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Winning the Battle, Losing the War: The Forgotten But Enduring Legacy of School Integration Efforts on Hempstead, New York

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Winning the Battle, Losing the War:
The Forgotten But Enduring Legacy of School Integration Efforts on Hempstead, New York

by

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Abstract of Project

Although their repercussions continue to be felt today, knowledge of efforts taken during the Civil Rights movement of the nineteen sixties to desegregate public elementary schools in the Village of Hempstead, New York is absent from the community’s historical narrative. This project, which is framed by two specific memories from my years attending Hempstead Public Schools, places these efforts within the historiographical context of the long fight against racially segregated education in the North and explores their long-term impact on Hempstead’s educational system and the entire community. The project also considers reasons this history has been forgotten and asserts the importance of remembering this history as a means of creating a bridge between past, present and future.
Introduction

On October 1, 1961, New York State Commissioner of Education James E. Allen, Jr. addressed the members of the state’s Council of School Superintendents. More than seven years after the United States Supreme Court ruled that “in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place,” and that “[s]eparate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” Allen acknowledged publicly, for the first time, the existence of segregated schools in some communities within New York State. Although this may have been the first time the issue was officially acknowledged by the Commissioner as an issue of statewide concern, the existence of segregated schools and unequal educational opportunities for black children had long been an issue for African American parents in Hempstead Union Free School District #1 on Long Island. Twenty years earlier, in 1941, Negro parents protested the assignment of the majority of black children in the district to a single elementary school. Little changed in subsequent years. In 1949, black parents protested the School Board’s gerrymandering of school attendance lines to further perpetuate the situation. They petitioned the Board of Education to redistribute black students throughout the district’s other elementary schools. The Board refused, and when school opened in September 1949, black parents boycotted the school for three weeks, sending their children to classes in a local church, and enlisted the assistance of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to appeal to the State Education Department.

Even though segregation in the North was de facto rather than de jure, or legislated, as it was in southern states prior to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision, separate, and often unequal, schools for white and black children were common throughout the United States. In Hempstead, discriminatory practices continued to impact the
composition of the public schools and the quality of education received by black children between 1941 and 1961. Hempstead Village’s African American population increased significantly during the years following World War II, and in 1960, a local civic organization, the Hempstead Citizens Committee for Education “called on the school board to end what it called segregation in Hempstead elementary schools by ignoring the boundary lines of racially segregated neighborhoods and reassigning students to create fully integrated schools.”5 By 1961, due in large measure to increasing residential segregation in several Hempstead Village neighborhoods, not one but three of the district’s six elementary schools had student populations that were over 51% black, a phenomenon the State Education Department termed racial imbalance.6

Although the Commissioner of Education suggested that districts with imbalances “should give added attention to this situation,”7 it took an additional year before the Hempstead Board of Education recognized school segregation “as one of the most important factors affecting the educational climate in Hempstead today.”8 In the spring of 1963, following years of activism on the part of many of Hempstead Village’s black residents and supporters both within and outside the community, the Board of Education indirectly addressed the issue of racial imbalance in the district’s elementary schools through approval of a voluntary transfer program that permitted children to enroll in schools outside of their geographic attendance zone. The School Board acknowledged the inherent ineffectiveness of the plan, noting that it would be virtually impossible to achieve racial balance in the schools in the face of increasing patterns of residential segregation. They noted that the policy had, nevertheless, “given opportunity for some parents concerned with their children being enrolled in schools having a racial imbalance to transfer them to others.”9
Although the program was seemingly accepted with minimal controversy by white residents,\textsuperscript{10} and the number of black parents who took advantage of this policy change to transfer their child to an elementary school outside of their immediate attendance zone was relatively small, the ultimate outcome of this quest for educational equality on the part of black residents was the hastened removal of white children from the public schools and the exacerbation of white flight from Hempstead Village. Less than ten years after Commissioner Allen’s acknowledgement of the problem, the number of white students enrolled in Hempstead Public Schools had decreased drastically and a process of racialization had begun that continues to the present. Fifty years later, with a student population that is composed almost entirely of black and Hispanic children, the schools in Hempstead School District #1 are in a state of permanent \textit{racial imbalance}. The Superintendent of Schools is said to have remarked in 1963 that while blacks might “win the battle” of school integration, they would ultimately “lose the war” of living side by side and participating on equal terms with whites.\textsuperscript{11} Looking at Hempstead Village today, his prediction has been fulfilled.

Clearly, the impact of events that occurred in Hempstead a half-century ago continues to reverberate into the present. Yet, little is remembered about what occurred in Hempstead during the Civil Rights movement of the nineteen sixties. The efforts of black residents to achieve social, political, and educational equality in Hempstead Village, and the impetus behind them, have been forgotten. Most people, residents and non-residents alike, see only the consequences, failing to see the link between the contemporary spatial racialization of the Village and events that occurred in earlier decades.

I contend that acknowledgement of what occurred within the Village of Hempstead during the years of the Civil Rights/Black Freedom movement of the nineteen sixties is vital
to an understanding of where the community is today. Although many of the social, economic and political issues confronting the Village today are directly related to its racialized identity as a minority community, an identity that was born during this period, this is one segment of Hempstead Village history that is almost completely absent from the official historical narrative of the community. In light of its relevance to the present, it is imperative that Hempstead’s civil rights history is documented and re-membered to the community’s historical narrative. It is equally important to consider the reasons why events of this period have been forgotten in the first place. I attempt to do both in this paper.

Personal memories provided a portal into the past and were my touchstone in the process of reconstructing this one small portion of Hempstead Village’s extensive civil rights history. With the exception of newspaper reports of those events deemed important by the media, astonishingly few primary sources exist to corroborate what actually occurred. The records of local organizations, including local civil rights groups such as the NAACP and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), are lost to time, destroyed or languishing forgotten in the attic or basement of former members. The records of local municipalities, including those of Hempstead Union Free School District #1, are unavailable as well, possible victims of a stringent interpretation of records retention guidelines. Luckily, I discovered a treasure trove of newspaper clippings, meeting minutes, reports and other materials right under my nose, among the papers of my late father. In the absence of other documentation, these items, along with my memories and the recollections of others proved essential in filling in the gaps.

The paper is divided into eight sections. The first two sections provide brief historical overviews of the Village of Hempstead and Hempstead Public Schools, concentrating on the years preceding the Civil Rights movement of the nineteen sixties. I describe the impact of
post-World War II suburbanization on African Americans in Hempstead Village and on the public school system. The next section provides the reader with a historical overview of school segregation and the numerous attempts to desegregate schools in northern states prior to the Civil Rights period of the nineteen sixties. Much of the information in this section is courtesy of historian Davison M. Douglas, who provides a thorough historiographical study of the topic from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries in his book *Jim Crow Moves North.* A brief consideration of the Civil Rights movement and the way it has been remembered and interpreted in the mainstream narrative of the United States follows.

Following a brief exploration of the relationship between memory and history and the role of personal memory in the creation of what Manning Marable termed *living Black history,* the paper focuses on the years 1963 through 1970 in the Village of Hempstead, concentrating specifically on the efforts of African Americans to overcome racial imbalances and obtain equal educational opportunities for black children in the Hempstead school district through efforts to integrate the elementary schools. Two closely related personal memories frame the next sections. The first is my 1963 memory of being one of a small cadre of Negro children to integrate one of Hempstead’s predominantly white elementary schools; the second is the memory of what occurred in the aftermath of instances of racial unrest in Hempstead High School in 1970. The events leading up the call for racial balance in the schools that culminated in my participation in Hempstead’s permissive transfer program, along with an account of the chain of events that occurred in the schools and throughout the Village during the seven-year period between 1963 and 1970, ones that catalyzed the departure of white students from Hempstead’s public schools, are explicated in these sections. The final section of the paper considers possible reasons why this portion of
Hempstead’s history has been forgotten, the ramifications of continued forgetting, and the potential benefits in the present and future of re-membering these events to the Village’s historical narrative.

In addition to situating my experiences within the broader context of nationwide efforts to achieve racial equality that took place during the nineteen sixties, this paper is offered as a “thank you” to my parents and all their contemporaries, both living and dead, who took a stand and acted upon their belief that equal educational opportunities for black children could best be achieved in integrated public schools. Though they acted on the small stage of one community, their efforts were part of a larger narrative of change with reverberations felt at the local, regional, and national levels. As active participants in the centuries-old quest for freedom and equality for black people in American society, and as further evidence of the ongoing resistance of blacks to the strictures placed upon them by the institutionalized racism of American society, their actions deserve to be remembered and their legacy merits preservation. I hope the information presented in this paper will help fill a hole that has existed for decades in the fabric of Hempstead’s past, and that by providing insight on how this community got from “there” to “here,” create a bridge between past, present, and future.
Hempstead Village – The Community

The geographic area known as the Village of Hempstead is a 3.2 square mile area located in Nassau County, on Long Island, in the State of New York. Incorporated in 1853, it is currently the largest incorporated village in New York State. Settled in 1643, it is one of the oldest English settlements on Long Island. It was established as the Town Spot of the Town of Hempstead, which originally encompassed an area that stretched from the Long Island Sound on the north, to the Atlantic Ocean on the south. This large swath of land was split into the towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead during the late eighteenth century in reaction to differing political allegiances in the northern and southern portions. Although it has its own independent government structure, Hempstead Village continues to be the governmental seat for the Town of Hempstead, which encompasses over 142 square miles in the middle of Long Island. It is one of 22 incorporated villages and 34 unincorporated areas within the Town.12 The fact that both entities use the name Hempstead causes a great deal of confusion. This paper is specifically about the incorporated area known as the Village of Hempstead. To avoid confusion, I will refer to it interchangeably as “Village of Hempstead,” “Hempstead Village,” or “the Village.”

Over the centuries, Hempstead Village evolved into a locale that proudly bore the moniker ‘The Hub’ of Nassau County. It was a center of trade and, located where roads from all directions converged, a popular stopping place for travelers. Hotels, taverns, and other businesses relating to transportation were important aspects of Hempstead’s economic life throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Village was also a religious center, home to what were among the earliest Presbyterian and Anglican parishes on Long Island.
From the very beginning, Hempstead functioned as a market town for the inhabitants of the primarily agricultural communities to the east. With the opening of a Long Island Railroad terminus in 1839, Hempstead emerged as one of the earliest suburbs of New York City. By the middle of the 1800s, wealthy New Yorkers, valuing the open space, fresh air and healthful climate, established their country estates on the outskirts of the village. Others built “country villas” and summer “cottages” within the village’s political boundaries. Beginning in the later years of the nineteenth century, Hempstead became home to commuters who traveled daily to places of business in Manhattan.

Through the middle of the twentieth century, Hempstead was also a respected educational center. According to a 1943 publication, Hempstead High School was “reputed to be one of the best in the state.”\textsuperscript{13} Before high schools were established in surrounding communities in the wake of post-World War II suburbanization, secondary students traveled from miles away in all directions to attend the high school. In addition, much of the original campus of Hofstra University (established in 1935 as Hofstra College) is located in the Village of Hempstead.

Although Hempstead grew relatively slowly in its first 250 years of existence, and retained a predominantly rural character until the early years of the twentieth century, it experienced relatively rapid growth in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Between 1940 and 1950, the population increased from 20,856 to 29,135 residents. In the decade between 1950 and 1960, Hempstead experienced another surge in population, growing to include more than 36,000 residents. According to the 2000 census, the Village had 56,554 residents. Approximately one-quarter of residents were white, fifty-two percent were African American, and Hispanics comprised over thirty-one percent of the population.\textsuperscript{14}
African Americans have been inhabitants of Hempstead Village since its inception in the seventeenth century. However, they continued to be a relatively small portion of the total population through the middle of the twentieth century. In 1930, blacks comprised only six percent of the population. Although the African American population grew substantially throughout New York State between 1940 and 1950, the proportion of black people residing in the Village of Hempstead increased only slightly during the decade, from seven percent to nine percent.\textsuperscript{15}

There was an influx of African Americans into the Village in the decades following World War II, and, after decades of relatively static growth, the percentage of African American residents increased significantly between 1950 and 1960, from nine percent to twenty-two percent. This was due in large part to the overtly discriminatory housing practices that evolved on Long Island during the postwar years. Practices such as restrictive covenants and red-lining by banks served to prevent African Americans from renting or purchasing homes in newly constructed suburban communities such as Levittown, the 4,000-acre residential subdivision in Island Trees built by Levitt and Sons in the late nineteen forties. The restrictive covenants in Levittown’s initial rental agreements and sales contracts prohibited persons other than members of the Caucasian race from using or occupying houses. Although federal law outlawed the inclusion of restrictive covenants in 1948, government-sanctioned banking policies, realtor practices, and widespread prejudice against African Americans on the part of whites conspired to create an environment where blacks, in particular, were prevented from purchasing houses in most of the new residential subdivisions built on Long Island during the postwar period. William Levitt expressed a commonly held view when he stated, “Most whites prefer not to live in mixed
communities.” As a result of such practices, African American participants in the suburban migration were forced to seek homeownership in communities where blacks already lived, like Hempstead.

