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D. Monty Neill Collection

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An educator and scholar of educational assessment, Monty Neil is the Executive Director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest). For his doctorate at Harvard in the mid-1980s, Neill examined the impact of the 1974 desegregation order affecting Boston's public schools and the ongoing search within the city's African American community for quality and equity in education. He completed his dissertation, *The Struggle of Boston's Black Community for Quality and Equality in Education: 1960-1985*, in 1987.

The 33 audiocassettes in this collection include interviews with 29 activists and educational and political leaders in Boston, predominantly from the city's African American community, include in-depth discussions about the busing crisis in Boston during the late 1970s and early 1980s, its aftermath, and the ongoing search for educational equity and quality. The tapes were recorded between January and April 1986 as part of Neill's dissertation research.

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Social justice
Massachusetts (East)

Background on Monty Neill

An educator and scholar of educational assessment and the Executive Director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), Monty Neill has led initiatives across the nation focusing on educational reform and accountability. He has published prolifically, including *Implementing Performance Assessments: A Guide to Classroom School and System Reform* (1995) and *Testing Our Children: A Report Card on State Assessment Systems* (1997).

As a graduate student at Harvard's Graduate School of Education in the mid-1980s, Neill analyzed the impact of desegregation on Boston's public schools, focusing particularly on the period after the height of the busing crisis and the struggle for quality education among Boston's Black community and the impact on the educational system. By 1965, a systematic campaign of legal challenges and grassroots civil rights agitation had secured passage of the Racial Imbalance Act in the Massachusetts state legislature, theoretically mandating an end to racial inequities in education. The intransigence of school officials and city government in Boston, however, ensured that in practice the law was little more than a dead letter. Frustrated by such official intransigence, the local branch of the NAACP lodged a class action suit in U.S. District Court, *Morgan v. Hennigan* (379 F., Supp. 410), accusing the Boston School Committee of violations of the 14th Amendment. District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity concurred, writing in June 1974 that the School Board had taken "many actions in their official capacities with the purpose and intent to segregate the Boston public schools," affecting students, teachers, and school facilities alike.

In his ruling, Garrity laid out a plan that included redistricting and wide-spread compulsory busing to go into effect that fall with the beginning of the school year. Instantly controversial, the plan was met in Boston's white community with furious resistance, including walkouts, mass protests, and frequent violence, requiring intervention by the police and National Guard to preserve a fragile order. Lasting more than a decade, the crisis shook up city and state politics and helped spur white flight, even while inequality continued within and across the schools. The dissertation concludes the primary reason for a continued lack of quality education and school improvement, as well as discrimination, was white racism. The interviews available here reveal how the battles developed over the years.

While Boston's Black community united solidly to repel white racism and to assert the right to attend any school in Boston, the desegregation effort proved controversial within the city's African American community as well. Heightened by the extreme response from most whites, debate at the time centered on the seeming [or apparent] dichotomy between "community control" of schools and integration as preferred avenues for improving the schools for Black children. Neill's dissertation, *The Struggle of Boston's Black Community for Quality and Equality in Education: 1960-1985*, was completed in 1987.

Scope of collection

The 33 audiocassettes in this collection include interviews with 29 activists and educational and political leaders in Boston, predominantly from the city's African American community, include in-depth discussions about the busing crisis in Boston during the late 1970s and early 1980s and the ongoing search for educational equity and quality. The tapes were recorded between January and April, 1986 as part of Neill's dissertation research.

Inventory

Allen, Henry L.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 27

01:22:01

Box 1

Allen became involved with desegregation as part of the Parents' Association at the William Monroe Trotter School in 1973, and later the Parent Councils; activity in District 9, a hub of activism and politically-conscious parents.

Arroyo, Felix D.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 3

01:06:20

Box 1

Arroyo became the first Latino to run for citywide office in Boston when he ran for School Committee in 1981 and 1983. A founder of the Latino Democratic Committee in 1984, the first state-level Latino political organization in Massachusetts, he served as Sen. John Kerry's Latin American Affairs Director and in the cabinet of Mayor Raymond Flynn (1985-1992). Debate over the Garrity decision and desegregation in Boston schools versus quality in education; tensions within the communities over bilingual education; tension between desegregation and community control.

