

# A pawn in their game

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

On Tuesday, April sixth, white kids from Denby High were involved in protests outside the School Board meeting which voted to send some of those kids' younger brothers and sisters to Osborn High, where black kids go to school. White students boycotted the schools involved on the days that followed. On Wednesday three hundred white Denby students marched two miles to Osborn and nearly started a race riot. They beat up fifteen-year-old black girls. What's happening here?

Look at it from the white side. There's two things in the air. One relates to stuff we used to say, like "participatory democracy" and "let the people decide." Fact is, the School Board has decreed integration of the Detroit School system without listening to the students and the parents who will be affected by changed boundaries and feeder patterns.

The time of town meetings has long passed in Amerika. People feel they're losing control over the decisions that affect their lives and it pisses them off. So you demonstrate in front of the School Board.

But there's another thing in the air. Many white students don't like the idea of going to a heavily black high school. For one thing, they know the schools are broken down. Then there's the "racial tension." Like, the blacks are together and they aren't taking shit off anyone. As far as the parents are concerned, they object to having their children used as "guinea pigs" for integration.

Now look at it from the black side. For as long as black people have been in this city they have received poor quality education. They go to broken-down inner city elementary and high schools, while most white kids in outlying areas of the city go to school in newer buildings with better facilities.

Those inner city schools run a racist thing on the people by attempting to instill white values into black kids.

Most importantly, the school districts are drawn in such a way as to leave the maximum number of black students under the authority of unsympathetic teachers who are hired by district school boards elected by a white-voting population. This means that black people in the city are not in a position to control their education.

One response to this situation is to demand an integrated school system. If whites and blacks have to go to the same schools, white voters will be more likely to help improve the quality of those schools. This response comes mainly from those community elements, both black and white, who are concerned with improving the physical conditions in the black schools and with providing an education which will allow black children to acquire the skills necessary to compete in the white job market.

Another response, while it does not neglect the necessity of developing economically useful skills in the black population, is to demand community control of schools in black areas of the city. This response comes from people who have concluded that they have nothing to gain from school board liberals and who feel that the only solution for black people in this city is to move to take over the institutions that affect their lives.

The question of which response is right is going to have to be worked out by black people.

But you white kids from Denby and other schools Who boycotted—what was going on in your heads? Was it just a chance to get out of school for the day? It doesn't much matter. Regardless of where your heads were at, your actions aided the School Board and the state legislature's main objective: to deny black people the control over their own community which they are in the process of gaining.

These School Board liberals are tricky. Why did they exaggerate the reports of student walkouts when the walkouts were in response to their own plan for integration? Suppose they wanted the legislature to use those reports, along with the Wednesday confrontation at Osborn, in order to repeal the whole school decentralization law. Why? Because that law might have been the first step towards gaining community control of the schools, which means taking it away from the School Board.-

What does that make you? Dupes. Pawns whose actions have been objectively racist.

Check out what's happening around Wayne State. Your white brothers and sisters in PCAUR (People Concerned About Urban Renewal)—kids your own age or younger—are beginning to move on the question of community control in alliance with black people. With black kids their own age. In the same organization.

Every Saturday they're out cleaning up their community. Every couple of weeks they're down confronting Wayne State over the question of community use of the university gymnasium. They have come to an understanding of who the enemy is.

The enemy is the *Free Press*, the *News*, and the rest of the racist media. The enemy is the state legislature, the School Board, and all other administrators of racist educational policies. The enemy is not the black brothers and sisters you'll be going to school with.

ALL POWER TO THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS WHO UNITE WITH REAL FRIENDS TO DEFEAT REAL ENEMIES!



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Fifth Estate #104, April 30-May 13, 1970

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