THE STRIKE THAT CHANGED NEW YORK

Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville Crisis

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"BLACK" VALUES, "WHITE" VALUES

Race and Culture in New York City During the 1960s

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute would become the defining battle in a cultural war that raged in New York City during the 1960s, and continues to affect the city today. As the events at Ocean Hill quickly swept beyond the immediate protagonists into the public discourse of the city as a whole, so did the cultural questions associated with it. The debate began with a basic educational question: why did black pupil achievement levels in the New York public school system lag behind those of whites? It soon grew to embrace the legitimacy of black lower-class culture, the validity of "middle-class" values and their relevance to the black community, and the ability of traditional models of cultural pluralism to speak to all segments of the city's population. Responses to these issues, along with the question of how to define the words "equality," "racism," and "merit," divided largely along racial lines. Black and white New Yorkers stared across a cultural divide, interpreting the same phenomena in markedly different ways, and offering vastly dissimilar solutions to the problems faced by the city. Ultimately, their competing versions of what constituted a "fair," "inclusive" city would place whites and blacks on opposite sides in mayoral elections, labor negotiations, and arguments about municipal spending and taxation levels. The legacy of these disagreements would be two hostile, culturally separated New Yorks.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, the same coalition of black and white educators, activists, and intellectuals that had organized around the idea of "community," also mounted a challenge to the prevailing civic values in New York City, and to the actors it associated with them—the majority wing of the UFT, the city's educational bureaucracy, and, more generally, most of the middle-class whites living in the city. The challenge was threefold. First, it attacked the idea of the "culture of poverty" as an explanation for low black student achievement, and defended the validity of lower-class black culture against attacks by white critics. Second, it questioned what it saw as the shallowness and fraudulence of the core "middle-class" values of the city—"race-blind" individual merit, unbridled competition, and materialism—associating them specifically with whites. Finally, it rejected the moderate cultural pluralism that had come to prevail in New York by the mid-1960s—one which stressed the primacy of individual identity within a host of overlapping ethnic, racial, religious, class, and civic group affiliations—and sought to replace it with a radicalized version based almost exclusively on racial status.

The challengers were a diverse group. They included black cultural nationalists, notably members of the ATA, who spearheaded opposition among black teachers to the UFT before, during, and after the Ocean Hill crisis. There were also black intellectuals such as Harold Cruse and Charles Hamilton, and a group of writers and activists centered around the black cultural journals *Freedomways* and the *Liberator.* In addition there were black leaders with ties to the white community, such as Kenneth Clark, and Milton Galamison, who had moved from leadership of pro-integration public school boycotts in 1964 to support of community control as a member of the city's Board of Education by 1968. They were joined by antipoverty, community action, and grassroots activist organizations with ties to the city's lower-class black community, notably Brooklyn CORE, headed by street organizer Sonny Carson. New Left–influenced whites, including Ford Foundation–financed intellectuals, and writers centered around publications such as the *Village Voice* and the *New York Review of Books,* also joined this cultural challenge. Finally, there were dissident radical teachers within the UFT, including veterans of the Communist-influenced Teachers Union and of the southern phase of the civil rights movement, as well as activists connected with the educational gadfly organizations EQUAL and United Bronx Parents.

The members of this coalition were animated by a belief that culture was central to an understanding of the problems faced by the black community in New York, and a desire to use it as the primary engine of black advancement in city life. To them, government spending was important, but not sufficient in and of itself. Social progress would come not when government programs elevated the incomes

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of the black poor so that they might become black versions of the white middle class, but when they came to understand and appreciate their own unique culture. Blacks could then use culture as a unifying force, organizing around it as a community to change the institutions that governed their lives. The world around the poor, and not the poor themselves, needed to change. This approach, rooted in the "opportunity theory" which served as the philosophical underpinning for the War On Poverty's community action programs, accordingly demanded the recognition of values and behaviors that had heretofore been denigrated or ignored by white society, and their use as currency for black advancement both within the public education system and in city life generally. As such it was almost predestined to clash with the views of the UFT and its allies in New York's white middle-class population.

By the mid-1960s, white UFT members had carved out a culture that in many ways was emblematic of large numbers of middle-class whites in New York City as a whole. New York was now a middle-class city, if one went by statistics. Approximately 67 percent of its households earned between $5000 and $25,000 a year (national household income averaged $7400 in 1967).[1] New York was also a predominantly white city: approximately 75 percent in 1960, 72 percent in 1965, and 66 percent in 1970. The city ranked only thirteenth of the fifteen largest American cities in percentage of nonwhite population during the decade.[2] Because of the city's large geographic area, moreover, much of the white middle class continued to live within its borders, a trend running counter to what was occurring in most other major American cities at the time.[3] New York had also become, by the mid-1960s, a white-collar city, the result of the shift from industrial to service and government jobs as the base of the city's economy after World War II; by the end of the 1960s, 59 percent of the city's labor force worked in the white-collar sector.[4] The government sector jobs went in large measure to the white children of working-class parents, from Jewish and Catholic backgrounds, many educated on the GI Bill. By the 1960s, the new middle class they had formed was typified in many ways by the members of the UFT.[5]

Between 1945 and 1965, New York public school teachers used the competitive testing system of the city Board of Examiners as a powerful engine of upward mobility. Passing examinations and accumulating graduate credits and advanced degrees, however, were more than just a path to material success for the teachers. By the mid-1960s they gave expression to a distinct culture. This culture was built around an ideology of marketplace competition between self-reliant individuals, who were judged by standards of "objective merit" divorced from considerations of racial group origin. It preached the virtues of work and delayed gratification. It

was, in fact, a collection of what many Americans had come to regard broadly as "middle-class" values.

The complex array of tests administered by the Board of Examiners, a relic of the Progressive era that prided itself on applying objective standards to applicants rewarded according to ranked lists, defined the parameters of the public education market in New York City. The tests demarcated the professional life and career expectations of the average teacher. While a teacher might quibble over an individual test or Board of Examiners' decision, few questioned the system's overall fairness. By the mid-1960s, the idea of "merit," as embodied in this civil service apparatus, was a fundamental part of the average teacher's worldview. It rewarded individual initiative, hard work, perseverance, and, with its slow pace, a willingness to forego present pleasures for the promise of future rewards. It resembled, in many ways, a modern-day Protestant ethic for a dogged, upwardly mobile group of largely non-Protestant New Yorkers.

In 1963, New York University School of Education Dean Robert Griffiths conducted a comprehensive study of the Board of Examiners teacher recruitment and promotion system. He found teachers concerned to the point of obsessiveness with passing tests. Everywhere in the system, he reported, there were "almost frantic efforts to take tests. [Teachers] appear either to be preparing to take a test, taking one, or waiting for the results of one." Griffiths described a system which measured success by the rapidity with which a teacher rose to become an administrator. He traced the career of a hypothetical teacher entering the public school system fresh out of one of the city colleges, the traditional feeder institutions for New York public school teachers. The teacher's career was a marathon race that rewarded diligence and obedience, not creativity. If the new hire passed the requisite number of examinations and accumulated the required graduate education credits, he or she could make the long climb from probationary status to tenured faculty, department chair, assistant principal, principal, and, finally, Board of Education bureaucrat. While Griffiths himself advocated the complete revamping of this system, including the abolition of the Board of Examiners, most white teachers viewed it as "fair" and "open to all." The consensus, among white teachers at least, was that while individual tests could be improved, "we must have them" in the interest of a fair system. But black teachers disagreed: less than half believed the system was "fair," and twice as many blacks as whites thought promotional opportunities were not "open to all."[6] There was good reason for this. In addition to short answer and essay components, many examinations tested oral expression, and the examiners were notorious for eliminating black candidates for allegedly poor pronunciation.[7]

Most white teachers were also committed to a competitive, merit-based ethos

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for their students. The New York City public schools had long operated on a system of "homogeneous grouping," or "tracking," for its pupils. Judgments on the relative abilities of students were made as early as kindergarten, where teachers were encouraged to identify children with high potential. In the early grades, the results of standardized tests—IQ tests until 1963, and reading tests thereafter—were combined with teacher evaluations to place pupils into ability-grouped classes, often designated by number, e.g., 3–1 for the "bright" class, 3–3 for the "slow" class. Once "tracked," a pupil often remained roughly in the same relative position throughout his or her career. Tracking continued even into high school. Promising students were steered toward courses that led to the "academic" diploma required for college admission, while others were placed in a "general" program which awarded a diploma that was little more than a certificate of attendance.[8]

Parents of children in the New York public schools were closely attuned to this system, and, for many, the attainment of a high "track" for their child was an openly-stated, unapologetic goal. White middle-class parents, especially, accepted the competitive nature of tracking as an article of faith. For them, education was largely commodified. Writing in 1965 of white middle-class parents in the Jackson Heights section of Queens, who opposed the integration of their children's elementary school, sociologists Kurt and Gladys Lang observed that "the residents in this area are very concerned about the progress their children make through the grades, about possibilities for acceleration, about admission to special programs and to college, as partial insurance against future insecurity." Education, they found, "is valued not so much for its content as for its marketability. Education is necessary if children are to retain the same relative position as their parents. . . . [T]he high valuation placed on learning is essentially that of the middle class; education is not the magic key to the kingdom sought by the children of immigrant parents before them."[9] Another white parent, who claimed to support racial integration in his Manhattan school district, nonetheless argued for tracking within his desegregated school. "The homogeneous grouping system," he wrote to a neighborhood newspaper in 1963, "allows each child to move at the level of his intelligence and needs. If homogeneous grouping were abolished, we would sacrifice the excellence of white and nonwhite alike to the dubious assumption that mixing complexions can advance (or hinder) the education of children. Excellence, interracially: this is what we want."[10] While some white parents groups, like EQUAL, opposed tracking, they were clearly outnumbered; most white parents accepted it and its ethos as legitimate for their children.

Nor did the majority of white teachers object to the values that underlay the tracking system. Indeed, most were themselves its products. While not as vocal

as the principals, who had objected to the end of IQ testing, they worked comfortably within the tracking system, identifying "gifted" pupils, and vying among themselves for the prestige that went with teaching the "fast" classes.[11] The UFT leadership, for its part, never seriously challenged tracking.[12] It also opposed the forced transfer of experienced teachers to ghetto schools, implying that "good" students in white schools were a reward for years of satisfactory service.

The Board of Examiners and tracking systems, then, were of a piece for the majority of white teachers in the New York City schools by the mid-1960s. They were complementary parts of a competitive, individualist culture, which was presumed to apply objectively measured standards of merit, without respect to group origins, to educators and students. Its currencies were grades, test scores, and advanced degrees. The manifestations of this culture were not lost on its critics. The Harlem community action group HARYOU's 1964 study of that area, *Youth in the Ghetto,* which was supervised by Kenneth Clark, described it as follows: "Public school teachers in New York City come largely from the city colleges, which have a dominant pupil population from a culture which prepares the child from birth for competition of a most strenuous type. . . . The competitive culture from which the bulk of the teachers come, with the attendant arrogance of intellectual superiority of its members, lends itself readily to the class system within the school."[13]

Arrogant or not, however, this culture was one that many middle-class white New Yorkers, inside the school system and out, accepted as legitimate. Nathan Glazer, writing in December 1964, noted the hold the competitive culture had on Jews in New York, but he also understood how it also resonated generally. "The liberal principles . . . the newer ones arguing the democracy of merit—that have been so congenial to Jews and so in their interest," he wrote, "are also being increasingly accepted by everyone else nowadays under the pressure of a technological world. We are moving into a diploma society, where individual merit rather than family and connections and group must be the basis for advancement, recognition, achievement." "The ideologies that have justified the principles of measurable individual merit and the logic of the market place," he concluded, while particularly beneficial to Jews, also "coincide with the new rational approaches to the distribution of rewards."[14] Thus by mid-decade the competitive individualism of the majority of the white teachers in the New York public school system reflected to a great degree larger cultural trends in the nation and city that had developed after World War II.[15] The meritocratic culture—a product of the Cold War, the technological and knowledge revolution, and cultural pluralism—fit the lives and aspirations of the white teachers perfectly, and they embraced it as their own. But as they would discover, the "marketplace" had a very different logic in the city's black community.

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The second element of white teacher culture in the mid-1960s revolved around the idea of the "culture of poverty" as a critique of lower-class black behaviors in New York. Here too, the attitudes of white teachers reflected broader trends. A product of post–World War II social psychology, the culture of poverty theory was, unlike the genetic-based racialism it replaced, rooted in environmental determinism. During the 1960s, three of its most important interpreters were cultural anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who popularized the general theory; sociologist and sometime presidential assistant Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who applied it to black lower-class culture; and education scholar James Coleman, who used it to explain low educational achievement among impoverished pupils.

Lewis, in *La Vida* (1966), as well as in an influential article in *Scientific American* appearing in October 1966, described the culture of poverty as "a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalist society." This culture was characterized by rejection of, or indifference to, the dominant values of the surrounding society. It could include, among other traits, nontraditional family structures, strong present-time orientation, propensity to violence, and lack of sexual inhibition. By the age of six or seven, Lewis argued, the values of this culture—or subculture—had taken hold of a poor youngster, making it almost impossible for him to take advantage of opportunities for upward mobility. The culture of poverty, to Lewis, was a "comparatively superficial" one, filled with "pathos, suffering and emptiness." "Poverty of culture," he observed, "is one of the crucial traits of the culture of poverty."[16]

Lewis emphasized that the culture of poverty was not unique to any race, and, indeed, could be found wherever capitalism and poverty coexisted. Moynihan, however, in his 1965 policy paper "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," applied the culture of poverty theory specifically to black Americans. Drawing on the work of E. Franklin Frazier and Stanley Elkins, Moynihan drew a portrait of a deeply flawed lower-class black family structure and lifestyle.[17] While the scope of his research was national, Moynihan, a New Yorker, was already familiar with the workings of the culture of poverty in his native city. His 1963 study of race and ethnicity in New York City, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, co-written with Nathan Glazer, had articulated the concerns regarding the "pathology" of black institutions that would later appear in "The Negro Family."[18]

Finally, James Coleman's 1966 report to the United States Commissioner of Education, "Equality of Educational Opportunity," moved the culture of poverty theory into the debate over low black educational achievement. After conducting an exhaustive study of the American educational system—mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964—Coleman concluded that funding levels, quality of facilities, and even class size had little effect on academic achievement. Summarizing

his findings for the general public in an article in *The Public Interest,* he wrote that "the sources of inequality of educational opportunity appear to lie first in the home itself and the cultural influences immediately surrounding the home." It was essential, he argued, "to replace this family environment as much as possible with an educational environment," by, for example, extending school hours or enrolling pupils in the Head Start program, in which they would start school at an earlier age.[19] The solution, in so many words, was to remove poor children from the "culture of poverty" of their homes and communities, and immerse them in the saving, middle-class, and predominantly white world of their school and teachers.

Thus, by mid-decade, Lewis, Moynihan, and Coleman had placed the issue of the legitimacy of lower-class black culture, and its effect on educational achievement, on the national agenda. The issue was no less compelling in New York City, where white UFT teachers had made the culture of poverty an article of faith. The culture of poverty idea served a number of purposes for the teachers. Since the theory, at least as Lewis articulated it, applied to the poor of all races, it provided a defense against accusations of racial bias when used to "explain" low levels of black educational achievement in city schools. It appeared enlightened in comparison to older theories based on genetic determinism. It shifted the blame for academic failure away from the school and teacher and toward the pupil's family and community. And, not least, it permitted lower-class black students to be classified as "culturally deprived," creating the need for compensatory education programs to expose them to the culture they were missing at home.

The culture of poverty idea, then, was the perfect white middle-class lens through which to view the behavior of the black urban poor. To many white UFT teachers in the 1960s, the lives of their black students were classic examples of the theory in action. The reason for low black achievement, wrote one, "is indissolubly bound up with the character of the parents, their view of life, their aspirations, their sense of moral values and the cohesion which exists in the given family. . . . [T]here is a definite correlation between the achievement potential of the student and the social, cultural and economic background of the parent. . . . [T]he character of a student body in a given school reflects to a very high degree the character of the people in the neighborhood."[20] Another white teacher cited "the chaos [black children] live in . . . no stability whatsoever—no family, no home, no one to talk with them. . . . You can't talk with them about the future—say about jobs—because they won't know what you're talking about." A third teacher, however, revealed some of the resentment that sometimes lurked beneath the surface of race-neutral pronouncements about the culture of poverty: "I hate these kids. They're impossible. How did they get this way?"[21]

In 1964, the UFT attempted to attack the culture of poverty with an ambi-

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tious, multimillion-dollar program of compensatory education called More Effective Schools, or MES. MES provided saturation-level services to selected ghetto schools, including reduced class sizes, two and sometimes three teachers per class, reading specialists, and extended class hours.[22] Costing approximately six hundred dollars extra per student, MES was expensive and labor-intensive; UFT collective bargaining sessions with the city Board of Education during the 1960s frequently broke down over the teachers' demands for funds for it.[23] MES was dear to the hearts of both UFT leaders and rank and file, and not solely because of the increased hiring levels it required. MES would do what the Coleman Report said was necessary to improve the academic performance of poor children. It would remove these "educational cripples," as one supporter put it, from the world of their parents, exchanging the culture of poverty for a structured setting more conducive to the learning process.[24] MES's stated goal was to bring minority schools up to the level of those in white middle-class areas of the city, both by raising reading scores and by expanding the cultural horizons of lower-class black pupils. The UFT fought relentlessly for MES during the course of the program's twelve-year existence, in the face of Board of Education recalcitrance, black community criticism, municipal budget cuts, and questions regarding its cost-effectiveness.[25] It was, indeed, one of the UFT's motivations for initially supporting the decentralization experiment at Ocean Hill–Brownsville itself. The single-mindedness with which the UFT supported MES testified to the hold of the culture of poverty idea on its members. For them, the culture of poverty theory both explained low black achievement and offered a solution: change black children by improving their culture.