Atkins, Thomas I.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 18

02:01:10

Box 1

An attorney and noted figure in Boston politics in the late 1960s and 1970s, Atkins was first elected to the City Council in 1967. Appointed Secretary of Communities and Development under Gov. Francis W. Sargeant in 1971, Atkins became the first African American to serve as Cabinet Secretary. During the city's busing crisis, Atkins was head of the Boston Branch of the NAACP and became a key figure in the desegregation effort. Discussion of Atkins's involvement in desegregation efforts in Boston from 1963-1966 and again from 1974-1980, and serving as counsel for the plaintiffs (in *Morgan v. Hennigan*) since 1981.

Batson, Ruth M.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 23

00:44:39

Box 1

A native of Roxbury, a civil rights activist, and official in the NAACP, Batson was a leader in the legal challenge to the de facto segregation of Boston public schools in the 1960s. She was among the founders of METCO in 1966 and architects of its voluntary desegregation plan. Batson discusses her history in activism for desegregation with the NAACP Education Committee during the 1960s, METCO, and background to 1974 decision; as well as the political and social turmoil surrounding desegregation.

Bing, Stephen R.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 26

00:59:37

Box 1

An attorney and Executive Director of the Massachusetts Advocacy Center, Bing discusses the legal case against segregation in Boston schools and fight against rate of suspension of Black versus white students from Boston schools.

Breeden, James P.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1985

00:06:01

Box 1

A priest at Roxbury's St. James Episcopal Church (and later at St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston) and a veteran of the Freedom rides of the early 1960s, Breeden played a critical role during the Boston busing crisis. Breeden joined the Citywide Coordinating Council in 1976 that helped monitor compliance with the order to desegregate the city's schools, and became a Senior Officer for Planning and Policy at Boston Public Schools in 1980, moving to Dartmouth College in 1984 to become Dean. In a telephone interview, Breeden discusses his conflict with superintendent of Public Schools, Robert 'Bud' Spillane and Spillane's role in desegregation of the schools.

Breeden, James P.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 20

01:33:32

Box 1

In a telephone interview (with intervening beeps due to Massachusetts state law governing recording phone conversations), Breeden discusses his return from Tanzania, work at Harvard, and immersion in implementation of the desegregation order in Boston, including work with the Freedom House Coalition and other community organizations.

Dean, Sally: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1985-12-03

00:47:47

Box 1

Dean was elected to the CPC at her daughter's school and was part of the School Site Council.

Glen, Beverly: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 4

01:33:10

Box 1

Glen was a member of the Citywide Parents Council in Boston.

Haskins, Kenneth: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Jan. 30

01:33:53

Box 1

An educator and school principal, Haskins joined the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1974, later serving as President of Roxbury Community College (1978-1984). Discussion of the desegregation effort in Boston, "quality" education; integration, racism, and political manipulation; changes in Boston schools.

Haskins, Kenneth: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 4

01:06:49

Box 1

Continuation of discussion of desegregation in Boston schools; organizing in the Black community, Roxbury Freedom House Coalition; struggle within the Black community over appropriation and muting of radical demands for change.

Holland, Albert: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 24

01:08:26

Box 1

During the busing crisis in Boston of the mid-1970s, Holland was headmaster of the Jeremiah E. Burke High School in Dorchester and was the first African American administrator at South Boston High School. Discussion of Holland's work in the Boston school system, first as a consultant (1975), and then his work as an administrator at South Boston High School (1975-76) working on problems in desegregation when the school was in receivership; violence in South Boston High and fighting back against the assaults; Jeremiah Burke School.

Johnson, Larry J.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 11

01:30:55

Box 1

Associated with Harvard's Center for Law and Education, Johnson was Counsel for the plaintiffs in the continuing desegregation suit against Boston Public Schools and in 1982, unsuccessfully requested that the court halt mandatory busing, arguing that it had failed to produce quality education, and replace it with a more flexible "freedom of choice" plan.

Jones, Hubie: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 25

01:33:57

Box 1

An educator and community organizer, Jones was Dean of the School of Social Work at Boston University, 1977-1993. Discussion of Jones' involvement in negotiations on the School Committee and controversy over his position; president of Corporation for Boston and controversy between John O'Bryant, Jean Maguire, and Bud Spillane; potential for quality education in Boston; need for collaboration and leadership in Black community in Boston to decide on what its agenda should be.

