of good education for all children.

The basic issue to be resolved, then, is not merely the question of timetable. The NAACP does not want a timetable for a voluntary, free transfer plan. The basic

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issue is the complete failure thus far of school officials to formulate a real plan of desegregation, city-wide in scope which will significantly and fundamentally change the racial pattern of the schools.

There is nothing we have said this afternoon that has not been said to school officials since last August. Despite repeated objections to the voluntary, free-transfer plan that was first proposed last August, the Interim December Report proposes the exact same plan. Even this meeting has been called to receive reactions and suggestions that have already been received. The meeting today is more in the nature of a public relations gimmick than it is an earnest effort to fulfill the September 5th commitment. Unless the Board of Education adopts a meaningful city-wide school desegregation plan and time schedule for change, the NYC NAACP Branches have no alternative but to continue to protest the free-transfer plan vigorously and dramatically, and to mobilize for the school boycott.



# WESTERN UNION

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REQUEST MEETING AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE TO DISCUSS POSITION  
OF NATIONAL OFFICE OF NAACP ON INTEGRATION STRUGGLE IN NEW  
YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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