As historian Andrew Wiese explains, African Americans were present in the suburbs of major cities prior to WWII. From the nineteenth century, small enclaves of blacks existed on the outskirts of white neighborhoods. The residents of such neighborhoods typically worked as housekeepers, chauffeurs, laundresses and laborers for affluent whites. During the early twentieth century, southern blacks migrated north and gravitated to these communities. These newer suburban migrants were members of the working class and, in many instances, sought to duplicate the rural setting of their origins. The Village of Hempstead is exemplary of this pattern. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the majority of the blacks that settled in the community worked primarily as domestics and laborers. According to a long-time resident, many had migrated from regions of the south known for horse breeding to work at the nearby Belmont Race Track.

Throughout its history, Hempstead had been a heterogeneous community, home to people of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. While it was primarily an Anglo-American town, there had always been small enclaves of Polish, German, and other ethnic groups. African Americans had always comprised a small percentage of the inhabitants of the Village as well. Historically, Hempstead’s black residents lived on the west side of the village, in one of the oldest neighborhoods known as “The Hill.” Beginning in the 1930s, blacks expanded into other sections of the Village, mostly to a neighborhood on the east side of the Village known as “The Heights.” Both were primarily working-class neighborhoods, and for the most part, blacks and whites lived side by side, based largely on their shared socioeconomic
background. Yet, it was a known and accepted fact that certain neighborhoods in the Village were off-limits to Blacks.

During and after World War II, African Americans moved to Long Island in large numbers, many to work in defense plants like Grumman and Sperry. Although blacks that had settled in Hempstead in earlier decades were employed primarily as domestics and laborers, those who made Hempstead their home in the postwar period were blue-collar workers as well as college-educated professionals and government workers. Many of the African Americans that moved into Hempstead during the 1950s and early 1960s became solid working- and middle-class homeowners; in many instances, they were better educated and earned more than the whites they replaced. Like their white counterparts, they wished to escape the congestion of the city and sought the American Dream of a single-family home in the suburbs, with a picture window, backyard for barbequing, and good schools for their children to attend. However, their options were proscribed. Purchasing a home in a community like Hempstead was often the only option prospective black homeowners had.

On Long Island, the deliberate exclusion of African Americans from Levittown and other newly built postwar subdivisions had serious implications for communities like Hempstead that already had sizeable black populations. Local realtors, determined to maintain the homogeneity of the new suburbs, steered potential African American homeowners to neighborhoods in Hempstead instead of showing them homes in new subdivisions, even if that was their preference. In contrast to subdivisions like Levittown, from which African Americans were steered, the subdivisions of cape cod- and ranch-style houses that were constructed in Hempstead during the period were, for the most part, offered for rent or sale to both blacks and whites. However, most blacks that moved to the Village
purchased homes in traditionally black sections of the village, in newly built subdivisions adjacent to these areas, or in neighborhoods that had already begun the transition from white to black. The initial transition from white to black homeownership appears to have been part of the normal process of young families buying the homes of older homeowners. However, as was the case in communities across the country, as blacks moved in, whites moved out. For the most part, neighborhoods in the Village remained relatively stable, both socially and economically, even as they became more racially integrated.
Hempstead Village – The Schools

Hempstead Union Free School District #1, established by state legislation in 1863, encompasses a two square mile area within the Village of Hempstead. While the majority of the homes within the Village are served by the public schools in the district, because the boundaries of the Hempstead school district and Village are not coterminous, children who reside outside of district lines attend schools in neighboring school districts. A significant number of students who live in neighborhoods in the eastern and southern portions of the Village attend Uniondale Public Schools. Smaller numbers attend schools in surrounding districts of Garden City, West Hempstead, and Rockville Centre.

At present, there are a total of ten school buildings within the Hempstead Public School district. There are currently six elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. Two of the oldest buildings are currently closed; renovation of one is slated to begin soon to create an early childhood education center. The current high school building opened in 1971. It replaced the original Hempstead High School building that was constructed in 1922. A major portion of that facility was destroyed by fire in 1970. A middle school for children in grades six through eight was erected on the site several years later.

Unlike the current high school building, which is located on the western edge of the Village, the 1922 high school building was centrally located within the parameters of the school district. This structure replaced the 1889 Hempstead Public School, which was destroyed by fire in 1919, and had housed all grades, kindergarten through twelve, for much of the early twentieth century. The first two grade schools, Prospect Street and Washington Street Schools, were constructed in the early decades of the twentieth century. An additional four elementary schools were constructed in other neighborhoods over the following decades.
Annexes to two of the schools were built in the mid-1950s to accommodate the increased school age population that resulted from the post-World War II "Baby Boom."

There has always been one high school in the Hempstead School District. Children from all neighborhoods enter Hempstead High School after completing eighth grade in their neighborhood elementary school. For decades, both before and after the postwar suburbs grew up around Hempstead, students from neighboring communities to the east and west also attended Hempstead High School. In the 1940s, it was "reputed to be one of the best in the state." It continued to be widely recognized as a top secondary school in New York State into the 1960s.

Defined attendance zones were first instituted in the district in 1949. Since that time, children within the district have been assigned to elementary schools based upon geographic attendance zones. In 1949, African American parents contested gerrymandered lines that made the student population of one school, Prospect Street School, over ninety percent black while including the streets of a new, white residential subdivision several blocks away from the school in the attendance zone for Ludlum School, which, in contrast, was ninety-four white.

By the early 1960s, the decade I focus on in this paper, approximately fifty-three percent of the district’s elementary students were white and forty-seven percent were Negro. Negro students comprised approximately one-third of the students attending Hempstead High School in 1961. Although exact numbers are not available, this represented a substantial increase over the previous decade. For example, in two elementary schools, Jackson School and Franklin School, the percentage of Negro students increased from sixteen to sixty-seven percent and fourteen to seventy-eight percent, respectively, between 1949 and 1961. These
increases reflect the increasing number of African American families with school-aged children that moved into Hempstead Village during the period, and provide evidence of increasingly segregated housing patterns as well as a growing trend among whites to remove their children from the schools as increasing numbers of African American children enrolled.
Black Education in the North Prior to the Civil Rights Movement

For centuries, education has been viewed by many African Americans as essential to their advancement in American society. As a result, the denial of full equal educational rights made it a prime venue in the battle for equal rights. Even while enslaved, African Americans risked beatings or sale in their quest to read and write. In the years following their emancipation, “[n]ext to land, African American’s great hunger was for learning.”25 In the five years the Freedmen’s Bureau operated throughout the South following the Civil War, 4,000 schools of various sizes were opened for ex-slaves, and hundreds of thousands attended.26 With the closing of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the withdrawal of the federal government from direct involvement with the affairs of freed slaves, the tide turned against black literacy. More often than not, African Americans, particularly in southern states, were denied an education or provided with a substandard one. However, blacks resisted these restrictions to learning. As early as the eighteenth century, black people throughout the country, particularly in the North,27 used litigation, boycotts and other strategies to assert the right of black children to receive an education equal to that received by white children.

Until the early nineteenth century, most schools were privately operated. Publicly funded education, advanced through the Common School Movement, did not gain popularity until the 1830s. Public education was supported most readily in New England and parts of the country settled by New Englanders. In contrast, tax-supported public education was typically unpopular in the south or areas of the country settled by southerners.28 The goal of common schools was to promote a homogeneous populace by inculcating children with a common culture. Common schools were designed to address the social conflict experienced in the country due to increased immigration during the antebellum period. Proponents of the
movement espoused such schools “as a means of assimilating and controlling the immigrant poor, and reducing religious and ethnic divisiveness.” African Americans, however, were generally not included in this effort, as “many northern whites, particularly in the Midwest, did not consider blacks worthy of assimilation or participation in the governing process so as to warrant inclusion in the common school system.” Even in the north, where opportunities existed for African American children to attend abolitionist-run African Free Schools, and for adults to attend private academies and educational programs run by benevolent and literary societies, the idea of providing educational opportunities for black people was contentious. Many whites believed that the assimilation of African Americans into white society was not only undesirable, but also impossible to achieve. Many questioned the necessity of educating black people at all, adhering to supposedly scientifically-proven beliefs in the innate intellectual inferiority of people of African descent. Further complicating the situation was the fact that, despite the belief of many African Americans in the importance of education as a means of advancing in American society, some blacks struggled “over the importance of assimilation into the dominant white culture.” While some advocated assimilation into mainstream white society, others favored separatism or emigration.

Throughout the antebellum period, most school-aged African American children in the United States, whether they resided in northern or southern states, remained completely uneducated. Even when the public education of blacks was legally permitted, their exclusion from public education was common in many northern communities, and instances where black and mulatto children were legally permitted to share public school classrooms with white children were few and far between. Throughout the period, there was no one consistent
attitude toward the education of blacks. Not only did it vary geographically, attitudes shifted temporally in reaction to the size of a community’s black population. For example, lower Midwestern states like Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois, parts of which were settled by migrants from southern states, legally excluded black children from public schools. Some communities within these states also resisted the establishment of private schools for blacks. In contrast, in states and parts of states settled by Quakers or those with abolitionist sentiments, black children were often permitted to attend public schools with whites. Even when public education was allowed, black children were racially segregated in most instances. Laws in northern Midwest states like Michigan and Minnesota permitted the establishment of separate schools for black children. Black children were legally permitted to attend public schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York during this period, although each of these states allowed school districts to establish separate schools for blacks if they chose.

As Douglas notes, “generalizations about black education in the antebellum North are difficult.” Throughout the period, New England states were most likely to support black education. The public education of blacks was generally not outlawed in Mid-Atlantic states; however, the exclusion of black children was common, and those that did attend public schools generally did so in separate schools. This was true in most communities in both urban and rural areas of New York State. In fact, most of the mid-Atlantic states enacted legislation that supported the establishment of separate schools for children of color. For example, in 1841 the New York State Legislature passed a statute allowing any school district in the State to establish a separate school for black children. Legislation passed subsequently even required some cities, including New York City, Brooklyn, and Buffalo, to
establish separate public schools for white and black children. Although it was rare, black children in some parts of New York State were able to attend integrated schools during the period. Mixed schools were most likely to exist in small, rural communities where there were not enough black children to warrant a separate school. However, racially mixed schools also existed in larger upstate cities such as Albany, Syracuse and Rochester.

Even if they were legally permitted to obtain an education, many African American students remained unschooled or received a substandard education. In northern communities that were too small or had too few black children to warrant a separate school, African American children were commonly denied access to education. When schools for black children did exist, they were generally inferior to white schools, both physically and in terms of the quality of teachers and educational materials provided. Often, the black school was too far away from their homes for black children to attend on a regular basis. Such impediments continued to hinder access to education for many blacks into the twentieth century.

Although for many blacks the issue of attaining an education took precedence over whether it took place in a segregated or integrated setting, black people did not unconditionally acquiesce to the existence of separate schools. Throughout the antebellum period and beyond, blacks protested segregated schools using a variety of means, including petitions, boycotts, and litigation. Not all attempts were successful; however, notable successes include the desegregation of Rochester, New York’s schools in 1856 and the 1855 enactment of school desegregation legislation in Massachusetts.

In the years following the Civil War, particularly during the period of Reconstruction, the fight for educational access continued “on a state-by-state, community-by-community
Northern blacks continued to fight for access to public education in communities where it was denied, and for the right to attend non-segregated schools in places where separate schools existed. Although Congressional efforts to ban school segregation nationwide failed in the 1870s, some states in the Northeast and upper Midwest passed laws prohibiting racial discrimination in public accommodations and education during Reconstruction. While the Civil Rights Act of 1875 provided many rights for blacks, the right of black children to attend unsegregated schools was not one of them. However, “[g]iven the rudimentary nature of the public school system in the nation at the time, it did not seem a critical issue.”