The third element of white teacher, and white majority, culture in New York City in the mid-1960s revolved around understandings of cultural pluralism. White teachers, primarily Jews and Catholics, had been the major New York City beneficiaries of the national wave of cultural pluralism that came out of the World War II years. Serving as a perfect entree for second-generation ethnics into what still was, as late as the 1950s, a Protestant-dominated mainstream culture, this brand of cultural pluralism defined expressions of ethnic identity, within common boundaries, as the essence of "Americanism" itself.[26] It thus replaced the older idea of the "melting pot" with a more flexible and accommodating one: ethnicity did not need to disappear, but merely bow in the direction of broad cultural unity. By the mid-1960s, with Jews and Catholics in control of the New York City school system, a "moderate" brand of cultural pluralism had come to dominate both its and the city's culture. This pluralism recognized ethnic distinctiveness, but discouraged overenthusiastic expressions of particularism, and emphasized that despite group affiliations, standards of individual merit continued to apply. It sought

to recognize the contributions of various ethnic and racial groups to a "common" culture with a Western, European-based core. And it attempted to dilute racial and ethnic conflict by encouraging multiple affiliations, based on economic, professional, or avocational interests.

This "moderate" approach to cultural pluralism may have been expressed best in 1963 by Glazer and Moynihan in *Beyond the Melting Pot*. "There are," they wrote, "many groups. They differ in wealth, power, occupation, values, but in effect an open society prevails for individuals and groups. . . . [E]ach group participates sufficiently in the goods and values and social life of a common society so that all can accept the common society as good and fair. . . . Groups and individuals participate in a common society. Individual choice, not law or rigid custom, determines the degree to which any individual participates, if at all, in the life of an ethnic group, and assimilation and acculturation proceed at a rate determined in large measure by individuals."[27]

Board of Education policy and curriculum statements during the 1960s reflected this approach to pluralism. "[T]he goals of cultural pluralism and humanism are the stated goals of the New York City public schools," it announced at the beginning of the decade.[28] "How can we find the common characteristics of a group?" asked a Board of Education curriculum guide in 1966. "Why should we judge the individual rather than the group? . . . In spite of differences, how are Americans alike?" New York City, it confidently stated, "is the outstanding example of cultural pluralism in our country."[29]

The UFT's approach was similar. Its original proposal for MES in 1964 had called for curricula "to reflect contributions of various groups to our common culture."[30] By this time, the union was focusing its attention on the teaching of black history in the New York City public schools. The UFT leadership prided itself on its sensitivity to the issue of racist and stereotyped portrayals of blacks in secondary school textbooks. Many such texts continued to rely on the interpretive frameworks of the pro-southern Phillips and Dunning schools of history, when they discussed black history at all. (In 1963, only three textbooks on the Board of Education approved list covered black history in any detail.)[31] The union attempted to rectify this situation through its Committee on African-American History, founded in the fall of 1966. The objective of the committee, whose work was personally supervised by Albert Shanker, was to help "children learn the contributions made by all ethnic groups to our pluralistic society."[32] For the UFT, this meant treating the history of black Americans as it had that of white immigrant groups—as component parts of a Western-oriented whole. The purpose of studying the history of Africa, according to the committee, was "to learn about the contributions of past African civilizations to Western civilizations."[33] "Many Negroes, past and

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present, have made worthwhile contributions to America and the world," stated a union-approved Negro History Week exhibit. "Many Negroes are good citizens."[34]

The UFT sought to portray "pluralist" black leaders like Martin Luther King and Frederick Douglass as role models for students. "Respond to hate with ____ is the philosophy of Martin Luther King," asked a question from a UFT-prepared black history workbook in 1967.[35] Frederick Douglass, a third-grade class was told during a UFT-endorsed Negro History Week commemoration, was "eager to get an education and studied every book he could find." King, according to the same materials, "taught peace and love" and "believed in freedom and dignity for all men."[36] This UFT-endorsed "moderate" pluralism would be exemplified during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis itself by a social studies lesson given at JHS 271 by a white teacher, R. J. Papaleo—one that was disrupted by African-American Teachers Association leader Leslie Campbell. The plan for the lesson asked: "How is America divided on the question of civil rights?" It divided a hypothetical "American Highway" into three lanes—two narrow ones for left- and right-wing "extremists," and a wide "center lane." Discussion questions included "What happens to America when either the right or left lane becomes more crowded?," and "Why is the key to peace and happiness found in observing moderation in things?"[37]

In general, the UFT endorsed a pluralism that sought to acknowledge the "contributions" of all groups to a cultural mainstream, deemphasized differences by implying that group identities were subordinate to shared attributes and attitudes, and placed the history of blacks in America within the same interpretive framework as that of white immigrant groups. It was a pluralism confident in its ability to tolerate and absorb virtually all interests and groups within a common cultural matrix.

The culture of the white majority of the UFT in the 1960s was, to a large degree, a reflection of that of the white middle class in New York City as a whole. Both were built around conceptions of individualism, marketplace competition, and objective merit, a critical view of lower-class black cultural expressions, and a moderate pluralism featuring a cautious endorsement of group distinctiveness bounded by a common cultural framework. It was a white middle-class culture for a predominantly white middle-class city. In the years after 1964, however, its assumptions would be challenged by other actors, mostly black, to whom this culture did not speak. They would lay the groundwork for a cultural debate that would carry through the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy and into the 1970s.

The implications of the culture of poverty theory in the New York public school system were not lost on black intellectuals and educational activists in the city. As

early as 1963, Kenneth Clark was taking the culture of poverty, and the related concept of cultural deprivation, to task. There were no "culturally deprived" children, he wrote, only "children who are being denied their rights as human beings . . . deliberately and chronically victimized by the larger society in general, and by educational institutions, specifically." Black lower-class children, he argued, would learn effectively "if they are respected" by "middle-class and middle-class-aspiring teachers."[38] By the following year, Clark was in a position to act on his beliefs, with the beginning of the national War on Poverty and its endorsement of the principle of community action as an organizational tool. Community action, based on the "opportunity theory" of sociologists Lloyd Ohlin and Richard Cloward, rejected the idea of a "culture of poverty." Opportunity theory advocates argued instead that the poor, through participation and empowerment, could change their local institutions, thereby obviating the necessity of adjustment to these institutions that the culture of poverty theory stressed.[39] They proposed, in effect, to alter the structure of incentives and rewards that governed political and economic relations in America, establishing a new set of national marketplace rules. Thus, in the words of opportunity theory proponents, "poverty is less the result of individual pathology than structural barriers, of institutions that were involved in the lives, yet unresponsive to the needs of the poor. The psychological problems associated with poverty are the result of the failure of these institutions. Thus, while the poor were told anyone who worked hard could succeed, they nonetheless came out of a school system that failed to educate them to hold skills and professional jobs. . . . Deviant and delinquent behavior could then be explained as the inability of the poor to achieve culturally acceptable goals by the use of legitimate means and existing institutions."[40]

Clark applied these ideas to New York City in his work with HARYOU on *Youth in the Ghetto*, and his 1965 book on Harlem, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power.* Cultural deprivation, he argued in the latter, was a "cult," an "alibi" for white teachers: "[Black] children, by and large, do not learn because they are not being taught effectively and they are not being taught because those who are charged with the responsibility of teaching them do not believe that they can learn, do not expect that they can learn, and do not act toward them in ways which help them to learn. . . . Stimulation and teaching based upon positive expectation seem to play an even more important role in a child's performance in school than does the community environment from which he comes."[41] Clark thus attempted to shift the focus of the debate over black student achievement levels from the child and the culture of his community to the teacher and the institutional structure of the school system. If white teachers showed respect for the cultural idiom of their black pupils, made instruction relevant to their lives outside the classroom, and, most impor-

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tantly, evidenced confidence in their ability to learn, Clark argued, black students would respond as well as middle-class white ones. Clark, however, conceded that ghetto culture was unhealthy, even pathological, albeit explainable as a reaction to white racism. Other black intellectuals and activists would go further than Clark and argue that the lower-class black culture that discomforted Clark and was rejected by white educators was in fact legitimate and worthy of respect on its own terms.

One of the first to do so in New York was Preston Wilcox. During the 1966 attempt by Harlem parents to have a black principal appointed at Intermediate School 201, Wilcox issued a call for a "community-centered school," modeled on the work of Leonard Covello, the principal of the predominantly Italian-American Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem during the 1930s and 1940s. Covello, a disciple of John Dewey, insisted that the school "deal with the child in connection with his social background and in relation to all forms, disruptive as well as constructive, that contribute to his education." Echoing Covello, Wilcox proposed that the community-centered school "be sympathetically responsive to the customs and values of the community it serves." The principal of such a school would use the culture of his black lower-class student population as a positive value, not as something to be dismissed as a sign of "cultural deprivation." "Instead of being committed to the elimination in his pupils of all he feels is repulsive in their backgrounds and values," Wilcox wrote, "the principal would be committed to utilizing these values as a resource for education." "The operating philosophy of the existing [school] system," he argued, "is too often manifested in a conscious or unconscious belittling of the values and lifestyles of much of its clientele."[42]

The community-centered school Wilcox envisioned would be something more than a weak reflection of more privileged schools. It would have different values and reward different types of behaviors. "Instead of approval being attached almost exclusively to matters of comportment and dress," he suggested, "rewards may come to be derived from fulfilling one's obligations to his peers and community. We must find a better balance between scholarship and citizenship."[43] Wilcox thus attempted to distinguish between what he saw as the mores of the middle class ("comportment," "dress," "scholarship") and those of the ghetto ("obligation to peers and community," "citizenship"). He argued that the communal ties that bound black lower-class neighborhoods were as important and as worthy of respect as the individuated, behavior-oriented values that characterized white middle-class areas. Black lower-class culture was neither "impoverished" nor "deprived." On the contrary, it was the foundation of a regenerated black community in the city. Wilcox wished to reconfigure New York's public education system to

reward attributes that whites, in his view, had either undervalued or cast aside altogether. His critique of that system offered a set of values he associated with the black community as an alternate currency, which could be employed to obtain benefits in the same way that whites used examination scores and advanced degrees.

Other black educational activists soon took up this argument, continuing to insist that the culture of black lower-class youngsters was as legitimate as that of the white middle class. One of their main forums was *Freedomways*, which had been founded in 1961 as a journal of independent black cultural expression by Shirley Graham—the wife of W. E. B. DuBois—and historian John Henrik Clarke. In its pages, educational administrator Edward Weaver criticized compensatory education programs such as MES for seeking to change the culture of the poor black child. Compensatory education, and the culture of poverty theory upon which it was based, argued Weaver, was

> a condescending approach to the culture of the black people with no effort to structure dignity for [their] life-style, linguistic habits and behavior, but rather designed to produce white middle-class conventional behaviors. . . . [It] educates the black ghetto child so that he will become a black "Anglo-Saxon." It postulates that a black "Anglo-Saxon" can or should escape from the ghetto. . . . Its obsession that black ghetto children must be held to the same standards as white middle-class children is based on the dogma that the black ghetto child must look forward to that tenuous future when, as a black "Anglo-Saxon," he will leave the dependent environment for the white world. [Compensatory education] proposes that the black ghetto child become a super-child, lifting himself through reading and language skills to a nobler and greater world of the future.[44]

Another *Freedomways* contributor, Doxey Wilkerson, a professor at the Yeshiva University School of Social Work, wrote that educational theories based on the culture of poverty meant that white teachers were "again off the hook." The cultural deprivation idea, he maintained, was "bankrupt": "When provided with learning experiences appropriate to their developmental needs, [black] children, despite their impoverished backgrounds, do learn effectively. Their academic failures must be attributed in large measure to inappropriate learning experiences." Citing a study by educational sociologists Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson that found student achievement levels to be directly related to teacher expectations, he argued that "much of the academic retardation so prevalent among Negro children is a function of negative attitudes and inept practices among the professionals who run the schools."[45]

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Others in the city's black community echoed this theme. "There are those," editorialized the newsletter of the Brownsville Community Council, the community action organization in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, "who have said that our children are unable to relate to the values of our society. We see now, however, it is the teacher who cannot relate to our values."[46] A parent-activist at IS 201 articulated the black community's reaction to the culture of poverty and cultural deprivation theories: "I don't want to be told my daughter can't learn because she comes from a fatherless home or because she had corn flakes for breakfast instead of eggs."[47] A math teacher at Ocean Hill–Brownsville's JHS 271 was equally blunt. "Students can't learn," he said, "until they feel good about themselves."[48]

Political scientist Charles Hamilton, writing in *Freedomways*, fully developed the black critique of the culture of poverty and cultural deprivation theories. Hamilton moved beyond criticism of compensatory education and defense of the culture of the black lower class and questioned the "legitimacy" of the white-dominated educational structure itself. He attacked the Coleman Report's reliance on reading scores as the measure of student achievement, asking rhetorically whether black pupils "in the process of preparing to achieve high scores on 'standardized tests' [were] being induced to try to emulate the culture of another ethnic or racial group." Black parents, he noted, were "becoming as concerned about the normative values received by their children as they are about the technical skills acquired. It is not sufficient simply to know how not to split infinitives." Even successful black students, he argued, were "permanently crippled, psychologically, while at the same time measuring up to criteria others have decided are the major determinants for 'achievement.'" He called for the replacement of a white middle-class educational structure based "solely on the acquisition of verbal skills" by one based on black "normative values," which he defined as "color consciousness, not color-blindness, group cohesion, not individualism [and] respect for Afro-American culture, not assumption of white, western cultural superiority." "And," he wrote, "I see this as a formal, overt, public process." White educators, he concluded, were attempting to "impose a consensus on black people who insist on the illegitimacy of that consensus."[49]

Black intellectuals and activists, then, were developing a critique of the culture of poverty theory even as whites embraced it. This critique was built around the proposition that poor black children were, in the words of a Preston Wilcox *Freedomways* article, "culturally different, not culturally deprived," and that the values of the lower-class black community, as CORE's Floyd McKissick argued in the *New York Amsterdam News*, embodied "the actual and factual soul of black people."[50] Another closely related critique challenged the competitive individualism and materialism of the city's middle class. It attempted, moreover, to specifically associate

"middle-class" values with those of the white community in New York, melding them into a single, indivisible term that was often employed as an epithet. By the onset of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute, "white middle-class" had become a powerful and frequently used term of negative reference for black intellectuals and activists in the city.

As had been the case with the culture of poverty issue, one of the first blows against the values of the white middle class was struck by Kenneth Clark. In *Dark Ghetto*, Clark described a white middle-class world that, apart from the damage it did in the ghetto, was itself "sick." Rebellion against such a world by poor blacks, Clark argued, was in fact "the evidence of health."[51] He also harshly criticized the practice of tracking pupils, under which, he argued, white middle-class teachers used "a powerful arsenal of half-truths, prejudices and rationalizations" against black children, who were "being systematically humiliated, categorized, classified [and] relegated to groups in terms of slow learners . . ."[52] By the mid-1960s, through his work with HARYOU, Clark had become convinced that community action, in general, and community control of education, in particular, were the means by which lower-class blacks could "cure" their white middle-class-imposed pathology. The culture of community action, in his view, was the antidote for the rampant individualism and competition of white schools and white society.

Charles Hamilton and Stokely Carmichael, in their 1967 book *Black Power*, also argued that the black community should disassociate itself from the white middle class. White values, they argued, were "based on material aggrandizement, not the expansion of humanity," and "supported cloistered little closed societies." They dismissed the idea of individual "merit" as "fit[ting] the white middle-class mold." Again, their prescription for the excesses of white middle-class individualism and materialism lay in "an attitude of brotherly, communal responsibility among all black people for one another."[53]

Harold Cruse, in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, also published in 1967, took aim at the black middle class, which he viewed as a weak imitator of its white counterpart. It had, he argued, passively accepted the cultural cues of the "commercially deprived white middle class," and blundered down the same blind alleys. "Caught up in the maze and vagaries of American materialistic values and the middle-class ethos," he wrote, the black middle class was "just as trapped by the system as the poor." Cruse called for "a new black middle class organized on the principle of cooperative economic ownership and technical administration," which "would teach the Negro masses the techniques of ethnic group survival under capitalism—group economics, group cultural self-education—in short, cooperative self-help on every level of human experience and need in industrial society . . ."[54]

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By the late 1960s, then, many black intellectuals had identified certain cultural traits with the middle class, and linked them specifically to whites. They had, moreover, begun to define a black oppositional culture built around values they associated with the black poor, which, in their view, the white middle class had rejected or ignored. And they had begun to create a cultural atmosphere which sharply circumscribed the ability of blacks to adopt the attributes associated with the white middle class and still retain their racial bona fides.

