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To Fight the Good Fight:" The Battle Over Control of the Pasadena City Schools, 1969-1979

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In January of 1970, Pasadena, California held the dubious distinction of being the first non-Southern city ordered by the federal courts to desegregate its public school system. This court-order sparked a decade long battle within the school district. Pasadenans became entrenched in two camps: progressives who wanted to integrate the schools and fundamentalists who vowed to stop court-ordered busing. Despite Pasadena's precedent setting role, historians have neglected it. The battle in Pasadena is significant, however, because it suggests an anti-busing motive that historians have overlooked. The evidence shows that opponents of integration in Pasadena used the tension over busing mainly as an election tool. Their agenda was twofold. First, they wanted to purify ideologically the public school system. Secondly, in order to achieve their first goal they needed to maintain local control, so they fought increasing federal intervention at every turn.

The evidence shows that the federal court-order to desegregate the public school system caused a large number of moderate conservatives to shift to a more extreme position. This movement allowed fundamentalists to gain enough support using a "Stop Forced Busing" slogan to be elected to office and form a majority on the school board. It was clear to many in the community that fundamentalists had capitalized upon the fears of Pasadenans in order to gain control of the board so that they could execute policies designed to return the public schools to their pre-1920s state of "fundamental education." This paper is an attempt to examine the turbulent decade of the 1970s in Pasadena in order to understand the ideology of the fundamentalists who dominated the school board. From 1973 on, the battle over control of the school district had four main focal points: book banning, the creation of fundamental schools, purging the district of educators with unacceptable political philosophies, and, ending federal control of the school district. While these objectives were all tinged with racism, they were in reality much broader and more complex. The events surrounding the desegregation of the Pasadena school system presents a challenge to the current race-centered analysis of anti-busing sentiment.

Literature on anti-busing sentiment in the North and West tends to support a focus on race as the central issue involved. In Boston for example, both Ronald P. Formisano and J. Anthony Lukas[1] found that the most violent reaction against busing and school desegregation came from the white working-class that felt betrayed by desegregation policies which targeted their communities while leaving the wealthier white suburbs effectively segregated. Both historians stress the key role played by racism in efforts to maintain segregated schooling in Boston. In fact, the historical scholarship that discusses northern busing issues seems to focus on the role of racism and place it at the center of the busing opposition's motives. The evidence from Pasadena, however, radically alters that perception. The actions of fundamentalists suggest that the role of anti-busing sentiments and the events in Pasadena were imbedded in a larger conservative agenda which was motivated in part by religious fundamentalism and an opposition to big government.

This would suggest that anti-busing needs a broader analysis and that it would benefit from the historiography dealing with the rise of the political right in the post-World War II era. Historians need to look to sociology and the work of scholars such as Jerome Himmelstein. The concerns of fundamentalists in Pasadena fit neatly into studies of the rise of the political right in the 1970s and 1980s. Fundamentalists were deeply troubled by what they took to be the moral decay of American society. They were frightened by the "growing domestic conflict over family, gender roles, and basic values."2 These members of the political right in Pasadena also expressed concern over "collectivism, the tendency of the state to organize and control all social life."3 This issue of creeping federal control panicked Pasadena's fundamentalists and in 1970 they were sent into a tailspin when the federal government stepped in and took over the school district. This sense of panic and doom led them to adopt a "siege mentality" which increased throughout the 1970s. The evidence presented in this paper strongly suggests that Pasadena's anti- busing fight belongs in the historiography of the rise of the political right rather than in the traditional anti-busing historiography which focuses almost exclusively upon race relations.4

The Pasadena School District, like many districts throughout the country, was divided into racially and politically distinct neighborhoods. So, in order to understand the dynamics of Pasadena school politics in the 1970s it is necessary to get a sense of the geography and of the history of the school district. The district is made up of several distinct neighborhoods that predictably voted liberal or conservative. The first, and most important, neighborhood is the northwest section of Pasadena. This portion of the city was a densely populated section where African Americans and Hispanics were forced to live, primarily because of a long history of housing discrimination. This area was bordered on the west by the Arroyo,5 on the north by the foothills, on the east by Foothill Boulevard and on the south by Washington Boulevard. According to the findings of Robin Kelley, as late as 1973 ninety-five percent of the African American population in Pasadena still lived in the northwest area.6 This group of people had to shoulder the brunt of the school board's extremist actions in the 1970s. Consistently throughout the decade residents of the Northwest section fought against fundamentalists. Leaders backed by the NAACP and local black churches regularly protested school board policies in the newspapers and at school board meetings.7

At the opposite end of the spectrum and on the opposite side of the district rested solidly conservative to extremely conservative communities: East Altadena, Sierra Madre and Hastings Ranch. All three of these neighborhoods were entirely made up of white middle-class residents. Since Pasadena had no significant white working-class population, the residents of these areas represented those who had most recently climbed out of the lower middle-class and the working-class. Compared to the older sections of Pasadena, where upper- and upper- middle class families had resided since the early twentieth century, these sections were made up of relative newcomers to the area. Because many of these residents had the most to lose they vehemently opposed busing and school desegregation. The fears of these Pasadenans probably stemmed from the fact that they did not have the option of sending their children to private schools or becoming part of the "white flight" 8 that surrounded them. Many of the white people in these neighborhoods had struggled hard to purchase their homes and they worried that their property values would drop if Pasadena became integrated, and so they felt trapped. As the newly arrived middle-class perhaps they also supported racially discriminatory policies simply because part of their sense of status rested upon a feeling of racial superiority. 9 The racism running throughout these neighborhoods allowed them to be manipulated by school board candidates using "anti-busing" and other racially charged campaign slogans.