By 1890, segregated schools had been declared illegal in many northern states. However, anti-black sentiments in many northern communities meant that, despite the statutory prohibition, the practice of providing separate schools for black children continued to be common in many cities and towns. In New York State, upstate school districts were more likely than downstate ones to integrate their schools in response to State legislation. Douglas notes that communities on Long Island, including Jamaica, Roslyn and Amityville continued to exclude black children from white schools even after the enactment in 1873 of legislation “that prohibited the denial to any school child of “full and equal enjoyment: of school facilities.” Those who supported segregation asserted that separate schools were lawful as long as black and white schools provided “equal school privileges.” Even though a subsequent law enacted in 1900 expressly stated “No person shall be refused admission into or be excluded from any public school in the state of New York on account of race or color,” a loophole enabled rural schools to retain segregated schools.
Anti-black sentiments increased during the later decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. In reaction to the influx of southern blacks to northern cities during the Great Migration that took place during and after World War I, white hostility toward blacks grew significantly. The result was a heightened degree of discrimination against blacks in jobs, housing, public accommodations, and education. Douglas notes that discrimination against blacks, particularly in public accommodations and housing, was greater during this period than it had been in the previous century. In some states, like New Jersey, statutes enacted in the late nineteenth century prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations were weakened or ignored. Throughout the north, residential segregation increased through the use of restrictive covenants and real estate practices that discriminated against blacks. By the 1930s, housing discrimination and residential segregation was sanctioned by the federal government through the loan policies of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) that downgraded integrated neighborhoods and those where Negroes and certain other ethnic groups resided.

While jobs were a primary motivator for blacks to migrate north, the promise of better educational opportunities was also a lure. However, they found themselves in an environment where school segregation was on the rise, due to both increasing residential segregation and the decisions of individual communities to separate black and white children in schools. During the early decades of the twentieth century, a number of northern communities that had integrated their schools in the post-Civil War years reintroduced separate schools in response to the insistence of white parents that their children not attend schools with blacks. In some states that had anti-segregation laws on the books, legislators chose to ignore actions taken by local school boards to separate students by race.
Although the precise methods employed to separate students varied from state to state and district to district, there were commonalities. One of the most common was the assignment of students to schools based upon race rather than geography. Another was the placement of black students in separate buildings on the grounds of white schools. In instances when they were allowed to be in the same building with white children, black students were often placed in separate classrooms, or even in separate parts of a classroom.\footnote{47} One of the more extreme ways districts separated white and black students was placing a screen around the desk of a black student so he or she wouldn’t be visible to white classmates. In addition, it was common for black children to be excluded from extracurricular activities or allowed only limited usage of facilities. In some northern school districts, including ones in New York State, black students were only allowed to swim in high school pools on Fridays so that the pool could be drained, scrubbed and refilled over the weekend before being used by white students during the week. Other common strategies included racial gerrymandering of boundary lines, or instituting racially discriminatory transfer policies that permitted white students to transfer out of schools with growing black populations while denying blacks the same privilege.

Throughout the early twentieth century, racially mixed schools were more likely to be maintained in locations, like the New England states, where there were relatively small numbers of black students. In New York State, the existence of mixed schools varied from school district to school district. For example, while some separation occurred naturally due to residential patterns, New York City schools “generally declined to engage in deliberate efforts”\footnote{48} to maintain segregated schools. In other cities and towns, such as Manhasset on the north shore of Long Island, segregated schools were a staple. As L.D. Reddick noted in 1947,
“the extent and character of the education of Negroes [in the north] is largely a reflection of
the position – numerical, economic, political and cultural strength – of the Negro
community.”49

Even as white resistance to intermixing grew, blacks continued to be divided over the
best approach to take in combating racial discrimination and exclusion. The National
Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, was pro-
tegration and supported a stance of inclusion. Other groups, most notably Marcus Garvey’s
Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), leaned toward separation and self-help.
Frustrated by intractable white resistance and increasing hostility toward black workers,
groups such as the UNIA urged racial uplift through the establishment of separate black
organizations and institutions, including schools. The contest between
integration/assimilation and separation was evident in conflicting support among blacks for
integrated or separate schools. Many of the same arguments for and against integrated
schools evinced by black parents as early as the eighteenth century continued into the
twentieth.

Although the primary goal of most black parents was an education for their child,
divergent perspectives about the respective benefits of integrated or separate educational
settings abounded. Even among blacks that believed in the value of integrated education,
assimilation with whites in and of itself was never viewed as an important reason for black
children to attend integrated schools, and a segregated education was preferable to no
education at all. However, the fact is that many black parents preferred separate schools,
sometimes to the extent of petitioning for their creation. A frequently cited benefit of all-
black schools was their ability to protect black children from race-based harassment from
white children and teachers, and from the lesser expectations of white teachers. It was typically felt that black teachers would be both more nurturing and have higher expectations for student achievement. Further, many black educators, who were not permitted to teach white children, supported separate schools because they feared the loss of jobs and their stature as leaders in the community if separate schools were eliminated.

Frederick Douglass was one black leader who strongly opposed segregated schooling during the antebellum period. Writing in the March 10, 1848 issue of The North Star Douglass opined, “The evils of separate colored schools are obvious to the common sense of all. Their very tendency is to produce feelings of superiority in the minds of white children, and a sense of inferiority in those of colored children; thus producing pride on the one hand, and servility on the other, and making those who would be the best of friends the worst of enemies.” During the mid-twentieth century, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark substantiated the claim that separate schools promoted feelings of inferiority in black children. Their research was presented as evidence in Brown v. Board of Education.

When it came to the issue of separate or mixed schools, differences of opinion existed between northern-born blacks and southern migrants. For example, some northern blacks supported integrated schools and, in some instances, blamed the increased number of southern migrants for the increase in segregation. On the other hand, northern black teachers were among those most strongly in support of separate black schools, often because they feared losing their jobs. Based on their experiences in the south, some southern blacks felt that black schools with black teachers would be more encouraging to and supportive of their children, and protect their children from mistreatment at the hands of white teachers. Others newcomers from the South supported the fight for mixed schools.
Efforts on the part of blacks to end racial discrimination and segregation in all aspects of American life intensified during the 1930s as “New Deal rhetoric provided blacks with a robust language of rights and democracy that they made their own.”52 Boycotts and mass demonstrations along with litigation were among the strategies used to protest segregated schools throughout the North. With the assistance of the NAACP, blacks sued school boards in cities and towns across the north to overturn local decisions to establish or maintain separate schools. Indeed, one of the first tasks undertaken by the Nassau County (New York) branch of the NAACP, founded in 1940, was “tackling the problems created by the disguised attempts of the public schools of Hempstead and Rockville Centre to segregate the colored pupils in order to expose them to a type of education which was alleged to prepare Negro students for domestic service since they are better suited to such work.”53 These attempts were not always successful, but by the middle of the twentieth century, explicit segregation of schools had been banned in most northern states. This did not necessarily improve educational opportunities for black students, either in terms of quality or access. Due to the patterns of increased residential segregation during the first half of the century, a high percentage of black children continued to attend segregated schools. Forced to live in the older sections of cities and towns, black students typically attended schools that were older and in worse physical condition than those attended by whites. Overcrowded conditions meant that black schools operated double and triple shifts; as a result, black children spent significantly less time in the classroom than their white peers. Thus, while black children bore the brunt of racist educational practices, “the elimination of racial classifications in public schools came with a limited “cost” [to whites] in most northern school districts.”54
The call to integrate American institutions, including schools, increased in the period before and during World War II. The discrimination and mistreatment experienced by African Americans was increasingly equated with the Nazism and Fascism that was being fought in Europe. Black soldiers, who fought for the freedom of whites overseas, were stung by their mistreatment upon their return to the U.S., and along with blacks on the homefront, increased their insistence on fair treatment. They were supported by organizations such as the NAACP, whose membership nationwide exploded during the period. The war itself created a set of circumstances that conspired to make whites more receptive to the abolition of explicit forms of racial segregation. Since racial discrimination and the mistreatment of black people flew in the face of America’s purported belief in democracy, the federal government was forced to take a stance against overt forms of discrimination toward African Americans. The United States government feared international embarrassment and the possibility that the war effort would be jeopardized if fascist governments like Italy and Germany were to use American mistreatment of Negroes in their anti-American propaganda.

During and after the war, the NAACP and other civil rights groups capitalized on the democratic rhetoric of the times to achieve their goals. For the first time, school segregation was termed “undemocratic” and “un-American.” With membership in its local branches the highest it had ever been, the NAACP began a “multipronged attack” in the northern states against school segregation. Nationally, the organization focused on “educating the black community about the need to challenge school segregation, filing lawsuits, and securing additional legislation that brought the power of the state to bear on recalcitrant school districts.” Although the NAACP was successful in securing fund-withholding legislation in
New Jersey and Illinois, it faced many obstacles in other states, such as Ohio, where there was considerable lack of support for desegregated schools among African Americans. A lack of support on the local level for integrated schools, often on the part of black teachers who feared losing their jobs, impeded the NAACP’s litigation efforts.60 However, the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka that overturned the legality of “separate but equal” public schools is a tribute to the NAACP’s continuous emphasis on litigation during this period.

In the years following World War II, the imperative for democracy continued. However, it was increasingly combined with a call for world peace and cultural tolerance. This resulted in a new rhetoric of anti-discrimination and intercultural relations that built on the democratic rhetoric of wartime. In response to the call for cultural understanding, tolerance, and respect for differences, many communities across the country formed Human Relations committees to help deal with interracial and intercultural differences. National organizations such as the American Council on Race Relations supported “Full participation of all citizens in all aspects of American life: equal rights and equal opportunities.”61 This group identified its mission as promoting inter-group relations between whites and people of other nationalities, such as Japanese and Mexicans. It contrasted itself with organizations like the NAACP and Urban League, whose primary focus was black/white relations. This new focus influenced the manner in which issues of discrimination and difference were handled in public schools across the country. For example, New York State Education Department initiated an emphasis on “intergroup education,” and called upon schools “to take steps to guarantee development of ... a program of education designed to promote national and world unity.”62 It was felt in some quarters that racially integrated schools would contribute to
tolerance and cultural understanding by helping to “prepare the Negro citizen to live in One World with all kinds of people from all kinds of cultures.”63

The existence of separate schools for Black children in the north remained a problem in the years following World War II, exacerbated by increased residential segregation in both cities and newly established suburbs. Increased numbers of working-class and poor African Americans had moved to the cities in search of employment during the war years. Although whites who lived in more congested urban settings were forced to share public spaces with blacks and members of other minority groups, most did not have the desire to live in racially integrated housing; migration from urban centers to suburban residential subdivisions in the postwar years became the prime way that many working- and middle-class whites were able to successfully avoid living near blacks. Margaret Marsh and Samuel Kaplan note that, “While our national image is one of ethnic and cultural diversity, on a community level we have tended to prefer homogeneity. … and [suburbanization] is an affirmation of the American commitment to homogeneity in the midst of ethnic and cultural diversity.”64 Douglas observes that since “almost all northern suburbs operated their own school districts, suburbanization would have a profound effect on racial isolation in urban public schools.”65 In areas such as Long Island, the deliberate exclusion of African Americans from suburban housing developments impacted the separation of blacks in suburban public schools as well.

During the suburban housing boom of the 1950s and 1960s, most suburban school districts promoted the concept of neighborhood schools based strictly on geographic criteria. With many mothers in the home during the day, suburban parents valued the ability of their children to walk to and from school, perhaps even for lunch. Consequently, in most communities, neighborhood schools were situated so that they were within walking distance
of all homes within the attendance zone. With residential segregation the norm in most communities, little notice was given to the fact white and black children, for the most part, attended separate schools.

However, despite widespread housing segregation, racial separation did not always occur naturally, forcing school districts to take other measures to perpetuate racial separation. Consequently, though explicit segregation was outlawed in the north, many school districts engaged in the more subtle practice of racial gerrymandering, or deliberate manipulation of boundaries and the creation of irregularly shaped attendance zones, in order to perpetuate racial separation. Hempstead Union Free School District #1 attempted to employ this strategy in 1949 in order to ensure that white children in a new housing subdivision would not attend the predominantly black school in their immediate neighborhood. The response of Hempstead’s black residents to this attempt to gerrymander school attendance lines was a precursor to the fight for educational equality in Hempstead Village that culminated during the nineteen sixties.