These intellectuals shared platforms, picket lines, and the pages of publications such as the *New York Amsterdam News*, *Freedomways*, and *Liberator* with black educational activists in New York City. They clearly influenced the latter's critique of the culture of white UFT teachers. To these activists, the white teachers were living embodiments of what Clark, Hamilton, and Cruse had described in more theoretical terms. Reverend Milton Galamison, perhaps the most visible pro–community control spokesman in the city, argued that the "merit" system so dear to the hearts of the white teachers was morally bankrupt. For them, he wrote, education was simply "rote memorization for sterile examinations, a necessary procedure for making money." In white teacher culture, he argued, "passing an examination is more important than learning [and acquiring] the qualifications to demand a huge salary are more important than the development of the mind and spirit." It was a culture in which "pushing and shoving and competing . . . defeat the very ends for which education is designed."[55]

David Spencer, who, as the chairman of a neighborhood committee that would later become the local school board of the IS 201 district in Harlem, had worked alongside Preston Wilcox in 1966 during the attempt to have a black principal appointed at that school, questioned the motivations of the white teachers he had observed. He described a number of different "types" of white teachers, all united by a desire for material gain at the expense of black schoolchildren: "the divorcee who has children to support, and that's her reason for staying in teaching; the trousseau teacher, who is planning on getting married and took the job so she could afford to get married and settle down; and the mortgage teacher, who has a home mortgage to pay for and this is his reason for teaching." Spencer, moreover, rejected the culture of the classroom itself, one that, in his view, was imposed on black pupils by white teachers obsessed with identifying and nurturing the "best" students at the expense of the others: "I'm tired of teachers who say, 'I've got two or three pupils here who are tops. Look what I have done.' What I see when I look is that there's twenty four more who ain't doing nothing. When you show me fifteen or seventeen that you've done something with, then I'm happy. . . . They need the push, not the kid with grades of ninety or ninety-five."[56]

Black educational activists in Ocean Hill–Brownsville described white teachers

as "bourgeois people" with a "9 to 3 . . . then go home" culture.[57] "All teachers have so far accomplished," charged black Ocean Hill–Brownsville teacher Ronald McFadden, "is a more efficient way to teach kids what it takes to make a dollar in America."[58] A *New York Amsterdam News* correspondent wrote that white-dominated education "stresses vocation rather than intellectual education." "The emphasis on marks," he complained, "is ridiculous."[59] "We say the philosophical outlook of the West is destructive of the human spirit," editorialized the *Liberator.* "We say we don't want to go whitey's way."[60] Rhody McCoy chaired a conference of black New York City school officials which unanimously resolved that "white middle-class values are harmful to black schoolchildren."[61]

White community control supporters took a similar stance. Mario Fantini of the Ford Foundation charged that whites "strive to create middle-class schools in the slums," schools that were "not the best of all possible educational worlds" because they failed to "stimulate intellectual competition with self—working to realize one's potential to the fullest—rather than competition with others."[62] And Robert Fox, a white activist Catholic priest in Harlem, viewed community control in black neighborhoods as a force that would "catalyze America" and begged his fellow whites not to "seduce [blacks] into our value system."[63]

Thus, beginning in the mid-1960s, black intellectuals in New York, aided by a small but influential group of sympathetic whites, sought to link a series of attributes—competition, individualism, and materialism—specifically to the white middle class. In the context of the New York City public education system and the fight for community control, black activists and their white allies associated these same attributes, which they viewed as shallow and fraudulent, with white UFT teachers. They mounted this challenge, moreover, at a time when the white teachers had come to believe that these attributes were legitimate and fair, offering the examples of their own professional careers as proof. As with the issue of black lower-class culture and the culture of poverty idea, blacks and whites in New York City were again on a collision course.

The third and final prong of the challenge to "white" culture mounted by black intellectuals and activists attacked the "moderate" version of pluralism which held sway in New York during the mid-1960s, and to which white UFT teachers in particular were especially dedicated. The challenge was built around a "radicalized" version of pluralism that dismissed attempts to blunt expressions of racial and ethnic identity as themselves ethnocentric. "Radical" pluralism placed such identities squarely and openly at the center of any argument over distribution of resources in the city. It argued that "humanist," moderate pluralism was itself exclusionary and restrictive. It objected to what the challengers considered a white, Western, and European-dominated civic culture. And it asked for an "opening up"

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of that culture to include new possibilities, including the idea that the city was not made up of "contributors" to a coherent whole, but of a series of communities sufficient unto themselves. If, as one supporter of this radical version of pluralism put it, "all could find justice somewhere, in one community or another," and "people can 'find' themselves, not in themselves, but in their communities," then the premises of moderate pluralism, which stressed individual identities within group affiliations, lost their explanatory power.[64]

Harold Cruse and Charles Hamilton again set the general theoretical parameters of this radical pluralist challenge. Both argued, in effect, that it was proper for blacks to use group identity as a form of currency in the race for the rewards offered by American society. Cruse's vision of civic culture revolved around "a struggle for democracy among ethnic groups," which would receive formal recognition from the government and in civil society. The black poor, he argued, were ill served by calls from the black middle class—itself in thrall to whites—"that [they] must give up [their] ethnicity and become human, universal, full-fledged American." To Cruse, the idea of "humanism" in America was a myth; the nation was not the cultural empty vessel it purported to be, but instead a stronghold of "European cultural and spiritual values" which rewarded groups, not unaffiliated "human beings." White middle-class culture, which argued that society rewarded "meritorious" individuals on a color-blind basis, was fraudulent and hypocritical. The ultimate goal of Cruse's brand of pluralism was amending the Constitution itself to grant formalized legal status to racial and ethnic groups, "mirroring the basic group reality of America."[65]

Charles Hamilton echoed Cruse's focus on group difference as the fundamental governing principle of American society. It was, he argued, "too late" for moderate pluralism's "private and informal" recognition of group identity in distributing resources.[66] "America asked [blacks] to fight for opportunity as individuals," he wrote, along with Stokely Carmichael in *Black Power*, while "what we have needed most is opportunity for the whole group." Blacks, they continued, need not "apologize for the existence of this form of group power, for we have been oppressed as a group, not as individuals. We will not find our way out of that oppression until both we and America accept the need for Negro Americans, as well as for Jews, Italians, Poles and white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, among others, to have and wield group power."[67]

Once again, this critique influenced black New York City educators and activists. Preston Wilcox urged blacks to develop an alternative system of values that, unlike those of whites, would "emphasize that which is private and ethnic as against that which is public and culture-blind," and which would redefine the public education market to reward resources found in the black community. "The

descendants of Africa," he argued, "are coming to see their destinies as being directly tied to their ability to articulate and implement . . . a black national consensus as it relates to the individual, the family, the community, institutions, and self-governing, self-developing, self-connecting strategies and modus operandi."[68]

Other activists sought to redefine white-influenced presentations of black history in the New York City public schools. United Bronx Parents, a pro–community control group, criticized the emphasis placed by white educators on Western cultural themes and "approved" black historical figures. It demanded that the curriculum balance discussions of ancient Greece and Rome with those of the African Ashanti culture, and the American, French, and Russian Revolutions with Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael. In a *Freedomways* article, James Campbell, an assistant principal in the New York City public schools, asserted that "[w]e need to know the relationship of our labor to this land and its development. It was not a 'contribution' as many curriculum guides are beginning to teach."[69] Keith Baird, the director of African-American education in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district, designed a black history curriculum that would offer an alternative to standard texts "written from a European point of view," and to "white schools reflecting white interests, a white self-concept and white culture." "We aren't concerned with putting one culture over another," he argued, "but with supplying the missing pages of black culture."[70] Baird's curriculum included African language, history, and even, through the use of the African number game Owari, mathematics.[71] The Ocean Hill–Brownsville district's curriculum advisory committee demanded "a curriculum based on the glory and greatness of the African-American culture, history, and experience that will be the well-spring from which all areas will flow, [and] counter the total focus in today's curriculum on the European Anglo-Saxon experience."[72]

The United Federation of Parents and Teachers, a pro–community control activist group, used an analogy based on the Arab-Israeli conflict to make a point about white portrayals of black historical figures in the New York public schools. What, it asked, if all textbooks on Israeli history were written by Arabs, "very, very moderate Arabs, but still Arabs?" What if they "dealt almost exclusively with Arabs and their successes," and praised "not the Jewish Freedom Fighters but rather those who accommodated to dominant Arab power?"[73] This, the organization argued, was equivalent to what black students and educators faced in the New York public school system. Milton Galamison may have expressed the frustrations of critics of the white pluralist approach to black history most succinctly. "For years," he observed, "Americans have sat in the theatre and applauded in all the wrong places, accepting the villains as the heroes and the heroes as the villains."[74]

Symbolic of the differences between the two brands of pluralism, and a har-

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binger of conflicts to come, was the Racism in Education Conference held in Washington, in December 1966, and sponsored by the UFT's national parent, the American Federation of Teachers. The UFT, which was the prime mover behind the conference, had expected it to provide a platform for discussion of the need to add more black history material to public school curricula. Instead, a contingent of New York–based black educators, writers, and activists turned it into a platform from which to attack the legitimacy of the white teachers' version of pluralism.

Actor Ossie Davis set the tone when he began the conference by listing some of the sixty negative synonyms for "black" that appeared in his thesaurus. "The English language," he said, "is my enemy." Davis asserted that blacks were "the last ethnic minority to use communal strength," and that they could "achieve equal opportunity only by concerted action of the group." Black scholar John Henrik Clarke then argued that whites were incapable of teaching black history properly, drawing reproaches from unsettled white teachers in the audience. Black teacher William Kelly supported Clarke's contention that whites were incapable of teaching black history because of their refusal to face up to the "genocide" committed by whites against blacks and Indians. He called for an "honest American history" that would acknowledge a white "killing" culture. Another black educator proclaimed his moral superiority to the whites in the audience: "I've been living around you all my life, but I've never lived with you and as a result I've been able to develop something you've lost." He went on to echo Harold Cruse's call for the black intellectual to eschew "universalities" and the false humanism of white pluralism for a distinct black cultural outlook and body of work. The session ended in acrimony, with a black teacher cutting off a white who asked how "to learn how to do our jobs better," with "you probably aren't doing your job at all now," as whites in the audience groaned.[75]

White teachers left the Racism in Education Conference in confusion and anger. The UFT's house organ, the *United Teacher*, reported that the black educators' pronouncements were "upsetting" to the white teachers, who "didn't understand this type of reaction and protest," and "rejected it out of hand." Some white teachers went so far as to resign from the union over the conference. One such teacher wrote:

> To indict the English language as the carrier of racism is arrant nonsense. . . . [Should] we teach the history of Liberia in the 1830s, or the current history of the 37 new African states as case studies of civil liberties, economic opportunity, and belief in the rights of minorities? It is obvious that traditions of democracy and equality, albeit not yet realized, have their origins and widest development in the Western societies, particularly the English and American,

that [black educators] are so ready to have the Negro cut himself off from. . . . It would appear as if history teachers at this conference attended the teacher training institutions of Hitler's Germany. . . . Simply substitute the words "white man" for "Jew" and the books are ready for reprint.[76]

The reaction of the white media that covered the conference was also negative. "Started from a desire to correct the frequently grossly inaccurate treatment of Negroes in history books," observed the *Long Island Press,* "the conference meandered through revival-type sessions ('Tell 'em, brother') to angry back-to-Africa speeches and general confusion."[77]

The Racism in Education Conference was one of the first overt confrontations between the moderate pluralism of the white UFT teachers and an emerging radical pluralist critique based in the community of New York black educators, writers, and activists. The conference unsettled the white teachers in attendance, because they had constructed their version of pluralism around a presumption of a consensus that clearly did not exist. White teachers had assumed that the addition of black history books to already existing public school curricula would address the concerns of black educators and "solve" any cultural inequities that existed. They were wrong. Black educators, viewing "humanism" as a cover for white particularism, and ambivalent about the need for a cultural consensus of any kind, were demanding a change in perspective that the moderate pluralism of the white teachers, almost by definition, could not accommodate.

Thus, even before the events of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis began to unfold, conflicting "white" and "black" cultural approaches had developed side by side in New York City. The former was built around conceptions of individualism; competition; "objective," examination-based measures of achievement and reward; black lower-class cultural weakness; and moderate, "common denominator" pluralism. The latter emphasized mutuality and cooperation; the cultural legitimacy of the black poor; the use of the cultural resources of the black community as a form of currency in the local and national marketplaces; and a pluralism based on community and group distinctiveness. Troubling questions, which entwined race and class, had been placed on the civic agenda: Were lower-class black children "culturally deprived"? Were the ideas of "individualism" and "merit" myths in city life? Were "middle-class" values necessarily "white" ones? Was it possible to be both "black" and "middle-class"? And was a pluralism that sought to dilute the force of racial and ethnic particularism through expressions of broad cultural unity merely a perpetuation of white dominance and black marginalization? By the end of 1966, as black and white educators, intellectuals, and activists offered strikingly different answers to these questions, this volatile mix lacked only

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a spark, a specific set of circumstances to animate it and give it momentum. Over the next two years, events at Ocean Hill–Brownsville would provide this spark, pitting the two New Yorks against each other, and forcing virtually every citizen of the city to choose sides. In so doing, they would transform Rhody McCoy and Fred Nauman, who in 1966 did not even know each other, into symbolic adversaries for a divided city.

4

THE OCEAN HILL–BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY CONTROL EXPERIMENT

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment had its genesis, perhaps fittingly, in a display of Board of Education bureaucratic arrogance: it would not permit a woman to speak at one of its meetings because her name was not on the proper list. On December 19, 1966, the Board held one of its periodic public hearings at its 110 Livingston Street headquarters. These meetings, one of the Board's rare bows in the direction of positive public relations, were tightly choreographed. Representatives of established organizations with ties to New York's educational bureaucracy spoke first. On this afternoon, these included the United Parents Association, the "official" parent liaison group in the city school system; the Public Education Association, the longtime voice of the city's upper middle-class reform constituency in educational policy; and the Citizens Committee for Children, another predominantly upper middle-class group with ties to the reform wing of the city's Democratic party and to the UFT. The Board of Education relegated EQUAL, HARYOU-ACT, the Harlem Parents Committee, CORE, and other prominent civil rights and community action organizations, as usual, to the end of its program.

Near the end of the afternoon's schedule, Lillian Wagner, a black single mother from Ocean Hill–Brownsville, approached the podium and asked to be heard.

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Checking the speakers' list before him, Board Vice President Alfred Giardino ruled her out of order. Only those who had submitted their names in advance could speak, and Mrs. Wagner had not done so. Giardino raised his gavel to continue the session. He was interrupted, however, by the audience, led by Ellen Lurie of EQUAL: "Let her speak, we pay the taxes!" Impassive, Giardino repeated that Mrs. Wagner was out of order. As the chants of "Let her speak!" grew louder, Mrs. Wagner shouted: "The voice of the people is with me. I don't want my child to grow up in the same ghetto as I did." At this, Lloyd Garrison, the president of the Board of Education, and a descendant of the legendary nineteenth-century abolitionist, announced he was adjourning the hearing because of the disruption. He and his colleagues exited the room through doors located directly behind their desks.

But Lurie and her supporters would not let the moment pass. Scrambling over the barrier separating the spectators' gallery from the now-empty row of desks, they sat down in the red-cushioned swivel chairs and refused to leave. "We are staying here," said one protester, "because the Board of Education would not listen to us. They showed they are not responsible to the parents. They held a public hearing, but they really don't want to hear." From his chambers, Garrison held to procedural niceties. He sent word that it was "impossible" to continue the hearing if the speakers appeared out of turn. But neither would he order the protesters removed immediately. He would wait them out.

It was now early evening. The protesters, some twenty to thirty men and women from EQUAL, CORE, HARYOU-ACT, United Bronx Parents, and the Brownsville Community Council, sent for Milton Galamison. They had decided to form themselves as the "People's Board of Education," and they wanted to elect him "president"; he arrived to assume his "duties" around 11:00 P.M. The People's Board, after electing Lillian Wagner "Superintendent of Schools," began taking testimony from members of the audience on conditions in the city's black-majority schools. It passed a resolution calling for community control of public education in New York. "We have attempted hearings before every conceivable public body," it charged in a statement released to the press waiting outside the chamber. "We have studied, analyzed and reacted to voluminous reports; we have made recommendation after recommendation. None of our efforts have made any appreciable difference in the education of our children. No one has listened to what we have to say." "We are infuriated," one protester told a reporter. "We have been infuriated," another broke in, "for a long time."

The sit-in lasted through the night and into the next day. When Board of Education President Garrison appeared that morning and tried to get Galamison to leave his desk, the latter, no doubt with ironic pleasure, told him he was "out of order."

Garrison once again retreated, but he was running out of patience. After another fruitless day of waiting, he finally gave the order for the police to move in. Galamison, Lurie, and ten others were carried out of the Board of Education chambers and arrested, as their supporters stood outside 110 Livingston Street with signs reading "Will Jail Help My Child To Read?"[1]

They had, however, made their point, both to the Board of Education and the city at large: without community control of education in black neighborhoods, there would be no peace in New York. And the protesters themselves would come to see the shared experience of the "People's Board of Education" sit-in as a landmark not only in the battle for community control, but in a larger struggle for their vision of political and cultural "equality" in the city. Another, less expansive vision, embodied by the UFT and its supporters, would stand in their way.

As the "People's Board of Education" drama unfolded, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville neighborhood was emerging as a hotbed of pro–community control sentiment. This development also owed much to the workings of an awkward Board of Education bureaucracy. The central Board had combined Ocean Hill–Brownsville and the predominantly white and middle-class East Flatbush section of Brooklyn into one district, Number 17, as part of its largely ineffectual attempt to promote racial balance in the public schools. East Flatbush residents, however, commandeered all the seats on the district's local school board, denying representation to Ocean Hill–Brownsville. In early 1967, exasperated Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents and activists began a boycott of the local board and formed their own "Independent School Board No. 17," a localized model of the "People's Board of Education" of the previous December that contained some of the same personnel, including Galamison.

Although the "Independent School Board No. 17" had no official legal standing, it received initial support from an unlikely source, in view of subsequent events—the UFT. Union leaders favored an alliance with the Independent Board for two interrelated reasons. First, they wished to curry favor with black parents by joining their demand that 110 Livingston Street pay more attention to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community. And second, to the UFT, "attention" meant services—more teachers, more specialists, more equipment—in a word, "more." "More," of course, would mean additional employment opportunities for UFT members. And the More Effective Schools, or MES, program for poor neighborhoods was particularly promising in this regard. MES-designated schools received an infusion of labor-intensive educational services that required more hiring—two and sometimes three teachers per class, remedial reading and mathematics specialists, guidance counselors, and program coordinators. The desire of union leaders for MES

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designations for as many Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools as possible, in fact, provided the single best explanation for the UFT's support of the initial stages of the community control movement in the district.

Albert Shanker dispatched Sandra Feldman, his most trusted field representative and later president of the UFT, to Ocean Hill early in 1967 to help the Independent Board and local residents pry "more" from the central Board of Education. In February of that year, Feldman organized a demonstration at PS 144 with local Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents, seeking its designation as an MES school. They also demanded the removal of 144's unpopular principal, whose bureaucratic instransigence was well known, and who was notorious for his customary response—"I get my orders from downtown"—to any suggestions that smacked of innovation or change. The protesters obtained the transfer of the principal, and, while rebuffed in their campaign for MES designation, were able to force the Board of Education to promise upgraded services at the school, including additional reading teachers and guidance counselors.[2] The UFT, encouraged by this qualified victory in its quest for "more," continued to work informally with the Independent Board in Ocean Hill–Brownsville during the winter and spring of 1967.