Because these racially segregated communities were the most predictable in their voting patterns, it was the other areas of Pasadena that school board elections and news analysts tended to target: Linda Vista, San Rafael, and southern portions of the city. These neighborhoods provided the swing votes in

local elections. During the 1970s these neighborhoods in Pasadena became susceptible to the racist propaganda of the fundamentalists. In the 1971, 1973 and 1975 elections, the majority of white precincts supported fundamentalist candidates. 10 And it is these voters who moved the ideological make-up of the board solidly to the right.

Moderates fell prey to the rallying cry of "stop forced busing" trumpeted in Pasadena in the 1960s and 1970s. Busing, they believed, would remove their children from the neighborhoods and put them at risk by sending them into dangerous neighborhoods in the predominantly African American sections of the city. Desegregating the schools would destroy the quality of their children's education. So, maintaining the quality of Pasadena's public education for their children was one of their primary concerns. However, they also demanded that rising taxes be stopped. This group consistently voted against local bond measures for the schools out of a fear that it would cause a tax increase. Often times these two goals conflicted. By stopping forced busing they claimed that the district would save millions of dollars a year, thus fulfilling both of their concerns by insuring the quality of the schools and avoiding a tax hike.

A diverse group of Pasadenans made up this moderate camp. Many of them were parents of school age children, lots of whom would be part of the white flight when integration became the goal of the school board. These families, if they could afford to, left Pasadena for the surrounding communities of La Canada and San Marino or they sent their children to one of the areas many private institutions. A large number of Pasadenans fell into this group and therefore they were the people who both progressives and fundamentalists tried to bring into their camps throughout the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* era.

Fundamentalists and progressives were not new to the Pasadena school district. For decades public school politics in Pasadena had been suffering from a "yo-yo" effect. Each time progressives gained control they would throw out fundamentalist programs and policies. And each time fundamentalists gained control they would do the same to progressive policies.11 However, as the threat of forced integration grew over the decade preceding the 1970s so did the power of fundamentalists.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 had very little direct impact upon Pasadena because the African American population was relatively small. However, the population began to increase steadily in the 1960s and 1970s and the implications of *Brown* took on new proportions for Pasadenans. By the early 1960s, major desegregation decisions began placing the burden of integration upon local school boards. Nonetheless, the board in Pasadena continued to ignore the issue of desegregation.12

In lieu of making substantial progress towards desegregation, the school district poured millions of dollars in aid into compensatory education programs in predominantly black schools. Through these programs they hoped to appease state and federal agencies. Continually throughout the 1960s educationally conservative board members attempted to skirt visible integration within the schools. Aside from compensatory educational programs, in 1964 the school board announced "Plan IV" which allowed a small number of children from the seven "most segregated" schools to transfer to certain "receiving schools," provided that they could find their own transportation. Rather than desegregating the schools, "Plan IV" increased segregation in the district. Only 13.1% of students from the "most segregated" schools were white, but 31.1% of the students transferred to the "receiving schools" were white. Also, studies found that those with higher income levels were the ones who left the predominantly black schools.13 We seem to have a typical story of racist ideals controlling school board policies but through the actions of the fundamentalist board in the 1970s it becomes clear that their agenda was much more complicated than simply maintaining segregation and white dominance.

The easy victory of the fundamentalists slate of LuVerne LaMotte, Steve Salisian, and Joseph Engholm in March of 1965 using slogans such as, "Neighborhood Schools are in Danger!" demonstrates the growing fear on the part of many white Pasadenans that forced busing, an end to neighborhood schools and increased federal control was looming on their horizon. They were right. Over the next five years state and federal courts demanded that school districts take steps to desegregate. During that time as well a fundamental shift had taken place on the school board. LaMotte and Engholm had, during their tenure, moved from the fundamentalist camp to the progressive. Consistently during their first years in office they voted against any motions that would desegregate the schools.14 However, as they became more familiar with the school system and more concerned with the quality of education they shifted to an integrationist stance. After visiting the schools, both Engholm and LaMotte noted the marked difference in the predominantly African American schools and the principally white schools. Schools with a majority of African Americans were overcrowded and understaffed. The facilities were also older and more run down than the facilities for white children.15 By the time the two board members ran for re-election in 1969 their candidacy was endorsed by progressives and they were being denounced by the fundamentalists who had initially put them in office. 16

Nonetheless, Pasadena had not moved in the direction of integration and by the end of 1969 the federal court took the control out of their hands. Thus, because of conservative inaction one of their greatest fears was realized: The federal government stepped in to monitor the integration process. The federal government's presence in Pasadena was immediately evident and the fundamentalists felt that they were under attack which caused them to quickly adopt a "siege mentality." On January 20 1970, Federal District Court Judge Manuel Real gave the Pasadena City School District twenty-seven days to come up with a plan to desegregate the public school system. Not only did the District need to reduce the racial segregation of its students, but of its staff as well.

Elementary schools in Pasadena traditionally followed the most inflexible standards of segregation. During the 1969-1970 school year eighty-five percent of the school district's African-American elementary school children attended eight majority African-American elementary schools. At the same time, ninety-three percent of its white elementary age children attended the other twenty-one elementary schools in the district. Washington Elementary school, located east of the Arroyo in the Northwest section of Pasadena, for example, maintained an enrollment that was over ninety percent African-American. During the 1969-1970 school year twenty-eight white students and 1060 African-American students attended this school. The Linda Vista Elementary school, located approximately one mile away on the opposite side of the Arroyo, in an upper-middle class, all white section of Pasadena known as Linda Vista, had 163 white children and one African-American child enrolled during the same period. This was not a new phenomenon in Pasadena. Washington Elementary School had historically been a majority African-American school and Linda Vista had been a majority white school.

Cleveland Elementary School, also only a mile away from Linda Vista in the Northwest section of Pasadena, maintained an enrollment that was ninety-seven percent African-American. When Linda Vista Elementary School opened with space for 255 students, not enough children lived in the area to fill its limited capacity . Up until 1964 the school district assigned the white students from Cleveland and another majority African- American elementary school, Lincoln, to Linda Vista in order to fill this gap.

