Oral History Interview John M. Canty

Interview Date: April 4, 2007

Interviewed by: Rebecca Andrews, Suffolk University Student from History 364: Oral History.

Citation: Canty, John M. Interviewed by Rebecca Andrews. John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project OH-070. 4 April 2007. Transcript and audio available. John Joseph Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University, Boston, MA.

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Interview Summary

In this interview, John M. Canty, a former administrator and teacher in the Boston Public Schools, discusses the impact of the 1974 Garrity decision, which required some students to be bused between Boston neighborhoods with the intention of creating racial balance in the public schools. Mr. Canty discusses the de facto segregation of the Boston Public Schools prior to the Garrity decision, his role in implementing the decision, the political and media reaction to the decision, and his feelings on how forced busing could have been prevented through other options. Mr. Canty also reflects on the roles his colleagues and Judge Garrity’s designees played in implementing the Garrity decision and the lasting effects of the decision on the educational system in the city of Boston.
Subject Headings
Boston Public Schools
Busing for school integration
Canty, John M.
Magnet schools – Massachusetts
*Morgan v. Hennigan* (379 F. Supp. 410)

Table of Contents

**Part 1**
Mr. Canty’s background p. 3 (0:00:01)
Mr. Canty’s work prior to and during the Garrity decision p. 4 (0:00:49)
Segregation of Boston Public Schools prior to Garrity decision p. 5 (0:03:56)
Efforts to avoid federal imposition of forced desegregation p.10 (0:15:49)
Violence in Boston resulting from the Garrity decision p.11 (0:23:06)
Magnet schools in Boston prior to Garrity decision p.12 (0:25:58)
Political and media reaction to the Garrity decision p.15 (0:36:46)
Mr. Canty’s regrets in implementing the Garrity decision p.20 (0:50:31)
Long-term effects of the Garrity decision on city of Boston p.21 (0:57:05)

**Part 2**
School officials involved with the Garrity decision p.23 (0:00:01)
Role of Judge Garrity’s two designees in Garrity decision p.26 (0:10:45)
Mr. Canty’s reflections on his role in the Garrity decision p.28 (0:18:46)
Mr. Canty’s reflections on others involved in Garrity decision p.29 (0:23:10)

Interview transcript begins on next page
This interview took place on April 4, 2007, at the John Joseph Moakley
Law Library, 120 Tremont Street, Boston, MA.

Interview transcript

REBECCA ANDREWS: What is your name and where do you live?

JOHN M. CANTY: John M. Canty. C-a-n-t-y. 503 Broadway in Boston.

ANDREWS: Where did you grow up?

CANTY: Primarily in Brighton, Massachusetts, a district of Boston.

ANDREWS: Did you live in Boston around 1970s?

CANTY: Yes, I did.

ANDREWS: What school did you attend?

CANTY: When I was a student?

ANDREWS: Yes.

CANTY: Grade school? High school?

ANDREWS: Yes.

CANTY: Boston Latin School.¹

¹ Boston Latin School is a public exam school founded on April 23, 1635, and is the oldest public school in the United States.
ANDREWS: What were you doing in 1974?

CANTY: In 1974, I was assigned to the—no, I’m sorry, in 1974, I was teaching English at Boston Latin School.

ANDREWS: How were you involved in the Garrity decision?²

CANTY: I was an administrator in the Boston Public Schools, who wrote many of the plans submitted to the court, and I was a frequent testifier in the court from 1969 to 1984. I was at the Educational Planning Center³ trying to prevent the federal jurisdiction in the racial imbalance in Boston. And I administered a department that Judge Garrity formed in his decision of 1975.

ANDREWS: What do you remember about the period of time leading up to the Garrity decision?

CANTY: (laughs) Well, that’s about five hours. I think the most significant things that I might help you with—prior to that, the school department created an agency called the Educational Planning Center in 1967. And I was recruited to participate in that. It was shortly after the state Racial Imbalance Law⁴ was passed in 1966. [sic – 1965] And it was just prior to the inception of hearings of the Civil Rights Commission⁵ investigating segregation in Boston. And from 1969 to 1972, I had been a team leader at the Educational Planning Center involved with developing

² The Garrity decision refers to the June 21, 1974, opinion filed by Judge W. Arthur Garrity in the case of Tallulah Morgan et al. v. James Hennigan et al. (379 F. Supp. 410). Judge Garrity ruled that the Boston School Committee had “intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation” in the Boston Public Schools. When the school committee did not submit a workable desegregation plan as the opinion had required, the court established a plan that called for some students to be bused from their own neighborhoods to attend schools in other neighborhoods, with the goal of creating racial balance in the Boston Public Schools. (See http://www.lib.umb.edu/node/1596 for more information)

³ The Boston School Department's Educational Planning Center (EPC) administered Title III projects in Boston. Title III (“Title Three”) is a section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was enacted on April 11, 1965. Title III provides financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children from low-income families and originally provided matching grants for supplementary education centers.

⁴ Passed in 1965, the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Law prohibited “racial imbalance” in public schools and discouraged schools from having more than 50 percent minority students.

⁵ The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan federal commission which investigates, reports on, and makes recommendations concerning civil rights issues in the United States. It was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.
plans to voluntarily promote desegregation in Boston and to improve our educational facilities, and to take a systemic look at education policy and administration in Boston. We were a racially diverse group, first time in the Boston Public Schools, and we were represented by gender too. There were males and females, which was quite rare in administration.

So I remember many plans, proposals, hearings within the school department with the state officials. I remember appearing before school committee meetings. I remember being interviewed extensively by different federal agencies. And then I remember the onslaught of the data for the decision that was made in 1975.

**ANDREWS:** How were the schools segregated?

**CANTY:** What caused them to be segregated? Well, that’s a question that inspires answers that are sometimes very personal. We tried to be objective. I don’t know if you can ever achieve objectivity. We believe they were segregated by neglect, that the administration did not make systemic decisions in dealing with the assignment of students and the allocation of facilities. In the late fifties and up to the middle sixties, there was a great influx of African American families to Boston, a city at that time had a very low African American percentage. Many of them settled in the corridor from Dudley Street to Mattapan Center. And those were residential areas that were heavily populated by Jewish families. Multiple dwellings, many densely packed apartments. With the arrival of the African Americans from the South—I think one of the reasons for the migration was national issue where African Americans were leaving the South and going to big cities, especially Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago. Boston had a very liberal public welfare program. It was very easy to achieve public assistance and it was run by the city. So there was a great influx. The administration was used to traditional ways of running their school system. They did not know what to do with an influx.