But the union leadership may have misapprehended the goals of the Independent Board and the parents and activists of Ocean Hill–Brownsville with whom they sought to ally around the demand for "more." Ocean Hill–Brownsville residents, by 1967, were moving beyond this idea, and beginning to question the legitimacy of the city's public education system itself. For the UFT, both leadership and rank and file, this legitimacy was an article of faith; they believed in money, not redistributive change, as an instrument of reform. In 1967, most UFT teachers felt that residents of neighborhoods such as Ocean Hill–Brownsville shared their belief that more services and facilities would cure what ailed the New York City public schools. But, even as they marched with the UFT at PS 144, Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents were showing signs that their understanding of "school reform" was very different from that of the union.

Their increasingly ambivalent reactions were best illustrated by Elaine Rooke, the president of the Parent-Teacher Association at Ocean Hill–Brownsville's flagship school, Junior High School 271. In May 1968, Rooke would sit on the local school board that voted to fire Fred Nauman, but in 1966, she was a supporter of 271's white principal, Jack Bloomfield, and his staff of mostly white UFT teachers. Bloomfield had arrived at the school in 1964. His tenure had been relatively successful, if measured by the traditional standards of reading and mathematics scores, which improved substantially between 1964 and 1967, although they still ranked below the city average.[3] He also attracted additional educational services

and resources to the school. Bloomfield sought to link JHS 271 and Ocean Hill–Brownsville community residents through an "Ocean Hill Community Council," on which Rooke sat. The council, while not an activist group, did provide a forum for discussion and air-clearing. Apparently, Rooke was satisfied with this arrangement, and with Bloomfield, in 1966. In June of that year, she presented him with a certificate commending him for his work, and wrote in the school magazine: "The teachers of the school have certainly shown [students] how much they feel they are special. . . . We have worked closely and harmoniously toward keeping [JHS 271] among the top schools that New York City has ever had."[4] Yet, only a year later, Rooke left the Ocean Hill Community Council for a different community group with a much more socially transformative agenda, the Brownsville Community Corporation. This group, the officially designated War on Poverty agency in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, sought to use community action as a means of resource redistribution in the neighborhood. It viewed white educators as part of the problem, not the solution.

By 1967, Rooke was accusing white teachers in the district of having "bad attitudes." "They don't live in the neighborhood," she complained, "and they rush out of the school and the neighborhood before three o'clock."[5] Two newcomers to Ocean Hill–Brownsville, who became acquainted with Rooke through the Brownsville Community Corporation, played a major role in her change of heart. C. Herbert Oliver, who as the chairman of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local school board would help draft Fred Nauman's termination letter, was a minister who had arrived in 1965 to head the Westminster Bethany United Presbyterian Church. Oliver came from Birmingham, where he had been active in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Oliver was skeptical of the abilities and motives of white educators in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, for personal as well as philosophical reasons. His son, a student in the Ocean Hill schools, was performing poorly in most subjects, and failing math. Since the boy had made the honor roll in Birmingham, where he had been taught by black teachers, Oliver concluded that the fault lay with indifferent white educators who did not believe his son was as capable as white students.[6] He believed there was no point in adding "more" services and programs to an already dysfunctional educational structure as long as white teacher attitudes remained the same.

Rooke's other major influence was also a man of the cloth. The Reverend John Powis, a white worker-priest, had come to live and organize in Ocean Hill–Brownsville in the mid-1960s. He quickly made his Our Lady of Presentation Church into a clearinghouse for local community control activists. In 1968, he, like Oliver, would sit on the local school board that sought to oust Fred Nauman.

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Powis's political philosophy was closer to anarchism than anything else. He viewed the public education system as the racist bulwark of a "sick society."[7] His institutionalized definition of "racism" damned white teachers as a group, regardless of their personal attitudes. With advisers such as Oliver and Powis, it is hardly surprising that Elaine Rooke's opinions about the public schools in Ocean Hill–Brownsville shifted drastically between 1965 and 1967.

While the UFT leadership sought to attribute Rooke's change of heart solely to the influence of "irresponsible extremists," her motivations were much more complex. Rooke, and many Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents like her, saw their children caught up in a cycle of failure in the neighborhood schools. Reading and mathematics scores had indeed risen under Bloomfield, but they still lagged far behind those in white middle-class areas of the city. It was also true that the UFT had succeeded in attracting more money, services, and programs to the district. The community's schools, however, seemed to be training their children for blue-collar and unskilled jobs that no longer existed, since the unemployment rate in Ocean Hill–Brownsville was 22 percent, and even higher among those under twenty-five years of age.[8]

And the white teachers themselves, while rarely employing overtly racist language, were, at best, condescending and patronizing toward black children. Rooke thought the white teachers were different—very different—from their pupils and their parents. They dressed differently, spoke differently, lived differently. They seemed to need different things. They wanted to get ahead, of course, as most people did, but with a hard, aggressive edge that Rooke wasn't used to. She had heard them talking to each other at school when she headed the PTA. Everything seemed to be about job announcements and tests and promotions, and often, down payments on houses in nice neighborhoods she couldn't afford, or vacation trips to places she knew she'd never see. And when the white teachers spoke about their students, they usually talked about their failures, large and small. The teachers seemed to think that the way they lived was better than the way she and her children lived, as if their lives were some sort of an example for her to emulate. But Rooke was not sure whether, for all their material success, the white teachers were the examples she wanted her children to follow. Of course, she hoped they would have financial security, but neither did she want her children to *be* the white teachers. Yet this is what the white teachers seemed to want. And the way things were in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, this couldn't happen even if she wanted it to.

By 1967, then, Elaine Rooke, and many Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents like her, viewed the UFT and its white teachers with growing suspicion and anger.

Sandra Feldman and other UFT leaders argued that "more" programs and services would help their children, but the people they really appeared to benefit were the teachers themselves, with "more" jobs, money, and material comforts. The union said it wanted a parent-teacher alliance, but only on its own terms. It assumed that what was good for the UFT was also good for black parents. UFT leaders did not appear fully to comprehend the depth of despair felt by parents such as Elaine Rooke. And they certainly could not understand why Rooke would blame white teachers for problems whose origins lay far beyond their classrooms. There was, of course, much justification for their feelings of bewilderment on this score. But white teachers, in Ocean Hill–Brownsville and elsewhere in New York, may not have understood the extent to which they had become symbols for parents like Elaine Rooke, symbols of an economic, social, and educational system that marginalized her and her children. It was this emotion that had led one of Rooke's friends to tell a white Ocean Hill–Brownsville teacher: "You ruined my life—you're not going to ruin my children's too."[9]

Exaggerated as these sentiments may have been, they spoke volumes as to the perceptual chasm separating white teachers and black parents in neighborhoods like Ocean Hill–Brownsville by 1967. White teachers viewed the educational system as one that, while flawed, had helped them, and would help anyone wishing to work hard. Black parents saw the system as a failure. Each generalized from their own experiences and projected them onto the other. As a result, by the spring of 1967, Sandra Feldman and Jack Bloomfield would be no match for C. Herbert Oliver and John Powis in the battle for the allegiance of Elaine Rooke and other Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents. It was obvious to them that white control of black schools had led nowhere. It was time, as one parent would put it, "to make our own rules for our own schools"—time, in other words, for community control.[10]

John Lindsay's thoughts at this time were proceeding along similar lines. He also had a more prosaic problem to solve. He needed to find a way to pry more funding for New York City's public schools out of the State Legislature in Albany, a body dominated by "upstaters" traditionally lukewarm to the city's financial needs.[11] In the spring of 1967, Lindsay asked the legislature to consider the five boroughs of the city as separate entities for school funding purposes, an accounting maneuver that would significantly increase the total allocated to the city as a whole. The legislature responded by asking the mayor to decentralize the city's public educational system down to the borough level, in order to make the arrangement more than just a paper transaction.

This was the go-ahead signal that Lindsay was hoping for when he made his

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2. Ocean Hill–Brownsville local school board member Elaine Rooke attempting to block the return of Fred Nauman and other white educators to Junior High School 271, May 1968. NYT Pictures/*The New York Times*

borough-wide funding proposal. He announced his intention to go the State Legislature one better: he would decentralize the schools below the boroughs, all the way down to the community level. He appointed a task force headed by Ford Foundation president McGeorge Bundy to study the issue and report back to him with a plan through which each of the city's communities would control its own schools. In the meantime, he prodded the central Board of Education to begin experimenting with various forms of community control. In April 1967, the Board announced its intention to do just that, issuing a policy statement inviting localities to apply for authorization to implement community control plans. The Board also announced that it would permit funding for such plans to be solicited from outside sources, including private sources, a departure from its traditional policy.[12]

The central Board's guidelines for such plans were relatively cautious. They continued the central assignment of teaching and administrative personnel, and competitive, examination-based hiring procedures. In an effort to facilitate the recruitment of minority faculty, they permitted local school boards to petition the Superintendent of Schools to waive formal hiring requirements "if exceptional circumstances exist," and request that he make teacher assignments based on "due consideration of the differences in needs as reflected in the pupil population of districts." The guidelines also permitted local control of curriculum, but only within the "framework" set by the central Board of Education and the State Department of Education. In general, the Board of Education sought to make local school boards, which had heretofore been virtually irrelevant, into limited partners, but not co-managers, in the business of running the public school system.[13]

On their face, the Board's guidelines appeared to promise little more than some administrative reshuffling, a fine-tuning to make the educational system more responsive to its constituents. This, at least, is what Schools Superintendent Bernard Donovan and Alfred Giardino, the new president of the Board of Education, believed. Neither, however, took into account the intensity of the passions swirling through neighborhoods like Ocean Hill–Brownsville.

Ocean Hill–Brownsville was a logical candidate to serve as one of the Board of Education's sites for "experimentation" in community control of education. By the spring of 1967, C. Herbert Oliver and John Powis lived in the neighborhood, and Milton Galamison, the city's best-known civil rights activist and a community control supporter, preached nearby. Lillian Wagner, whose demand to be heard by the Board of Education had sparked the "People's Board of Education" demonstration in December 1966, was an Ocean Hill–Brownsville resident, as were other "People's Board" veterans. And in "Independent School Board No. 17," the

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neighborhood already had an informally functioning "experiment" in community control.

It was also logical for the Ford Foundation to be interested in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. The foundation's director, McGeorge Bundy, a community control supporter, was already serving as chairman of the Lindsay-appointed panel studying the issue, and his chief educational policy adviser, Mario Fantini, was actively searching for possible projects to fund. Ford and Ocean Hill–Brownsville were brought together by members of the staff of the Institute for Community Studies at Queens College (ICS), a group of New Left–influenced academics attracted by the link between community control and the principles of participatory democracy. ICS's head, Marilyn Gittell, a professor of sociology at Queens College, would co-author a book on community control of education with Fantini.[14] And both Gittell and Fantini were personally acquainted with Powis and aware of his work in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community. Thus, a number of personalities and forces converged in support of the community control impulse at Ocean Hill–Brownsville in the spring of 1967.

Community control also made a great deal of sense to Ocean Hill–Brownsville residents, because it spoke to their basic concerns. In addition to the hope of improved educational opportunities for their children, it offered the possibility of changing the rules governing the public education market in the city to make more jobs and political power available to them. Community control's premise that outside bureaucrats had failed meant employment possibilities for local residents, who could work as paraprofessionals and teacher's assistants in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. In addition, the end of the central Board of Education's stranglehold on awarding contracts for school construction and maintenance might provide local men with a long-awaited opportunity to break the near-monopoly held by whites in these areas; in 1968, the Board of Education had awarded two-thirds of the contracts for these services to just two white-owned firms, each with virtually no black employees.[15]

Community control also promised to end the political marginalization of the average Ocean Hill–Brownsville citizen, by creating an alternative route to empowerment. This route to political influence, ironically, did not involve traditional currencies of power. The architects of the community action apparatus wished it to be independent from the established political structure in areas such as Ocean Hill–Brownsville, because they considered that structure to have failed. While local residents voted for representatives to "community corporations," these elections were in practice marked by low levels of voter participation. There were no primaries or endorsement battles that served to eliminate "outsiders." Consequently, one did not need a broad popular base to be elected, only some name recognition

in the neighborhood, which could mean simply being seen "around." The democratic features of this new currency were obvious. They did, on the other hand, tend to empower individuals who did not have broad-based electoral support, and were not skilled in the politician's art of compromise. Community action thus had the potential to create "leaders" who purported to speak for the "community," but who in fact represented narrow constituencies.[16]

In 1967, little of this seemed to matter, but by the time of the city's fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s, community control's seductive promise of political power without the requirement of an electoral base would play New York's black population false, since only the mass electoral muscle that community control implicitly discouraged could stave off budget cuts and service reductions that impacted black citizens disproportionately. With power on community boards but not at the polls, where blacks represented close to a quarter of the city's population but only about 15 percent of its voters, black leaders were unable to prevent these cuts.[17] They would learn the hard lesson that "community," if not translated into a political organization plausibly able to threaten retribution at the ballot box, offered only imperfect protection against shifts in the city's political winds.

In the spring of 1967, however, all this lay in the future. Ocean Hill–Brownsville citizens saw community control as a chance to change the rules of an unfair market, and end decades of economic and political marginalization. They, and the educational activists who supported community control, were joined at this early stage by the UFT. The union supported Ocean Hill–Brownsville as a site for a community control experiment in the spring of 1967, although its motives presaged the disagreements that were to come.

Albert Shanker was encouraged by Sandra Feldman's limited success in joining with parents to obtain "more" services at Ocean Hill–Brownsville's PS 144, and hoped that the union and the community could now unite in a campaign to make all of the district's schools MES. To Shanker, in fact, the idea of "community control" meant, essentially, MES. Shanker was also uncomfortable with the very term "community control," which he rarely used in public. He preferred "decentralization," a more limited arrangement under which local boards would "consult" the union and the central Board of Education as they decided the essential questions of school governance. As a co-manager of the public education system in New York, the UFT had a vested interest in preserving the apparatus of centralized control that the Board of Education had created. Shanker's version of "decentralization" thus had no room for local control of spending, personnel, and curriculum. Shanker believed that his brand of decentralization offered a significant advance over past practice, and he was right. Since 1898, local school boards had been little more than rubber stamps. But "decentralization" according to Albert Shanker,

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and "community control" according to John Powis, C. Herbert Oliver, and Elaine Rooke, were very different things.

Swayed largely by the UFT's recommendation, Schools Superintendent Bernard Donovan chose Ocean Hill–Brownsville as one of the Board of Education's experimental community control districts in May 1967. Donovan proposed a procedure and timetable that bespoke the central Board of Education's bureaucratic caution. He called for the formation of a "planning council," composed of Ocean Hill–Brownsville residents, teachers, and school administrators. The planning council would prepare a detailed blueprint for community control; this would govern methods of electing local board members and delineate the powers of the board. The blueprint would then be submitted to Donovan for his approval in the fall of 1967.[18] This was typical Board of Education practice: a leisurely planning process, followed by an extended high-echelon review.

UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, including Fred Nauman, began meeting with community leaders to formulate this blueprint. The UFT also envisioned a leisurely process, especially with the summer recess approaching, and one, moreover, that it would control. Accordingly, the union produced what was essentially a plan to formulate a plan. Its "Plan for an Experimental School District in District 17," which Sandra Feldman sent to the Board of Education, contained Donovan's "planning council" idea, as well as modest proposals for local input into personnel, curricular, and financial matters. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville local school board, whenever it was installed, would prepare a list of candidates for the position of "Unit Administrator" to serve as the nominal head of the district's schools, but Donovan would make the final selection. While the plan did not define the unit administrator's powers with specificity, Feldman clearly envisioned roughly the same limited, consultative responsibilities as exercised by the administrators of the city's other, nonexperimental school districts, who were known as "district superintendents." The plan also provided for a continuation of the competitive examination system, although it did express the hope, in a bow to local sensibilities, that teachers chosen in this manner would maintain sympathetic relations with the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community. Most importantly to the UFT leadership, the plan asked that all eight schools in Ocean Hill–Brownsville be designated MES schools. This amounted to a demand for the expansion of the teaching force in the area by some 25 percent, a typical expression of the union's philosophy of "more."[19]

As the UFT charted its course, however, other actors were proceeding with their own, different plans for community control in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. In June and July, they emerged to confront the union. The Ford Foundation was eager to provide funding to the nascent Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. The founda-

tion's education liaison, Mario Fantini, worked with Powis and the ICS's Marilyn Gittell to execute an end run around both the union and the Board of Education, taking most of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community with them. Without consulting Shanker or Donovan, Fantini announced a Ford Foundation grant of forty-four thousand dollars to the Ocean Hill experimental project in late June. Fantini deliberately routed the grant funds through Marilyn Gittell's ICS and Powis's Our Lady of Presentation Church. Fantini also announced that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, when it came into existence, would have the power to hire and fire school personnel independent of the central Board of Education, another circumvention of Shanker and Donovan.[20] Donovan protested ineffectually, telling Fantini on June 30 that he was moving too "definitively" for his tastes.[21] But Donovan did not, either at this time or during the critical summer months that followed, put his foot down and order that the process of setting up the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental district be slowed or modified to fit his agenda. Instead, Donovan implicitly accepted the different direction the project was taking.[22] Donovan's reticence can be explained in part by his reluctance to be perceived as an obstacle to the aspirations of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community. He was especially wary of accusations of racism, as Powis, who had observed his behavior during the IS 201 controversy in 1966, was well aware. Powis, Rhody McCoy, and the community control supporters would use this sensitivity for their own purposes as the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy developed.