Another glaring example of the purposeful segregation involving these elementary schools can be seen between 1967 and 1969. The district closed Linda Vista school for two years in order to repair structural problems. Instead of reassigning these children to the three elementary schools in the Northwest area which were approximately one mile away and less crowded, at this time, the district

reassigned the children to a predominantly white school, San Rafael Elementary School over three miles away which had less room to accommodate these students than the closer, predominantly African-American elementary schools.

In his decision Real addressed those gross inequalities. He wrote:

> The plan shall provide for student assignments in such a manner that, by or before the beginning of the school year that commences in September of 1970 there shall be no school in the District, elementary or junior high or senior high school, with a majority of any minority students.17

These words served to polarize the community. Fundamentalists felt that the federal court had just destroyed any hope that they had of preserving the award winning quality of Pasadena's public school system. Judge Real had taken the district out of the hands of local officials and had given control to a federal government which had no idea how to handle Pasadena's problems because they knew nothing of the dynamics of the population. Fundamentalists had no doubt that the federal government would destroy the school district and public education in Pasadena.

At the Tuesday afternoon Pasadena school board meeting six days after Judge Real's decision, the school board voted to comply with the court-order. Board Member John Welsh, visibly shaken by the decision, stood and pulled a folded piece of paper out his pocket and read the following statement:

> In my opinion we are today witness to the beginning of the end of local control, and under these conditions of Federal mandate where local officials, duly elected and responsible, are not allowed to function, conditions where those closest to the scene are not allowed to prevail and solve their own problems, I find it difficult to serve. . . There are challenging times ahead and I wish you Godspeed in working toward solving Pasadena's educational problems.

With that, he slowly pushed back his chair, rose, and left the board room.18 John Welsh resigned in response to the school board's decision not to fight the federal court-order. Not long after Welsh's resignation, a group of fundamentalists launched the first recall effort in Pasadena's 100 year history in order to remove the three board members (Lowe, LaMotte, and Engholm) who refused to appeal the court decision. Ultimately the recall failed at the polls, but only by a narrow margin because of the steady shift of moderates into the fundamentalist camp. LaMotte, Lowe and Engholm were able to hang on to their school board seats, at least until they were up for re-election in 1973. While the elected school board officials throughout the 1960s were attempting to side-step desegregation, fundamentalists were playing on the fears of "forced busing" and communist infiltration in order to make inroads onto the school board.

Throughout the first part of the 1970-71 school year racial unrest at the schools dominated the news, causing endless complaints from parents, growing alarm over the safety of the children, and elected officials' increased fear of "white flight." The turbulence quickly diminished but many in the community moved towards conservative positions on the issue of education. This allowed Henry Marcheschi to win a seat on the school board using an "anti-busing" platform. 19 The 1971 election indicated a dramatic shift in the voters and progressives knew that they would face a tough fight during the 1973 school board elections. The fundamentalists also realized that this would be a pivotal election. This election, more than any other, changed the course of the Pasadena Unified School District and caused the battle over the schools to reach a fevered pitch, because it was in this election that moderates and conservatives overwhelmingly supported a slate of fundamentalists.

One evening in 1972 a group of close to a dozen fundamentalists met to discuss their concerns over the 1973 election. In their view the last three years of forced busing had virtually destroyed the school district. According to their statistics 7,000 children had fled the public school system equaling close to forty percent of the white student population. While property values in neighboring communities were steadily increasing, the value of Pasadena's houses were at an all time low. It appeared as if their worst fears had come to fruition. This small band felt that their "backs were against the wall" and that "time was running out."[20] Fortunately for this gathering the voters were ready to accept just about any candidate they put forward.

Fundamentalists, Henry S. Myers, Jr., Lyman W. Newton, and Richard Vetterli, easily won the election and moved the school board firmly to the fundamentalist camp and the extreme right, educationally, politically, and religiously. Marcheschi, Vetterli, and Newton were all active members of the Mormon Church. Richard Vetterli, in fact, taught for several years at Brigham Young, the university established by the Mormon church, and he authored a history text entitled, *Mormonism, Americanism, and Politics*.[21] When reading this text it becomes clear that the religious affiliation of these new board members lends insight into their ideology. According to the introduction of Vetterli's book, for Mormons economics and politics were closely tied to their religious beliefs. In the introduction, Ivan Hinderaker, chair of the Political Science Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote:

> Latter-day Saints, in politics and economics, tend to stand for aggressive individual and local responsibility
>
> . . . . [They] tend to believe in an economic and political system in which individual free agency and initiative are very important elements. . . . [They] tend to be deeply patriotic Americans. They believe that their destiny and future is inseparably bound up with the destiny and future of the American Nation, that hand in hand Mormonism and Americanism are the answer to a sick world in troubled times, that in these two forces lie the temporal and spiritual salvation of the world. [22]

Mormonism thus provided the root of Marcheschi, Vetterli, and Newton's extreme conservatism and fundamentalism.

The cornerstone of their political and educational philosophies lay in the fundamental school structure. In the eyes of these men, the only way to save the children of Pasadena, and the entire country, was to wipe out progressive educational philosophies which had been introduced in the 1920s by John Dewey and to remove the "militant subversives" who were controlling the classrooms. Their tenure on the school board was chiefly dedicated to doing just that. Progressive educational philosophies, including "new math" and "new English," had destroyed the minds of children. They saw a militant political agenda buried within this philosophy of progressive education, an agenda that would lead to increasingly centralized government control. "Essentially, progressive educators claim that in the modern multi-cultural society. . . the emphasis on separation of powers, states rights, and private property accumulation are hopelessly out of date," wrote Richard Vetterli in1976. He continued, "What they say is needed is a more centrally organized political organ with the power to benevolently administer to the people under an enlightened mass democracy."[23] In his view teachers were to be the "catalyst" in this revolution. In the minds of these fundamentalists they were fighting a war for the mind and the soul of the entire country. Progressive educational philosophies were radically at odds with their political and educational theories.