Efforts to mitigate the de facto segregation of public schools in the north, typically caused by residential segregation, coincided with the more publicized efforts to end de jure segregation of southern schools and colleges. Although national and statewide focus on the question of race-based educational inequalities increased during the early 1960s, the problem of segregated schools continued to be viewed by many northern whites as a southern problem. However, for African Americans, “the campaign for school segregation provided a reminder that in the context of a society with widespread antiblack sentiment, school desegregation was a mixed blessing.”66
Remembering the Civil Rights Movement

For all Americans, in particular African Americans, the 1960s was a decade of major change on many levels, from the evolution of individual racial identities to major political, social and cultural shifts. Although there are wide variations in how the decade is remembered, for most Black people, it is framed by the Civil Rights/Black Freedom movement. Certain persons, locations, and events have become icons of the era and are imbedded in our collective memory of the Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat to a white person and the resultant 1955 Montgomery (Alabama) Bus Boycott, the teenaged “Little Rock Nine” who traversed a gauntlet of jeering whites to desegregate Little Rock (Arkansas) Central High School in 1957, and the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* are among the key individuals and events that are included in textbooks and television documentaries about the period, and have become part of the collective memory of most Americans. Violent events such as the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till, the 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four young girls, and the assassinations of Medgar Evers, Dr. King, and Malcolm X are other pivotal events frequently recounted in media retrospectives. As a result, these collective memories have become part of the context through which most Americans recall and understand the Civil Rights Movement. Historian Owen J. Dwyer and others have labeled this interpretation “the “Great Man” school of historiography.”67 Although it is the one most frequently reflected in textbook accounts, documentaries, and other sources of public knowledge, Dwyer asserts that viewing civil rights history in these terms results in portrayal of the civil rights movement “as a series of key moments...that, under the orchestration of charismatic leaders, served to shift
the balance of power between a vanguard African American community and those seeking to maintain white supremacy.\textsuperscript{68}

Further, the Civil Rights/Black Freedom Movement continues to be remembered and understood primarily as a southern phenomenon. However, although blacks in southern states struggled to overcome a legislated system of overt racism in which enforcement of racial separation was often punitive, the lives of African Americans in northern and western states were negatively affected by racially discriminatory policies and practices as well. In many places in the north, discrimination against blacks was as severe as in the south, even though segregation was not legislated.

Finally, despite growing evidence to the contrary, the most widely accepted narrative of the Movement follows a ten-year trajectory that starts with the \textit{Brown} decision of 1954 and ends with the signing of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965.\textsuperscript{69} Despite evidence that the movement began decades earlier and continued for years after, this understanding continues to be perpetuated in textbooks and media presentations, as well as through the stories told at museums and other public history sites that memorialize the Civil Rights movement. For example, Glenn Eskew cites the Birmingham (Alabama) Civil Rights Institute as an exemplifier of a site that defines “the early 1960s as the key years of the struggle and events in Birmingham with the subsequent adoption of the Civil Rights Act as the climax of the civil rights movement all framed within the standard Montgomery to Memphis refrain.”\textsuperscript{70}

Remembering and understanding the Civil Rights/Black Freedom movement solely in terms of its major players and events, strictly as a Southern phenomenon, or limited to a ten year chronology is problematic because it limits our knowledge of the role of average
Americans, both black and white, in the centuries-long quest of African Americans to achieve racial equality. Throughout the United States, both before and after the years that commonly delineate the movement, in communities large and small, many average individuals orchestrated events that shifted the balance of power in their communities. More recent scholarship on the civil rights movement demonstrates that such local grassroots efforts were often precursors to the better-known events that have become part of our nation’s historical narrative, or led to those that blossomed in their wake.71 Like Dwyer, historians such as Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard further critique the “Great Man” iconography, noting that it serves to “[obscure] the groundbreaking work of local people across the country who challenged the racial caste system in the United States. These local people drove the Black Freedom movement: they organized it, imagined it, mobilized and cultivated it; they did the daily work that made the struggle possible and endured the drudgery and retaliation, fear and anticipation, joy and comradeship that building a movement entails.”72 In many instances, the efforts put forth by these “local people” successfully opened doors for African Americans in individual communities throughout the country. The boycotts, marches, and sit-ins that are part of our nation’s collective memory of the Civil Rights movement were not planned by men in suits sitting around a table in Washington, D.C., but by average men and women sitting around a neighbor’s kitchen table. Even events such as the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott or the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, that subsequently garnered national attention and have attained iconic stature, began as responses to local conditions, led by local leaders and supported by local residents. While these events are notable because they engendered change on a national scale, similar efforts were also undertaken in communities throughout the
country in response to the unique circumstances faced by their black residents. Many of these efforts resulted in immediate results and significant long-term local changes.

In the Village of Hempstead, African American residents were on the forefront of battles to secure equal rights to housing and employment, to obtain equal educational opportunities for their children, and to gain political representation so that their voices could be heard. Although their protests had, no doubt, begun even earlier, the parent boycotts of Prospect School that took place throughout the 1940s are among the first documented instances of black activism in the Village. However, it is likely that there were many other individual and group protests in the years preceding and during the Civil Rights movement that have not been documented in newspaper accounts or official records. One means of gaining access to such knowledge is through the use of personal memory.
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Memory and the African American Historical Narrative

If history is, as described by Manning Marable, “the architecture of a people’s memory,”73 the recognition of the validity of individual and collective memories in the construction of historical narratives, and their acceptance as sources of information about the past, albeit incomplete ones, has particular salience for members of minority groups, whose stories have traditionally been ignored or subverted in the Master Narrative74 of this country. This narrative, which perpetuates white hegemony by portraying blacks as inferior and ‘Other,’ has been and continues to be disseminated through both literary and scholarly works, in textbooks and popular media.75 This is particularly true in the case of African Americans, whose participation in the official narrative of American history continues to be largely one-dimensional. Inclusion of the voices and experiences of those who have personally lived history provides depth and adds significance to known facts and may, more importantly, expand or contribute to uncovering aspects of the past that have been forgotten. Thus, personal memories have a special capacity to provide a unique contextual arena in which to consider broader questions and challenge accepted understandings of the past.

In addition, what is remembered and how things are remembered are important factors in the shaping of local, regional and national identity. As Patricia Burgess notes, there are “multiple histories for each place and time. Whoever creates the history or tells the story has the power to shape other’s understanding of both the past and the present.”76 The official historical narratives of communities include those aspects of the past that dominant members of society deem important enough to remember, and generally select those persons, places, and events that show a community in a positive light for inclusion in the official narrative of a place. Painful or less positive events in a community’s history are left to quietly fade away.
Collective forgetting may effectively serve as a panacea when there are uncomfortable linkages between past events and contemporary situations. However, this can be particularly problematic for African Americans in light of ongoing mainstream attempts to subvert knowledge of events that occurred under a racist society and to suppress historical evidence of the impact on black people of the structural racism that is at the core of our nation’s past.

The recognition of the need to not forget the lived experiences of our foremothers and forefathers is of particular interest to scholars of African American history and culture, who have generated a growing body of research that provides evidence of the agency of people of color, and highlights their acts of resistance, both overt and covert, to the strictures of a society built on structural racism. These scholars assert that unless such acts are remembered and made part of the mainstream historical narrative that is widely disseminated to the public in textbooks and popular history productions, we are likely to forget that the civil rights era was launched, as Karen Fields asserts, not by President Eisenhower but “by the people whose business it was.”

Scholars have viewed the use of personal memory in the reconstruction of the past in an increasing positive light in recent decades. Although psychologists and scholars in various fields have studied memory extensively over the last century, until the middle of the twentieth century, many historians understood history and memory dichotomously. Memories were thought to be unreliable and clouded with subjectivity and personal bias. Their veracity was not to be trusted in the construction of “what really happened.” Memories might be appropriately used anecdotally or to add flavor to descriptions, but their use as empirical evidence was generally rejected by many in the field. On the other hand, history, compiled of researched facts and presented as truth, has been held in high esteem. Social historians, who
sought to challenge official narratives and to elucidate the past from the perspective of marginalized groups like women, workers, and members of racial and ethnic groups, were among the first to make a link between the two concepts, and contemporary literature on the interrelation between the two concepts demonstrates that history is not just “facts” and memory cannot be disregarded as “a created version of an event snatched from the chaos of the otherwise invisible world gone by.” While memories cannot be equated with facts, they can be useful as a tool to pierce the veil of forgetfulness that causes aspects of the past to be silenced.

While collective memories, shared by members of a community or cultural group, are useful in providing an overall framework, personal memories of experiences in which an individual was personally involved have the potential to reveal aspects of and perspectives on the past that can provide meaningful insight into contemporary circumstances. Increasingly, personal narrative evidence, in the form of memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories, is being used by social scientists and historians to explore specific social-structural categories, to add the voices of marginalized groups, to create counternarratives that contest official historical claims, and to reveal “hidden” histories that may have been simply forgotten or deliberately distorted or suppressed. Personal memories can be particularly useful in situating African Americans within a “living Black history” that has meaning both contemporaneously and for the future and in developing narratives that augment official histories that tend to rely on documents created and compiled by members of the dominant culture.
Winning the Battle: The Fight for School Integration in Hempstead

Memory #1: It is September 1963. I am nine years old. It is the first day of fifth grade. But instead of walking a few blocks to Jackson School, the school I have attended since kindergarten, I have been driven to a new school all the way on the other side of Hempstead. I remember following the principal down a long hallway, past classrooms full of younger children, to my new classroom. I enter a room full of unknown faces, where I am one of only a few brown faces. Although I don’t recall what my parents told me in preparation for that day, I know that I was aware, on some level, of the magnitude of the day. While nothing was said, it was apparent that our presence in the classroom was different from what the other children and teacher were used to. I knew that it was important to my parents and others that I was on my best behavior and that I showed what a good student I was. On the surface, none of these things should have been particularly stressful. I had always loved school and was an “A” student. There had always been white children in my classes and I was friends with and played regularly with white children, both in their homes and in my own. White girls were in my Girl Scout troop, and Brownie meetings had been held in the home of a white woman in my neighborhood. However, things had changed over the summer. On the bus ride to Girl Scout camp, one of these girls, someone I considered a friend, made a derogatory comment about Negroes. In that instant, for the first time in my life, I was aware that I was different in the eyes of white people.

Recalling almost fifty years later what I thought and felt as a nine-year old was an unexpectedly challenging endeavor. However, I remember with some clarity that first day of school in September 1963, and, in the wake of my summertime experience, the uncertainty I
felt walking into that fifth grade classroom at Hempstead’s Fulton Elementary School. The hurt I felt by the comments of someone I had considered a friend came streaming back. Less than a month earlier I had excitedly watched the March on Washington on TV, hoping to catch a glimpse of my father and his friends in the crowds, and listening to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give his historic “I Have a Dream” speech. Even at that young age I knew that it was a momentous occasion for Negro people. I was also aware that the experience I and two other Negro girls from my neighborhood were embarking upon that September day was important.

My new school, Fulton Elementary School, was located on the opposite side of town from where we lived. It was in a part of the 3.2 square mile Village of Hempstead that, until that time, I had only seen out of a car window as my father drove west on Fulton Avenue on our way to visit my grandparents in St. Albans, Queens. Up to that point, the furthest I had ever been on Fulton Avenue was the Abraham and Straus department store where we shopped for clothing. In sharp contrast to Jackson School, the elementary school I had attended for the first five years of my education, 92% of the children who attended Fulton School were white. The three of us were among a relatively small group of black children participating in the Hempstead School District’s newly approved “permissive transfer” program. Created with the goal of correcting racial imbalances and alleviating overcrowding in several of the elementary schools in the district, this voluntary program, allowed parents the option of enrolling their child in any elementary school in the district, provided there were openings in the appropriate grade level. The Board of Education had implemented the plan in an attempt to correct racial imbalances in the district’s elementary schools that had been identified several years earlier by a survey conducted by the New York State
Department of Education. As a result of survey responses, New York State had designated a set of criteria to measure racial imbalance in schools. Three of the six elementary schools in Hempstead Union Free School District #1 were identified as racially imbalanced in accordance with the State’s definition. According to the June 1963 directive issued by State Commissioner of Education James Allen, Jr., “racial imbalance exist[s] in a school in which the enrollment is wholly or predominantly Negro.”81 This was generally understood to mean that a school was considered racially imbalanced when more than 50% of the students in attendance were black. New York State’s focus on this situation coincided with the focus on school segregation that emerged across the country in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. Jeanne Theoharis notes that the term “racial imbalance [was] the more palatable Northern word for segregation.”82

At the time, the Hempstead School District was comprised of six elementary schools and one high school. Each of the neighborhood-based elementary schools served all children in kindergarten through eighth grade that lived within a district-defined attendance zone. Students from all six elementary schools attended one centrally located high school. Attendance zones were geographically determined, and homes within each zone were within walking distance of the school.