The UFT teachers who served on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville "Planning Council" did not head off Powis and Fantini's alternative plans for the project for a simpler reason: they were not around. The Spring 1967 semester ended on June 30, and the UFT representatives duly packed their belongings and turned their attention to the traditional summer activities of New York public school teachers—second jobs, graduate courses, and summer camps. Their contacts with the Ocean Hill–Brownsville neighborhood during the summer were sporadic, because they expected that the "planning" for the community control experiment would resume in earnest in the fall. But they miscalculated: by then events had moved past them.

At the beginning of July, Fantini, Gittell, and Powis agreed that by September the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment would have an elected board, a unit administrator, and a plan of operation. All would be as independent of the UFT and the central Board of Education as possible. Powis turned his attention first to the matter of the unit administrator. He introduced Rhody McCoy to the planning council, at a meeting attended neither by the UFT representatives nor by any official from Donovan's office.[23]

McCoy was an eighteen-year veteran of the New York City public schools. A native of the city, he had begun his career in the system after graduating from

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3. Ocean Hill–Brownsville Unit Administrator Rhody McCoy (right) outside Junior High School 271. NYT Pictures/*The New York Times.*

Howard University. He was a quiet, deliberate man, not prone to displays of emotion. Many of his professional acquaintances believed him to be apolitical. Only close friends know of his interest in, and admiration for, Malcolm X, whose Harlem meetings he attended in the early 1960s. By the summer of 1967, McCoy was the acting principal of a "special service" school for emotionally disturbed children on Manhattan's West Side. He had refused to take the examination required for permanent appointment, on principle. McCoy believed that it rewarded rote knowledge unrelated to the skills actually required by the job. He was thus not on any Board of Examiners eligibility list when Powis nominated him for unit administrator.[24] For this reason, the UFT teachers on the planning council, when they heard of his nomination, opposed him, and proposed Junior High School 271 principal Jack Bloomfield instead. Incensed, Powis and the rest of the council, at a meeting to which the teachers had not been invited, selected McCoy.[25]

To them, McCoy's lack of "paper" credentials was a point in his favor, not a reason to reject him. McCoy was known as one of the rare public school administrators whose leadership style combined compassion and firmness. He liked black children, and had not given up on their capacity to learn, even under the trying conditions of a "special service" school which housed "difficult" children. He believed in the black community and in community control. These qualities, above all others, recommended him to Powis and his allies on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville planning council.

McCoy moved quickly to align himself with the parent members of the planning council, all of whom were women on some form of public assistance. He authorized payments to them from the Ford Foundation grant as "consultants" in the upcoming election for representatives on the permanent Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board. McCoy continued these payments to the parent members of the permanent board when it was elected, assuring himself of ongoing support from the most influential parents in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district.[26]

With McCoy installed as unit administrator, the planning council began drafting its own community control plan for Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Once again, the UFT representatives were largely excluded from this process. Powis, Fantini, and the newly appointed McCoy set out to produce a document that was very different from the previous UFT-approved version. They intended, in fact, to construct a community control structure completely separate from the union and school bureaucracy, seizing the moment in a preemptive strike Donovan and Shanker would have no choice but to accept.

On July 29, after four weeks of concentrated effort, the planning council, minus the UFT members, produced its plan for community control in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. Its preface, written by McCoy, began by describing the mar-

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ginalized life of the typical Ocean Hill–Brownsville resident, although it could also have described much of the rest of black New York in 1967. "There are people here," McCoy wrote, "who feel themselves out of sight of other people, groping in the dark. The city takes no notice of them. In the midst of a crowd, at church or in the marketplace, these people are about as obscure as they would be if locked somewhere in a cellar. It is not that they are censured or reproached; they are simply not seen—the invisible people. To be wholly overlooked and to know it is intolerable." "Men are capable of putting an end to what they find is intolerable without resort to politics," McCoy warned. "The ending of oppression and the beginning of a new day has often become a reality only after people have resorted to violent means." The Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment, he concluded, "represents the last threads of the community's faith in the school system's purposes and abilities."[27]

The community control plan went on to claim sweeping powers for the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, which it envisioned replacing the central Board of Education in the district's schools. The local board would control hiring, curriculum, and finances. It would have the right to continue to solicit funds from sources outside the central Board, a privilege denied other school districts in the city, and one that would give it the potential to use Ford Foundation support to eventually become independent of the entire public school system. And, in a deliberate slap at the UFT, the plan made no provision for MES in any of the district's schools.[28]

The election for positions on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board took place on August 3 and 4, almost immediately after the release of the Powis-McCoy community control plan, and once again without the active participation of the UFT or the official sanction of the central Board of Education. The neighborhood parents whom McCoy had designated as paid "election consultants" ran as candidates themselves, and went door-to-door soliciting votes. Polls were also open at the neighborhood schools. Eleven hundred residents participated, representing about 22 percent of the parents in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and approximately 10 percent of the area's registered voters. This turnout, while relatively light, did approximate the average rate for legislative races in the district.[29]

Seven parents, all of whom were already serving as McCoy-appointed "election consultants," emerged victorious, including Elaine Rooke. They, in turn, chose five community representatives to join them on the local board. Notable among these were Powis, Assemblyman Samuel Wright, and the Reverend C. Herbert Oliver, who was elected the board's chairman. The local board completed its roster by selecting Professor Stephen Lockwood of Brooklyn College, a community control activist with ties to Powis and Fantini.[30]

From the start, the parent members of the local board held the balance of

power. They came from similar backgrounds: most were black, poor, and female. All had been active in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, and many, like Elaine Rooke, had served as Parent-Teacher Association officers. They shared Oliver's disillusionment with white teachers. The parents were also driven by a desire for a measure of respect from them. The parent representatives were all too aware of their lack of educational credentials; most had not finished high school. When white teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville questioned their decisions on the local board, the parents believed they were really questioning their qualifications to decide educational policy. The UFT leadership invariably justified its criticism of the Ocean Hill local board by asking whether "nonprofessionals"—a veiled reference to the parent representatives—could properly play such an important role in the schools. "The terrible thing for most opponents of community control," wrote McCoy, mockingly describing this attitude, "is that the thrust for control is being made by people who 'aren't equipped' to exercise it. They're backward. There are no Ph.D.'s or college presidents among them. They're just 'folks' and what on earth do they know about schools?"[31] White teachers who criticized the parents on the local board may well have believed they were debating policy issues, and meant nothing personal. What the parents actually heard, however, was an attack on their legitimacy, and, indirectly, their lives. Like Oliver and McCoy, their day of reckoning with the white teachers of Ocean Hill–Brownsville would come on May 9, 1968.

The newly elected Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board's first order of business was the appointment of principals for the schools in the district that had vacancies. Ordinarily, the board would have had nothing to decide, since principals were centrally appointed by Superintendent Donovan from a list according to examination scores. For elementary school principals, the superintendent was bound by the "rule of three" to select one of the three top scorers. By 1967, the system had become so rigid that in practice, the superintendent invariably chose the applicant with the highest grade.[32] Selection of junior and senior high school principals was governed by a "qualifying list" system, under which the superintendent could elevate any candidate attaining a designated minimum examination grade, although, once again, in practice those with the highest scores were usually chosen first.

McCoy and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, however, viewed the principal selection issue as the first real test of their authority, and were determined to assert their prerogatives. They also wished to make a point about the racial distribution of principalships in the public school system. Only 1 percent of the principals in New York were black in 1967, and the existing eligibility lists were composed almost entirely of whites.[33] Accordingly, McCoy informed Donovan that he wished to fill Ocean Hill–Brownsville's vacancies with principals who were not on

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any Board of Examiners list. Their only qualification would be New York State certification, which consisted of basic college education courses and did not involve passing an examination.[34]

Donovan was uncomfortable with the idea, but he did not wish to risk a confrontation. He placed the matter on the desk of his superior, State Education Commissioner James Allen, whose sympathies for community control were well known, and asked whether the examination requirements for appointing principals could be waived. Allen replied that while they could not, he would nonetheless attempt to find a way to give the local board what it wanted. He contacted Howard Kalodner, a Columbia University law professor who was also sympathetic to community control, and asked him to find an alternative legal route. Kalodner complied by creating an entirely new category, that of "demonstration" school principal. Requirements for this new position, as Kalodner outlined them, would consist of New York State certification, plus rapport with the community that the principal would serve. Demonstration principal appointments could be made immediately on an acting basis by the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, without any examination requirement. Kalodner's guidelines called for a flexible examination, to be developed at an unspecified future time, that would emphasize community relations rather than administrative arcana. Kalodner and Allen assured McCoy that whenever such an examination was developed, he would have the major voice in determining its form.[35]

For the time being, however, there would be no examination, and in late August, McCoy and the local board set out to make their choices. They chose Louis Fuentes, a reading consultant, who would be only the second permanent principal of Puerto Rican ancestry in the city system, to head PS 155. Ralph Rogers, a black assistant principal, was tapped to head PS 144. Irving Gerber, a white who had expressed interest in working in a community-controlled district, and who was the only one of the local board's choices to be on an eligibility list, would lead PS 87.

The final principal chosen was Herman Ferguson, a black teacher active in the militant Revolutionary Action Movement, then under indictment for conspiring to murder civil rights leaders Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young. Ferguson's appointment was too much even for the accommodating Donovan, who immediately suspended him pending the outcome of his trial. He did, however, permit Ferguson to serve as a paid adviser to one of the other districts experimenting with community control, IS 201 in Harlem, until his case was finally decided.[36]

When the UFT representatives on the planning council returned for the fall semester, McCoy announced that he expected them to ratify the actions taken by the local board during the summer, including those relating to principal selection.

The UFT members immediately disassociated themselves from the local board, complaining that they had been frozen out of decision making and that they were the victims of racial harassment. From that point forward, the UFT would have no representation on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board.[37]

Both UFT leaders and McCoy agreed that the events of the summer of 1967 in Ocean Hill–Brownsville permanently defined their relationship. They agreed on little else about them, however. Fred Nauman, the union chapter chairman at Junior High School 271, saw them as illustrating the unreasonableness of the local board members:

> The teachers who were selected to help in the planning (of the community control experiment) quickly found that their job was not a simple one. Suggestions on their part were taken as attempts to destroy the plan, although that was not their intent at all. It became apparent to them that they were not invited to all of the local board's sessions. Portions of the plan were presented to them as already approved. Rhody McCoy, who had been selected as acting Unit Administrator for the summer without any consultation with the teachers, informed them that items that could not be agreed on would be decided by the local board. The (community control) proposal was rewritten during the summer, largely without the knowledge or presence of the teachers.[38]

McCoy's interpretation of the summer's events was quite different. He emphasized the intransigence of the UFT. The teachers' objections to the principals the local board had selected, McCoy argued, "emanated from their determination to see that no militants or black power advocates were selected. This, to us, was an attempt to exclude a vital segment of the community and to deny the exercise of free choice. . . . Every attempt was made to eliminate [community control]. . . . Racism was rampant. [Local board] members were involved in answering UFT charges. They spent innumerable hours interpreting the program to the community and attempting to maintain solidarity and support. They practiced self-restraint and reason throughout."[39] The disagreements of the summer of 1967 would set the tone for the succeeding winter, fall, and spring: one set of circumstances, two sets of interpretations.

The UFT did more than disassociate itself from the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board to protest the demonstration principal idea. It joined a lawsuit brought by the organization representing the city's principals, the Council of Supervisory Associations (CSA), challenging the validity of the new category, as well as the appointment of McCoy as unit administrator, under the state Education Law and the state and federal constitutions.[40] The UFT's action was unprecedented. Never before had teachers reached across class lines to ally with their nominal superi-

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ors in a legal proceeding. While some UFT leaders questioned the union's action on this basis, the majority, led by Shanker, argued successfully that, as during the IS 201 controversy the year before, the merit principle, and the idea of "equality" itself, were at stake. McCoy had stated during the summer that his eventual goal was an all-black teaching staff in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and Shanker viewed the "off-list" principals issue as merely the opening salvo in a battle that would eventually involve his teachers.[41] Shanker also knew that the "merit" hiring issue was an emotional, visceral one to his rank and file, and felt he had to take a stand, if only to keep abreast of them. A union election loomed in June 1968.[42]

The CSA lawsuit began what would become a year-and-a-half-long odyssey through the New York State court system. In March 1968, a trial court ruled that the demonstration principal idea violated the portion of the State Education Law mandating that all appointments to pedagogical positions be governed by substantive written examinations, as well as the antidiscrimination provisions of the state constitution. The court upheld McCoy's appointment, however, ruling that the unit administrator position was a new category that could be filled without an examination on a temporary, experimental basis.[43] An intermediate appeals court upheld the invalidation of the demonstration principals in November 1968, a major victory for the UFT, which was then in the midst of its third citywide teachers strike aimed at obtaining the reinstatement of Fred Nauman and the other union teachers terminated by the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board. Shanker refused to settle that strike until he received assurance that the demonstration principals would be removed pending a further appeal.[44] In January 1969, after the strike had ended, the state's highest court reversed the lower courts and upheld the demonstration principal appointments, although on narrow grounds, permitting them only as limited experiments and mandating the preparation of written examinations for the category in the future.[45] Despite losing its immediate battle, the UFT had made its point. It would fight for its view of "equality" and "merit" in the city's public education market, a view that was intimately bound up with the civil service examination system. But by supporting the demonstration principal concept, McCoy and the local board had made their point as well. They would fight as tenaciously as the UFT for their own, different understandings of these words.

The citywide teachers strike of September 1967 further poisoned relations between the union and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board. This strike, unlike the one that would come a year later, did not arise out of events specific to Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Nevertheless, many in that community, including McCoy and the members of the local board, interpreted it as directed at them. In its negotia-

tions for a new contract with the Board of Education in the spring and summer of 1967, the UFT demanded wage increases, an expansion of funding for MES programs, and, most controversially, a "disruptive child" provision permitting teachers to unilaterally remove seriously misbehaving pupils from their classrooms and schools. The union struck all of the city's schools in September over these issues.[46]

While the 1967 strike, which lasted two weeks, affected all of New York, black communities, and especially Ocean Hill–Brownsville, viewed it as a racial affront—an attempt to withhold educational services from black schoolchildren. In Ocean Hill–Brownsville, McCoy and the local board kept the schools open throughout the strike. Members of the ATA helped staff the classrooms on a skeleton basis.[47] Emblematic of the perceptual gulf between the local board and the UFT was the latter's offer, made through Nauman, of a quid pro quo—in the form of MES designation for all Ocean Hill schools—exchange for the local board's support of the strike. The board, which viewed MES as little more than a jobs boondoggle for the UFT, dismissed the offer out of hand, as the union leadership should have known it would. The local board then launched a campaign to punish the striking UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. It notified the draft boards of strikers, asking that their deferments be revoked. It also encouraged community residents who worked in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools as monitors and teachers aides to harass the teachers upon their return to work.[48]

The 1967 strike produced an alliance between the local board, the ATA, and Mayor Lindsay, who, as Shanker's opponent at the bargaining table, had reasons of his own to oppose the union. After the strike ended, with the UFT winning substantial wage increases but failing to obtain expansion of MES or the disruptive child provision, Lindsay thanked the president of the ATA, JHS 271 assistant principal Albert Vann, for his "instant response to the teachers' strike," and for his role in keeping the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools open. The mayor praised Vann's actions as reflecting "the finest traditions of service to the city."[49] The UFT, of course, had another term for what Vann had done: strikebreaking. The incident exacerbated a deteriorating relationship between it, on one side, and the mayor and the black community, on the other.

The release of McGeorge Bundy's report on decentralization for the entire city in early November hardened these divisions. Lindsay had stacked the deck when he appointed the commission to study the subject. Four of its five members were strong community control supporters. The commission, whose research staff was headed by Mario Fantini, gave Lindsay what he wanted—a strong endorsement of the idea of community control for the city's public schools.

The report, officially entitled "Reconnection for Learning: A Community School

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System for New York City—Report of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools," but informally referred to as the "Bundy Report," called for the city to be divided into thirty to sixty independent school districts. Each would possess almost unfettered power to hire, fire, and grant tenure to teachers and administrative personnel. The report called for the elimination of all examination requirements for hiring and promotion in the city school system, and, echoing the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, the substitution of New York State certification as a minimum floor for applicants. This, it argued, would "liberate the recruitment and promotional system from restrictions that have outlived their purpose and strengthen and broaden the concept of merit. No city can afford to hobble itself with a recruitment and selection process that discourages talented people from entering the system." While acknowledging that "broadening" the merit system by eliminating examinations would cause a degree of personal hardship among passed-over teachers, the report contended that defenders of the status quo "confuse past values with present needs." The report also recommended that localities be given full authority to determine the content of curriculum in their districts, and control over all spending, including school contracting, maintenance, and finance.[50]

Reaction to the Bundy Report divided along roughly the same lines as did reaction to the September teachers' strike. Most of the city media, which had opposed the strike, applauded the report. "If this proposal is radical," editorialized the *Times,* "it is because the situation is desperate. Something new and revolutionary is needed."[51] The *Post* called it "a thoughtful, provocative alternative to the intolerable status quo."[52] And the *New York Amsterdam News* praised the report's rejection of the idea "that only middle-class Caucasians have the right to set standards for themselves and the rest of society." The UFT's opposition to the elimination of examination requirements, the newspaper charged, showed "contempt for the ghetto. We cannot sympathize with the cry for 'orderly promotional procedures based on qualifications and experience' when the Board of Examiners has licensed only three Afro-Americans and no Puerto Ricans in a school system in which they make up over half the pupil population."[53] McCoy, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, and the African-American Teachers Association also praised the report, as did corporate leaders, academics, educational activists from EQUAL and United Bronx Parents, and Manhattan-based political figures, including, in an ironic prelude to his later career as the city's first neoconservative mayor, Edward Koch. Lindsay made the Bundy Report, with minor modifications, the basis for the decentralization law he submitted to the State Legislature in Albany.