According to both Vetterli and Myers, progressive educators had abandoned a demanding curriculum and developed an obsessive concern with "the whole living experience of the child." Progressive

educators refused, for example, to hold students back in grade levels because they were concerned with the psychological damage that might do to the students. They also moved away from competition and encouraged cooperation among the students, the net result being the destruction of individuality. As Richard Vetterli saw it, this was a communist conspiracy designed to undermine the structure of society and the government of the United States and this view led them to label all progressives "militants". Finally, Myers and Vetterli were also shocked by what they saw as the lack of rigorous discipline within the schools. 24

By proposing the fundamental school philosophy the board majority attempted to undermine the negative forces that they saw in the public school system. Instead of "new math" and "new English" the schools would return the "three R's." Fundamental education also attacked what Myers referred to as "slobism." They targeted disrespectful students, littering, graffiti, and vandalism, as well as lax dress codes that permitted jeans and sweatshirts--even for teachers. "A great costume, mind you, for digging in the garden on a Saturday afternoon. But hardly the garb for a professional teacher on the job," commented Myers. 25 To counteract that, administrators at public fundamental schools implemented a strict dress code and severe punishment for those who did not treat their surroundings with respect.

Fundamentalists also advocated corporal punishment. They taught children how to behave, follow rules, and to discipline their minds, which included: setting priorities, being responsible, being neat and orderly, and being punctual. Fundamental education proponents coupled this focus on discipline with an emphasis on competition. Many of the problems faced by public schools would simply fade away if a sense of competition was put back into the schools. According to Myers, "Nearly every major accomplishment in the history of the world has been brought about by honest, free enterprise competition. Conversely, as soon as competition is eliminated, deterioration and inefficiency are inevitable." 26 As part of this need for competition, Myers recommended that parents choose their children's schools. This would foster a spirit of competition among the schools in the district, thus allowing those who did a better job a chance to prosper, while those that did not would simply "go out of business." Competition was also crucial within the classroom. Students were encouraged to work individually instead of cooperatively because this would "help the children set their aims high, yet learn to deal maturely with setbacks. . . ."27

Richard Vetterli and Henry Myers made it clear in both of their books that they saw themselves as fighting some sort of international conspiracy--in all likelihood a communist one. They fought cooperation among students at every turn. At one point Myers wrote:

> A. . . group of individuals is working desperately to see us fail. Some of our readers will doubt that they even exist. . . This is a group of power-hungry individuals who simply do not want the masses to become educated, especially the minorities. An educated electorate votes intelligently. It cannot be led around. *Whether this conspiracy is international or strictly local in its makeup is open to conjecture* [emphasis added].28

Vetterli displayed the same concern as Henry Myers. His own book is full of references to "outside militants" and "radical subversives." Their writings provide evidence of the "siege mentality" that descended upon Pasadena's fundamentalists when the federal government stepped in to run the school district in 1970.

"Patriotism" was fundamental education's secret weapon in the war against the international conspiracy. Displays of "patriotism" in the fundamental schools included daily flag-raising ceremonies and instruction in the principles and ideals of the United States. The parent handbook for Pasadena's first fundamental school, opened in 1974, read:

> When a child is first taught to love his country, later in his education he will have a motive strong enough to spur him on to understanding American and her heritage. Feelings of loyalty to his country give a child identity--he belongs, he has roots. 29

By removing a spirit of cooperation from the classroom, demanding a rigorous level of discipline (from the age of five, on) and by producing good patriots, these extreme fundamentalists clearly hoped to control the minds of the citizenry by denying a forum in which dissent could take root. Students could not protest against or voice their concerns about the system. This would effectively remove the militants and the rising international communist conspiracy. Eventually they planned to spread these schools throughout the school district and ultimately the nation. 30 In his 1977 book, *Fundamentally Speaking*, Henry Myers wrote:

> In July of 1973, a tiny seed was planted that was destined to initiate the Phoenix-like rebirth of fundamental education in Pasadena and set an example for the entire nation. The fires of permissiveness and progressiveness had taken their toll, and the wreckage of what was once the finest educational system in the country lay smoldering in ruins.31

The new board wasted no time implementing their programs. They quickly opened two fundamental schools in the district and they called for the removal of several supplementary textbooks from the high school curriculum --textbooks they found "as a whole to lack redeeming value." 32 This first attempt to ban books came in October when Lyman Newton asked the superintendent to remove these two supplementary ninth grade English texts, *The Voices of Man: As We Grow Older* and *The Voices of Man: Face to Face*. He "had information that there were political overtones in the books that would not be. . . supportive of the type of educational approach that this district wants to take." 33 Vetterli found the books to be "sadistic and morbid and without redeeming value." Myers told the people gathered at a school board meeting that one story dealt with the "death of a retarded child" and that it was "virtually worthless." The school superintendent, Ramone Cortines, a specialist in the field of developmentally disabled children, "praised" the same story. 34

Superintendent Cortines pointed out to the board members that in this case they had not followed the established guidelines for dealing with complaints brought to the school district about reading materials. Myers replied that he had not been aware of any procedures or guidelines. At that point Cortines reminded him that Willard Craft, a board appointee, had drafted the policy and the board had approved it unanimously at a meeting a few weeks earlier.35 It is from this point, January 1974, on that the three members of the board increasingly descended into their siege mentality. They saw themselves surrounded by enemies who were attempting to undermine the very principles upon which the United States was founded. In their minds, this conspiracy clearly emanated from the "subversive radical" teachers unions and their attempts to take over the district. And it is within their extremist political philosophies that their policies became increasingly reactionary and discriminatory.

