# Jigsaw Reading #4: School Integration

**Directions:** Read the following sources.  Circle and underline important words.  Answer the questions after each source and the Final Questions.

Source 4A:

Rochester City School District Non-White Enrollment by Elementary District 1962-1973

Note: Suburban school districts were almost 100% white at this time. Henrietta was the most integrated school district with just 11 individual people of color living in the entire town of Henrietta.

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| A picture containing text, whiteboard, map  Description automatically generated |  | **✎ What do you notice and wonder about Source 4A? What feelings are coming up for you (Consider noting issues, problems, civic actions)?** |
| I notice that the outskirts have a higher percentage of non-whites. The lower percents are in the center of the map. I feel like this is accurate since the outskirts on the map is bordering with the city and that’s why it has much higher percentages. The areas with the lower percentages are seen as still desirable or best. |

Source 4B:

James Beard: Interview with Justin Murphy on School Integration at Charlotte H.S. on 5/31/19

Note: In 1971 RCSD responded to state mandates and pressure from coalitions of White and Black Parents demanding integration at RCSD by attempting to integrate their Junior and Senior High Schools. James Beard was one of the students who integrated Charlotte H.S.

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| Graduated Charlotte 1971. Went to School 4, then Madison for one year before busing. Lived on Jefferson Avenue. There was only one white kid at School  It was an extreme culture shock and it was racist as hell. They hadn't seen any black people at the school. Our first experience was basically one of conflict, racial slurs and the like. We would have to gather together in order to protect each other.  Would get caught in the bathroom and beat up. I was really shy in grammar school so I used to get beat up a lot. When I went to Charlotte and experienced prejudice and racism, something clicked in my head and I don’t know what it was. I brought everyone together and said, we need to do something about this, because this isn't working.  Because of what was happening during that time, Black Power and FIGHT, I was engulfed and connected with that whole black power movement. I was a ferocious reader. Mao Tse Dung, Gandhi, MLK, Malcolm X, Che, Kabbalian? It was a combination of reading spiritual materials and revolutionary materials at a young age. My father was like a gentle giant. He did not teach us to hate white people. He did not teach us racism. But what he did teach us, me and my brothers and sisters, was basically to deal with people how they present themselves to you. He was not a scared man nor was he a racist man. They were Christians who loved people. I used to say to my father: the problem with the world is white people. He said, oh really? Do you feel that way about Mr. Harwood. I said, no, no, not Mr. Harwood, Mr. Harwood's cool. He said, oh, how about Jimmy? No, Jimmy's cool. And Cooch is cool (white kid at grammar school). But he said, everybody else? I said, yep. And he didn't like that.  **Getting Bussed to Charlotte H.S.**  We're on the bus and as soon as we get to the graveyard on Lake Avenue, they would hide in the graveyard and there was a wall, and they'd come out from behind the wall and throw bricks, rocks, iron, anything they could find at the bus. They'd bust the windows, people would start screaming.  Miss Jones was our advisor for BSU [Black Student Union]. She was always encouraging us to not start anything and be peaceful. One day a dummy with a noose and a black face, hanging from a tree, with a sign that said 'kill all N-----s.' A girl had a nervous breakdown. Miss Jones, I remember that lady had tears in her eyes. She said, enough is enough. Probably in 11th grade. Fights started taking place almost right away, and it was a continual struggle.  I remember one time we [Black students] locked ourselves in the auditorium. There was enough venom in the school for us to have to lock ourselves in the auditorium [to keep us safe].  There were very racist teachers there, and we knew who they were. Everybody knew it. It was a sense of, why are you here? Where did you come from? You don't belong here. You messed up our school. Everything was fine before you came here, and now look at what's going on. This integration thing is not working. Would they say it straight out? No, but you knew it. That wasn't the majority of teachers; maybe one out of 10 or 20. But it was so obvious from those who didn't want us there, you knew.    When I got there, it was like I knew it. I knew white people were racist as hell. And for some reason, they're not going to make me leave. I'm staying right the f--- here. You're not going to make me leave.  My father and aunts and uncles would come to school and sit on the front lawn to make sure we were all right. They'd have a picnic blanket. 1971. They switched off and did it for weeks at a time on a daily basis. When they started throwing rocks at the bus, they'd all get together and drive us to school, like a caravan. They were extremely peaceful. They were about keeping the peace so we wouldn't get hurt.  I remember one riot we had where they called the cops in and they were facing us. And I said, wait a minute, those guys across the streets are the ones with the bats and guns and everything – why aren't you facing them?  They'd line up and keep us behind them. The guys across the street: “n-----s this, n-----s that, throwing sh--.” I said, wait a minute, they're throwing shit! Why's your back turned!  To be honest with you, yeah, it was scary, but you didn't have time to be afraid. You only had time to act. If you were afraid, you froze, and we couldn't afford to freeze.  *D and C Mob outside Charlotte H.S.*  Isaiah Blanding was on the bus one day when they were throwing rocks. The bus driver froze. Isaiah tried to get him out of the seat to drive the bus himself. Isaiah has been a bus driver for RTS for almost 40 years.  I became chair of the black coalition of Rochester (all BSUs together). When I took leadership, my whole thing was to keep every black person in that school safe. It wasn't about, let's go start a riot and fight somebody. There was too many. I was just strategically organizing, letting everybody know in the city what was happening in Charlotte. I was encouraged by my family. Keep doing what you're doing, son. You're not about having people fight but it's about keeping peace. I never encouraged fighting. It was too dangerous; there wasn't enough of us.   We would have meetings; we would talk about how we were to go to class; that there would always be a man – that's what we called ourselves, men – that would escort the girls to class. They should never be by themselves. As much as possible, we should always be in groups, never alone. They tried to run Jonathan over with a car. It was horrific. That pissed me the hell off. I said, I know we're fighting and all that, but you tried to kill Jonathan? We used to meet with white kids all the time: Molly Murante, Stuart Lobenstein, David Bess. They were the head of student government. When we would talk about it and what we needed to do – many of the kids we'd be in class together, then they get out of class and they're throwing shit and fighting us. We did the best we could to try to instill some peace among the races.  It was so entrenched, the attitudes were so engrained. Now that I'm an older man, they actually believe the stuff they were thinking. That dummy hanging from the tree – that even got me. And that was no joke to my parents – not even a little bit.  Interacted with Rev. Florence. All the community leaders, I had their ear. They would mentor me. Sent to the National Association of Black Students, about racism in schools.  Willie Carter president of BSU at Marshall; Freddie at Franklin (now dead) We would meet the black coalition of Rochester, and Marshall had some issues too, but not like we had. We had the biggest problem. We would strategize on how to keep peace.  The BSUs, we weren't about being revolutionary, let's go kill somebody. It was, how do we protect ourselves? And if something does happen, how do we make sure we don't get killed or slaughtered or beat up? And how do we talk about coexistence, regardless of the fact that you hate me and I don't like you either?  What needs to take place politically in the city? Can we get some security at the school to help protect us? Hell no, nobody's paying for that?  My thought was, I have a right to be at this school if I want to be at this school. The board of education and the political climate at that time was more about the laws that had been enacted around integration. But the problems that were taking place as a result of it had not been addressed. That's the bottom line. They were pushing to make sure they were in compliance with the law, and that was the primary purpose. We must be in compliance; we've got to integrate. But they had nothing set up for the fact that nobody wanted us there. They had no action plan – what do we do now that black kids are being beaten up, dummies are being hung from trees, kids are organizing to be in the graveyard early in the morning to throw bricks, then making sure they're there again in the afternoon to throw more bricks. When we play sports, let's show up in the stands...  I never went to one class reunion. Am I bitter? I respond to them; I say, hey man, I hope you're doing well, how many kids you got, all that. But I just can't go to that place.  It taught me a lot. I know how to code-switch. When you're young and you're black and you come from a totally black environment and community, you learn something when you're immersed into a white culture and community that's automatic. You learn how to deal with white people in a way that's almost organic. I am so grateful, regardless of all that happened at Charlotte – all the tears, all the fighting, all the blood, everything – I am so grateful that I got the opportunity to meet people whether they were black, white, that I came to understand – wait a minute. Because I didn't have any white friends. There were no white people in my community. When I started to develop friendships with these young white guys, I had a conscious shift, and my revolutionary – all white people need to just die – regardless of what was going on at Charlotte, I then knew – wait a minute, all white people aren't like that. I actually love some of these people. And I know that sounds crazy, but I'm grateful for that. |