But the UFT reacted furiously, and launched a frontal assault on both the bill and the Bundy Report. In December, it released its own decentralization plan, con-

tained in a union-issued "Statement on Decentralization," that harshly criticized the report. The "Statement on Decentralization" echoed the UFT-sponsored decentralization plan for Ocean Hill–Brownsville, calling for limited consultative powers for local boards in matters of curriculum and finances, with final authority resting with the central Board of Education. Educational personnel would continue to be centrally assigned from ranked lists, although the UFT was willing to accept the elimination of Board of Examiners tests and their replacement by the more widely used National Teachers Examination. The UFT plan also featured a smaller number of larger school districts than the Bundy Report—about fifteen—ostensibly to facilitate school integration, which the union continued to support rhetorically.[54]

The UFT's "Statement on Decentralization" also attacked the Bundy Report on philosophical grounds. "The history of local community participation in American cities," it argued, "has been a sad one," as New York's failed experiment with the ward system of school governance in the nineteenth century proved. Now, in a repetition of the mistakes of the past, "teachers will be hired and fired not on the basis of educational competence, but on the basis of race, political conformity to parochial community prejudices, and favoritism." The Bundy Report's call for "community standards" in hiring, charged the UFT, "is a proven failure. This is precisely the method used in school districts across the country which reward submissiveness and conformity. The UFT cannot accept the introduction of this system in New York. The present system of licensing must be changed, but not by abandoning educational standards altogether."[55]

The UFT also questioned the Bundy Report's assumption that "laymen without professional experience" could make decisions on educational policy, as well as the report's apparent faith that without a central assignment system, teachers would voluntarily choose to work in black-majority schools.[56] Since the number of teachers wishing to transfer out of such schools exceeded those desiring to transfer in, the union predicted an exacerbation of the already serious shortage of experienced teachers in ghetto schools.

Viewed side by side, the Bundy Report and the UFT "Statement on Decentralization" encapsulated the growing perceptual chasm between supporters of local control and the union over understandings of "equality" and definitions of "community." Both sides were confronting a series of unsettling conundrums. The UFT had always prided itself on being a "populist" organization. Broad-based worker democracy was part of its heritage. Yet its "Statement on Decentralization" showed the union leadership to be profoundly suspicious of "the people," in both black and white "communities." Supporters of community control, on the other hand, as the Bundy Report illustrated, also celebrated the idea of a "people's democracy" in theory, but applied it primarily to black neighborhoods, unable or unwilling to

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come to grips with its implications for more conservative whites. Moreover, the UFT had always regarded the competitive test system, where, ostensibly, nothing but ability in the examination room mattered, as the embodiment of "equality" in a democratic society. Many of its members had spent their professional lives fighting for such a "fair chance." But how could a system that produced such racially skewed ratios of success be described as an "equal" one? UFT leaders and rank-and-filers had no satisfactory answer to this uncomfortable question. And, conversely, supporters of the Bundy Report's call for elimination of the use of all competitive examinations in the New York City public school system evinced a literal egalitarianism that nonetheless begged questions of racial and ethnic favoritism in the distribution of societal rewards. Both sides plunged stubbornly ahead—ironies, contradictions, and all.

In Ocean Hill–Brownsville, the UFT and the local board continued to feud. The 1967–68 academic year had already gotten off to a tumultuous start with the UFT strike in September. In its angry aftermath, dozens of white Ocean Hill–Brownsville teachers demanded to transfer out of the district. Shanker, who did not wish at this point to be held responsible for the community control experiment's demise, asked them to remain, invoking, somewhat incongruously, the example of "the kids at Little Rock" who had integrated that city's public schools a decade earlier.[57] Shanker was able to prevent a mass exodus of union teachers from the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, but did negotiate an upward modification of the citywide rule that limited transfers to 5 percent of a school's teacher population in any one year. In Ocean Hill–Brownsville, 10 percent per semester would now have this option.[58] While placating the teachers, the compromise infuriated McCoy and the local board, who viewed it as emblematic of white teacher disrespect for the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment.

On the heels of this came the request of all of the district's assistant principals, who were not subject to teacher transfer quotas, to leave Ocean Hill–Brownsville. After Donovan reluctantly granted the transfers, McCoy demanded that the new assistant principals be chosen without examination requirements, in the manner of the demonstration elementary school principals. Donovan, however, bowing to CSA and UFT pressure, chose them in rank order from the Board of Examiners list; all were white.[59] Meanwhile, McCoy complained about his inability to obtain supplies from the central Board of Education, a problem common to most district superintendents, but one which took on a racial tinge under the charged circumstances. McCoy viewed his seven-week wait for office space and telephone service at the start of the 1967–68 school year in similar, racially conspiratorial terms.

McCoy's anger at the UFT, and at white unionized teachers in Ocean Hill–

Brownsville generally, was often directed at Fred Nauman, the UFT's chapter chairman at Junior High School 271, and Shanker's informal point man in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district. Nauman, like McCoy, was a child of poverty who had used the city's public education system as a route to a better material life, but the similarities ended there. He had been born in Germany, and had come to America in the late 1930s as a small boy with his parents, fleeing Nazi persecution. A product of the New York public schools and Brooklyn College, he became a science teacher after graduation, and quietly worked his way up the ranks, serving as a guidance counselor, department chair, and, for a brief period, assistant principal. He joined the UFT's small predecessor union, the Teachers Guild, in the 1950s, and was one of the charter members of the infant UFT in 1960.[60]

Nauman had benefited personally from the Board of Examiners system. In fact, his career up to 1968 had been a classic example of what one study of advancement in the New York City public education system had considered significant enough to grace with an acronym: "GASing," or "Getting the Attention of Superiors."[61] GASing was the route to upward mobility for teachers in the city schools, and Nauman had used it well. By 1968, with his UFT chapter chairmanship factored in, he was the most influential white teacher in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Nauman had faith in the New York public schools as a functioning, working system, in a way that McCoy did not. The "system" had certainly worked for him. Thanks to it, he, and others like him, had a measure of financial security and social status their parents could only have dreamed of.

Nauman credited much of this success to the labor movement. Unlike McCoy, who viewed education unions as obstructionist and often racist, Nauman believed fervently in their power for good. "Dignity" was an important word to Nauman. Teachers had been denied dignity in New York for too long, until the UFT did something about it. Thanks to the UFT, teachers were no longer subject to the whims of administrators, principals, and, for that matter, local school boards. The union had forced the central Board of Education to raise salaries, improve benefits, and perhaps most important, to treat teachers as professionals, with the control over work conditions that this status entailed. Now, Nauman believed, everything the union had fought for and won was in danger, thanks to McCoy and the local board. If they had their way, teachers would lose control over their lives in the workplace. The UFT had stood up to the central Board of Education in the past, and it would stand up to Rhody McCoy here. Union teachers would not lose their dignity.[62]

Nauman and McCoy differed in another crucial respect. If McCoy was a quiet admirer of Malcolm X, Nauman's hero was Martin Luther King. To Nauman, King, a longtime UFT ally, represented the essential link between labor and civil rights

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that lay at the heart of the politics of liberalism in New York City after World War II. Nauman revered King for what he symbolized to him: a color-blind democracy of merit in which men were judged, in King's well-known words, "not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." This often-repeated 1963 phrase captured the essence of what Nauman understood "equality" to mean. He, and thousands of other liberal white UFT teachers in New York City, became fixated on this phrase—and the vision of King it encapsulated—even as King himself edged away from it in the last years of his life, toward an acceptance of the use of racial preferences in the name of "equality." Nauman's understanding of King, then, may have been flawed and unrealistic. But it was heartfelt nonetheless, and he viewed McCoy, with his talk of an all-black teaching staff in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, as the very antithesis of his hero and his dream.[63]

Fred Nauman and Rhody McCoy, then, had both philosophical and practical reasons to distrust each other. Their different understandings of the meaning of labor rights, civil rights, and "equality" spilled out into the day-to-day operations of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment, magnifying what might otherwise have been containable disagreements into a series of unmanageable crises.

By early 1968, conditions in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, especially Junior High School 271, had reached new levels of chaos and acrimony. In February, William Harris, a black assistant principal, succeeded Bloomfield as principal. Also that month, Leslie Campbell, a social studies teacher who was one of the ATA's leaders, was transferred into 271. There, he joined Albert Vann to make the school home to that organization's two most important figures. Campbell made his classroom a center for the study of Afro-American history from a Marxist and nationalist perspective. He used the lives of Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Frederick Douglass, and Malcolm X to illustrate the need for a "revolution" in the modern-day black community, and did not shrink from discussing the possibility of violent forms of self-defense. Campbell also encouraged a flowering of black cultural forms among his students, including African art and dance, Afro-American novels and poetry, and contemporary soul music. This elicited expressions of horror from many of his white colleagues, one of whom derisively described Campbell's students as "uncontrollably twitching to that James Brown selection [he] played for them."[64] Campbell welcomed their discomfort, making no secret of his contempt for them.

Campbell, with Vann's approval, also encouraged the physical separation of black and white teachers at JHS 271 in cafeterias, lounges, and other common public spaces.[65] The school was now divided almost entirely along racial lines.

with Nauman and most of the white union teachers and administrators arrayed against the black teachers, led by Vann and Campbell. White teacher absenteeism ran rampant, and acts of student vandalism occurred on almost a daily basis, including an incident in which a student threw a desk out of a third-story window.[66]

An epidemic of unexplained fires also plagued the district as a whole, and one such occurrence further poisoned relations between white teachers and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community. In April, a fire occurred at PS 178, at about 2:00 P.M., and teachers and students evacuated into the street. They were still waiting there at 3:00 P.M., the end of the school day. Some ten teachers then left their classes standing outside the school and went home, causing panic among the unsupervised students. McCoy was outraged, accusing the teachers, all of whom were white, of abandoning the children. He charged that the incident symbolized their lack of commitment to black students. A telegram sent to Donovan after the incident by a local activist group, Project Method, went further: "We openly declare war. Recognized or not, this community will begin to act. Assistant principals and teachers will be fired this week. No hearing. . . . We declare our independence and will act as we desire."[67] Through retelling on the streets of Ocean Hill–Brownsville, what became known as the "fire incident" took on exaggerated proportions, with the number of white teachers abandoning their classes increasing as the story was repeated. It became a symbol of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community's perception of white teachers.

The news of the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4 pushed the district further toward the edge. The day after King's death, students at JHS 271, urged on by Campbell, rampaged through the halls, assaulting white teachers, setting off fire alarms, and vandalizing classrooms. At an impromptu memorial ceremony in the school auditorium, Campbell told the students to "stop fighting among yourselves. You save your money and finally get enough to buy a leather jacket and your brother steals it. You've got to get your minds together. You know who to steal from. If you steal, steal from those who have it. Stop fighting among yourselves."[68] The next day, a white assistant principal, in a letter to Donovan, spilled out his anger and frustration: "You must spend many a sleepless night trying to figure out what it is that makes people so difficult to deal with when all you want to do is help. The worst part is they won't even believe you and they keep on accusing you of things that never entered your head. This is the only letter I'm sending to anyone. I was going to send one to Rhody McCoy but I don't believe I will. He would probably say it's untrue or that I'm prejudiced. Well, I'm not prejudiced, I'm desperate."[69]

As the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools themselves careened out of control, the issue of the powers of the local board, never resolved, burst to the surface. For

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4. African-American Teachers Association leader Leslie Campbell telling student boycotters at Junior High School 271 not to go to a "white power school," May 15, 1968. ©Bettmann/CORBIS

months, McCoy had sidestepped Donovan's request for help in developing a written examination for the demonstration principal position. In April, McCoy and the local board dropped all pretense, and informed Donovan that "we will accept no other principals except those chosen by us and will not permit them to be subject to any new examination."[70] They also demanded that all other administrative positions in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools be exempted from examination requirements. After the Board of Education balked, the local board announced a boycott of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools for April 10. When UFT teachers came to work that day, they found no one to teach; every student in the district supported the boycott. After two days, the local board ended the boycott, and the students returned, with no change in either side's position, and the Board of Education warily awaiting the local board's next move.[71]

Albert Shanker, however, could see what that next move would be: the local board would try to fire a UFT teacher on its own initiative. Everything that the board had said and done over the past months pointed in this direction. Shanker had already moved to capture the procedural high ground on the issue. In January, a black student at Junior High School 258 in Brooklyn accused his white teacher, George Fucillo, of striking him, a charge Fucillo denied. Black community leaders demanded that Fucillo be removed from the school, and 258's principal asked Fucillo to accept a transfer to a school outside the district. Shanker contacted the teacher, however, and told him to refuse to go anywhere without a hearing. Shanker then had the UFT's Delegate Assembly adopt a resolution threatening to boycott the schools of any district in which a teacher was involuntarily transferred without a formal hearing.[72] Shanker hoped this resolution would make McCoy and the local board think twice before dealing with Fred Nauman or any UFT teacher in Ocean Hill–Brownsville in such a manner, and, if they went ahead anyway, stake out an unassailable legal position on the issue of hearings for involuntarily transferred teachers.

But, in reality, it was not entirely clear under the relevant law—in this case, the bylaws of the New York City Board of Education and the latest UFT/Board of Education collective bargaining agreement—whether hearings actually were required before a teacher could be transferred against his will. The rules governing teacher termination, in contrast, were clear. The collective bargaining agreement contained an array of due process protections, including hearings, internal reviews, and court appeals. But the agreement did not mention transfers, as distinguished from outright terminations, and the Board of Education bylaws stated only that the superintendent of schools could transfer a teacher outside a district, without specifically mandating hearings.[73]

In practice, the question rarely came up, because most teachers usually agreed

"voluntarily" to interdistrict transfers arranged by their principals or district supervisors. This, in fact, was how ineffective teachers who "washed out" of white middle-class schools found their way to ghetto districts. Faced with the unwelcome alternative of a formal "unsatisfactory" rating entered on their record by a principal or department chair, they usually agreed to transfer out without a hearing.[74] Often, the UFT itself helped with this process, quietly pressuring the teacher to go along. In a few "hard" cases, usually involving severe personality clashes between a supervisor and a teacher, the union stood aside while the superintendent of schools made the transfer himself.

But the Fucillo case and the looming Nauman imbroglio presented different problems. Both teachers had good records, and neither wanted to transfer. Fucillo had not been, and Nauman would not be, offered a hearing. While they may have deserved them under basic principles of equity, the actual documents governing the issue said nothing about them. Shanker knew this, and intended to use the UFT resolution as Nauman's first line of defense. He also knew, however, that the issue would be much less complicated, and much more favorable to the UFT in the court of public opinion, if he could argue that Nauman was terminated, and not merely transferred, by the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board.[75] Much would depend on the language the local board employed when it finally acted. Shanker hoped the board would use the word "terminate," and not "transfer"; this would make his job much easier.

In the meantime, Shanker and the UFT continued the legislative fight over community control in Albany. The union had codified its objections to the Bundy Report, offering its own decentralization bill providing for continued centralized control of public school personnel, curriculum, and finances; a small number of large school districts; and limited consultative powers for local boards. Bundy, Lindsay and the State Board of Regents, led by its most prominent member, Kenneth Clark, had coalesced around a more expansive bill based on the Bundy Report that vested thirty local school boards around the city with almost complete control over personnel, finances, and curriculum. The UFT lobbied against this bill in March and April, calling in all available political chips, and even offering support to machine Democrats—usually considered off-limits by the liberal union—in exchange for assistance in blocking the Lindsay/ Bundy/Regents bill.[76] By late April, however, it appeared likely that this bill would pass, since most upstate Republicans, who held the balance of power in the legislature, seemed inclined to give New York City the same powers that their own local constituencies exercised in school governance. Lindsay, a fellow Republican, was doing some hard lobbying of his own, channeling his efforts through a group he had recently formed for this purpose, the Citizens Committee for Decentralization of the Public Schools.

The Citizens Committee was composed of representatives of the two major elements of the pro–community control coalition—business and civic elites, and the black poor. It included RCA president Robert Sarnoff, Thomas Watson of IBM, former Harvard University president James Conant, Columbia Teachers College president John Fischer, Milton Galamison, Isaiah Robinson of the Harlem Parents Committee, and the East Harlem Tenant Council's Edward Ortiz. The assertion by a Lindsay education aide that the group was "broadly representative" indicated the limitations of its perspective, and fueled Shanker's growing suspicions regarding an alliance of rich and poor against his teachers.[77] Shanker would have felt justified had he been present at an April 26 meeting at the offices of the Carnegie Corporation between members of the New York Urban Coalition's Education Task Force, the Citizens Committee for Decentralization of the Public Schools, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board. John Powis, speaking for the local board, announced that "we're firing" a group of UFT teachers hostile to the idea of community control. John Simon of the Taconic Foundation, a member of the Citizens Committee, replied that he had no objection to this action, but suggested that the board prefer formal charges and hold hearings before dismissing the teachers. Powis refused: "No—every time you bring charges, you lose." Neither Simon nor any of the others pressed the issue, and the meeting broke up with the matter decided. The local board would dismiss UFT teachers of its own choosing in Ocean Hill–Brownsville.[78] Although the parties present did not realize it, they had given Albert Shanker what he had hoped for—a "termination," rather than a "transfer."

Only the formalities of choosing the teachers to be terminated and drafting the appropriate letters remained. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board met for these purposes on May 7. Some names, like Fred Nauman, were obvious. Others were UFT chapter chairs in other Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. Still others, while not union leaders, had been overheard complaining about the hiring of the demonstration school principals or community control generally in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. A handful appeared to have been chosen almost at random, including a black teacher, whose last name had apparently been confused by the local board with that of a white, and who was later dropped from the termination list after he identified himself. Seven assistant principals, all civil service list hires who had arrived in the district that year over McCoy's protests, completed the list. There were nineteen altogether, twelve teachers and seven supervisors, all white except for the one black teacher included by mistake.[79]

During the meeting, one board member raised the question of hearings and due process, asking whether the terminations would pass legal scrutiny without them. Another suggested that the board's action might hurt the chances of the Lindsay/Bundy/Regents decentralization bill then pending in the State Legislature. Neither

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argument convinced Powis, Oliver, or the local board majority. Clara Marshall, the chair of the board's personnel committee, dismissed the due process point, arguing that "the people in the street considered the [due process] laws written to protect the white monied power structure of this city." White teachers, she charged, were racists and incompetents "who sought protection from the civil service list." As a sop, the board voted to offer the terminated teachers and supervisors the opportunity to meet with it for informational purposes only, without the accoutrements of a formal hearing.[80] The final text of the letter produced by the board informed each recipient that "the Governing Board of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville Demonstration School District has voted to end your employment in the schools of this District," and that "this termination of employment is to take effect immediately." The educators were ordered to report Friday morning to Personnel, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, for reassignment.[81]

The board then notified McCoy that it wished to "terminate the services" of the nineteen teachers and supervisors, and instructed him to deliver copies of the letter to each.[82] McCoy had the letters typed, copied, and signed the next day. They were waiting for Fred Nauman and the others when they reported for work the following morning, Thursday, May 9, 1968.

