

CARTON 124

WRITINGS

"BUSING: THE FIGHT FOR SCHOOL DESEGREGATION
AND BLACK RIGHTS"

CIRCA 1975

LOS ANGELES STUDENT COALITION AGAINST RACISM
NATIONAL STUDENT COALITION AGAINST RACISM

2017/193
c

"Black Scholar"

Editor

Robert Allen



Black students enter South Boston High School.

BUSING: The Fight for School Desegregation and Black Rights

Distributed by:

LOS ANGELES

STUDENT COALITION AGAINST RACISM

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National Student Coalition Against Racism

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Robert Allen is editor of Black Scholar Magazine. Widely known for his book *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, Allen has had extensive experience in the Black movement and journalism.

Allen helped organize Black student protests in Atlanta, graduating from Morehouse College in 1963, and earned his master's degree in Sociology from the New School for Social Research. Recently he travelled to Cuba and China studying revolutionary changes made in those countries.

Allen also speaks on: Coin-telpro, (Counter Intelligence Program) a government program directed against Blacks, the anti-war movement and the left; Desegregation; and Angola.

(The following are major excerpts of a speech by Black Scholar editor Robert Allen to the October 10 rally at the Second National Student Conference Against Racism, held in Boston.)

It has now been over twenty-one years since the United States Supreme Court ruled that school segregation was, and is, illegal.

The famous Brown decision of 1954 represented an important antiracist step. This decision was not an easy one to obtain. Rather, it represented the culmination of many decades of court battles and other struggles by the NAACP and other organizations in the antiracist movement.

There can be no doubt that this was an important victory, but it is equally clear that it signaled the beginning of a long, hard struggle—a struggle which is continuing to this very day.

I think it would be instructive for us at this conference to



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recall a few of the events that happened in the aftermath of the 1954 decision.

The first thing to remember is that the racists at that time, just as today, refused to accept the court decision as the law of the land. In fact, they immediately began organizing to oppose the court ruling, to oppose its implementation. Just two weeks after the court decision, the first White Citizens Council was organized in Indianola, Mississippi.

The racists found ready support in the federal government. Sen. James Eastland and other political figures aided and abetted the racist organizations. Some 101 members of Congress signed what was then called the "Southern Manifesto," a document that refused to recognize the real issue, blaming the court decision on outside agitators and calling for organized resistance to "forced integration."

Very quickly the racists began devising tactics for defying the law. They came up with the doctrine of interposition, under which they claimed that the states had the right to reject any federal law that the states themselves felt was not in keeping with the Constitution. Some seven Southern states adopted in-

terposition resolutions.

When this interposition doctrine proved ineffective in halting the pace of desegregation, the racists then threatened to close the schools down altogether. This threat was actually carried out in four counties in Virginia.

Sophisticated Racists

Very soon, some of the more sophisticated racists realized that to get around the law they would have to confuse matters by pretending that racism and race were not really the issue.

exploited to maintain racial segregation.

These differences could be used as the basis for assigning Black and white students to different schools without using race as a criteria. Thus, segregation could be maintained under a different name.

This tactic was at least partially successful in confusing the issues and slowing down the process of desegregation. In fact, it required more than 200 state and federal lawsuits to bring about the ending of these pupil placement plans.

When the racists saw that



NSCAR founding conference of 2,000 students.

The device they came up with was the so-called pupil placement plan. Under these plans, local school boards were empowered to designate a school that each pupil would attend, according to certain sociological, psychological, educational, and aptitudinal criteria. These sophisticated racists realized that years of unequal education had created certain differences between Black and white students—differences which would be ex-

their legal maneuvers were not going to be wholly successful in stopping the process of desegregation, they did not hesitate to use illegal means, including cowardly attacks against Black school children.

These Black youth were the real heroes and heroines of the struggles for desegregation in the South. Those children certainly had more courage in their little fingers than all these racist mobs put together. And it was the picture of these Black youth

courageously stepping forward to meet the hysterical lynch mob to attend school, it was this picture that provoked a massive outpouring of protests from the Black community and from progressive whites around the country.

This massive outpouring of antiracist sentiment finally compelled the federal government itself to call in troops to protect the Black children and to implement the law of the land.

Today the struggles to desegregate the schools have spread from the South throughout the nation.