A lot of the schools in that corridor I mentioned from Dudley Station to Mattapan, where Jewish families that had only one or two, maybe at most three kids in the family and the schools were old, they weren’t well maintained, but they had relatively small classes for the day. Their classes weren’t crowded and the schools weren’t stretched. So they were running as they had always
run. In the fall when schools opened, this administration wasn’t ready for classes of ten, fifteen, twenty kids to have to accommodate thirty or forty kids. And then very, very quickly, within three years, in the late sixties, most of the schools in that corridor became very overcrowded where for years they had been underutilized, and they were overcrowded with black Americans. The Jewish people left. And one period of time the local junior high school went, within two or three years, from 90 percent Caucasian, almost all of them, all of whom were Jewish, to over 90 percent black American. And went from 50 percent utilization to 115,120 percent utilization.

So there was a great influx. The city wasn’t prepared. The city did have a lot of racial sentiments. There was a lot of contention, historically, when I was a child growing up, between Irish and Italians, Italians and other races, there was—people lived in enclaves. There was a lot of anti-Semitism among the groups. And the few black Americans were not treated well. And the few Asian Americans, in my childhood, were not treated well. It was a city that was made of districts. If you lived in Brighton, you lived in an enclave. If you lived in South Boston, there was another enclave. Everybody had his identifier, by a church, or by an intersection of streets, or by some tangible identifier. And people didn’t want to traverse that.

When the late sixties—the schools—there was very great demand for the new arrivals. Administration made reactive assignments. They didn’t know what to do with them, and all the kids, so they just put them anywhere they could. Consequently the kids that they were moving were not the few remaining white kids, but the African American kids. And they were moving them in very different parts of the city just to get them indoors and accommodated some place. They weren’t worried if it was in cellars, or if it was in auditoriums. They just had to get them in off the street. Consequently, they were moving only one race of kids and they were moving them to, in many cases, the more inferior facilities. And it was obviously a movement of black kids away from white kids. It was ruled in 1975 to be de facto segregation, which I guess it was, of course. But really it was expedient desegregation, where it’s just get kids in off the street. The families were new to the area, they didn’t know of anything about Boston, they did not know

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6 Racial segregation, especially in public schools, that happens “by fact” rather than by legal requirement. For example, often the concentration of African Americans in certain neighborhoods produces neighborhood schools that are predominantly black, or segregated in fact (de facto), although not by law (de jure).
anything about the neighborhood concept of Boston, so they passively or unwittingly, or just innocently, had to accept the decision making.

Then in the late sixties, Boston started to make specific assignments before the September—so if two or three Septembers went by and they just made random relocations of kids. The assignments were always made by a very limited number of administrators. They were always made in downtown Boston by people who hadn’t been out to the districts and the schools in years. And they assigned kids to schools such as English High School,7 which was always open to anybody in the city. They now assigned eleven junior highs, for example. And those junior highs that they assigned to go there were, within two or three years, almost all African American. So English High School that really innocently enjoyed a very good diversity, racial diversity in the fifties and sixties, overnight became an all-black high school.

The all-female high school is Jeremiah Burke, Roxbury, excuse me, at that time it was called Girls High School, Girls Trade School, for example, were automatically assigned black girls. So the wonderful racial diversity that they had acquired naturally over the years disappeared. Kids in Mattapan and Dorchester were bused across into Roslindale. African American kids were bused across the district to go to schools that had to be opened on the elementary level. Random facilities were grabbed, temples, and things like that. There was an abandoned temple school on Morton Street. It was immediately assigned with just black kids.

And one of the most telling things is schools such as Charlestown and South Boston High School, which were in racially identifiable, white, attitudinally identifiable white neighborhoods that really didn’t have lines, but had gentlemen agreements of where their assignment lines were. They went from relatively small, white high schools, because most of the kids would go to the in-town schools, a pattern that had been going on for almost a hundred years. These schools start welcoming, tacitly, with the tacit consent of in-town administration, enormous numbers of white kids who didn’t live in either South Boston or in Charlestown. So Charlestown, which at the time had only five hundred high school age students, started opening up annexes in an elementary

7 English High School of Boston was founded in 1821. The school is currently located the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, its sixth location since it was founded.
school, a boys’ club, a library, any kinds of place to bring in white kids from as far away as West Roxbury. And South Boston High School opened up four or five annexes including a health club, the city-owned former bath house, just to have more white kids go there.

And the gentlemen’s agreement on the line between Dorchester and South Boston kept getting more obfuscated, when at one time it was clear in people’s minds. And schools such as Dorchester High School were—as a result, you know, clearly, went from relatively well-mixed in the fifties and sixties. In 1960 Dorchester High School was probably sixty/forty with the white students in the majority. It went to 95 percent, maybe even higher, black at South Boston, to very close to 100 percent white. It expanded its population from maybe a thousand students to twenty-seven hundred kids.

So a lot of factors were involved. I’ve given you a very quick sketch. But these were factors that made the schools exceptionally identifiable by race. And then there were some academic factors such as special education, which really was not well-articulated on a statewide basis, a citywide basis. And a lot of kids were just summarily put into what was called special education, with really no definition of what kinds of categories were in special education, and no real training for the special education teachers. And they ended up in very makeshift facilities, behind bookcases, in cellars, and in cafeterias and in boiler rooms, that I had seen, so that there were a systematic, maybe not intentional, you know, not like the articulation of the South of the United States when they specifically said that kids who were black or Negro had to go to certain schools. Boston didn’t really articulate it that way, but they made all kinds of decisions. And many schools across the city, and most of them we could document, for those schools to change either to all-black, or to all-white, or to boys and girls, or to stay all-girls. And within the schools, the facilities, especially in the schools that were determined to be all-black or majority, overwhelming majority black, the facilities, the locations, the opportunities were, again, certainly defined adversely. I don’t know if any or all that is helpful to you.

ANDREWS: It is. Thank you. How did you learn about the Garrity decision?
CANTY: Oh, I just said that I worked for several years on plans to prevent, to try to convince the elected officials in Boston not to be subjected to any imposition by the federal government, that we had to notice that a hundred northern cities were being forced to be desegregated at this time, and it would not benefit anybody if we didn’t accomplish a more equitable distribution of our students, and to integrate their distribution with academic reform. Not look at it as just a demographics or statistics, but to look at it as an opportunity to make modern changes in a school that was moribund, in a school system that was moribund. It hadn’t moved for decades.

When Garrity—when the United States Civil Rights Commission came, an investigation, actually they knew of the work that we at the Planning Center were doing to try to alter perspectives, alter directions, they interviewed us. Garrity received their reports when he read about their adverse findings. Garrity sent signals for two years that he did not want this in his court, that this could be prevented. He had agents of his court meet with us extensively before his decision. We were interviewed on almost a daily basis. I believe that all our files and proposals, and charts and graphs and all of those kinds of things were subpoenaed, and that Garrity had them in his possession for a year or two prior to his decision. And I was in very close contact with what were then to be called his experts, the people who were to oversee the administration of his order.

ANDREWS: In what other ways did people think that the black children went to inferior schools?