A statement on book banning read by a Pasadena Federation of Teachers (PFT) union official at a board meeting fueled the board's suspicions. Among other things, the statement accused the board members of being members of the ultra-conservative John Birch Society.36 The statement read, in part:

. . . Contempt for educators does not sufficiently explain the negative actions of these Board members. When the adoption of *Voices of Man* was first questioned by Mr. Newton, he spoke of "political overtones" in the books. . . . It seems to me the politics of extremism is the motivation for their opposition to the [books]. . . . When persons are in positions of responsibility, when they have, as Mr. Marcheschi stated, the right to censor books, certainly the educators and the parents have the right to know the orientation from which the censors are operating.

The official then proceeded to point out the reason for the ban. Had the anthologies contained stories by Billy Graham, Robert Welch, Gary Allen and the Chicago Tribune, warning of "an international communist conspiracy" instead of stories by Jack London, Ray Bradbury, and LeRoi Jones, who were known to sympathize with the political left, they would not have to been questioned. The official also pointed out that, "It has been alleged that a high administrator who opposed the books did so because he felt that Joan Baez was a communist." He closed his statement to the board by demanding,

> It seems to me it would serve this district well if Dr. Vetterli, Dr. Myers, [and] Mr. Newton. . .would individually respond to this question: . . . Are you now or have you ever been a member or affiliated in any way with the John Birch Society? . . . I will resist the temptation to conclude, as Senator Joseph McCarthy would have, that a refusal to respond indicates guilt.37

Aside from the local unions' attempt to gas-light the board, the statement clearly shows that those considering themselves progressives felt that they were in the middle of a local "red scare" and that the board members were trying to purge the schools of anything that was not in accordance with their political beliefs.

That they weren't too far off the mark became clear by mid February when high school senior, Wanda Knox, requested that the board remove William Faulkner's *Light in August* because it was "demeaning and racist in its references to Negroes." 38 She circulated a petition at a local high school because she was disturbed by the fact that the book list in the high schools had very few, if any, minority authors on it. Ultimately, the board rejected her request. By April they called for an investigation of Knox in order to flush out the subversive teachers who had given her the idea to challenge the school board. Upon being informed of this investigation, she demanded that the board justify their actions:

> I was shown a memo from Mr. Marcheschi requesting an investigation of the "Light in August" matter. The memo went on to say, the board had been "had" by Miss Knox and others involved in this affair. To my knowledge, an investigation was not requested of the people who wanted "Voices of Man" reconsidered. . . Why must my integrity and intelligence be questioned?

The board asked Knox, "Did you write your own speech or did your teacher. . .write it for you?" At this she responded, "To tell you honestly, when I heard this I had to lay my Black kinky head on the table and get a good loud chuckle at pure, unadulterated ignorance." Having been an honors student and having taken advanced placement English courses throughout her high school career in Pasadena, she found it absurd that the board would even suggest that she should not be able to write a speech. 39 However, the board's reaction is not surprising considering the fact that they felt that Pasadena schools were at a crisis point and that progressive educational theories had destroyed the minds of Pasadena's youth. The board's contempt for individuals who challenged their authority or their political beliefs is clearly seen by the investigation of Wanda Knox. As she pointed out, individuals calling for the banning of *The Voices of Man* series were neither questioned nor investigated by the board members.

Later in the board's tenure, the local press discovered that an example of "appropriate" reading material was a textbook published by the John Birch Society entitled *Quest for a Hemisphere*. 40 This fact alone helped to confirm the dread of many educators in Pasadena that the board was dominated, if not by members of the John Birch Society, at least by individuals who sympathized with its extremist political ideology. Over the next three years the board limited the reading material available to the students by banning increasing numbers of books. By October of 1975 they had implemented a new policy which forced teachers to submit "justification papers" for any materials they wanted to use in

the classroom, including any standing orders they may have had. If the board decided to question the teachers they could effectively delay the purchasing of books. In cleansing the curriculum of any "undesirable" material, the board called for the removal of large numbers of books from the high school libraries.

In November of 1976 the board created a panel to review all of the textbooks being used in the school district. Openly admitting that they were creating a "screening committee" that was politically biased, Henry Myers commented, "I'm going to put people on it who have the same philosophies I do. If we believe in our conservative convictions, why not?" They intended to remove books being used in the district which they thought were overrated, among those was award winning playwright, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which Henry Myers referred to as "junk."41 Not content to stop with the books, over the next year the board also began using the same screening process on all of the films used in the classrooms.

In an attempt to break the fundamentalists' control of the school district various progressive organizations, including the Pasadena Federation of Teachers, staged a series of strikes, demonstrations and protests between 1973 and 1977. In June of 1973 the PFT conducted a one-day teachers' strike and student walk-out. Out of 1200 teachers in the district only 213 stayed out of school. This disappointing turn out was far short of the 600 teachers they had hoped for. However, thirty- eight percent of the students stayed out of the high schools. This work- stoppage so outraged the board that they filed a damage suit against the PFT, an organization that both Myers and Vetterli had expressed a great amount of disdain for. According to Myers, his main opponents in the fight for fundamental education were teachers' unions. "Most unions," in his view, only functioned to "protect incompetent teachers." 42

As part of the continuing protest against the actions of the board, the PFT and Community Together staged a demonstration in front of the school district offices. The event was designed to kick-off a recall campaign and to coincide with the "Freedom Against Racism" marches being held in Boston and Los Angeles. Demonstrators carried signs demanding that Pasadena find a way to "End This Mess!" The signs screamed, "Buses Must roll for Integration," "Block Racist Attacks: No Resegregation," "We Must Have Quality Education" and "Muzzle Marcheschi!"43

These actions fueled the growing anxiety and contempt for progressive educators among the board members. They felt that this group of "subversive" teachers was so obsessed with undermining the board that they were neglecting the education of their students. In his book, Henry Myers discussed the endless stream of protests--strikes, picket lines, and signs.