King, Melvin: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

ca.1985

00:37:13

Box 1

A key community organizer in Boston in the late 1960s and 1970s, King was Director of the Urban League of Greater Boston and a state representative for the 9th Suffolk District from 1973-1982. In 1983, he became the first African American to run for mayor of Boston. Discussion around the meaning of quality education within Boston's Black community and the struggles surrounding the public schools; diversity of positions within the community; belief that just the process of mobilization is a positive, even if the result is not.

Although undated, the interview appears to predate the other (February 1986) interview with King and begins with a general explanation of Neill's research plan.

King, Melvin: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 5

00:58:23

Box 1

Discussion of the main points of unity and difference within the Black community over issues in education (community control vs integration).

McGuire, Jean: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 13

01:32:47

Box 2

An Executive Director of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), McGuire was the first African American woman to gain a seat on the Boston School Committee at large.

McKinnis, Hattie: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 26

01:32:39

Box 2

A member of the Citywide Parents' Council (CPC: initially called racial-ethnic parent councils) at the Grover Cleveland School, McKinnis discusses the rise and decline of the CPC.

Minor, Hasan: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 18

02:18:44

Box 2

Discussion of the politics of desegregation and education in Boston, the Boston School Committee, and the Black community; John O'Bryant; the Spillane administration.

O'Bryant, John D.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 17

00:54:58

Box 2

A graduate of Boston University, O'Bryant taught for many years in the Boston public schools, becoming a protege of Mel King. In 1976, O'Bryant became the first African American person elected to the Boston School Committee, becoming a leader during the busing crisis and years following, serving as president of the committee until 1990. O'Bryant reviews his involvement in desegregation efforts in Boston through the NAACP beginning in 1965 through the busing crisis; Mel King; the School Committee; politics.

Owens, Bill: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 1

01:36:38

Box 2

Bill Owens was among the highest ranking African American politicians in Massachusetts, serving as a Democratic state representative (1973-1974), becoming the first African American elected to the state senate, serving from 1975-1982 and 1989-1992. Discussion of great inequities and rigidity of Boston Public Schools prior to the Garrity decision; failure to win Black control over schools due to Mayor Kevin White's desire to maintain all power to himself; organizing against racism in education and undermining of the efforts; possibility of violent confrontations with police and white; pitting poor Black versus poor white; limited impact of desegregation efforts.

Owens-Hicks, Shirley: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 27

01:15:00

Box 2

The sister of State Senator Bill Owens, Shirley Owens Hicks was a key figure in school reform efforts in Boston beginning in the early 1970s, winning election to the Boston School Committee at the height of the busing crisis. She went on to represent the 6th Suffolk District in the Massachusetts House for over twenty years (1984-2006). Discussion of Owens-Hicks' involvement in school desegregation struggle beginning in the late 1960s arising from her dissatisfaction with conditions in the public schools; opinions on busing then and now; work on the School Committee; pursuit of quality education.

Parks, Paul: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 5

01:00:33

Box 2

Parks had a long pedigree in opposing school in education in Boston. He was President of the Boston Branch of the NAACP in 1963, when legal challenges to segregation of Boston Public Schools began to mount, winning passage of the Racial Imbalance Act in 1965. He served as Vice President of METCO and became the State Secretary of Education (1974-1979), and in 1992, became the first African American Chair of the Boston School Committee. Discussion of changes in the Black community resulting from desegregation effort (caused them to "come out"); desegregation version quality and equality in the system; Arthur Garrity; METCO and approach to desegregation; impact of integration; poor kids; Mel King; Kevin White.

Peterkin, Robert S.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 29

01:04:50

Box 2

An educator, Peterkin was headmaster of Boston English High School during the busing crisis, and went on to become Superintendent of Cambridge Schools. Discussion of Peterkin's arrival at English High on the day Garrity issued his order, changes at the school, and impact of desegregation; service as Budget Director for the school system; controversies surrounding the Spillane administration and insensitivities to African Americans; controversy around the Educational Planning Group and splitting the School Committee.

Pola, Carmen A.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 20

01:33:39

Box 2

As coordinator of the Community District Advisory Council of the Boston Public Schools and director of the Project to Monitor the Code of Discipline, Pola was a key figure in overseeing bilingual education initiatives in Boston schools during the 1970s and 1980s.