**✎ What do you notice and wonder about Source 4B? What feelings are coming up for you (Consider noting issues, problems, and civic actions taken)?**

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| I respect the black students who had to endure the violence, prejudice, and racism in integrated schools. There wasn’t much help or somebody to fall back on. It was really unfortunate the authority didn’t help out much. |

Source 4C:

### *Democrat and Chronicle*, archival photo, 1971-1972 school year.

\*In February 1972, the Rochester City School board rescinds the school integration plan.A group of people holding signs

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**✎ What do you notice and wonder about Source 4C? What feelings are coming up for you (Consider noting issues, problems, and civic actions taken)?**

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| Most white people aren’t too content with the new busing policies. They don’t accept black people and believe that they’re an inferior class to them. |

Source 4D:

### [EdBuild’s Fault Lines Report](https://edbuild.org/content/fault-lines) 2020

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| “The nation’s most segregating school district border divides Rochester from Penfield. Brighton is number 6 and West Irondequoit is number 7 in the country.” |

**✎ How are these statistics informed by James Beard’s story?**

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| It shows that the poverty rate and percent nonwhite of Rochester is greater than Penfield. It shows that the segregated school border divides Rochester from Penfield. |

Final Questions

**✎ Using these sources, how has racism impacted Monroe County?**

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| Racism has impacted Monroe County in the 20th century. It has affected busing, many acts of violence were inflicted upon black people, and many black people felt unsafe to be on schools and busses. |

**✎ How did people respond? Be sure to identify specific forms of civic action (see** [**chart**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dq4vkdRghXoxJlt_HkBvsXMrwpwfKGyz/edit)**)?**

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| Most black people were told to be peaceful and not to escalate anything. Then, the responses of the whites varied, ranging from peaceful to violent. Some whites protested with signs to not encourage busing and other whites physically and verbally attacked black people. Some people used civic engagement by protesting and others participated in civil disobedience. |

**✎ Going forward, what might be the most effective tool for addressing this issue?**

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| The most effective tool for addressing this issue is helping people understand that being different isn’t bad and to accept everyone. Be able to understand and live with each other. |