> Many of our protesters are teachers who, cloaked in the protective garb of tenure, feel perfectly free to level all manner of vindictive insults and intimidations at the board members. . . . When they are particularly aroused, they enlist the aid of their students who blindly latch on to their teachers' causes and join the melee. After all, it's much more fun than doing homework, and the teacher is probably far too busy trying to harass the board to worry about assigning or expecting homework, anyway.44

This statement, along with the board's investigation of Wanda Knox and their desperate attempt to rid the school curriculum of any seditious material, provides ample evidence that they were working to rid the school district of any political dissidents and to reshape the curriculum to comport with their fundamentalist convictions.

The battle between the fundamentalists on the board and progressives was played out weekly at the Tuesday night school board meetings. In fact, these meetings became the hottest entertainment in

town. Throughout the mid-1970s they would stretch over five and six hours and the crowds would grow to six hundred people. Noel Greenwood in the *Los Angeles Times* noted:

> In most other school systems, it would be a remarkable event when: Four members of the school board, no longer willing to listen to the repeated cheers and jeers of a hostile audience, file tight-lipped out of a crowded auditorium and adjourn to a closed-door meeting across the street--while the fifth board member [Sam Sheats] stays behind to conduct a rump session during which he tells the angry audience how the board is mistreating them. Not so in Pasadena. . . . 45

By June of 1974, in a closed meeting, the board had hired a sergeant- at-arms to control the spectators. Feeling threatened by these growing crowds, fundamentalist members of the board were increasingly holding their meetings in closed session to avoid being confronted by the large numbers of people protesting their policies. According to Richard Vetterli's accounts, these massive meetings were viewed by the members as carefully orchestrated demonstrations. "Often meetings are characterized by hissing and booing, catcalls, etc., sometimes even during the prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance that open each meeting." Board president, Henry Myers, adjourned the meetings to executive session because the disruptive "militants" were placing the "spectators in some jeopardy."46 A "constitutional consultant" to the Board, Paul Leonard, saw the hiring of a sergeant-at-arms as necessary for this reason. From his perspective the board meetings had become "a farce--a field day for rabble-rousers--packed with liberals."47

By the beginning of the 1973-1974 school year the Vetterli, Myers and Newton board had begun to make good on all of its campaign promises, among them the promise to get out from under the court ordered desegregation. By December 1973 the board had filed a motion to modify the integration plan in the Los Angeles federal court. Essentially, they asked Judge Real to throw out forced busing in favor of voluntary busing and to be freed from all federal constraints placed upon them by the court.48

However, because they had allowed five schools to remain in violation of the original court order and hired a number of white administrators early in their term, Judge Real found that the board had acted in contempt of the court order.49 According to the 1970 court- order the district had an obligation to not only integrate the student population of the schools but also the faculty and staff, which had been effectively segregated as well. By hiring the white administrators on a "temporary" basis the board thought that they would be able to get around that part of the court-order.

Real also denied the board's request that they be allowed to implement a "freedom of choice" plan to replace the current integration plan and he refused to relieve the school district of the federal order which was forcing them to insure that there be no "majority of any minority" in a Pasadena school. He found that:

> Modification of the injunction of this court of January 23, 1970, would, in effect, leave the Board to its own devices concerning the Pasadena Plan and its continued viability as a mandate for desegregation. To grant such relief would--in light of the avowed aims of four members of the five-member board--surely be to sign the death warrant of the Pasadena Plan and its objectives. 50

Judge Real understood the motives of the fundamentalists on the board of education. He noted in his findings that the theory of the board that white parents, whose children left the school district because of forced busing, would return if busing was voluntary held no merit. He wrote, the idea that,

> 'salesmanship' will convince enough 'white parents' whose children have left [the school district] to return *and choose* the same 'educational alternatives' that black parents do in order to accomplish an integrated schools system. . . exposes the folly of the belief that one who left a school district because his children were forced to attend schools with Negro children would now voluntarily choose that alternative.51

Judge Real knew that, given the political philosophy of the current board, he was the only thing standing between them and the resegregation of Pasadena schools.

The school board was not so easily discouraged. They immediately took the case to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Attorneys hired by the school district argued that they should be relieved of the court-ordered "no majority of any minority" clause, that they should be allowed to implement a voluntary busing plan, and, finally, that they should be freed from court supervision. The appellate court supported Judge Real's decision. Judges Ely and Wallace, in their opinion, noted, as Judge Real had, that because the majority of the board members had run for election on a platform that called for an end to forced busing and a return to neighborhood schools, the "district court did not abuse its discretion in refusing to dissolve the earlier decree implementing a desegregation plan."52 So, both the Circuit Court and the Appellate Court had refused to make any changes in the court supervised desegregation of the school system.

Another part of the courtroom battle took place in 1975 over the board's increasing efforts to fundamentalize the schools. The board voted, in a closed meeting, to add two new fundamental schools to the two already in existence. By September, Audubon Primary and McKinley Elementary schools would join Marshall and Sierra Mesa Fundamental Schools. The outcry against the action was fierce and instantaneous. Audubon was the only primary school in the northwest section of the city. Without it all of the children in the area would have to be bused into other communities while white children would continue to attend primary schools in their neighborhoods. Two prominent members of the black community attacked the idea of fundamentalization as an "indoctrination of black students with white, middle-class values." They both saw the schools as an attempt to create a "mono-cultural society." 53

Other critics of the fundamental school system felt that these schools were a way for the board to get around the integration plan. They had created private schools within the public school system. They were producing special, racially unbalanced schools so that "white-flighters" would return to the system. As proof of their determination to curb "white flight" was the fact that of the 1350 students on the waiting list for fundamental schools, all 124 of the students from private schools were accepted. Henry Myers acknowledged that he hoped this would "attract more white students back to the public schools." 54 In order to silence the critics and block debate surrounding Audubon and McKinley at the school board meeting, the board announced their intention to fundamentalize the schools and then quickly voted that "discussion of Audubon was permanently closed."55