CANTY: Well that’s hard to say. Who’s “the people” now? The plaintiffs?

ANDREWS: Yes.

CANTY: The people who were bringing the case?

ANDREWS: Yes.
CANTY: Well, I think in my recollection, inferior schools was a secondary complaint. I think the primary complaint was the burden that was placed on African American kids, that they had to go to such distances, and they had to be uprooted. That is what brought it to the attention of people. There were a lot of protests in the streets of Boston by African American groups, from about the time of the Racial Imbalance Law in 1966 [sic – 1965] until about 1970 or ’72, that kids really didn’t know where they were supposed to go to school, didn’t know—had to leave home and go great distances, had to go into all-white neighborhoods where people were afraid, black people were afraid of what was going to happen to their children going long distances into what they perceived as racially hostile community.

And then I think from these protests—I know there were picketers outside school administration building a great deal of time. It was also a time of enormous foment nationally on the racial issue. Dr. [Martin Luther] King, [Jr.] and Reverend [Ralph] Abernathy and those kinds of people were almost daily in the press, in television. So there was great national attention. The Democratic National Convention of 1968. Famous anti-desegregationists such as Bull Connor in Alabama and George Wallace. It was making it a national controversy where people were taking clear sides and venting hostilities. So the national hostility was coming to Boston. Sports was wrestling (inaudible)—professional sports. Boston’s always had its tradition of great investment in their professional sports, and the issue of blacks and white in professional sports was a very keen issue.

So race became what they call now a “hot button” issue. It was blacks versus whites, when really, in Boston it seemed to be in retrospect, just some black people saying, Hey, we’re afraid to have you keep busing our kids, and there’s nobody else being bused. And we’re going to places that were abandoned and were makeshift. Then after a period of time when they were complaining about the logistics of moving little kids, and high school-aged kids, people who probably, primarily the black activists, were beginning to realize that they would get (sound of paper rustling) to visit where their kids were going, the distance that they were going, and see that in almost, well, in many cases they were going to dilapidated facilities, and they were being placed in deplorable circumstances in the dilapidated facilities.
I remember in—we tried to get a lot of those schools closed just as a planning effort in the sixties for any students. And at the time I became significantly involved in administration, we had 212 schools in Boston, and we had over 104,000 students. When I left as an administrator in 1984 we did manage to close a number of them. We were down to—we got them with a lot of hostility in many cases from administration, from the citizenry and all, the schools down to about 140. A lot of these small wretched buildings we did get closed. But we also lost almost half, well, more than half of the student population.

ANDREWS: Did you see any violence resulting from the racial tension?

CANTY: Yes, yes, I did. Yes, I saw a great number of (inaudible)—great amounts of violence almost on a daily basis. I saw phalanxes of police forces behind shields. I saw stonings. I saw armed police snipers on the roofs of [housing] projects. I saw numerous arrests. When I was an administrator, I tried to be on-site to many of these places. I saw a great number of fights in the halls of many different schools. I saw the foreign press. It was always ironic to me, when I was a younger growing up in the forties and fifties, we would always see on television the newsreels of student riots in places like Korea and the Philippines. It was always uncommon, seeing something that we typcast. There would be white newsreels filming Asian student riots. And I used to go to work everyday when I was trying to administer Judge Garrity’s court order in ’76 and ’77, ‘74 to ’77, Asian film crews filming Americans in riot mode and kind of hoping and encouraging that the students and the parents would act out, and it was total reversal for me personally. I can remember driving every day to work and seeing the Asian film crews waiting for a riot or, unfortunately oftentimes, their waiting was rather short-lived, that they were satisfied right away.

Yeah, there was quite a bit of rioting. But more distressing was the image that people would be fighting and trying severely to hurt each other. I would see prominent politicians out leading fights. And to see armed snipers on rooftops is one of the most compelling images that I’ve retained. And of course the endless motorcycle escorts of buses to the schools.
ANDREWS: Tell me about the magnet schools\(^8\) and why they were opened.

CANTY: My recollection is about 1966 and the Dorchester/Roxbury line on Humboldt Avenue, a very densely—okay, a new school was built. And it was going to be one of the first, I’m going to say “modern” schools. One floor, open classrooms. A whole different concept in elementary education, as opposed to the egg crates of the three hundred years of Boston buildings. A totally different kind of structure. And a lot of black people were complaining, and this new black school was being put up in the neighborhood and they don’t have access to it. They didn’t have say in its opening. And the administrators kind of reflexively, the few who made all these logistical decisions, decided to call it the William Monroe Trotter School. Kind of a paean to give to black people that we’re finally naming a school after a black person. William Monroe Trotter was a very prominent abolitionist of the last—of two centuries ago.

And then some college types and some architects got together as the school was being constructed and they were trying to ensure that it be open space and integrated academically. So they prevailed upon the city to make this a school, instead of having neighborhood lines in a particular segment of Dorchester, in Roxbury, where kids who lived in specific streets would go, that they would open this school and encourage whites and blacks to go to this school voluntarily, rather than being, what was a very popular word for the last forty years, a neighborhood school.

At the same time the federal government was financing in Boston and many other cities what was called a Title I program,\(^9\) and this was called part of a subsystem. And this was heavily funded by the federal government to encourage blacks and whites to go to school. And they were given a direct line. If they started at the Trotter School, and they went there willingly, then they could go to the Lewis School, a dilapidated building that’s still in existence, as their junior high

\(^8\) Magnet schools are schools offering special courses not available in the regular school curriculum and designed, often as an aid to school desegregation, to attract students on a voluntary basis from all parts of a school district without reference to the usual attendance zone rules. (Definition from the Library of Congress.)

\(^9\) Title I ("Title One") is a section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was enacted on April 11, 1965. Title I of the Act is a set of programs set up by the United States Department of Education to distribute funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families.
school. And then they opened a new school in downtown Boston, called Copley Square High School. So they had a feeder pattern. And that started.

In the late sixties it had its success. A lot of white people, especially people that really weren’t too sure where they could go to school, people who lived in the underpopulated areas such as the Back Bay, and people that didn’t want to go to all-black schools, or in other parts of Dorchester, volunteered, and they did achieve fairly good desegregation at the Trotter School when it opened as a brand-new, lovely-looking modern building. And through the subsystem, it was a subset of the Boston Public Schools; I think that’s why they called it a subsystem. And they went to the Trotter, the Lewis, and what was then-called Copley Square High School. So that was probably one of the first magnet schools, or set of schools, nationally. And it became a buzzword, throughout the North anyway, that you could get kids to go to school willingly together. And if you could, then you didn’t have to have racial desegregation imposed upon you. And within a few years Boston started trying to develop other magnet schools. The [Dennis C.] Haley [Elementary School] was a former bowling alley that they opened to entice kids.