5

THE STRIKES

Albert Shanker was not surprised by Fred Nauman's telephone call from Ocean Hill–Brownsville that morning. The letter's language satisfied the union president: it contained the essential word "termination." Shanker asked Sandra Feldman to meet with Nauman and the other teachers who had received the letter in the afternoon to plan strategy.[1]

Rhody McCoy was also expecting a telephone call that morning, but of a less friendly variety. He knew that Bernard Donovan would be on the line the minute he found out about the letters, and that the schools superintendent would not be a happy man, to say the least. Sure enough, Donovan called at mid-morning. There were procedures for terminating teachers, explicit procedures, he said, and McCoy had not followed them. Puffing calmly on his pipe, McCoy replied that the local board had not intended to fire the teachers, they just wanted them out of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. Where they went next was not the local board's concern. Donovan asked why McCoy had not requested informally that he transfer the teachers—he would have done so without publicity. McCoy had no answer. Later, he would claim that he had, indeed, written Donovan with the names of teachers he wanted transferred. "Where are his carbons?" snapped the exasperated superintendent, knowing that none existed. Donovan ended his con-

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versation with McCoy by telling him to prefer formal charges against the teachers he wished to be rid of. McCoy was noncommittal, except to reiterate that however outsiders wished to define what the local board had done, the teachers would never work in Ocean Hill–Brownsville again. He calmly bid the superintendent a good day, and hung up.[2]

In the early afternoon, Sandra Feldman met with the teachers at an Ocean Hill-Brownsville luncheonette. She told them that this was an important case, a test case, and that the union wanted to fight the local board on the issue of due process rights for teachers. She asked the teachers if they were willing to fight too. All said yes. In that case, said Feldman, ignore McCoy and the local board and go back to your schools and your jobs.[3]

But Feldman, and Shanker, knew it would not be that simple, and they were right. By May 14, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community and the ATA had had time to organize in support of McCoy and the local board. On that morning, the teachers and administrators who had received letters found a wall of neighborhood residents and black teachers barring their path into JHS 271.[4]

Lindsay had sent police to the school, along with two of his close aides, Sidney Davidoff and Barry Gottehrer, whom he employed as troubleshooters in tense ghetto confrontations. Davidoff and Gottehrer customarily mediated between community residents and the police to defuse racial violence. Lindsay, who had just completed his work on the Kerner Commission, had dedicated his administration to avoiding a major riot in New York City. He walked the streets of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant in shirtsleeves on hot summer evenings at the first hint of trouble, to show residents he cared. He met unapologetically with black spokesmen that his political rivals branded as "militants," men whom his predecessor, Robert Wagner, would not have sat in the same room with. He ordered his police not to wear helmets or carry nightsticks in black neighborhoods, to avoid "the appearance of a conquering army."[5] And he had succeeded; almost alone among major American cities after 1965, New York had not suffered a large-scale civil disturbance.

Gottehrer and Davidoff executed Lindsay's antiviolence strategy. They went wherever the trouble was, and on the morning of May 14, there was clearly trouble at JHS 271. Led by Nauman, the UFT teachers lined up outside the main entrance of the schools, separated by the police from Oliver, Powis, Vann, Campbell, and other local board and ATA members who blocked the doorway. As epithets flew back and forth between the two sides, Davidoff and Gottehrer sized up the situation and conferred with the mayor over the police radio. They decided it was too

dangerous to have the police force the teachers into the school. They told Nauman and the others they would not teach that day.[6]

Shanker was furious. He told a reporter that Lindsay was "a profile in weakness."[7] To Shanker, this incident symbolized the mayor's attitude toward both the Ocean Hill controversy and race relations generally in New York City. Would Lindsay have given in so easily if a white mob had blocked a school doorway to a group of blacks? Shanker thought he knew the answer. Lindsay seemed to think that because of racism in America, he had to say "yes" to blacks even when, as here, they were in the wrong. Well, Albert Shanker did not operate that way. He had heard Marilyn Gittell of the Institute for Community Studies say that in the area of race relations, the literal facts surrounding an event did not matter so much as the larger truths of white racism and black oppression, and that, accordingly, she would base her judgments on those broader, metaphorical "facts."[8] But Shanker did not place much stock in metaphors. His mind went doggedly, stubbornly, straight ahead. He was comfortable with literal facts, those that went from "point A" to "point B." And the solution to the problem at JHS 271, in his mind, was simple and logical. Fred Nauman and his colleagues had a right to teach in the school. The mayor had the obligation to make certain this occurred. And anyone who said otherwise was wrong, even if they happened to be black. Shanker had been at the March on Washington, at Selma, and in Memphis to honor Martin Luther King's memory just a month before, but he would have no trouble doing at Ocean Hill–Brownsville what Lindsay and Gittell apparently could not do. He would tell Rhody McCoy he was wrong. An aide had floated a compromise plan before him that day. Under it, the teachers could come back, but they would be assigned vaguely defined "professional duties," which might or might not include actual teaching. The aide suggested mildly that this might offer a face-saving way out for everyone. Shanker cut him off: "Fuck you. I want those teachers in the classrooms now."[9]

Donovan too wanted the teachers in the classrooms, albeit with less outward passion. His orderly bureaucrat's mind also needed to place what McCoy and the local board had done into a recognizable administrative framework. Accordingly, he wrote McCoy on May 14, demanding that he press formal charges against the teachers and administrators. Initially, McCoy balked, claiming that since he was merely "transferring" them to central Board of Education headquarters, formal charges—and hearings—were not required. In any event, he claimed, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community had the right to choose teachers for its children without interference from outsiders. But Donovan continued to hammer away over the next two weeks, and finally induced McCoy to press charges. This activated

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5. Standoff between supporters of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local school board and UFT teachers at Junior High School 271, May 1968. United Federation of Teachers Collection, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

6. UFT President Albert Shanker speaks to demonstrators supporting Fred Nauman and his union colleagues, May 23, 1968. United Federation of Teachers Collection, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

the requirement for hearings under the Board of Education bylaws and the UFT contract, however one wished to define the letters Nauman and the others had received.

In agreeing to bring charges, McCoy may have been driven more by the rising tide of his anger than anything else. He considered the refusal of the teachers and administrators to obey his order of "transfer" to be insubordinate, and said so. Once he had accused Nauman and his colleagues of insubordination, hearings seemed a logical next step. Another incident, in which McCoy summoned the nineteen teachers and administrators to his office, to have only a handful show up, had also fueled his pique.[10]

In addition, McCoy felt pressure from his allies in the community control movement to bring formal charges. He had assured Fantini, Gittell, and the members of the Citizens Committee for the Decentralization of the Public Schools, among others, that there was plenty of evidence against the teachers and administrators he wished to be rid of. Taking him at his word, they argued that by publicly unmasking incompetent teachers, the hearings would make the case for community control all the more compelling. Finally, Donovan offered McCoy the opportunity to have his charges heard by a black judge, retired Civil Court Judge

Francis E. Rivers. On May 27, still averring that "not one of these teachers will be allowed to teach anywhere in this city—the black community will see to that," McCoy agreed to formal hearings before Judge Rivers, and began drawing up charges.[11]

McCoy's decision to participate in hearings would prove to be a grave tactical misstep. It gave Albert Shanker all the ammunition he needed for his due process arguments in the corning months. If, as McCoy claimed, the local board had sought to transfer, not terminate, Nauman and the others on May 9—and it was, at best, unclear whether the Board of Education by-laws required hearings for transfers—then agreeing to appear before Judge Rivers gave the opposite impression. It bolstered Shanker's assertion that, however McCoy wished to justify himself, his intent was punitive. In the future, whenever supporters of the local board claimed that it had merely sought routine transfers, Shanker would employ the best rejoinder in any debate—his opponent's own words and actions. McCoy had ceded the procedural high ground on the terminations-versus-transfers question, and simplified a potentially complicated issue into a clear, easily digestible one for the public Shanker hoped to reach. Now he would not have to cite arcane provisions from collective bargaining agreements and Board of Education bylaws. He could instead talk about due process protections for employees whose jobs were in jeopardy, something every New Yorker who worked for a living could understand. McCoy had given Shanker what he wanted.

McCoy blundered by agreeing to hearings before Judge Rivers for yet another reason, one that he had not seen fit to share with his supporters in the community control movement. The evidence against most of the teachers and administrators was sketchy. Virtually all of it related to expressions of hostility to the idea of community control rather to actual job performance. Most of the teachers, in fact, had satisfactory employment records. Even William Harris, JHS 271's principal, conceded that Fred Nauman, for example, was a good teacher. McCoy's charges against Nauman alleged merely that he had "expressed opposition" to the community control project and "contributed to the growing hostility" between black and white teachers.[12]

When McCoy's charges did touch upon matters of professional competence, they were frequently exaggerated and inaccurate, and, sometimes, outright fabrications. In one instance, McCoy sought to buttress his charge that a teacher, Paul Satlow, could not control his class, by alleging that his students threw chairs around their classroom. The incident could never have occurred, however, since the chairs in Satlow's room were bolted to the floor. Other allegations of use of profane language and corporal punishment rested on uncorroborated hearsay. Still others, such as "failure to decorate the classroom properly" and "excessive use of

the blackboard," were trivial.[13] All in all, most of the evidence offered by McCoy involved the sorts of infringements on freedom of expression least likely to impress a judge.

Why, then, with so much to lose, did McCoy agree to hearings that he claimed were unnecessary? While Donovan's pressure and the momentum of his own anger played a major role in his turnabout, McCoy may have agreed to this bureaucratic procedure, paradoxically, because of his own antibureaucratic personality. Procedural niceties meant little to him; in this sense, he was the polar opposite of Donovan and Shanker. One of the things that drew McCoy to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment in the first place was its romantic, antirationalist quality. It is possible, then, that McCoy agreed to hearings because of his contempt for them, his feeling that in the final analysis they did not really matter. However Judge Rivers ruled, McCoy believed, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community alone would decide the ultimate fate of the teachers. So McCoy went through with what he considered to be a meaningless charade, but what the UFT viewed as a definitive airing of the issues. After hearing the evidence presented by both sides, Judge Rivers took the case under advisement, promising a decision before the 1968–69 school year opened in September.

Meanwhile, Ocean Hill–Brownsville had become even more tense. After a number of abortive attempts by the teachers to enter JHS 271, Shanker had prevailed upon a reluctant Lindsay to approve the deployment of police escorts for them. Surrounded by a jeering crowd, the teachers and their protectors pushed their way into the school, only to have the local board close all of the Ocean Hill schools in protest.

When they reopened, it was the UFT's turn to act dramatically. Almost all of the approximately 350 union teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville walked out in support of Nauman and his colleagues on May 22.[14] They would remain out for the duration of the school year. McCoy, accusing them of "leaving our children," began searching for nonunion replacements on university campuses.[15] These politically left-leaning, pro–community control "amateurs"—or, as the UFT called them, "scabs"—would man the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools throughout the tumultuous fall of 1968. The local board proclaimed that the 350 union sympathy strikers, like the original group of disputed teachers led by Nauman, would never return: "We decide who will teach our children—no Donovan, no Shanker, no Lindsay, no 500 cops—we decide!" If a confrontation was inevitable, argued Marilyn Gittell, "it might as well come now."[16]

The termination letters had also served to doom the Lindsay/Bundy/Regents decentralization bill pending in the State Legislature in Albany. The legislature, skittish in the wake of the disturbances at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and influenced

by a wave of UFT lobbying, delayed the entire question of decentralization for one year in a bill sponsored by Republican State Senator John Marchi. The so-called Marchi Law postponed a final resolution of the issue until the 1969 legislative session, and in the interim, allowed the central Board of Education to delegate powers of its choosing to local school boards in the city. It also expanded the Board of Education by four new members, to be appointed directly by Lindsay.

The Marchi Law, while an immediate victory for the UFT, which would have accepted almost any alternative to the Regents/Lindsay/Clark bill, presented the union with a number of potential minefields in the longer term. It permitted the central Board of Education to delegate its powers, including personnel powers, giving local boards throughout the city the ability to do what the Ocean Hill–Brownsville board had done to Fred Nauman. The new law also allowed Lindsay to name four new members to the Board of Education, now expanded in number from nine to thirteen. Since, in addition, three of the more conservative board members were scheduled to leave in the early fall, Lindsay would name a majority of the body that would determine the rules for the upcoming 1968–69 school year—the worst of possible outcomes for Shanker and the UFT leadership.

The mayor had reacted to the terminations, in Shanker's view, with a singular lack of moral outrage. Lindsay had deplored the local board's action in ritual language, but made no secret of his true sympathies. The UFT, he said, lacked "understanding of the causes of the deep community frustrations" that led to the letters of May 9.[17] Had the Board of Education given the local board the powers it deserved, Lindsay argued, "this would not have happened."[18] The mayor also put pressure on the recipients of the letters to quietly accept transfers into another district. In late May, the six administrators, who were members of the Council of Supervisory Associations and not the UFT, agreed, along with two nontenured substitute teachers. The ten UFT teachers who remained would press their challenge to McCoy and the local board for the duration of the controversy.

Lindsay's appointees to the newly expanded Board of Education confirmed Shanker's fears. The mayor selected Milton Galamison along with three other strong community control supporters, making this veteran of the community control struggle an "insider" with one stroke of the pen. A few weeks later, Lindsay would name three more Board of Education members, most notably John Doar. Doar, whose Ivy League background and bearing resembled Lindsay's, had played a major role in the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi in 1962 as assistant attorney general for civil rights. In the mid-1960s, he came to New York to direct the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, an early community action experiment in the black neighborhood adjacent to Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Earlier in 1968, Doar had enraged Shanker when, referring to the

7. New York City Board of Education President John Doar. United Federation of Teachers Archives, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

looming crisis in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, he had told an interviewer: "Union concepts of security and seniority were formulated in the period of struggle between company and union. Now the struggle is between the Negroes and the unions. It is our position that a basic conflict exists between labor union concepts and civil rights concepts. Something has to give."[19] Together, Doar and Galamison, who by October would be named, respectively, president and vice president of the Board

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of Education, symbolized the alliance of city elites and poor blacks that Shanker feared most.

But the UFT did not lack for allies of its own. Shanker, while identifying himself with the left wing of the American labor movement, had been carefully building bridges to powerful mainstream leaders for years, including AFL-CIO president George Meany, and, closer to home, Harry Van Arsdale, the president of the influential New York Central Labor Council. The council brought together the heads of virtually all unions in New York City, public and private, but was dominated by the mandarins of the conservative craft and construction unions, notably Van Arsdale himself, a crusty electrician. Shanker, one of the most liberal members of the council's slate of officers, had nurtured alliances with, and performed political favors for, these leaders. He had not, for example, publicly criticized the War in Vietnam, despite his own personal misgivings and the opposition of the majority of his rank and file, because Meany and Van Arsdale supported it. Now, facing the most important battle in his union's history, Shanker prepared to call in his IOUs. In the coming months he would ask for, and receive, crucial political and financial support from the mainstream wing of organized labor in New York City.

The UFT also had markers out to the city's old-line liberal and socialist intellectuals and activists, including A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, whose Randolph Institute, a labor research and lobbying center, survived on UFT financial support. Shanker, Feldman, and other UFT leaders who had come of age in the democratic socialist movement of the 1950s and early 1960s maintained close relations with Michael Harrington, the movement's leader in 1968; there were many instances of institutional cross-pollenization between the UFT and Harrington's League for Industrial Democracy. Shanker was also on friendly terms with public intellectuals identified with various shades of the Left, including old-line socialist Irving Howe, moderate liberal Nathan Glazer, and emerging neoconservative Norman Podhoretz, whose *Commentary* magazine was one of the first of the journals of ideas to champion the UFT's cause after the termination of Nauman and his colleagues.

The most significant source of support for the UFT, however, came from the white population of the city. Shanker attempted to cast the controversy in race-neutral terms whenever he could, as when he reminded the readers of a union flyer that "due process—which protects the worker against arbitrary discharge—has no color and no race." He also sought to present the controversy as a traditional labor dispute between employer and employee, arguing that while "the local board of Ocean Hill–Brownsville doesn't think of itself as 'bosses' against whom its employees need the protection of a union contract, they are . . ."[20] But the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board did not "employ" the teachers—this, after all, was

the union's point in fighting the terminations—and the principals, who resembled "the bosses" much more closely, supported the UFT. Much as Shanker sought to elide the issue, white New Yorkers flocked to the union's side after the May 9 letters less because Fred Nauman was a union man than because his antagonists were primarily black.

This support went well beyond union members, and, for that matter, well beyond the teachers and their families. The developing crisis was changing the social and political landscape of the city, ending the rivalry between Jews and white Catholics that had defined civic life in New York for decades. This rivalry affected mayoral elections, patterns of neighborhood formation, business development, levels of city services, intellectual life, leisure, and even newspaper readership. The rationalist, cosmopolitan "Jewish" ethos, and the more traditionalist "Catholic" ethos described by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the 1963 edition of *Beyond the Melting Pot* found expression in disagreements over state aid to parochial schools and "regular" versus "reform" wars for control of the Democratic party.[21] These, argued Glazer and Moynihan in 1963, were only the most recent manifestations of an ancient civic rivalry that showed few signs of abating.