The parents took their concerns into Judge Real's courtroom. By the end of September an outraged Judge Real gave the school district thirty days to find a way to defundamentalize Audubon school. He also ordered that the district refrain from forming any more fundamental schools. As the basis of his decision he noted that the board was shifting the "burden of desegregation" to the black community. "The board was increasing 'forced busing' for the neighborhood students who could normally walk to Audubon but who would now be bused nearly all of their school experience. . . ." He concluded by stating that, "The affirmative duty is upon the school board under orders to desegregate to see that their actions and to show that their actions or policies do not result in resegregation." 56 The Board immediately filed for a stay in the decision and began the appeals process. This order to refrain from

forming any more fundamental schools would destroy the goals and objectives of the fundamentalist board members unless they could get out from under it.

At the same time, the school board prepared their case for the United States' Supreme Court. Again they asked for the same things they had asked the Appeals Court. Two basic questions needed to be answered: 1) Was a racially imbalanced school unconstitutional regardless of the cause of that imbalance? and 2) Should a school system, once it has desegregated have to "in perpetuity, have the judge running the school district or should it be the citizens?"[57] Clearly, the board was not satisfied with the answers given by both courts. So, they were determined to ask the same questions of the Supreme Court. In November of 1975, the court agreed to hear an appeal. In 1976, after seven years in the court system, *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* landed in the highest court and the board finally received some relief from Judge Real's tight supervision.

The Supreme Court decision stated, in part, that:

> If, as petitioners have represented, they have complied with the District Court's order during the intervening two years [from 1974 to 1976], they will probably be entitled to a lifting of the District Court's order in its entirety.

The Court went on to state that the District Court and the Court of Appeals were in a far better position to judge whether or not the district had complied with the court-order. Finally, they concluded that the integration plan was not meant as a one step at a time remedy. But, as stated in *Brown v. Board Education*, it was a remedy whose "implementation did 'achieve a system of determining admission to the public school on a non-racial bias.'"[58]

Even though the Supreme Court gave Judge Real clear guidelines to follow, their decision did not return the school district to local control. In fact, it would be almost four more years until the district was placed back in the hands of the school board. Thus the Pasadena School District was not returned to local control until 1979.

> In view of the board of education's present compliance with integration efforts and its official representations that it would continue to engage in affirmative action in the future in support of integration, the district court should have relinquished, after nearly ten years, its continuing jurisdiction over the schools. [59]

The six year court battle by a board that had been dominated by fundamentalists with extreme political views had exhausted the resources of the extreme right. By the time the war was over, they had lost control of the school board and the district because of the rapid growth in the Black and Hispanic populations in Pasadena and Pasadenans growing disgust at the board's increasingly extremist policies and its inability to get out from under federal control. By this time, also, the conservative ambition had waned. Essentially, the fundamentalists had lost. In the end, their fight had become mainly a legal one.

What were the lessons for progressives and fundamentalists of the decade long battle during the 1970s? After 1975, extreme conservatives realized that they could not make the major changes they had envisioned because of the court supervision and the vocal community outrage. They were forced to settle for making some modest changes, primarily through hiring educationally conservative administrators. The progressives, on the other hand, realized that they could not garner enough support to remove the conservative board. They had no choice but to wait until the board came up for re-election. Essentially both sides settled into a form of trench warfare. The years between the end of

1975 and 1978 were marked by a series of skirmishes over issues such as collective bargaining and the board's insistence that they screen all educational films.

The 1970s for Pasadena went beyond their usual "yo-yo" pattern between two ideological camps: progressives and fundamentalists. The evidence shows that because of the federal court-order to desegregate the school system and the resulting public discontent, fundamentalists garnered enough support using a "Stop Forced Busing" slogan to be elected to office. It quickly became clear to members of the community that these right-wing extremists had exploited the antagonism of the public over forced busing to get elected. Once elected they began to implement a series of policies designed to return the school system to what they termed "fundamental education."

Basically, fundamental education was designed to create disciplined, blindly patriotic citizens. By essentially molding the minds and characters of the school children in their image, these board members hoped to thwart the creeping cancer of federal control over local issues and the growth of a stronger centralized government that would "imbue [Americans] with an ideological world view dedicated to building a 'new order.'"60 Their paranoia and extremism was evidenced by the fact that anyone who questioned the policies or actions of the board was immediately labeled a dissident, a militant, or an outside agitator.

It is unclear whether or not, as some PFT officials believed, Pasadena was a test case for the right-wing nationally to see if the anti- busing slogan could be used to succeed in getting local school districts to abandon federal programs and return to traditional education, weed out educators that did not support the right wing, and purge the curriculum of "unacceptable" materials. However, the actions of the board and the progressives' reactions provide strong evidence that the motives of the fundamentalists were much broader than a purely racist agenda. The evidence reviewed proves that the board dominated by Myers, Vetterli, and Newton during the mid-1970s had paranoid and extremist right-wing ideological beliefs and that they tried to mold these beliefs into school district policy through their philosophy of fundamental education.

The significance of the Pasadena schools in the 1970s is that for a brief time it was clear to all involved that controlling the local school systems, and subsequently the minds of the children, was a powerful tool in dominating and guiding the ideological beliefs of United States citizens and that because of the situation and the fears of increased federal control and school integration in Pasadena during the 1970's this control seemed possible for the fundamentalists on the far right. The events in Pasadena show that theories of racism are not enough to explain the events surrounding anti-busing campaigns. For these fundamentalists what was important was placing a fundamentalist ideology within the public school system that would replace the philosophy of progressive education which was undermining the bedrock of American values, "patriotism, responsibility, and morality."61 Ultimately, however, political extremists were unable to control the system enough to implement their political and educational vision.