But Boston always had a magnet school system, they just didn’t know to call it a magnet school system. Because in all times a great number of schools, Boston Latin School, English High School, Boston Technical High School, Boston Trade, Girls Trade, Jeremiah Burke, Girls High School, Boston Clerical School, many, many schools were open to anybody who wanted to go. You know, the reason that most people prefer to go to these schools I mentioned because they were located in-town. Very few people in my neighborhood growing up, very rarely did anybody go to Brighton High School. And people I worked with later in life who lived in different parts of the city. Very rarely did you ever meet anybody who went to his or her district school. But magnet became a term from about—I think the Trotter may have opened about 1966. And Copley Square High School may have opened in ’67 or ’68. Those were the first. And then by the time of Judge Garrity’s court order, we had a whole set of maybe thirty or forty schools that were magnet schools, had different themes. Their racial percentages were strictly regulated, but in fact they really had no impact on the severe racial identification that was going on in places like Charlestown, South Boston, in the corridor, throughout, from Dudley Station to Mattapan, and over the Mattapan line, that had been established.
And then of course, other areas of Dorchester, with the largest population of the city, whites just stopped going to the schools and really didn’t take part in a significant percentage in the magnet schools.

**ANDREWS:** Did you get involved in any meetings or conversations with the parents of the students?

**CANTY:** Oh yes. Every one of our proposals, whether it was a proposal—we’ve put into—I think we were prime movers in the magnet schools, and where they would be, who the administrations would be. We also were involved in a school building program where we did get twenty-seven schools opened in forty-two months. Brand new facilities, a big capital investment by the city. All of them we started in neighborhood community meetings with staff assigned specifically to recruit people in the neighborhood. We started meeting in kitchens, and living rooms, and storefronts before any school was built. We tried to have as many representative groups participate as we could throughout that. And we were involved greatly in all kinds of other academic programs such as dealing with isolation by language. Shortly after the African American influx into Boston we got a very large influx of refugees from Indochina. And we had no facility in Boston to equip classrooms with opportunities (laughs) for people who spoke things like Hmong Lao, and Cambodian, and different kinds of Laotians, and different dialects of Vietnamese. So we would meet all of the time with those kinds of people in trying to identify leaders who were native language speakers in those groups to work with the city.

And then we were into the plans to try to avoid the imposition of federal decision making. Almost all our plans we took public, we tried to take them to small groups, we tried to take them to large groups, we tried to take them to press conferences, we tried to take them to open sessions on television. And I was in all those hearings and then I was in many hostile meetings where I and colleagues were proposing school closings, or when we had no alternatives but to—well even in creating some of the magnet schools, I remember that families were extremely hostile to us. That it was a trick. They had no confidence in administration. They had no confidence in city people. And it was probably justified. They thought we were just hoodwinking them into busing
their children. Now transportation of either race became a horrific symbol. And we were in many a meeting of great hostility, and physical abuse, and verbal abuse. They were arduous times.

ANDREWS: Did you receive any threats?

CANTY: Oh, endlessly. Oh, nightly. (laughs) Face to face with people spitting at me (laughs), sure. Sure.

ANDREWS: What politicians are really influential to the community after this decision?

CANTY: After the decision?

ANDREWS: Yes.

CANTY: Well, you know, some people could contend that the politicians forced the decision. A lot of the administrators who worked for the politicians—Boston at that time was an elected school committee. A lot of the—in my personal administrative and teaching life in Boston, almost all of the superior officers, the higher ranking people, were very good human beings. They were very kind and altruistic. It was kind of a mindset across the board that they were dedicated and diligent and hardworking. They’re all mostly like me today. They’re older, white, balding, gray-haired men and women. For some reason, women had a pretty good chance at promotion in upper levels of the Boston Public Schools in those days. They had deplorable opportunities when we were teachers. I remember, I was hired on a different pay scale from women. But they were good human beings. Unfortunately, we did not consider them visionaries, and they didn’t seem to know how to initiate ideas and concepts.

The elected school committee—and I sat in countless public and private meetings with the school committee. The elected school committee didn’t seem to have, as a group, any altruism whatever. They seemed only concerned with the eleven thousand jobs they controlled. And their whole contention was daily, who was getting what job, and who was contributing how much money to them, or what they used to call their campaigns, or the buzzword at the time was, each
politician would have a “time.” And the good, decent administrators who were rather shortsighted, and didn’t understand the national issue of race or how it was impacting the local issue of race, seemed to be kind of powerless under these school committee members who were controlling their jobs, their pay raises, their security. And then when the race issue came out—the school committee always had a reputation as being a launching point for other city elections. People felt if they could get on the school committee they had a huge opportunity to receive money in the form of donations, and had a huge ability to determine who was going to be promoted or not promoted. But at the same time, they had a feeling that the school committee allowed them an opportunity to be visible so they could run and achieve other offices. Statistically they had a rather poor success rate. They won elections to school committee, but they rarely won higher offices. And you know, Maurice Tobin,10 I believe in the forties, went from school committee, to mayor, to governor, to cabinet member, to the person chosen for that eponymous bridge that goes across the river. But not many others had that success.

Well, when the race issue came by, I think a lot of the school committee people who had spent all of their time concerned about controlling jobs and promotions, and eyeing possible higher office, realized that they had a wonderful built-in opportunity. That when black people were protesting outside the city hall office, white politicians could get equal camera time, and could scream an invective back at the black people in the six o’clock news. And now the school committee had such a hot issue that they were creating a “them versus us” attitude. Former chairman of the school committee Louise Day Hicks11 used to always use her slogan: “You know where I stand.” Which was a buzzword that everybody in her community knew meant, I’m against “them.” So whether they were good people or bad people, they knew that if they were opposed to busing, and if they screamed, and if they created havoc, and if they were defiant, the masses who were reacting to race issues, locally and nationally, had a person in play. So the issue did not become what kind of schools any kids were going to. It became a “them versus us”

10 Maurice J. Tobin (1901-1953), a Democrat, served as mayor of Boston from 1938 to 1945, as well as governor of Massachusetts from 1945 to 1947, and United States Secretary of Labor from 1948 to 1953 in the administration of President Harry S. Truman. In 1967, the Mystic River Bridge, which connects the Charlestown section of Boston with Chelsea, was renamed the Maurice J. Tobin Memorial Bridge in his honor.

11 Louise Day Hicks (1916-2003), a Democrat, served on the Boston School Committee from 1962 to 1967 (serving as chair from 1963 to 1965). She co-founded the anti-busing organization Restore Our Alienated Rights, or ROAR.
issue. And as long as we had a “them versus us” issue, the “us” (sound of paper rustling) outnumbered the “them,” so the “us” would ensure that the politicians would get elected.