With a student population that was 83% Negro in 1963, Jackson School, the school I had attended from kindergarten through fourth grade, was deemed racially imbalanced. Franklin School and Prospect School, with student bodies that were 88% and 89% Negro, respectively, met the criteria as well. Each of these three schools was situated in a neighborhood where the number of African American residents had grown and the number of white residents had decline over the course of the previous decade. At the other end of the
racial scale were Fulton School, with a student body that was 92% white, and Ludlum School which was 85% white. While classrooms at Jackson, Franklin and Prospect schools were overcrowded, space in Fulton and Ludlum schools was underutilized. It was to one of the later two schools that parents who chose to take advantage of the permissive transfer program enrolled their children. Although there were already a few black children attending Fulton School prior to September 1963, all of the black children who entered the fifth grade that year were transfers from one of the three schools identified as racially imbalanced.

Just as the national fight for civil rights/black freedom did not start in the 1960s, the impetus for the events that led to implementation of Hempstead Public Schools’ permissive transfer program had begun decades earlier. For many years, black parents in Hempstead had fought for the rights of their children to enjoy the same educational opportunities of their white peers. In addition to group protests, such as the 1949 boycott of Prospect School, individual parents initiated challenges to discriminatory practices in the schools. For example, a 1954 graduate of Hempstead High School, who later became one of the first African American teachers in the district, described how her parents confronted the high school principal to make sure that she was placed in the appropriate college preparatory classes instead of the home economics classes into which most black girls where scheduled.

Even before the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that separate schools were inherently unequal, African Americans in Hempstead had actively challenged discriminatory and racist practices, particularly in regard to educational policies that affected their children. In 1941, Negro parents protested the assignment of the majority of black children in the district to Prospect Street School. This school, which was one of the oldest in the district, was adjacent to the “Hill” neighborhood, the historical home of the Village’s
African American and Native American residents. Prospect School remained a site of contention throughout the decade, and in 1949, black parents boycotted the school to protest the School Board’s establishment of “restrictive attendance boundaries” that gerrymandered school attendance lines so that white children in the new Eldredge Estates subdivision would be able to attend all-white Ludlum School instead of Prospect School.

During the 1950s, efforts on the part of blacks to end discriminatory practices and to gain the right to participate fully in all aspects of life in the community increased significantly. In addition to challenging restrictions in employment and housing, blacks began to challenge the lack of representation in local government. The local branch of the NAACP, in coordination with the organization’s national legal defense team, was instrumental in these challenges to civil rights. In the wake of Brown v. Board of Education, local branches of the NAACP increasingly shifted their focus to educational equity in northern public schools.

For African Americans, many of the same issues and arguments pertaining to the benefits and banes of integrated schooling extant in the nineteenth century continued into the twentieth century. While advocates of integrated education equated it with equal education, the opportunity for most black children to attend mixed schools continued to be limited. Many whites in cities and suburbs south and north shared a long-standing cultural belief in the innate intellectual inferiority of blacks, a factor that influenced the resistance of white parents to having their children educated among large numbers of black children. For example, many of the southern-born children who entered northern public schools in the twentieth century typically had deficient skills due to the limited academic opportunities afforded them in the South. However, rather than make the effort to help them achieve,
northern white educators were more apt to accept racist stereotypes that all African Americans were intellectually deficient.89

The issue of racial imbalance was already an issue in Hempstead schools by the 1950s although it had not yet been labeled as such. The protests of the previous decade are evidence that black parents were aware and concerned about the issue. In 1949, the Board of Education, for the first time, established attendance zones throughout the district. The gerrymandered lines segregated most of the district’s black students in the predominantly black Prospect School. Black parents petitioned the School Board to redistribute students throughout the district’s other elementary schools. The School Board refused, and in September 1949, black parents boycotted the school for three weeks, sending their children to classes in a local church. They enlisted the assistance of the NAACP and, represented by NAACP attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley, appealed the Board’s decision to the State Education Department. Although the Commissioner ordered the district to “restudy and realign” the lines so that all attendance zones were based on geographic proximity schools, he also stated that “school boards are not under compulsion to bring about an even distribution of pupils of all races within all the schools of their districts.”90

In 1957, the issue of racial imbalance in Hempstead’s schools was again brought into the open, this time by a white parent whose child attended the predominantly black Prospect School. The parent petitioned the school board to assign her 12-year old daughter to another elementary school on the basis that the child “was being ‘crippled socially’ because she had no playmates of her own race, and was being held back educationally because ‘she had no mental challenge’.91 The white parent’s concern was obviously in opposition to those of
black parents. While Black parents sought to have their children in mixed educational settings, the goal of this white parent was to ensure her child’s education in a homogeneously white setting. When the school board denied her request, she removed her daughter from the public schools and enrolled her in one of the local parochial schools (three Catholic and one Lutheran) that existed in the Village during the 1960s. Although white students were not the only ones to attend church-run schools during the period, the existence of such schools effectively provided white parents with an alternative to sending their children to public schools with increasingly black student bodies.

Though questions about the quality of education in the predominantly black Prospect School had long been raised by the nineteen fifties, doubts also began to emerge about overcrowding and educational quality in two more of the district’s six elementary schools. In the decade between 1950 and 1960, the percentage of black residents in Hempstead Village had increased from nine percent to twenty-two percent. Among the primarily middle- and working-class blacks that settled in the community during the 1950s and early 1960s, many were professionals and government workers. However, as more and more African American families purchased houses in neighborhoods where other Blacks were already in residence, the changing racial composition of neighborhoods began to be reflected in the schools. There is evidence that Superintendent of Schools Dr. Amos Kincaid approached Negro civic leaders in 1957 to express “concern for the fact that the Jackson Street and Franklin Street schools were increasing in percentage of Negro population” and “suggested that the Negro population itself may be interested in preventing school and neighborhood from becoming segregated in fact.”

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By the time I started kindergarten in Jackson Street School in 1958, there were observable changes at schools with growing numbers of black children were present. My mother, a teacher in the school district, recalled that class sizes increased in the four years since my older sister started to attend the school. She also remembered being concerned that teachers in the school, whether young and inexperienced or more seasoned, appeared unprepared to teach larger groups of Negro children, and exhibited difficulty handling black boys, in particular. As the numbers of white children declined, expectations for achievement seemed to lower. By 1962, the year I was in fourth grade, the percentage of black students in the school was close to seventy percent. My parents recall feeling that the level of classroom work and homework was less challenging than it had been for my sister four years earlier. Apparently, they were not alone in their concerns, and they, along with other residents whose children attended increasingly overcrowded schools, began to attend school board meetings and to confront the Board of Education about observed disparities in class size and achievement levels related to the racial composition of the district’s elementary schools.

In 1960, a local civic organization, the Hempstead Citizens Committee for Education, “called on the school board to end what it called segregation in Hempstead elementary schools by ignoring the boundary lines of racially segregated neighborhoods and reassigning students to create fully integrated schools.” In discussing the committee’s rationale for requesting that the schools be integrated, the chairman stated that the “seeds of prejudice are planted” and “the roots of racism start” in racially segregated schools. From the perspective of African Americans, integrated schools were “[m]uch more than black children sitting next to white children in school.” Rather, they were part of “a fundamental transformation of the economic, political and social landscape.”
Following his 1961 acknowledgement that segregated schools existed in some districts in New York State, Education Commissioner James E. Allen, Jr. ordered the superintendents of school districts across the state to complete a “racial census of elementary schools” in order to identify those districts in the State in which “the ratio of Negro-to-white pupils was relatively high.” The census revealed that 61 of 410 elementary buildings in districts outside of New York City had pupil populations over 51% black. Three of the 61 schools identified were in Hempstead Union Free School District #1. The Advisory Committee on Human Relations and Community Tensions convened by the Commissioner in 1962 to assess the findings termed this growing phenomenon racial imbalance. According to the Advisory Committee, racial imbalance existed “in a school in which the enrollment is wholly or predominantly Negro interferes with the achievement of equality of education.” The Education Department suggested that districts with imbalances “should give added attention to this situation,” but opined that the manner in which the imbalance was to be corrected was to be left to individual districts “in keeping with the principle of local control.”

The racial census’ confirmation of racial imbalance in Hempstead schools would not have been a surprise to members of the Hempstead Citizens Committee for education. However, the Hempstead Board of Education apparently did not give the issue the immediate attention members of the community thought it should. Community activists, many of them members of the Hempstead Branch of the NAACP, joined with members of civic organizations and representatives of religious groups, to demand that the school board take action in response to the Commissioner of Education’s directives. When the Board dragged its feet, the Legal Redress Committee of the New York State chapter of the NAACP got
involved. In 1962, the case Branche v. Board of Education of Town of Hempstead was filed on behalf of black students who attended racially imbalanced schools. The lawsuit against the school district “challenge[d] the existence of segregated schools in fact” and claimed the inadequacy of segregated education.101 Lawyers for the Board of Education refuted their claims, stating that residential patterns not deliberate gerrymandering of attendance zones were responsible for “the maintenance of racially segregated public schools and … restriction of Negro children to attendance at them.”102 They also contested the claim of the parents that “the legal duty to integrate educational facilities” be equated with the “duty not to segregate children racially for educational purposes.”103

At the same time that this litigation was underway, the school district’s Citizens Advisory Committee formed a subcommittee to study the issue. My father, who was also legal counsel to the Hempstead branch of the NAACP at the time, was the chairman of this subcommittee. In June 1962, the Subcommittee on Racial Imbalance presented a report of their findings to the school board. According to a copy of their report, the members cited their belief that “education must provide for the healthiest democratic growth of all children and provide each of them with the fullest opportunity for the maximum development of his potential.”104 The committee went on to outline the consequences of racially imbalanced schools. They noted that although both white and black children were “denied the right to healthy, democratic growth”105 and affected psychologically by racial imbalance, black children were impacted more severely. Black children were also denied the ability to fully develop their potential, were exposed to watered down educational standards, and had the potential to feel rejected and to become emotionally immature. The report asserted that the “watering down of standards” impacted all children in racially imbalanced schools. It further
acknowledged that it “accelerates the flight of white families from the affected areas,” and noted that such “community disruption” had already occurred in Hempstead.

The first African American was elected to the Hempstead Board of Education in the spring of 1963. During the same year, the Board finally acknowledged that the problem of racial imbalances in the schools was “as one of the most important factors affecting the educational climate in Hempstead today.” However, several of the options presented by the School Board proved to be objectionable to the black community. Since the schools identified as racially imbalanced were also severely overcrowded, the School Board chose to focus on overcrowding rather than the issue of school integration. It is possible that this stance reflected their acknowledgement that it would be virtually impossible to achieve racially balanced schools in the district “whether by rezoning or any other device” due to growing patterns of residential segregation in neighborhoods throughout the district as the African Americans population continued to increase. The initial two alternatives presented by the Board met with resistance. The first was to undertake a construction program that would add additional classrooms to the overcrowded schools. The second was to institute split sessions in the overcrowded schools. Both raised the ire of the NAACP, who asserted that the first option would perpetuate segregation, and the second would further diminish the quality of education that black children were receiving. Further asserting that any “mandatory movement of Negro or white pupils within the district will accelerate the imbalanced condition,” the School Board asked the Commissioner of Education to consider consolidation of the district with the Garden City and Uniondale school districts as a potential way of achieving racial balance. Both of these adjacent districts were virtually all white, and both immediately indicated their intention to reject the proposal.
Despite any reservations the Board of Education may have had, it appears to have addressed the issue as an area of concern for all residents within the school district, not just black residents. It demonstrated openness about the problem, and published statistical data, reports, and proposals for corrective measures in district publications. The plan of action accepted by the School Board in the summer of 1963 included implementation of a voluntary transfer plan that provided parents with the option to move their child out of the assigned attendance zone and enroll him or her in the elementary school of their choice, provided seats were available at the proper grade level. In keeping with the Board of Education’s expressed focus on overcrowding, the issue of racial imbalance was secondary in the plan that went into effect in September 1963. In fact, in order for a child to be eligible to participate in the program, he or she had to be in a class with numbers that exceeded the numeric threshold determined by the School Board. The district’s Report to the Commissioner states: “Although specifically designed to relieve overcrowding in the Franklin and Jackson Schools, the policy has given opportunity for some parents concerned with their children being enrolled in schools having a racial imbalance to transfer them to others.” A decade later, Richard Kluger noted in his book Simple Justice that “such so-called freedom of choice plans allowed black parents to send their children to schools in white neighborhoods but thereby cast them as interlopers, inviting a hostile reception for going where they were not wanted. Only 10 percent or so of black parents subjected their children to such an ordeal.”