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Notes for "To Fight the Good Fight"

1. Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, 1991) and J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York, 1985).

2. Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990) p. 6.

3. Ibid.

4. For examples of studies of the New Right see Jonathan Rieder's "The Rise of the 'Silent Majority'" in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) and Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab's classic *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977* , 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

5. The Arroyo is a park like canyon in which the Rose Bowl is located and which is bordered by wealthy homes but separates a predominantly minority, low income neighborhood (the "north-west" section) from an upper-middle class white neighborhood ("Linda Vista").

6. Professor Robin Kelley researched the history of the African-American community in Pasadena for a documentary produced by the Pasadena Historical Society in 1988. His research notes are available in the archives of the Historical Society. This information comes from those notes.

7. "Voters Turn Down School Recall," *Pasadena Star News,* March 5, 1975.

8. "White flight" is a term used to describe the flight of white residents out of a neighborhood or school once minority groups begin to enter the area. This was a common occurrence in Pasadena. As the schools became integrated large numbers of upper-middle class white families pulled their children out of the public schools and placed them in private schools or even moved out of the school district altogether.

9. For a detailed discussion of this motivation see C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow,* George Fredrickson's *White Supremacy*, Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* or David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness*.

10. "Hardy Sees Win as Call For Harmony" *The Pasadena Star News* April 17, 1975.

11. Henry S. Myers, *Fundamentally Speaking* (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1977) p. 51.

12. John McAlister, "Marcheschi to Seek Pasadena Plan Changes," *Pasadena Star News* December 17, 1973.

13. *Know Your Schools* newsletter. This newsletter was published throughout the 1960s by a volunteer citizens committee "in support of the Pasadena Board of Education." June 1965 (VII:6).

14. *Know Your Schools*.

15. *Spangler, et al v. Pasadena City School District* (311 F. Supp. 501).

16. *Know Your Schools,* April 1969.

17. *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* (311 F. Supp. 501, 1970).

18. Lucie Lowry, "School Board Rejects Appeal: Welsh Resigns" *Pasadena Star-News* January 28, 1970.

19. John McAlister, "Marcheschi to Seek Pasadena Plan Changes" *Pasadena Star News,*, December 17, 1971.

20. Myers, pp. 49-50.

21. Richard Vetterli, *Mormonism, Americanism, and Politics* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing Company).

22. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

23. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

24. See Vetterli, pp. 1-4 and Myers, pp. 11-18.

25. Myers, p. 11.

26. Myers, p. 18.

27. Vetterli, p. 26.

28. Myers, p. 74.

29. Vetterli, pp. 30-31.

30. For conclusive evidence of this plan to spread fundamental education throughout the nation, see Myers' *Fundamentally Speaking* and Vetterli's *Storming the Citadel: The Fundamental Revolution Against Progressive Education* (Costa Mesa, California: Educational Media Press, 1976).

31. Myers, p. 51.

32. "Dr. Vetterli's View," editorial, *Pasadena Star News,* March 9, 1973.

33. Marjorie Wyatt, Statement for the Board of Education Reading, December 11, 1973.

34. John McAlister "Pasadena School Board Bans Books," *Pasadena Star News*, January 10, 1974.

35. Ibid.

36. The John Birch Society in the 1960s and 1970s, along with other extremist organizations, insisted that communists directly controlled the government and public schools which was in accordance with the philosophy of the fundamentalist school board (Himmelstein, p. 66). The John Birch Society is discussed in much of the historiography on the rise of the political right. See for example, Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*.

37. Excerpts taken directly from a copy of the statement read to the school board on January 15, 1974 by Robert L. Salley, PFT vice-president.

38. Gary Clark, "Another Book on the Back Burner," *Pasadena Star News,* February 18, 1974.

39. Excerpts taken directly from a copy of the statement read by Wanda Knox to the school board on April 16, 1974.

40. Jan Dean, "Birch Society Textbook Up for School Adoption," *The Pasadena Guardian* January 10, 1975.

41. Dan Myers, "Pasadena Schools Book Review Panel Criticized," *Pasadena star News* November 29, 1975.

42. Myers, p. 73.

43. Vetterli, photo captions pp. 4-6.

44. Myers, pp. 22-23.

45. Neol Greenwood, "Pasadena Schools: How Much Turmoil Can They Take?" *Los Angeles Times* July 7, 1974.

46. Vetterli, p. 3.

47. Gary Clark, "Sergeant at Arms Hiring Draws Fire," *Pasadena Star News,* June 13, 1974.

48. John McAlister, "School Integration Shakeup Sent to Court," *Pasadena Star News,* December 19, 1973.

49. *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* (384 F. Supp. 846 [1974]).

50. *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* (375 F. Supp. 1304 [1974]).

51. Ibid.

52. *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* (519 F. 2d 430 [1975]).

53. Stewart Alsop II, "Board Fundamentalizes Audubon and McKinley," *The Pasadena Guardian,* July 9, 1975.

54. Kenneth McCormick, "Fundamental School Future: A Magnet for White Flighters," *The Pasadena Guardian,* March 28, 1975.

55. Alsop, *The Pasadena Guardian* July 9, 1975.

56. Kenneth McCormick, "Real Orders Fundamental Halt: Schools to Appeal," *The Pasadena Guardian,* October 1, 1975.

57. Steve Hemmerick, "School Board Appeals," *Pasadena Star News,* July 31, 1975.

58. *Pasadena Board of Education v. Spangler* (427 U. S. 424, 96 S. Ct. 2697, 49 L. Ed. 2d. 599 [1976]).

59. *Spangler v. Pasadena City Board of Education* (611 F. 2d. 1239 [1979]).

60. Vetterli, p. 8.

61. Ibid.