I can remember one particular time when we had many plans and color codes, and graphs, and charts, and maps of the city. And there was a full house at school committee headquarters and a widely advertised meeting in probably 1971, to show alternatives to, that Boston was never going to have to be subjected to federal law. That we could make some academic changes that would benefit all of our kids. The city had not been subjected to white flight yet. We had wonderful opportunities and we were going to give this city a whole number of options that I could identify with. That we had discussed them in community meetings, local areas, and now undertake it for discussion throughout the city. And an enormous crowd, as I took my magic marker, or whatever I did, and went up to the first plan. All the newspapers were there, all the television stations were there. Even the [Boston] Globe and PBS [Public Broadcasting Service]. And the chairman of the school committee at that time was Paul Tierney,\textsuperscript{12} who was much slicker than the other politicians. He didn’t scream and yell. But he knew how to manipulate the others, and he had a leadership position. And to that “them versus us” spiel that was going on. And in front of all the television stations and all the reporters in Boston, including the Globe, which was very pro-, well, very anti-school committee. And PBS. And I see many of those reporters still on citywide television today. Tierney leaned over and pulled the plugs so that the microphone wouldn’t work and all their cameras went dark.

ANDREWS: What do you think the media’s effect on this situation is?

CANTY: Well, I know that they backed down that day. They never challenged it. But other politicians that were—there was a politician who just died in South Boston. He’s been a representative for thirty-five years over there. He was somebody who never had accomplished much in his life. He went on to be—he had an extensive police record. And he was leading the stonings of black buses going up 6th Street to South Boston High School. He was elected city

\textsuperscript{12}Paul R. Tierney was a member of the Boston School Committee from 1968 to 1979, serving as its chairman in 1971 and 1973. He advocated addressing the racial imbalances in the Boston Public Schools, but opposed the mass busing of students.
council and city council president for a number of years based on how the opportunity of race and desegregation of Boston allowed him to get prominence. John Kerrigan,\textsuperscript{13} in the conversations that I witnessed, was a very profane man and would make his scatological remarks about everybody, but he always said that in his way that he knew that keeping the action going was keeping him in office. And he ran for many subsequent offices. He never got them, but he always held his position. Paul Ellison\textsuperscript{14} was a very devious man. He eventually went to jail for his deviousness. He was very closely involved in following the others in the foment so that he would get his name in the paper. And the more times you get your name in the paper and your face on television, you seemed to get elected.

So on the school committee level, all of those were elected people, I would say there were very few. You know, the most outspoken was Louise Day Hicks and then a woman called [Elvira] “Pixie” Palladino,\textsuperscript{15} from East Boston. She represented an all-white peninsula over there that in those days had no minorities. But she knew that minorities were going to be bused in. And she was a widely acerbic woman, and a woman of very little articulation, a very limited (laughs) erudition, who got elected a couple of times just by, probably, her histrionics. So politicians at that level—the ones who were most outspoken were the school committee.

The statewide politicians, the people who had great effect, were quite clever in being underground. You know, they make a lot of statements now. We’re in a Moakley Archive, and Moakley\textsuperscript{16} was representative in South Boston. Who, in South Boston meetings, would voice to his neighbors, his constituency—he was highly revered for some reason. I’m not too sure of any position he ever took on any policy or anything constructive, but he would always say in local

\textsuperscript{13} John J. Kerrigan (1932-1996) was a member of the Boston School Committee from 1968 to 1976. He gained notoriety as one of the city's most outspoken critics of busing.

\textsuperscript{14} Paul J. Ellison (1940-1988) served two terms on the Boston School Committee from 1972 to 1975. He was sentenced to two years in jail in 1976 after he was convicted for larceny of public funds, serving a year and a day of the sentence before being paroled.

\textsuperscript{15} Elvira "Pixie" Palladino (1931-2006) was a two-term member of the Boston School Committee, serving from 1975-1977 and 1979-1981. Along with Louise Day Hicks, Palladino helped to organize the anti-busing organization ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) in 1974.

community meetings how busing was destroying the city and everything. But citywide and
nationally, he was mute. There was just no position. Nothing could be—what do they call it?
Teflon? Nothing could be attached to him. Nothing could be—Bulger, another prominent
politician who eventually became president of the Massachusetts Senate, was always going by
the claim of how opposed he was to busing. But he was just a non-participant in anything for or
against. And in a hotbed neighborhood, absolutely nonverbal. Mayor White was suspiciously
involved, when we were building schools, in a lot of activities that seemed nefarious to me. But
he had so many layers of insulation we couldn’t prove them. He seemed to be—the man is now
acclaimed and has a statue across the street. Nothing could ever be traced to him on his position
of busing. They’d all say busing was bad. But they were never in the forefront. And the people
who—even Ray Flynn, who eventually (inaudible) became mayor. They were very clever in
maintaining their offices and not getting into the throes. What they said privately and what they
said to their constituents in their smaller enclaves was never translated into citywide issues. Even
the governor at the time—of course, one of the governors, poor Ed King, that maybe didn’t
know anything that was going on. Very, very removed from all of these issues. Any
policymaking, any policy proposing. So the luminaries became the loudest actors. And the
people you would expect to be the most prominent actors became nonpersons on those topics. In
our relationship with them, a lot of them, especially Mayor White, became very involved in
anything that had to do with capital expenses and some very suspicious activities. But he seemed
to spend more attention on those than he did on the riots that were going on in his city. So there’s
a quick sketch of one person’s view of politicians.

17. “Teflon” is a nickname given to persons, particularly in politics, to whom criticism does not seem to stick. The
term comes from Teflon, the brand name of a "non-stick" chemical used on cookware. The nickname was first given
to President Ronald Reagan in 1983.
18. William M. Bulger (1934- ), a Democrat, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1962 to
1970, in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1970 to 1996. He was Senate President from 1978 to 1996. OH-014
in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Mr. Bulger.
19. Kevin White (1929- ), a Democrat, served as mayor of Boston from 1968 to 1984. He ran unsuccessfully for
governor of Massachusetts in 1970.
20. Raymond L. Flynn (1939- ), a Democrat, represented South Boston in the Massachusetts State House of
Representatives from 1971 to 1979. He later served on the Boston City Council from 1978 to 1974, then as mayor
of Boston from 1984 to 1993.
21. Edward J. King (1925-2006), a Democrat, served as governor of Massachusetts from 1979 to 1983. He switched
his party affiliation to Republican after leaving office.
ANDREWS: Thank you. Do you have any regrets about your involvement?

CANTY: Well, yeah, I have a couple. One that I could never articulate before the state and before the federal court that they were imposing, or threatening to impose, in all the time I was dealing with them, up until the time the law came down—I couldn’t convince them that they had a significant hand in the segregation. The state took over the welfare system from the city when they felt that the city didn’t want it anymore, or the state felt that they were administering it badly. But the state didn't seem to improve public assistance and public housing in any way. And the city housing projects became state housing projects. And then they became housing projects under a state, quasi-state authorities. And the federal government administered many of the public housing projects, that we called them in Boston. And the state, and the city, allowed huge neighborhoods, densely populated areas, to become all one race: black. And in some areas, Charlestown, South Boston, and Brighton: white. They, you know, by house by house assignment, determined what color people were going to live in those buildings. And then they sued us because we were sending them to the closest schools to the places they say. So they never took any responsibility for their enormous contribution to the segregation that occurred overnight.