Pressman, Robert: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 27

00:25:30

Box 2

An attorney with Harvard's Center for Law and Education, Pressman worked with the NAACP to represent plaintiffs in *Morgan v. Hennigan*, the case that resulted in the 1974 order by Judge W. Arthur Garrity to end the de facto segregation of Boston public schools. Pressman discusses his role on the legal team for the plaintiffs, especially early in the effort.

Robinson, Jack E.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Mar. 17

01:29:51

Box 2

President of the Boston branch of the NAACP, Robinson filed the desegregation suit in 1972. Divisions between white and Black communities in Boston over desegregation and resistance of the School Committee; courage of Garrity's decision and ultimate evidence that desegregation improved the quality of the system; needs of quality education.

Smith, Mary Ellen: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 May 19

01:25:53

Box 2

An activist in Boston, Smith was a founder of the City-Wide Educational Coalition. Discussion of history of educational protest in Boston's Black community and her involvement in the Liberation School in the late 1960s and its aftermath; formation of City-Wide Educational Coalition (Citywide Coordinating Council) in summer of 1974 and panic on the onset of the crisis in September; difficulties and dangers of organizing in South Boston and Charlestown during the crisis; painful impact on kids and families caught in the middle in Southie and poor support by police and city, "the cops wouldn't do anything"; desperately poor planning for the city to bring about desegregation and freedom of choice; attempts to bring anti-busing people into the discussion; impact of the failure to take redistricting into consideration during desegregation; Black community critiques of CWEC as a white-dominated organization and sapping resources from other organizations (e.g. the Freedom House Coalition).

Snowden, Muriel: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 1

01:20:23

Box 2

Snowden and her husband Otto were cofounders of the Freedom House in 1949 in Roxbury that promotes economic self-sufficiency and social justice in Boston.

Teixeira, Manuel: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Feb. 17

01:27:59

Box 2

Teixeira was a co-chair of the Community District Advisory Council for District I. Discussion of establishment and structure of districts parents' councils within each district (the Ethnic Parents Councils); impact of busing; South Boston High has improved, not declined; violence and anger in Southie and Charlestown; panel choosing books for schools; School Committee; Laval Wilson.

Wade, Juanita B.: Oral history with D. Monty Neill

1986 Apr. 16

01:24:15

Box 2

Wade was a teacher in Boston public schools during the busing crisis and earned election to the Boston School Committee. She became a critic of the emphasis on desegregation rather than choice, equity, and educational quality, arguing that it diluted the power of African Americans to control their community schools. Discussion of Wade's involvement in education; early opposition to the desegregation plan, preferring to focus on freedom of choice, quality of education, and adequacy of resources; defining quality of education; School Committee; current issues in the school system and conservative ideas about education, bilingualism, and "back to basics".

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of D. Monty Neill, Dec. 2018.

Related Material

Neill's dissertation has been digitized and is available for viewing online.

Digitized content

The recordings have been digitized and may be accessed online through SCUA's digital repository, [Credo](#).

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Search terms

Subjects

Boston (Mass.)--History--20th century
Boston (Mass.)--Politics and government--20th century
Boston Public Schools. Citywide Parents' Council
Boston Public Schools. School Committee
Busing for school integration--Massachusetts--Boston
Civil rights movements--Massachusetts--Boston
Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (Boston, Mass.)
Public schools--Massachusetts--Boston
School integration--Massachusetts--Boston
Segregation in education--Law and legislation--Massachusetts--Boston
Segregation in education--Massachusetts--Boston

Contributors

Neill, D. Monty [[main entry](#)]

Allen, Henry L.

Arroyo, Felix D.

Atkins, Thomas I.

Bing, Stephen R.
Batson, Ruth
Breedon, James P. (James Pleasant)
Dean, Sally
Glen, Beverly
Haskins, Kenneth, 1923-1994
Holland, Albert
Johnson, Larry J.
Jones, Hubie, 1933-
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McKinnis, Hattie
McGuire, Jean
Minor, Hasan
O'Bryant, John D., 1931-1992
Owens, Bill, 1937-
Owens-Hicks, Shirley
Parks, Paul
Peterkin, Robert, 1945-
Pola, Carmen A.
Pressman, Robert
Robinson, Jack E.
Smith, Mary Ellen
Snowden, Muriel S. (Muriel Sutherland), 1916-
Teixeira, Manuel
Wade, Juanita B.

Genres and formats

Audiocassettes

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