Although participants in Hempstead’s 1963 voluntary transfer plan do not recall any overt hostility, it is evident that the number of parents who took advantage of the option to transfer their child was relatively small. However, enough did so that, for the first time, the two elementary schools with the highest concentration of white students were integrated.
The permissive transfer plan did not satisfy everyone. Although recognizing that it was a step in the right direction, the local branch of the NAACP did not feel that it went far enough. They reasserted their contention that the concept of neighborhood schools was faulty, and that the issue of school integration would be more appropriately addressed through adoption of a plan similar to one that had been put in place in Princeton, New Jersey. The so-called “Princeton Plan” involved redistricting elementary schools so that attendance would be based upon grade level rather than geographic factors. They also recommended construction of a junior high school building that would both alleviate elementary-level overcrowding and promote the same mixed environment that existed in the high school.¹¹¹

Nineteen sixty-three was a watershed year in efforts to integrate elementary school not only in Hempstead but also in communities on Long Island and across New York State. Although little disruption appears to have occurred in the Hempstead school district, efforts were significantly more contentious in other Long Island communities, particularly those with small black populations. The NAACP brought suit against the largely white Manhasset School District claiming that the district perpetuated de facto segregation because one of the district’s three elementary school was ninety-three percent black while the other two were predominantly white. Manhasset, an affluent suburb on Long Island’s north shore, had only a small population of blacks, composed primarily of laborers and domestic workers. In opposition to the NAACP’s claim that black children attending the mostly all-black Valley School received an inferior education as a result of attending a segregated school, the school board took the position that they could not control neighborhood development and, further, that the reasons for black children’s lower academic achievement level were “their lower socio-economic background and their generally lower IQs.”¹¹²
Literature pertaining to desegregation of northern schools provides evidence that contestation was particularly fierce in sections of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. In New York, some of the most acute situations outside of New York City existed in Hillburn in Rockland County, New Rochelle in Westchester County, and Malverne in Nassau County. Malverne appears frequently as a case study in the literature on northern school desegregation. The district was composed of the all-white Village of Malverne, sections of the Village of Lynbrook, which were also white, and the hamlet of Lakeview, whose African American population had increased rapidly during the 1950s. Children from the Lakeview area attended the Woodfield Road School. In 1963, eighty-one percent of the students at the Woodfield Road School were Negro. Parents complained that their children received an inferior education due to the school’s racial imbalance. State Commissioner of Education James E. Allen, Jr. recommended that the Malverne Board of Education remedy the situation through implementation of a “Princeton Plan,” the same plan that the NAACP had recommended be adopted in Hempstead. White parents in the Malverne school district immediately rose up against the proposed plan, citing the sanctity of neighborhood schools and the expense of bus transportation. As white opponents obtained court orders to prevent forestall implementation of the plan, black parents, supported by the local branch of the NAACP, other civil rights organizations, and local civic and religious groups, responded with boycotts, picketing, sit-ins and other demonstrations of protest. In September 1963, black parents boycotted the Woodfield Road School while white parents picketed the school to express their opposition to sending their children to the school. Black parents also staged sit-ins at the predominantly white schools. While white parents continued to send their children to the two predominantly white neighborhood schools, many black parents
boycotted the Woodfield Road School, instead sending their children to Freedom Schools established by parents and supporters of integration. The Freedom Schools were housed in local churches and staffed with volunteer teachers. The fight to integrate Malverne’s elementary schools was not resolved until 1967, when the School Board agreed to implement Commissioner Allen’s original plan. Ultimately, the district instituted a plan similar to the Princeton Plan, and assigned children throughout the district to schools based on grade level. The district closed the Woodfield Road School. By the end of the struggle, a significant number of white parents had removed their children from the public schools. Over the four-year period, the percentage of black students in the district had increased from forty-four percent to fifty-nine percent. NAACP attorney Robert Carter charged that, in closing the Woodfield Road School, the district had “placed the entire burden of integration on Negro pupils.”

The policy of closing predominantly black schools was also widely applied in school districts where black children were concentrated in one school. Freeport, Roosevelt, and Westbury were among districts that had one elementary school whose pupil population exceeded ninety percent. In 1963, Freeport solved its imbalance problem by closing the district’s predominantly black school and reassigning the 240 students who had attended the school to predominantly white schools. Although the burden for integration was substantially greater for black children, media accounts of the plan indicate little if any comment from black parents, or protest from white residents.

In contrast to the contention in Malverne during the 1963 school year, there appears to have been minimal resistance to school integration in Hempstead. This can feasibly be attributed to the fact that Hempstead had a historically heterogeneous population and, by
1963, the total student population in the district was already over one-half black.\textsuperscript{117} In addition, as predicted by the president of the Hempstead branch of the NAACP, relatively few black children participated in the program. This can be attributed to the fact that parents had to provide their own transportation and were likely hesitant to have children attending more than one school. Further, despite any reservations they may have had, the Board of Education provided thorough coverage during the 1963 and 1964 school years of the corrective measures through its publication \textit{Hempstead Schools Bulletin}. It appears that the PTAs, as well as civic organizations, religious groups, and civil rights organizations such as the NAACP supported the concept of integration as a means to achieve racial equality, and the Board of Education noted the “heartening” response of residents and commended community representatives for \textquotedblleft display[ing] a common spirit of good will and a sincere desire to work for the best possible solution to the racial imbalance problem while insisting on the maintenance of our high educational standards.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{118}

Hempstead’s plan proved to be only a temporary panacea and ultimately failed to remedy racial imbalances in the district. Black enrollment in several schools continued unabated and it was recognized almost immediately that \textquotedblleft[a] continuing gradual increase of Negro enrollment has offset the effect of these transfers on racial balance in the Jackson and Franklin Schools.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{119} Whites continued to move out of neighborhoods with growing numbers of black residents, although some white families stayed but removed their children in the public schools. However, it is evident that the nominal integration of the elementary schools that began in 1963 set in motion circumstances that hastened the white flight from the Village of Hempstead that ensued throughout the following decade. My father, a firm believer in the benefits of integrated education who had served as chairman of the district’s
Citizens Advisory Committee and counsel to the Hempstead Branch of the NAACP during the 1960s, observed decades later that Dr. Kincaid was prescient when he remarked in 1963 that “You may have won the battle, but you’re going to lose the war,” concluding that whites would end up leaving the community. In retrospect, the truth of his statement cannot be denied; the out migration of white families, particularly those with school-age children, continued unabated throughout the sixties, accelerating in the latter years of the decade.
Losing the War: The Impact of School Integration Efforts in Hempstead

It is March 1970. I am a 16-year old high school junior. My grades place me near the top of my class, although over the years I have learned to appear to be smart enough but not too smart, in order to avoid hearing comments from other less achievement-oriented black students that “she thinks she’s white.” I remember making a conscious decision in seventh grade to identify myself as “Black.” This often placed me in opposition to the sensibilities of many of my white classmates, particularly when it came to musical preferences. For years I had listened to my parents and their friends discuss the problems facing Negroes and strategizing ways to combat racial discrimination and gain the right to participate fully in American life. James Brown was singing “Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud,” students were demanding to be heard, and throughout the country black people, old and young, angered by the continued mistreatment of blacks, were taking a more militant stance and demanding that their concerns be heard. My older sister, a student at Howard University in Washington, DC, had, to the consternation of my parents, participated in the takeover of an administration building at Howard University. Even though I did not participate, I was aware that some of my more daring classmates, both black and white, were attending anti-war demonstrations and Black Power rallies in New York City and at nearby Hofstra University. And even though no one I knew was personally involved, I was aware of racial friction between some white and black kids at school. In fact, earlier in the month, several fights had escalated to the point that the media was calling them “riots,” and school was closed for a few days. What I remember most clearly is that when school reopened, some of the white kids I had seen every day since fifth grade and who had been in many of my high school classes were suddenly absent. As the days and weeks passed, they did not return. No
one ever said anything, but through the years I often wondered why had left and where they gone, especially so late in the school year.

In the years between 1963, the year I transferred to Fulton School, and 1967, the year I began ninth grade at Hempstead High School, civil rights activism had ratcheted up throughout Long Island. Black people in Hempstead and other Long Island communities were angry and becoming increasingly militant in the wake of ongoing local discriminatory practices in housing and employment, as well as in response to instances of overt racism such as that expressed by residents of nearby Malverne. In Hempstead, in particular, battles were being fought on more than one front at the same time. While the New York State Education Department continued its emphasis on “correcting racial imbalances and improving the quality of integrated education,” the issue had taken a back seat in Hempstead. It was clear that it would be virtually impossible to achieve in a district like Hempstead. However, with the assistance and support of organizations like the NAACP and Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), Hempstead’s black residents actively challenged systemic racism in other institutions.

One major area of contention was the exclusion of blacks from volunteer fire departments across Long Island. A survey conducted in 1964 by the local newspaper, Newsday, found that not one of Nassau County’s seventy-one fire departments had an African American member. Two years later, only four departments Island-wide had any black members. The president of the local chapter of CORE called Long Island’s fire departments “the last bastion of the bigot north of the Mason-Dixon line.” Several black men had repeatedly attempted to join Hempstead’s volunteer fire department but had been
prevent from doing so by discriminatory membership rules such as the requirement that prospective members attain the signatures of six existing firemen, and the practice of blackballing, in which one anonymous negative vote could prevent an individual from being accepted as a member. In 1967, a verbal confrontation between the Mayor of Hempstead and members of the NAACP and CORE on the subject led to threats from black participants that they would “tie up Hempstead in boycotts and demonstrations.” The Mayor responded with the threat to quell any disorder with “guns if we have to.” This angry repartee was an example of the rhetoric of violence that was increasing on Long Island and throughout the country. Members of the Village Board and the Fire Department continued to resist and it was not until 1969 that the first African American were allowed to join the Hempstead Fire Department.

Hempstead’s African American residents, many who were members of local chapters of the NAACP and CORE, were on the forefront of struggles to increase employment opportunities for blacks. They also actively protested housing discrimination in the Village. For example, in 1963, black residents picketed Village Hall and staged an economic boycott of Village stores to protest the Village Board’s decision to downzone a vacant tract of land adjacent to a predominantly black middle-income housing development from residential to industrial. Residents asserted that having an industrial area in such close proximity to their homes would reduce the value of their homes and be deleterious to their quality of life. The “Don’t Shop in Hempstead” campaign was effective, drawing a swift response from downtown business owners, who urged the Mayor and Board of Trustees to reverse their decision. Although newspaper accounts of the boycott state that it “was orderly and without incident,” the Mayor again used a rhetoric of violence and fear, attributing the Board’s
decision to reverse the zoning change to its “obligation to prevent riots and injuries to residents, merchants and shoppers.” The following year, in 1964, a 16-year old African American honor student, the brother of one of the girls who had transferred to Fulton School with me, was shot to death on a downtown street by a Village police officer. There was a community outcry and charges of police brutality and the NAACP demanded that the Village Board of Trustees initiate a full investigation.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the percentage of black students attending Hempstead High School was relatively low, reflective of the relatively small number of African Americans who resided in the Village. As the number of African American families in Hempstead increased during the 1940s and 1950s, the percentage of black students enrolled in the high school also increased. As white families began to leave Hempstead in favor of newer, more racially homogeneous subdivisions to the east, there was a perceptible decline in the number of white students progressing from Hempstead’s elementary schools into the high school. As a result, white enrollment in the high school diminished rapidly over the course of the 1960s. Whites comprised sixty nine percent of Hempstead High School’s student body in 1960; ten years later, only twenty-two percent of all students enrolled in the high school were white.

Hempstead High School was not part of discussions about racial imbalance in the early part of the 1960s. In 1963, Hempstead High School’s student population was over half (57%) white. During that period, white students who enrolled in the high school lived in neighborhoods throughout the district, both those that remained predominantly white as well as those that were in transition. Despite the Superintendent of Schools’ 1958 observation that “the type of Negro moving into the community, by and large, has been the upper income or
high middle income and professional person," whites living in neighborhoods with rapidly increasing numbers of African American residents were already leaving the district in relatively large numbers. By 1963, Jackson School, one of the three schools identified as racially imbalanced, was eighty three percent black. One former resident, part of Jackson School’s 1963 eighth grade graduating class, recalls white classmates commenting that their families would be moving because there were too many Negroes in the schools. The hastening pace of white flight from neighborhoods in transition from white to black is further substantiated by an anecdote that a former classmate shared. A graduate of Franklin School, one of the other elementary schools identified as being racially imbalanced, she recalls being one of only a few black children in Franklin School when she initially started in the primary grades. However, as a junior high student in the late 1960s, she recalls asking her social studies teacher “if we are a minority, where [are] all the whites?”