I personally drew all the plans for what kids would go to what schools. And what bus routes would get them there. Classroom by classroom, program by program, school by school. It was a very horrific, emotional experience for me to realize that I was taking kids as young as four years old and sending them in all kinds of different patterns that I tried to make congruent, and logical, and logistically sound. It was very difficult. But I knew that there was nothing we could do about it. We had fought for years to prevent it. And it was imposed. It was, you know, a judicial fiat. It was the law of the city. And it was going to be done. And the first year of the law, the school committee put all kinds of people who were contributors, payroll people, into prominent positions, and they reassigned these children murderously, horribly. They took kids that were in litters and gurneys, and physically handicapped classes, and sent them to sheet metal shops, and high schools when they’re—you know, and they took kids who were studying French at Latin School, and put them into bilingual classes in East Boston. They just did a horrific job of carelessness.
So I knew, also, that the people who were making the first year’s decisions after the order, were uncaring, inept, and we had to go back to Garrity and petition him. And I wrote the petition to dismiss those people that were enforcing his order, and to allow us to do it. That we could do it equitably and honestly. And also the equitable and honest hiring of people instead of allowing the corruption of hiring in the past. It’s very painful to be part of busing when you knew it never had to happen. And when you knew you were doing this to little children and to families. But we felt, and I was the director, that if I didn’t do this, corruption was going to prevail as always. And as bad as this situation was, it was going to be worse. None of the persons that I hired after the judge allowed our petition, and allowed us to create a new administration, an implementation department, was politically connected. We had to hire ninety-three people. All of my predecessors, who were over a hundred people, were politically connected, and were making egregious and callous decisions on a situation that was nationwide news and was violent. And we did tell Garrity that we could have the police and the metal detectors if he honored us. We could have the police and the metal detectors out of the schools within eighteen months. And as painful as it was to determine the fate of every single child (laughs), my fingerprint was on every child, we did get the police, and the metal detectors, and the newsreels out of the schools within six to nine months. We had that satisfaction. The greatest grief of all is that we got everything calm and the issue began to disappear, but as we all know, later on I went back to teaching in the schools, in what they used to call minority neighborhoods. And the school system to this day has not recovered. And it’s probably lingering effects because of the busing, but of course, overwhelming effects because of administrative style, and devotion, and policy, or lack of devotion.

**ANDREWS:** How were the neighborhoods affected? What were the long-term effects?

**CANTY:** Oh well, as I said, white people refused to go to the schools. In South Boston an awful lot of the kids were not transferred out of South Boston, but they refused to sit in classrooms with kids brought in. So kids didn’t go to school. I even knew cases where they locked some children in closets. We had to investigate individual cases with a family locked their children in closets. Wouldn’t let them out all week. But within a couple years after 1975 there were just no
white children left. The only white children left were kindergartners who were able to go in some schools to their neighborhood kindergarten, which was segregated in their building. So in West Roxbury, Roslindale, Brighton, and of course East Boston, you had all-white kindergartens. A lot of the schools stayed white in East Boston because the black people did not go over there in great numbers initially, the first few years. So they had a white majority. And the exam schools were overwhelmingly white, although, that was going to be gradually changed by the court order. And some of the magnet schools had some white kids. But aside from that there were no white kids anywhere. So it became all-black schools. Still we couldn’t get them closed fast enough, the bad ones, and new ones up fast enough. So we still had black kids going to school bearing the brunt of the transportation, and the brunt of the inadequate facilities. The school-age population of the city just tumbled. It fell in half. I think it’s now back to sixty-two or [sixty-] three thousand. It went from 104 [thousand] to probably fifty-four [thousand], which is more than half.

But one thing that did come out of it was a lot of other policies and programs became visible: special education, non-English speaking, physical access to buildings, and a lot of other local suits took place. So while we were dealing with the implementation of the court order after 1977 now, we were also actively participating in a whole new look at how we were treating other kinds of people that had challenges, had unfairnesses thrust upon them. So maybe the war in Vietnam had as a by-product the Women’s Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps the war in the streets of Boston had as a by-product, great more accessibility to many other kids, and at least the mindsets of thinking of improving academic programs and coming out of the mindset of the thirties and forties, and trying to get into the seventies and eighties. And the thinking of developing academic programs. But I’ve taught the last fifteen years in Boston after I’d left administration. And I taught in neighborhoods that are really in difficult situations. And the situations in the schools up until my retirement a year or two ago, is rather bleak.

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22 Mr. Canty misspoke and meant to say fifty thousand.

23 The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War or Vietnam Conflict, occurred in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from 1955 until 1975. The war was fought between the communist North Vietnam, supported by its communist allies, and the government of South Vietnam, supported by the United States and other members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Escalation of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War began in 1965 and lasted until the Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 27, 1973.
ANDREWS: Was there anyone else connected to this that you would like to talk about?

CANTY: Oh yeah, there was a great many of them. Unfortunately I think all the players now are deceased. As I said the school committee was very concerned about patronage. It was all they would ever talk about privately. And manipulation. This is long before and all during the busing foment. They were a very unattractive people. They were very difficult for a person, I tried to be a person of dignity, to meet with privately. They’re profane, they’re nasty, they’re crude. And we had a superintendent at the time, up until 1972, who was a good man. And he did not have that racism of the school committee, and he tried to listen to alternatives. Which was unusual in those days because a large, powerful white man didn’t have to listen to alternatives. All he had to do was issue fiats. But he really listened to proposals and he really seemed to care. He didn’t wear any emotionalism on his sleeve. He was a very tough, formidable man. But he seemed to care. And he seemed to be efficacious. He seemed to know what would work and what wouldn’t work. And he seemed to sense that all this nonsense, and screaming and yelling wasn’t gonna work.

And he was very—I was very impressed by him. One, because he was different from most people. And he had a caring about improving. And two, he could handle the machinations of the crooked school committee who controlled his fate. Until finally they took his, what they used to consider, his abuse for years. I sat in meetings behind the scenes with him when he would physically browbeat them. These people that were making these horrible statements out in public. And he controlled them. They were afraid of him. But finally they got the three votes together after years and they throw him out. And his name was William H. Ohrenberger. He was a—they named a school after him, Ohrenberger. I think it’s O-h-r-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r. He wasn’t a person of great vision. But he would have liked to have been. And if he had more time, maybe

24 William H. Ohrenberger served as deputy superintendent (1960-1963) and superintendent (1963-1972) of the Boston Public Schools. Upon his retirement in 1972, a new elementary school in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, was named in his honor as the William H. Ohrenberger Community School.
he could have been. And he tried to prevent as much chicanery as he could, and he actually did a pretty good job.

