

Black Schools Erupt

J.R. Kennedy

1970

High school students throughout the country have been historically forced to assume second and third class status in American citizenship. Special kinds of oppression are reserved for them because the state views them as being at the crucial brainwashing stage.

But, like all other institutions in our society, high schools are breaking out of the narrow constricted limitations that are provided for them. To be black in America is bad enough, but to be black and a student is totally intolerable. Throughout Detroit white, and especially black, high schools have been rebelling and scoring important victories.

At Northern High School, black students of the Uhuru Association have been putting the administration against the wall since the beginning of the school year. Back in mid-September several student walk-outs were held to protest the fact that the administration of Northern and the Detroit School Board refused to even consider the list of demands that the association presented them.

Following those walkouts, two students, Warren McAlpine and Carl Williams, were expelled. They were notified of this expulsion on October 1st and told that it included not only Northern High, but all schools in the Detroit system. Both brothers were members of the Uhuru Association, which was no mere coincidence.

Attorneys immediately moved on the issue and suit was filed in Circuit Court against the Detroit School Board. Both students, following the court action, have been re-instated.

In the meantime, however, harassment has begun anew. The Assistant Principal has passed out, to all instructors, a list of over 100 students who are to be watched. Most of these students belong to various black political and cultural organizations. Forty of the 100 have already been suspended and legal-administrative action is under way.

At Murray Wright High School the political climate had become so uptight by December that the administration hired private guards to patrol the hallway. Otis Williams, a black student activist, was assaulted by three of these private guards while walking down the hallway during a class period. The police were carrying Mace and side arms, contrary to regulations for rent-a-pigs, and threatened Williams after physically assaulting him. He was later suspended from the school, and reinstated the next day, only after he promised not to bring charges against the rent-a-pigs.

By December 19th the situation was out of control and the administration, rather than yield to the demands of black students, called in the Detroit Police. 20 police in full uniform patrolled the hallways and harassed students. By the end of December, the six ministers of the Black Student Association were expelled from the school, one of whom was Otis Williams.

When suit was filed against the school board for these actions, the administration responded by bringing charges against Otis Williams for assault. Half way thru the court battle the school realized that they were in a bad position, dropped all charges, and the students were reinstated.

In other activities, the principal of Mumford High School announced a general "house cleaning." Over 100 students were expelled during a 3-week period. Some of the students are now in other schools, and some are still out on the street. Over 90% of the students expelled belonged to various black organizations such as the Black Renaissance, the Black Panthers, and the Black Student Association.

At Hampton Jr. High School Detroit pigs invaded the school and conducted an illegal search of all lockers. They were allegedly searching for gasoline and explosives. Many students have reported losing personal possessions after the search and six students have been charged with fire bombing. Actions in juvenile court will follow.

Aside from the obvious implications of the Northland Shopping Center actions, other activities have begun emerging at various white suburban high schools. In East Detroit a student was busted for selling the *Fifth Estate* near his school property, and in Livonia four students were suspended for publishing an underground newspaper. At Southfield-Lathrup High School the sale of the *Fifth Estate* has caused the biggest stir on the campus and in the Student Congress that they ever dealt with.

In Redford Township, principal Barton has been systematically busting students for such trumped up charges as alleged drug usage and long hair. The man has so totally lost control that he actually assaults the students personally! Legal action has been taken to reinstate the students and assault charges filed against the principal.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #100, March 5-18, 1970

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