Hempstead High School’s yearbook, The Colonial, provides an excellent tool for observing racial change in the high school. Yearbooks from the decade of the 1960s, in particular, show a school in transition. Even a cursory perusal of the individual photographs of graduating seniors, underclass groupings, and group photos of participants in clubs and other student activities prove the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. Observed in such a visual manner, the relative rapidity with which the white student body declined between the mid to late 1960s, is particularly striking. In addition to a portraying a continuous decline in overall white enrollment, the yearbooks show a pattern of reduced participation among white students in major extracurricular activities, including class and student government, yearbook and student newspaper staff, and athletic teams. Visual
assessment of the racial makeup of such student groups provides a telling picture of the composition of the student body.

There are clearly limitations in such an exercise. Yearbook photographs, usually taken over the course of several days, are merely a “snapshot” in time; consequently, there is inherent inaccuracy in conducting a simple count of faces. Students may have been absent on the day photographs were taken, or students may have begun the school year but left before class photographs were taken in early spring. However, even in the face of such apparent limitations, this exercise proved useful for getting a feel for how Hempstead High School changed during those years.

Graduation pictures for the classes of 1964 through 1967 show relative stability in the percentage of white students graduating from Hempstead High School. After a high of sixty-four percent in the class of 1964, the percentage of white graduates declined further over the next three years, averaging fifty-five percent for the classes of 1965, 1966, and 1967. From personal knowledge along with that of individuals who attended Hempstead High during those years, it is possible to conclude that significant numbers of white students pictured lived in the neighborhoods that were served by the predominantly white Fulton, Ludlum and Washington elementary schools, further indication that families removed their children from the public schools sooner when they resided in a neighborhood with a racially imbalanced school. By 1969, the percentage of white graduates had further declined to forty-three percent. The most dramatic drop by far occurred between 1969 and 1970. By 1970, only twenty-six percent of the Hempstead High School graduating class was white. This reflects a precipitous decline in white enrollment that began in the mid-1960s as well as an increase in the number of white students who transferred out of the school at some point before
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graduation. Fewer and fewer white students attended and graduated from the high school in subsequent years, and by 1974, only thirteen percent of the graduating class was white.

Having transferred to Fulton School as a fifth grader in the fall of 1963, I graduated from Fulton School along with 49 other eighth graders in June 1967. Thirty-seven of the graduates were white, and 12 were black. In addition, there was one Asian student in the graduating class. With the exception of one student whose family lived within the school’s attendance zone, all of the black graduates had joined the class in 1963, as participants in the permissive transfer program.

In 1967, sixty-eight percent of all students enrolled in Hempstead Public Schools were nonwhite. This was a substantially higher proportion than in any of the adjacent districts. For example, Garden City, to the north, had no nonwhite students and only one percent of the students attending West Hempstead’s schools were nonwhite. Only ten percent of students in the Uniondale school district, which encompassed the eastern section of the Village, were nonwhite. Roosevelt, a community unsuccessfully battling the scourge of blockbusting, had a nonwhite student population of over fifty percent.132

While 11 of 12 of my fellow black classmates continued on to Hempstead High School in the fall of 1967, less than one-half (14 out of 37) of white students enrolled.133 White parents who did not want their child to attend Hempstead High School were able to exercise several options. One was to move to another community all together. The other option would have been to send their child by district-supplied bus to a local parochial high school or to an independent school. It is noteworthy that two of the white children from my elementary school graduating class who did not proceed to attend Hempstead High were the
children of prominent members of the community, including the Village Justice and, more significantly, a member of the School Board.

The trajectory of the Fulton School graduating class of 1967 reflects a trend that had started earlier in the decade, and that had caused the balance of Hempstead High’s student population to tip from white to black. Not only did fewer white children enroll in the high school as ninth graders, an increasing number of white (and some black) parents began to withdraw students part way through their high school career. The rapid decline in the percentage of white students graduating from the high school between 1969 (42%) and 1970 (22%) can be attributed in large measure to this trend.

It is apparent that the increasing militancy of the times was reflected in actions being taken at the high school. Among other things, black students demanded the addition of black history and culture to the curriculum. Early in the 1969-1970 school year, a committee composed of students, teachers, and parents was formed to consider issues confronting the high school, including curriculum, discipline policies, and race relations. Although the exact causes are generally unknown, friction between black and white students escalated during the school year, and in March 1970, a series of incidents occurred that resulted in closure of the High School for several days. Although these incidents appear to be a largely forgotten blip in the overall life of those enrolled in the high school at the time, it was apparently a signal of impending change for some white parents. Before the school year was over, some had removed their children from Hempstead High School.

As evidenced by individual senior class pictures printed in the 1971 edition of The Colonial, ten of the fifty-eight white members of Hempstead High School’s 1971 graduating class had graduated from Fulton School in 1967. They were among the fourteen white
students who began ninth grade in the high school. However, four of the fourteen did not stay to graduate. Two of the four students remained through the end of junior year in June 1970 but did not return to complete their senior year at Hempstead High School; one of these students accelerated her course of study in order to graduate in three years with the class of 1970. The remaining two students were among those who withdrew from Hempstead High School in the spring of 1970, and are among the students absent from the school in my memory of the aftermath of the March 1970 racial unrest. The fact that each of these students withdrew from Hempstead High School at some point during 1970 not only substantiates my memory, but provides evidence that 1970 represented a turning point in the life of Hempstead High School, one with far-reaching ramifications for the entire Hempstead community.

Even a rapid paging through subsequent editions of the *Colonial* confirms that the final exodus of white students from the high school was precipitated by events that occurred in 1970. Although white residents continued to comprise a substantial portion of the Hempstead Village populace, their presence was not reflected in the composition of the student body of the high school. A calculation of the number of white and black graduating seniors pictured in yearbooks for 1971 through 1974, provide evidence that the percentage of white students who graduated from Hempstead High declined steadily over those years, from twenty-two percent in 1971 to thirteen percent in 1974. Yearbooks for the last years of the nineteen seventies show clearly that, by the end of the decade, only a negligible number of white students were enrolled in Hempstead High School.

The situation in Hempstead was further exacerbated in July 1970, when a fire tore through Hempstead High School, destroying a significant portion of the stately circa 1922
building. Among the portion of the structure destroyed were the main classroom wings and the auditorium. With a new high school building and campus nearing completion at another site, the facility was in the process of being renovated for future use as a middle school for sixth through eighth graders. Although stories of speculated arson continue to circulate forty years later, the most likely cause of the fire was a spark from faulty electrical wiring, and the degree of destruction attributed to the rapidity with which the fire traveled through the building in the space between the newly lowered and the original arched ceilings.

Coming on the heels of the spring’s racial tension, the destruction of central portions of the high school, in particular the portico of the auditorium with its carved moniker “Hempstead High School,” further impacted perceptions of the high school, the school district and the community as a whole. When school reopened in September 1970, a number of students, both black and white, were absent not only from the senior class, but from lower classes as well.

For close to fifty years, the original Hempstead High School building played a central role in the lives of residents of Hempstead and surrounding communities, serving as an icon of community pride. Although the name “Hempstead High School” exists on the contemporary-designed building that opened in the Fall of 1971 and remnants of the old high school building have been incorporated into the current middle school facility, for many, the Hempstead High School fondly remembered by so many died in 1970. Not only did it cease to exist as a “site of memory” in the community, the physical loss of the building only heightened the loss in stature of Hempstead High School that occurred beginning in the 1960s, a perception that was repeatedly reinforced as its once stellar reputation declined over the subsequent decades.
Over the course of the next several years, the design of the middle school to be built on the site proved contentious and pitted black against white residents. Before fire destroyed the original high school building, plans had been underway to modernize and retrofit the facility to make turn it an appropriate learning environment for sixth through eighth graders. Once this option was foreclosed, it was necessary to develop plans for a completely new facility. One proposal presented by white residents and supported by the two white School Board members was for establishment of a school for gifted children on the site. This proposal was controversial and vehemently opposed by black residents. Sensitive to the fact that many whites still adhered to cultural beliefs about the intellectual inferiority of black people, and to historical attempts by whites to exclude blacks from advanced academic opportunities, many blacks saw this as an attempt on the part of white residents to create a separate school that would draw white students back into the district while ignoring the needs of the majority black school population who would be forced to remain in overcrowded schools. Although the Board of Education did not go forward with this proposal, it once again split along racial lines over whether the new building should have a traditional or open floor plan. Some blacks expressed the feeling that white opposition to an open floor plan was based on stereotypical beliefs and fears that black students would be uncontrollable in such an unstructured setting.\textsuperscript{138}

Although white flight from predominantly black schools was itself problematic, even more so was the overt statement it made about integrated education. In most communities, the local high school plays a role in bringing all parts of the community together. Sports teams, theater groups, marching bands and orchestras are among the activities that bring students and families from diverse backgrounds together in support of a common goal.
Consequently, in a community like Hempstead, where younger children commonly followed in the paths of older siblings, the sudden refusal of white parents to either enroll their younger children in the high school or to remove them part way through made a troubling statement. It was even more problematic for the image of the schools and community when those removing their children were the professionals, business owners, government officials, and other members of the community that had traditionally provided leadership in the schools and contributed to the tax base that supported public education. In choosing to remove their children from the public schools, white residents effectively broke the links in the chain that bound the Hempstead Village community together. Even if they retained a Hempstead address, a commonality that had once existed among all residents in the district disappeared. Even though blacks, both nationally and on the local level, were becoming less interested in desegregation as a goal, the overt white rejection of the schools of Hempstead Union Free School District #1 reflected their lack of faith that a predominantly black school could provide their child with a satisfactory education, and effectively signaled an end to the objective touted less than ten years earlier that equal educational opportunities for black and white children could be achieved in an integrated setting.
**Racialization and Remembrance: A Double-Edged Sword**

Just as instances of African American resistance and rebellion through the centuries have been omitted from or marginalized in mainstream narratives of United States history, instances of activism and agency on the part of local black people before, during, and after the civil rights era of the nineteen sixties are also absent from the historical narratives of many local communities. The Village of Hempstead in New York State is a case in point. As this paper has shown, during the decades of the nineteen fifties and sixties, in particular, many of Hempstead’s African American residents were active in the Civil Rights/Black Freedom movement and on the forefront of efforts to challenge racially discriminatory policies and practices that prevented blacks from equal access to housing, jobs, educational opportunities, and political representation throughout the region. Their efforts led to significant changes that are evident in the community today. Yet, the history of the Civil Rights movement in Hempstead is missing from the historical narrative of the community. Over the course of the ensuing half-century, the legacy of the individuals and organizations that fought against racial discrimination in all aspects of community life has been forgotten by all but a few individuals. The reasons why Hempstead’s civil rights history has been forgotten and the impact of this forgetting on the Hempstead community today are closely intertwined and can be envisioned as a double-edged sword that slices through the fabric of the community.

The rapid decline in white enrollment that began more than forty years ago has culminated today in the virtual absence of white children from the public schools of Hempstead Union Free School District #1. Yet, although the vast majority of students attending Hempstead Public Schools today are black or Hispanic, Hempstead Village’s
overall population continues to be close to one-quarter white. While the racial/ethnic composition of schools in the district does not reflect the makeup of the Village’s overall population, the perception that it does contributes in large measure to the contemporary racialization of the Village.

Through the process of racialization that occurred beginning in the later decades of the twentieth century, Hempstead Village has come to be identified as Other in relation to other communities on Long Island, particularly in Nassau County, simply because the majority of its residents are not white. Due to the persistence into the twenty-first century of ingrained cultural beliefs in white superiority, and the negative connotations associated with blackness perpetuated by media, Hempstead is widely perceived as inferior to predominantly white communities. This racialized identity impacts all Hempstead residents, regardless of race or ethnicity. Not only does it affect residents view themselves as community members, it also impacts how those outside perceive the community, particularly when all problematic issues in the Village, from economic decline to crime to poor test scores are racialized. This has very real consequences in the present, impacting the social, economic, and political systems within the community. It also influences what the community chooses to remember about its past, which in turn influences the trajectory of the community’s historical narrative.