One of the real heroes of the desegregation was my boss at the Planning Center and at the implementation. And his name was John H. Coakley. No, John R. Coakley.25 C-o-a-k-l-e-y. And here was a man of very humble appearance and very halting speech, who was revered by anybody on either side except the politicians. He was profoundly bright. He was a great innovator. He had wonderful ideas before and after. He was in particular esteem with the judge. He alienated no community. He had such a tremendous power of intellect. He was a man extremely conservative of his person. And very liberal of his mind. And all of the concepts, a lot of the theoretical proposals were made all the year, were made with his pen. Because I knew, he and I were together all-day, everyday. He was a man I was very proud of. And Boston owes tremendously to him.

There were some good honest people that were started the Planning Center. There was Joseph Carey,26 he’s deceased. Coakley’s deceased. Ohrenberger’s deceased. A very broad-minded man who tried to be open and engaging to different concepts. He led a department that had women, and other races, and handicapped, something that was never seen in public administration anywhere. And he had another, Robert L. Murray, who is still alive and bright and able. A very conservative man as opposed to Coakley, but a bright man. He might be worth an interview. He lives in Braintree. He’s probably approaching eighty years of age now. He was very much opposed to our developing plans for Boston’s taking leadership in the desegregation. He was a very bright man and a very good gentleman. But he believed it was a Massachusetts issue that all the black kids should be shipped throughout eastern Massachusetts so that the whole eastern part of the state should share in the huge demographic issue. And there was a lot of argument in those days in favor of his metropolitan plan, to metropolitanize this issue. Of course we said—we

25 John R. Coakley served as an educator and administrator in the Boston Public Schools. When Judge W. Arthur Garrity ordered the Boston School Committee to develop its own desegregation plan in 1974, Mr. Coakley was the principal author of a proposal the committee refused to adopt. Judge Garrity then ordered his own student assignment desegregation plan in 1975, with John R. Coakley responsible for its implementation.

26 Joseph F. Carey (1922-2005) served as director of the Boston School Department's Educational Planning Center (EPC) during the desegregation era.
disagreed, Coakley and I, that that would put the burden on one race, African Americans, and white Americans wouldn’t be required to bus. And also, that we thought it was our responsibility to clean our house first before we went outside to either blame outsiders or to stick outsiders with a situation that we had created.

So Robert Murray, a very impressive man, I think you’d be happy to meet him. Was the antithesis of my thinking in those days. But I think it would be beneficial to see another side, and it would be good for you people just to meet, you know, a man of his personal qualities. Very hard to identify other people that I could give tangible trace to their trying to be proactive. It’s easy for me to identify people who tried to be negative. One of the first teachers in Boston who was promoted primarily because of his race, and took an awful abuse, and was made an area superintendent, an assistant superintendent, was a black man named Rollins Griffith who was a very highly regarded music teacher. And when the city felt that they had to promote some people, they went around and tokenistically promoted the few black people that they could find. Fortunately, one of the first people they found was Rollins Griffith and they made him a spokesperson for many of the areas of this city and they gave him responsibility. I think they didn’t really have their hearts in it. But he was a wonderful man who had great strength and a very quiet demeanor, and was in the public forum all the time. Subjected to all kinds of abuse. I think that when in baseball they made Jackie Robinson the first black ballplayer because they felt he was strong enough to take the abuse. And I don’t know if he ever got enough credit for that. Well on our local level, Rollins Griffith, you know, took the abuse, and went about his business as an administrator in the schools. He did not go out of his business with any agenda, or role, or attitude. He was just trying to do the right thing with his abilities. And he suffered greatly for it. But we respected him greatly, and unfortunately he died at an early age. His wife succeeded him. She was a very lovely woman, but she was more in the background. She was not a citywide spokesperson.

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27 Rollins Griffith was the first African American assistant superintendent of the Boston Public Schools and also served as a music teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He established the District 5 Teacher Center to link teacher training and school programs and help staff members earn teacher and/or administrative certification. After his death in 1978, the Center was renamed the Rollins Griffith Teacher Center of Boston.
Other people—it would be hard for me to recollect somebody that left an impression. I guess it’s not much of an impression if you have to go looking for the impression. I have fought plenty of people I could identify who brought gasoline to the fire. It’s hard to find people who tried to bring alternatives to the fire. You know, you asked me about the politicians. You didn’t ask me about two of the most prominent people in the desegregation issue. And that was the Experts. That was the title given them. They were the day-to-day administrators and policymakers of the judge. Judge Garrity had the position as a federal district judge. That his role was to hold hearings and issue decrees from the bench. And the only time, as involved as I was in this, and he read every word I ever wrote, and he sent back—none of us ever met personally with Garrity. He was a judge on the bench.

But his two designees, his cardinals, or whatever you would call them. Who wrote the decree of the order of 1975, were Robert Dentler,28 D-e-n-t-l-e-r, who I believe is still at UMass [University of Massachusetts] Boston. At the time he was a dean of School of Education at Boston University. And Marvin [Scott], I’ll think of his name in a minute. Was the associate dean at this place [School of Education at Boston University] and was the second deputy, the second—Marvin, man, I met with that guy everyday for seven years. (laughs) Ten years. Well—and they really had the similar, or the same authority that (inaudible) did. They could make decisions, they could—and Dentler seemed to be a very sour, bitter man, who was very bright and very crafty, and very uncaring. I can remember one day he told me he was a triage officer. He got to determine what children lived and died. That was his figure of speech for what kids had a happy school assignment and what kids didn’t.

I had a contentious relationship with him [Dentler] not on philosophy, but on attitude. You know, I think in a way, we were both philosophically looking for reasoned, thoughtful, proactive policies, academic policies, logistical policies in Boston. I was always appalled by anybody would have that attitude. That he was some superior being. That if somebody suffered, well, that was—they were expendable. That was in the battlefield. A general’s attitude that. Well, you

28 Robert A. Dentler (1928-2008) was a sociologist, educator, and one of two court-appointed education experts who helped design and administer Boston's school desegregation busing plan under the order of Judge W. Arthur Garrity. In 1974, while serving as a professor and dean of the School of Education at Boston University, Garrity asked Dentler and his associate dean, Marvin B. Scott, to assist in drafting the desegregation plan.
know, if we lose so many, that’s what we expect. And he had actually no compassion on any individualized cases or categories. He always had that attitude that they were losses of war. That they were losses of a social experiment. Now although he was dean of the School of Education, he was a sociologist by academic background. And he always referred to this in private conversations with me as a sociological experiment. I was alarmed by those kinds of things. And I tried to articulate that alarm several times in court, but the judge would not hear that. I think that he had another kind of agenda. That his agenda was an enormous power over a city. He seemed to relish publicity, although he was very crafty. He did not have a public persona. He did not act out. He didn't go to the press or anything like that. But he would get his experiments out, and his name would be attached to them. A very clever, very crafty man. I don’t think he was a good person for a horrible time in the city of Boston.

