

Statement To The Committee On Equal Educational Opportunity  
March 5, 1971

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for inviting me to appear before it today. Second, I wish to state that I do not speak for all Blacks, nor do I consider myself an authority on the educational problems of Black people. However, having spent some time as a member of a secondary school board, I feel I am in a position to offer some comments on the subject.

I resigned in disgust after reaching the following conclusions:

- a. This society did not intend for Black people to be educated in its public schools;
- b. The public schools, unwilling to educate Black children, were incapable of educating non-black children;
- c. Given the method of operation and the achievement record of the educational system, Black people would not be educated in the next 25 or 50 years.

Therefore, upon resigning from the public school board, I intensified my efforts with the Nairobi Schools; this is a private educational alternative on the peninsula which primarily addresses itself to the education of Black people.

A great deal of attention, perhaps too much, has been given to the topic of desegregation throughout the country. In my opinion, desegregation is but one of the many educational programs which have been exploiting and abusing Black and low-income people. Some of the other programs contributing to the abuse and destruction are the "tracking" system, compensatory education, teacher certification programs, computerized instruction, varsity athletics and progressive education programs. Speaking of the latter, I have found that many Black people who are seriously into educating Black people are very reluctant when it comes to adopting and evaluating progressive education programs. Perhaps all that is needed, and I believe this is the basic philosophy of the Nairobi Schools, is

an honest, manifested belief on the part of the instructor that the Black child sitting in front of him can learn; he must realize that he is teaching a person not a subject.

I believe that instead of concentrating on the educational programs, attention should be focused on who is in control of schools operating within any community. Why? Because any educational program, irrespective of how well conceived it is, or how successful it is considered to be, is no better than the belief and enthusiasm put into it by the Board of Trustees. For this reason, I believe the courts and federal agencies should have focused on desegregating school boards rather than student bodies. Desegregation is one the educational alternatives in Black and low-income communities; community control is another, and a more compelling one at that. Thus, more attention must be given to bringing control and accountability to the community. Mere decentralization will not suffice in the long run. One way of bringing control to the community is to reverse the trend toward larger school districts. In reversing this trend, the chances of Black and low-income people being elected to the school boards would be increased. Of course, this would have to be accompanied by additional financial support other than through revenue derived from property taxes; increased state-level support could provide the solution to this aspect of the problem.

This country, under great pressure, decided that economic monopolies were not in its best interest. I believe the same argument applies to education, especially in Black and low-income communities where parents are unable to send their children to private schools. For this reason, the voucher system must be implemented because it gives Black and poor parents the option of selecting schools for their children. The voucher system can be considered an educational program, too; its effectiveness as a program will be dependent upon how it is controlled. Unfortunately, many of the voucher system legislative models I have researched have placed an excessive amount of control in the hands of the local boards; these same boards control programs that have failed the Black and low-in

come communities to date. Local boards, or traditional policy-making systems presently in operation, must not play a critical part in the voucher system or demonstration projects if those programs are to succeed.

Lastly, satellite systems of private schools must be developed in Black and low-income communities. Clusters of families, comprising between 50 to 75 children between the ages of 3 and 8 years, must be organized to begin the task of taking the education of their children into their own hands. One suggestion would be that the parents start schools on a once-a-week basis as a supplemental or tutorial program and then spin off into independent orbits after several years of operation and experience.

These are my abridged thoughts. I hope you find them to be of some value.

Thank you.

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