The official narrative of Hempstead Village’s past recounts the story of more than 300 years of progress, prosperity and commercial prominence that declined precipitously during the last quarter of the 20th century. The declension in commercial prominence that occurred during the latter part of the twentieth century is widely attributed to the development of centralized shopping malls, like Roosevelt Field Mall, that drew retail away from downtown Hempstead beginning in the decades following World War II. Until that
time, Hempstead Village had been known as “The Hub” of Nassau County, serving as the retail and social center for the smaller and less densely settled areas surrounding it. By the nineteen fifties, it enjoyed a reputation as a suburban town with urban amenities. This is where Hempstead’s history ends, according to the last official written history prepared by the Village Historian in 1997.\textsuperscript{141}

Clearly, other factors must be taken into consideration as well. With nearby suburban residential communities, such as Levittown, fostering a culture of racial segregation and exclusion, and shopping malls seeking “to filter out not only the inefficiencies and inconveniences of the city but also the undesirable people who lived there,”\textsuperscript{142} Hempstead’s rapidly growing African American population was problematic within a national ethos in which the derogatory monikers ‘urban’ and ‘ghetto’ were applied to any locale where there was a concentration of black people. In this context, Hempstead’s changing racial composition was enough to lead to a perceived loss of status on the part of both white residents and outsiders. Until that time, Hempstead’s heterogeneity had been an accepted fact; it had never been considered a reason for the Village to be viewed as less than anywhere else. Thus, the devaluation of Hempstead in terms of its residential, economic, and educational desirability can clearly be understood as a consequence of the process of racialization.

With the abundance of Spanish stores, restaurants, and bodegas that line the main streets, catering to Latinos of many nationalities, people find it difficult to recall that fifty years ago well over three-quarters of Hempstead’s population was white. In fact, imagining that the Village of Hempstead was ever other than the way it is today is virtually impossible
on the part of both current residents and outsiders whose only knowledge comes from what they personally observe or experience, hear from someone, read in the newspaper or see on television. It is common to hear individuals, both white and black, remark “Hempstead used to be such a nice place to live.” Many recall shopping in the department and specialty stores that once lined downtown streets, or Saturday double features at the Calderone Theater. What is not voiced, but implied nonetheless, is completion of the sentence with the words “when white people lived there.” Also implied in these recollections is the underlying belief that the community’s decline can be attributed to the skin color of its residents, situating black people as creators of the present-day situation while neglecting to account for the role whites played in its creation.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s statement that “history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives”\textsuperscript{143} has particular salience to this discussion. Despite the fact that African Americans have comprised the largest portion of Hempstead Village’s population for decades, the history of the community is still being told from the perspective of the dominant culture. Relatively little about the history of African Americans in Hempstead has been chronicled or documented. Consequently, little is known about historically black neighborhoods, organizations, or institutions in the community. In particular, the Village’s civil rights history, including the instances of activism discussed in this paper, have been largely forgotten or deemed unimportant relative to current events.

To a significant degree, the breach in Hempstead’s twentieth century historical narrative, in which the Village transforms seemingly overnight from a retail and social center, with top ranked schools, and a reputation as a “nice place to live,” to a crime-ridden community whose public schools rank on the bottom statewide, and whose downtown is in
perpetual need of revitalization, can be understood as a manifestation of the collective white memories upon which it is constructed. Whites, however, are not the only ones who share these memories; blacks have also appropriated them, based either on personal experience or hearsay. The collective, or public, remembering of certain aspects of the past also allows for the public forgetting of others. If the only thing remembered is how “nice” things used to be when the majority of residents were white, it is possible to forget that black residents were typically denied the same opportunities afforded their white peers. It is possible to forget that the African Americans who made Hempstead their home in the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s sought the same things as their white counterparts – a safe, healthy, suburban environment in which to raise a family, including a one-family home with a backyard, safe streets, and good schools, but did not have the same options. Perhaps they preferred to live in one of the new suburban communities but were steered to Hempstead by realtors who sought to keep Long Island’s new subdivisions all white. It is easy to forget that fifty years ago it was difficult for African Americans to purchase homes in certain neighborhoods, even though they may have been more educated or had higher paying jobs than the whites who already lived there. It is possible to forget that, although black residents desired to participate in all facets of the community, including serving as volunteer firefighters, they were denied the opportunity to do so.

As shown in this paper, Hempstead’s civil rights activists faced many challenges and successfully achieved many goals during the civil rights movement. They successfully fought against discriminatory and exclusionary practices kept blacks from equal opportunities and that precluded the full participation of black residents in the life of the community. As a
result, today blacks are members of the Hempstead Fire Department and comprise the majority on both the Board of Education and the Village Board of Trustees. However, these dedicated individuals failed to achieve one of their major goals, namely, providing the black children of the school district with equal educational opportunities through the creation of racially integrated public schools. The individuals who fought so hard in the nineteen fifties and sixties for equal educational opportunities for the black children of Hempstead Union Free School District #1 could not have anticipated that the ultimate outcome of their efforts. Despite their best intentions, they were unable to combat white resident’s ultimate weapon – their ability to move out. As a result, Hempstead’s black residents were unable to overcome the deep-seated cultural beliefs and media-fueled misconceptions that led to the desire and ability of significant numbers of whites to distance themselves from blacks by withdrawing their children from the schools and removing themselves from the community altogether. The impact of this failed quest reverberates into the present, both in the quality of education currently received by students in Hempstead Public Schools and the generally negative perceptions of place that Hempstead is subjected to.

In light of present-day realities, it might be easy to conclude that the efforts of these civil rights activists were in vain, leaving little of value or importance to remember. Some might ask what purpose can there be in remembering failure? However, I agree with Patricia Burgess’ assertion that “[to] truly understand the past, we must know the other, “unofficial” histories of each time and place.”\textsuperscript{144} The current omission of Hempstead Village’s “unofficial” civil rights history creates a void in the historical narrative that prevents the present from being put in context. Additionally, it perpetuates the stigmatization of the very group whose rights were originally violated by neglecting to appropriately place the
ostensible failure in the context of the systemic racism of the postwar period that led to segregated housing and racially imbalanced schools in the first instance, and the white privilege that gave white residents greater housing options and the ability to escape heterogeneous residential living environments.

Despite current realities, it seems incongruous that residents of this predominantly African American community have failed to remember, recount, and celebrate the efforts taken by the Village’s black residents during the civil rights movement, particularly when their efforts had tremendous impact locally as well as being part of a larger regional and national story. Perhaps it is as simple as Manning Marable’s assertion that black people, “influenced by America’s master narrative,” tend to “deny the validity of [their] own … experiences.”

Or, perhaps the daily reminders of the failed objectives provide sufficient motivation for Hempstead’s current African American residents to forget. Constantly subjected to the negative perceptions of Hempstead that result from the community’s spatial racialization, it is possible that black residents have acquired an attitude that says, in effect, if we want to be seen as equal with our neighbors, why draw attention to race-related issues when they are among the major factors distinguishing us from our?

Knowledge of Hempstead’s civil rights history can help to repair the tear in the community’s fabric caused by the double-edged sword of forgetfulness and the reasons why the community has felt it necessary to forget. However, unless African Americans insist that this important part of the Village’s past is included in the community’s historical narrative, it is likely that the silence will continue. The primary reason for this is that members of the dominant culture have little or no reason to tell and promote the story of minority groups, particularly if the stories reflect resistance to the status quo. Within the schema of white
superiority, dominance, and control that is continues to be evident at all levels of American life, the deliberate omission of certain individuals and events perpetuates the power of the dominant culture to determine what is collectively remembered and forgotten, and to ensure that the historical narrative that is created and maintained fulfills the specific needs of those in power. Michael Rolph Trouillot notes that it is “the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.” As long as the mainstream historical narrative continues to reflect notions of white hegemony and white cultural dominance, the lived experiences of blacks will continue to be devalued.

The act of remembering only certain aspects of the past poses problems for whites and blacks alike. Failure to remember events such as those discussed in this paper, and the circumstances that were the impetus for them, perpetuates a mindset that situates blacks as both the perpetuator and the victim, while absolving whites any responsibility, able to tell blacks “look what happened when you got the opportunity to participate fully.” Further, the failure to remember makes it possible for whites to deny the extent to which the systemic racism and discriminatory practices of the post-World War II period impacted blacks in communities like Hempstead Village, and that issues like white privilege, which gave whites the mobility to leave Hempstead as the black population grew continue today. The absence of these topics from contemporary discourse has serious ramifications, since “[d]enying the racism of the past thwarts the connection between past and present—and the ongoing legacy of racialization today.”

Although the hoped for outcome of a racially integrated educational system failed to materialize in the long term, the individuals and organizations who led and participated in efforts to achieve this goal fifty years ago leave a tremendous legacy. They are truly part of
Hempstead Village’s “living Black history.” The fact that these individuals took a concerted stance against prejudice and discrimination is something to be celebrated. That they resisted being second-class citizens and, with courage and determination, fought a sustained battle for equal rights and equal opportunities is something to be remembered with pride. Knowledge of these events has the potential to provide powerful lessons for the present and the future, particularly for young people who only know what they see and experience today. Through the process of *re-membering* Hempstead’s civil rights history to the official historical narrative of the community, there is potential to finally “win the war” by upending the existing narrative of failure and loss and replacing it with a potent and unforgettable legacy of agency and action.
Notes

1 “Transcript of Brown v. Board of Education (1954),”
5 “Ask LI Board to Integrate Schools,” Newsday, May 1, 1960.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 2.
10 Hempstead Schools Bulletin, Vol. 11 No. 1 (September 1963), 1.
11 John Cooke, Historical Perspective – Segregation and Integration in Hempstead, 3.
12 “History of the Town” www.toh.li/content/tc/history.html
17 For the various stages of African American suburbanization see Andrew Wiese, Places of Their Own.
18 Bowen interview.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
Literature on northern desegregation generally identifies the following as Northern states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa.


Ibid., 32.

Ibid., 19.

Ibid., 33.

Ibid., 41.

Ibid., 40.

Ibid., 46.

See Douglas 50-60.

Ibid., 61.

Ibid., 84.

Kluger, 49.

Douglas, 102.

Ibid., 103.

For a detailed discussion of impact of the Great Migration on the increase in segregation in Northern states see Douglas 134-8.

Ibid., 135.

For information about reasons for northern school segregation and its impact on black students see Douglas 138-53.

Ibid., 151.


Douglas, 47.

For an in-depth discussion of both positions see Douglas, 172-185.


Douglas, 220.

Douglas, 275.

Douglas, 234.

Ibid.

Ibid., 240.

Ibid.

Ibid., 256-7.

American Council of Race Relations. Booklet. n.d.

State Education Department, *Education for Unity in the Schools of the State of New*

63 Reddick, 300.
64 Marsh and Kaplan, 38.
65 Douglas, 269.
66 Ibid., 277.
68 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 5.
80 Marable, xi.
82 Jeanne Theoharis, “I’d Rather Go to School in the South”: How Boston’s School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Right’s Paradigm” in Freedom North: Black Freedom


84 Personal interview with Hildene Bowen, October 2010.


88 Douglas, 278.

89 Ibid., 154.


92 “Integration in Hempstead,” n.d.

93 “Ask LI Board to Integrate Schools,” Newsday, May 1, 1960.

94 Ibid.

95 Freedom North, 128.


97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.


103 Ibid.


105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.


108 Ibid., 3.

109 Ibid., 2.

110 Kluger, 762.

111 Hempstead Branch NAACP, Untitled flyer, n.d.

112 “Trial on Bias in Manhasset School Ends,” Newsday, n.d.

113 See Douglas for additional information on efforts to desegregate schools in these states.

115 Howlett, 162.
118 Hempstead Schools Bulletin, Vol. 11 No. 1 (September 1963), 1.
120 Personal interview with John Cooke, Nov. 2001.
121 “Status of State Aid for Experimentation and Innovation Projects for Correcting Racial Imbalance: An Interim Report (February 23, 1967),” University of the State of New York-The State Education Department, New York State Archives. SED Commissioner’s Subject Files, 1942-1956, Series 15080-78 Box 8 Folder 11.
123 Howlett, 170.
124 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
129 Integration in Hempstead, n.d.
131 Kathleen Rollins, E-mail message, Mar. 3, 2011.
133 Based on a comparison of students shown in “Fulton School Class of 1967” photograph and class photographs in 1968 edition of The Colonial.
135 Ibid.
138 For additional information on this controversy see Laval S. Wilson, “Can An Open Space Middle School Meet the Educational Needs of Minority Youngsters?,” The Journal of Negro Education 44:3 (Summer 1975), 368-376.
140 Kobayashi and Peake define racialization as “the process by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often


144 Burgess, 656.


146 Trouillot, 25

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