He came from Kansas. He seemed to resent the East. He seemed to resent—I rode in cars with him. I went to—you know, I had lunches with him, and you know, went to meetings with him. We were always opponents. You know, we had to be. Although, I think both of us had the same goals. You just could never be aligned. He always seemed to want to have that role. So he made enormous decisions and in the first year of the court order, the implementation, when the worst kinds of decisions were imposed upon individual families, he seemed to relish it. He seemed to like watching suffering. And that’s what sociologists did. They witnessed and commented upon behaviors of masses of people. I believe he had the utmost trust of the judge which constantly gave him enormous power. In day-to-day matters and the implementation of the court order. He was a dour, sour, negative man that was extremely manipulating, and just plain not decent. He could be available for a—well, he’s still around. He’s an old man now. Here I am calling people old. But you may want to get his perspective.

And then Marvin, I forget his last name. It will be in any documentation around. Was a younger man. He, unfortunately, we just regarded as a token African American. He was silly. He was giddy. He tried to be a bully in public and in all our private meetings. He was just profane and perverse and silly. But, we always felt that he just was more interested in the hourly rate. In those days we were all amazed, don’t forget it was 1972, that Dentler was getting two hundred dollars a day, and Marvin was getting a hundred dollars a day. And it seemed as though they were
always padding the time they put in. Of course a hundred dollars a day today is not much of a figure.

Marvin has been kicking around different small colleges for years. You can see his name. It wouldn’t be hard to find him. And I’m sure I’ll think of it later. But they had great authority, although, Marvin deferred on everything to Dentler. Everything. He just wasn’t interested. He just going along for the ride. There’s two other interviews. I don’t know if you’ve heard those names, if you’ve tried them, there’s somebody to pursue.

ANDREWS: How has this changed your life?

CANTY: My life? Well, you know, I guess people always comment that years are like the tide, they wash away so many things. It certainly changed my life from 1969 to 1984, when I was, all but two years, I was daily involved. It was an enormous struggle to see if we could get reasoned change. Those are terms I use. I don’t know if other people would agree. Obviously, made a lot of enemies by my peers, white males. That I was on the other side. And you can imagine a lot of the epithets that I heard. I was probably pretty much immune to that in those days. I know the hours—John Coakley and I used to catch the MTA, the last “T” at night. It was always one o’clock. And we’d get the last train and then we’d probably be on one of the first ones in the morning. So we were working 6:00 A.M. to 1:00 A.M., seven days a week. That naturally had an effect on personal life.

I can remember one time, August night, when we were running over to get the one o’clock train, I happened to observe to him, “Gee, I wonder what kind of summer they had.” I think as a younger man I probably was too arrogant to feel the abuse that I took in a lot of public sessions. I felt very pained to see that I was participating in the anxiety of people who I felt just did not want to see. I just couldn’t live with kids in these horrible schools like the Phillips Brooks [in Dorchester], and Bradford [in Mattapan]. And all of these politicians were really against me

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29 The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is a body politic and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts formed in 1964 to finance and operate most bus, subway, commuter rail and ferry systems in the greater Boston area. It replaced the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), which was formed in 1947.
because I didn't want them buying junkie buildings from people like the city lawyer who sold them his abandoned property, or his congregation’s abandoned property on Morton Street. But I think we were so given to the charge that it didn’t have much of a personal effect. I never remember having difficulty sleeping. I never remember having change in blood pressure. I never remember having any physiological symptoms. And we were so concerned about trying to be fair. And trying to show people options and alternatives to the whole situation. The situation that couldn’t be avoided that we didn’t have much time to reflect upon what it was doing to us. Or our own feelings. And now thirty (inaudible) years later, it’s been twenty-three [years] since I was an administrator. I feel the greatest difficulty for me is that none of this had to happen.

If people just, if white politicians and administrators just wanted to prevent a situation—they didn’t have to listen to me, they didn’t have to listen to our ideas. We were scary. We were talking about doing things by computer, doing things by technology, and those were bad words in those days. But none of this ever had to happen. And too many people used this situation for personal glorification and personal gain. I felt there was a prominent person who got achievement in the state, Charles Glenn. You’ll find his name. He’s still around. You may want to interview him. He may be at Boston University now. He’s probably a little bit older. Not in this for anything else but self-glorification. You know, I hear a lot of great praise for Mel King, a politician in the South End. My experience with him is just a glory rider, you know. Like Louise Day Hicks. We had people on both sides, black and white, who seemed to be flying their own banners. And that’s very hard to forget.

And, you know, it’s very disconcerting to see the adulation. I see buildings and here named after Moakley and all. And I live in South Boston. I have no idea what the man ever did on any topic to gain fame. If he were as talented and as dedicated to the people as he was, he could have taken a position of preventing this. The man—nobody would prevent. And although we tried to be

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30 Charles L. Glenn is a professor and chairman of educational administration and policy at Boston University's School of Education. From 1970 to 1991, he was director of urban education and equity efforts for the Massachusetts Department of Education, including administration of over $500 million in state funds for magnet schools and desegregation.

31 Melvin H. King (1928- ) is an educator, activist, and writer who has served as Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He also ran for mayor of Boston in 1983, narrowly losing to Raymond L. Flynn.
bright and articulate and everything else, we weren’t politically savvy. We thought we had a better mousetrap, but we didn’t sell it. And we didn’t sell it because Louise Day Hicks and those politicians didn’t want it to be sold. And I regret that I personally wasn’t strong enough to counter-effect their power. Everyday, television reporters and newspaper reporters were in our office. Everyday, all-day, looking for scoops, looking for stories. And I still see some of them on television today. There’s two on Channel 2. And, you know, a lot I see in national television. I can remember doing one of the first interviews with Leslie Stahl. But we had the position that we weren’t gonna play the press. We weren’t gonna get into petty contests and bickerings with parties. That would not help our case. So the politicians had the power of the press. And they got their negative point, and consequently their votes to stay in office. And we got a city with tens of thousands of families distressed, very upset. And justifiably so. So I guess, you know, whether you’re playing baseball, or tennis, or writing an essay, or a love letter to somebody, you always think you could do better. I guess I felt that this should have been prevented and I should have been a bigger factor in getting it prevented. I probably did a good job in getting it administrated fairly, but I didn’t succeed in getting it prevented.

ANDREWS: Is there anything else you’d like to say about it?

CANTY: No, I think you’ve listened to somebody babble, for how long now? An hour and a half.

ANDREWS: Thank you.

CANTY: You don’t even have classroom—I’m sure you’ve thanked me for stopping, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

32 Mr. Canty misspoke and meant to say Channel 5.