Boston and Louisville have become national symbols of that struggle.

All eyes are focused on Boston and Louisville because people realize that what happens in these cities will have a major impact on the struggle for democratic rights for many decades to come. Because the fact of the matter is, if there is a major setback to the struggle here in Boston it will have an effect in Washington in the federal

cerned about opposing racism why the focus has to be on the struggle here, now. Why it is important for all of us to support the struggle and to see to it that the struggle here is successful in ending racism.

When we look at the struggle in the South in the 1950s and 1960s, I think we can see parallels to the struggle taking place here in Boston, and I think we can draw some important lessons that can help us in meeting today's challenge.

The Real Issues

Number one, we must not allow ourselves or the public to become confused as to what is really at stake in the struggle here, what the real issue is. The real issue today, as it was twenty-one years ago, is racism in the public schools, that is, the denial of the right of Black children to receive an equal education.

In the past the racists tried to confuse the issues by conjuring up rhetoric about "forced integration," or "pupil placement



Anti-busing graffiti in South Boston.

government. It would have an effect in the statehouse in every state across this land. It will embolden the racists. It will encourage the racists to move against the rights of Black people wherever we may be.

Consequently, I think it is urgent for us to make it very clear to people who are con-

plans." Today they try to confuse matters by talking about "neighborhood schools," or opposing "forced busing." But by their actions the racists have proved that what they really oppose is the right of Black children to have access to an education equal to that of any white child.

Number two, the racists have organized to oppose desegregation, and the only way to counter this tactic is to build a broader and stronger antiracist movement.

In 1954 it was the White Citizens Council. Today it is ROAR and other racist groups. But we need not be intimidated by these racist groups with their squeaks and howls, for we have stronger, mass-based organizations that have dedicated themselves to combating racism. I'm speaking, of course of the NAACP and the National Student Coalition Against Racism.

It is urgent for all of us to support the antiracist work of these two organizations and to help them expand their work in every community across the face of this nation.

Number three, let us have no

illusions about the good intentions of the federal government. Yesterday it was James Eastland who aided the racists by vowing to defend segregation to the end. Today it's Gerald Ford, who encourages the racists when he talks about his opposition to "forced busing." Yesterday, it was Congress signing the "Southern Manifesto." Today it is Congress signing antibusing riders and trying to hitch them onto legislation that's going through Congress.

Nevertheless, it is still true that the federal government has both the responsibility and the power to implement the law of the land. But the government will not move to implement the law unless it feels the sustained, organized pressure from the antiracist forces throughout this country.



May 17 March on Boston of 15,000

Dr. Kenneth Clark:

"NSCAR is the most important development in the civil rights movement in the last decade."

JOIN US!

What Is NSCAR?

The National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR) is a multiracial student and youth organization dedicated to the fight against all aspects of racist oppression.

NSCAR was founded in February 1975 at a conference of over 2000 people in Boston, the city that has become the focal point of racist oppression to court-ordered school desegregation.

At that conference, representatives from 147 colleges, 58 high schools and 113 campus and community organizations joined together to launch a massive pro-busing, pro-desegregation campaign in defense of Boston's embattled Black community.

NSCAR aims to unite everyone — Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, whites — who is willing to join the fight against racism. NSCAR aims to join forces on any issue, on any front.

Equal Education for Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Asian American students — not only in Boston, but also in Pasadena, Los Angeles, Denver, Louisville and many other cities.

Support the Pasadena Plan
Stop Police Terror of the Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican communities — protest racist police brutality.

Freedom for Political Prisoners — Gary Tyler, J.B. Johnson, the San Quentin Six, Joanne Little, Dennis Banks and others who have been framed up and railroaded into jail.

NSCAR will continue to stand on the front lines of these and many other anti-racist struggles. Whenever and wherever racism raises its ugly head — NSCAR will be there!

You should be there too! You should be a part of the struggle! You should join NSCAR!

Clip and mail to:

L.A. Student Coalition Against Racism

P.O. Box 19532
Los Angeles, CA. 90019

Telephone (213) 732-7910

☐ Enclosed is a contribution of \$_____ FUNDS URGENTLY NEEDED!

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☐ I would like more information on NSCAR.

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☐ I can arrange a speaking engagement for an NSCAR representative.

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