Yet by the summer of 1968, only five years after the publication of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, the long history of ethnoreligious animosity between Jews and white Catholics in New York was giving way to the shared imperatives of racial identity. The major shift occurred in the city's outer boroughs. Here, living in close proximity, the two groups found many areas of race-related common ground. Both feared the influx of black students into their neighborhoods and schools, as the massive outpouring of support for PAT in the early 1960s proved. Both were disturbed by the rise in welfare costs in the city, which more than doubled during the first Lindsay administration, a result of welfare rights activism and new, more generous city policies.[22] And both feared the city's skyrocketing violent crime rate, which had increased every year since 1960.[23] Measured against these concerns, questions of parochial school funding and Tammany "machine" control of the Democratic party appeared comparatively trivial. In 1966, for the first time in any city observer's recent memory, outer-borough Jews had joined their Catholic neighbors on a major political issue, rejecting Lindsay's proposal for a civilian review board to investigate allegations of police misconduct. Analysts who had expected outer-borough Jews to vote with their more traditional black and white Protestant allies, as well as with their Manhattan coreligionists, now began describing a race-and-crime-based political and social realignment in the city.[24]

By the summer of 1968, middle-income outer-borough Jews and Catholics, riding a tide of racial anger, represented the UFT's core constituency. Their support for the union, as evidenced in polls, was the highest in the city, by a wide mar-

gin.[25] Taken together, Jews and white Catholics made up almost two-thirds of New York's population in 1968.[26] "Jewish" and "Catholic" world views notwithstanding, they would be Albert Shanker's most important weapon in his battle against Rhody McCoy.

The spring semester in Ocean Hill–Brownsville ended with the 350 boycotting UFT teachers still out. McCoy, after reiterating that none of them would ever work in his schools again, stepped up his efforts to replace them. Donovan, oscillating between anger at McCoy over the termination letters and sympathy for his need to staff his schools, agreed to waive formal licensing requirements for the teachers McCoy recruited from college campuses. By summer's end, this process was complete, and some 350 mostly white recruits, short on experience but long on enthusiasm for community control, prepared to begin the fall 1968 semester in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. Donovan, no doubt, could foresee the chaos that would accompany the return of the boycotting UFT teachers to their positions in these same schools. Desperately rushing from brushfire to brushfire, however, the beleaguered superintendent did not have the luxury of advance planning. He would, by necessity, cross that bridge when he came to it.

Two events in late summer made a citywide teachers strike almost inevitable. On August 17, the Board of Education, led by its four new Lindsay appointees, fulfilled its mandate under the Marchi Law by announcing its decentralization plan for the 1968–69 school year. The plan permitted local school boards to hire teachers directly, without reference to Board of Examiners lists, and to transfer teachers out of their districts involuntarily, as long as another district was willing to accept them. Shanker immediately denounced the plan as "a violation of the collective bargaining agreement between the UFT and the Board of Education."[27]

The other major development was more to Shanker's liking. On August 26, Judge Rivers released his decision on the legality of the local board's letters to Fred Nauman and his colleagues. In sweeping language, he ruled that all the teachers were entitled to return to their jobs. Rivers held that McCoy's charges of incompetence were unfounded, and that those relating to criticism of community control were protected by constitutional free speech guarantees. The Fourteenth Amendment's admonition against taking property without due process of law, Rivers concluded, required hearings, when, as here, the right to continued employment was at issue.[28]

Shanker, then, had gotten what he said he wanted. Rivers had ruled that the letters did in fact amount to attempted terminations, and that Nauman and his colleagues had been deprived of due process. But in a sense, the union president may have received more from the decision than he needed. Rivers's decision left

little room for compromise, with the beginning of the 1968–69 school year set for September 9, only two weeks away. Shanker, having won all the cases, would now be unable to reach an accommodation with McCoy on some of the individual teachers without losing face with his membership. Neither could McCoy, whom Rivers had left with no room to maneuver, comply with the ruling without giving the appearance of abject surrender.

The reaction of the members of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board to the Rivers decision was predictable: they ignored it. Their supporters were equally defiant, and urged them to stand fast.[29] As the days ticked down to September 9, each side prepared to do just that. The Rivers decision, legally correct though it may have been, had left both Shanker and McCoy with nowhere to go.

On Friday, September 6, three days before the scheduled opening of the New York public schools, Lindsay and Donovan convened a marathon negotiating session aimed at preventing a citywide teachers strike. The UFT and local board representatives, closeted in separate wings of City Hall, never spoke directly to each other. On Sunday, the local board presented Lindsay with a prepared statement. "We will no longer act as a buffer between this community and the establishment," it read. "This community will control its schools and who teaches in them. We do not want the teachers to return to this district. Since the legal machinery of this sick society is forcing these teachers on us under threat of closing our schools and dissolving our district, the Board of Education should return to our district any of the teachers who wish to return. Our original decision remains as before. We refuse to sell out. If the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools forces them to return to a community which does not want them, so be it."[30]

Lindsay, grasping at straws in search of a settlement, took the language "the Board of Education should return to our district any of the teachers who wish to return" out of context, and announced that the dispute was settled, since the local board "will not seek to prevent" the reinstatement of the UFT teachers. An angry Oliver, speaking for the local board on the steps of City Hall, disputed the mayor, accusing him of "saying something that was in his mind, not in ours." Hearing this, Shanker walked out of City Hall, and drove to midtown, where the union's Delegate Assembly was waiting for him. He asked for, and received, their authorization to conduct an immediate strike vote by the membership at large. By 12,021 to 1,716, they voted to strike all of the city's public schools the next day, Monday, September 9.[31]

Fifty-four thousand of New York's fifty-seven thousand public school teachers went out that day. In a show of sympathy for the teachers that was unprecedented in their sometimes stormy relationship, most of the city's principals closed their

schools. The custodians union also honored the strike, making it difficult to obtain basic services in the small number of schools that did open. UFT-ers picketed the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, which were open and operating with replacement and ATA teachers. Standing in front of JHS 271, Nauman compared his position to that of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi, a veiled slap at John Doar, Lindsay's choice for a seat on the Board of Education, who had opposed the use of police force on the union teacher's behalf.[32]

Shanker, responding to Lindsay's charge that the strike was racially motivated, claimed that it was about due process protections for teachers of all races, a public position he maintained throughout the crisis: "This is a strike to protect black teachers against white racists in white communities and white teachers against black racists in black communities." If a white school board attempted to fire a black teacher, he promised, "then we will be back here again fighting his battle."[33]

Many of the black members of Shanker's own union, however, disagreed with this characterization. Led by Assistant Treasurer Richard Parrish, the UFT's highest-ranking black officer, they used the occasion of the strike to form the UFT Black Caucus, and announced their "unequivocal support" of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board.[34] Parrish's group sought to combine union loyalty—most of its members honored the strike—with support for community control, in a tenuous balance that typified the dilemma of other black unionists, and which threatened to come crashing down at any time.

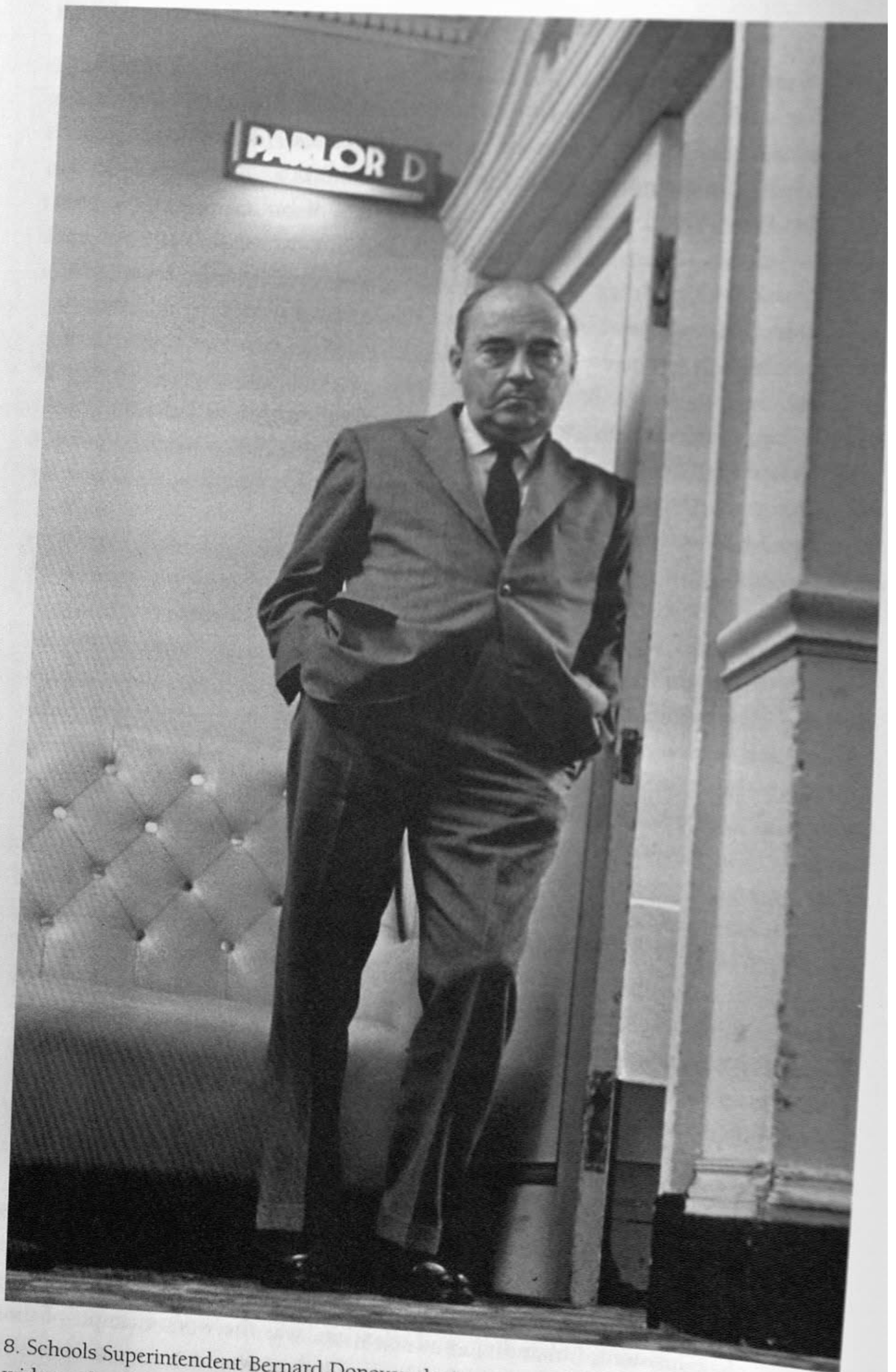
The UFT strike lasted two days before ending in a settlement that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board had no part in negotiating, and which presaged future trouble. Lindsay and Donovan agreed to order all UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville back to their jobs. This included Nauman and his nine test case colleagues, along with the sympathy boycotters from the spring, now reduced from 350 to approximately 200 by attrition. The parties also agreed that all cases of involuntary teacher transfer would be settled by binding impartial arbitration, and not, as the regulations released by the Board of Education on August 17 had provided, by local boards. Before the teachers went back to work, Shanker obtained membership authorization to call a second strike if the settlement terms were violated. Shanker, Lindsay, and Donovan now waited to see what the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board would do.

They did not have to wait long. Early in the morning of Wednesday, September 11, the day the teachers returned to work, Sandra Feldman visited Rhody McCoy's office to discuss—she thought—procedures for giving the UFT-ers classroom assignments in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. She found him on the telephone, cryptically telling a succession of callers that the "arrangements" they had agreed upon the night before were to be put into effect that morning. He re-

fused to explain himself further to Feldman. When the returning UFT teachers reported for work, they were told to go to the auditorium of one of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, IS 55, for an "orientation session." As they arrived, approximately fifty community residents, most from the Brooklyn branch of CORE, surrounded them, brandishing sticks and bandoliers of bullets. While the men cursed the teachers, threw the bullets at them, and threatened to "carry you out in pine boxes," McCoy entered the room, and quietly observed the scene, offering no assistance to the terrified educators. After a few minutes, he told them to report back to their respective schools. When they did so, however, they were refused teaching assignments. At JHS 271, students attacked Nauman and other UFT teachers. Principal Harris herded them into a locked classroom for their safety. Police rescued them later in the afternoon. That night, the UFT's Executive Board, exercising the option given to it by the membership at the conclusion of the first strike, voted to send the teachers out again.[35]

The second strike lasted another two weeks, until late September. Shanker, Lindsay, Donovan, and Doar now agreed that the UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville had the right to reinstatement. They differed, however, over the proper strategies to achieve this objective. Shanker viewed the matter as one of simple contract enforcement. He had settled the first strike on Lindsay's promise that Nauman and the others would return to their jobs. The mayor, he felt, had stood by impotently while the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community wrecked that agreement. Now, he wanted guarantees before the teachers would go back. He wanted Lindsay to force the local board to agree to reinstatement, backed, if necessary, by police stationed in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools themselves.

To Lindsay and Doar, however, this smacked of heavy-handedness, and more than a hint of racism. Both believed that municipal unions had too much power in city life. Lindsay had been at odds with them from the day he took office in January 1966, when he faced a strike by the city's transit workers union. Lindsay had approached that strike as he would all the others that marked his first term: as affronts to the public weal, and, especially, to the city's black community. When he took office, Lindsay promised that the days of cozy, lucrative deals with labor leaders brokered personally by his predecessor, Robert Wagner, were over. But while Lindsay did end the last-minute backroom deals that were a Wagner trademark, his more confrontational style resulted in long municipal worker strikes that ended up costing the city even more money in settlements. Lindsay never forgave the city unions for besting him at the bargaining table. To him, public employee union leaders were little more than narrow-minded, self-interested potentates—and Shanker, insistent, unbending, and relentless, was the worst example of the type. He was the only municipal labor leader Lindsay would not invite into his



8. Schools Superintendent Bernard Donovan during negotiations to end the second city-wide teachers' strike, September 24, 1968. NYT Pictures/*The New York Times.*

personal living quarters at Gracie Mansion, the mayor's official residence, during negotiations.[36]

Shanker, for his part, viewed Lindsay as epitomizing a "type" as well: the sanctimonious upper-crust moralist, with an added whiff of genteel anti-Semitism. The mayor, complained Shanker, "makes himself out to be acting on high ethical standards, while the teachers act only in self-interest." "What you have," Shanker said on another occasion, with Lindsay in mind, "is people on the upper economic level who are willing to make any change that does not affect their own position. And so it is the middle-class interests that are narrow and selfish and the civil service teacher who must be sacrificed. I'm not sure that is a WASP attitude. I think it's only human. But what if you said give twenty percent of Time, Inc. or U.S. Steel to the blacks? Who would be narrow then?"[37] Lindsay and Shanker's communication difficulties during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis, then, were as much culture- and class-based as they were political, and the rushed circumstances of the dispute left neither man the luxury of walking a mile in the other's shoes.

Doar's personal relations with Shanker were less hostile, but the Board of Education president also believed the UFT leader's straight-ahead approach to the problem of returning the UFT teachers to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools was counterproductive. The defining moment of Doar's career had been helping to enroll James Meredith at the University of Mississippi, and he believed the same tactics he employed in the South would work in Brooklyn. He spelled those tactics out in a televised debate with Shanker: "The way to [get compliance] is to continue to move forward and show restraint, show patience, but be firm, move forward, keep persuading, keep negotiating, keep appealing to the best in people. And that is the best way to serve your teachers."[38]

Doar felt he could convince McCoy and the members of the local board to voluntarily accept the return of the teachers through patient negotiation that permitted as much face-saving as possible. Doar, of course, may have been drawing quite different conclusions from the Meredith integration crisis than were warranted by the actual facts of the episode. It had ended, after all, with a display of decisive federal action, as Shanker was quick to point out. But to Doar, who was as devoted as Lindsay to the idea of community control in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, obtaining Fred Nauman's reinstatement at the point of a sword, as Shanker appeared to demand, was self-defeating. It would, essentially, kill the promising Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment for the sake of a labor leader's pride —in Doar's view, a singularly uneven exchange.

This, then, was the problem as the second strike began. Lindsay and Doar's philosophical commitment to community control in Ocean Hill–Brownsville forced them to accept behavior that was difficult to defend, as when Lindsay told

9. Albert Shanker arriving at a pro-strike rally in City Hall Park, September 16, 1968. NYT Pictures/*The New York Times.*

an incredulous crowd at a parents meeting during the second strike that the local board had "more or less" complied with his directive to give the UFT teachers assignments in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, or when Doar defended a fellow Board of Education member who had picketed UFT headquarters with a menorah mounted upon a coffin as a "fine, fine Christian woman."[39] Neither Lindsay nor Doar believed that telling a teacher he would be "carried out in a pine box" constituted acceptable behavior, whatever Shanker may have thought. They were trapped, however, by their allegiance to community control, and this, combined with their suspicion of overweening union power and abhorrence of racism, led them to resist coercive measures against McCoy and the local board.

Shanker was trapped as well. He had made the reinstatement of the disputed teachers his union's defining issue. "You or a member of your family may be employed on jobs protected by union contracts or civil service regulations," he had written in a UFT advertisement. "How would you react if you could be fired without any charges or any procedures to hear your objections? I think you will agree that a union is worth nothing if it fails to defend the rights of its members to their jobs and to a fair procedure for dismissal."[40] But having phrased the issue in this all-or-nothing manner, he was forced to minimize the clear racial implications of his calls for the use of hundreds of police to force white teachers on an unwilling black community.

And McCoy, Oliver, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, in their own way, were also trapped. They had articulated the issue of the return of the UFT teachers in stark terms of racial authenticity, branding black leaders who sought compromise—Samuel Wright, Whitney Young, even the pro–community control Kenneth Clark—as traitors and Uncle Toms. It is doubtful that McCoy, for example, honestly felt that the mere fact of Fred Nauman's presence in JHS 271 would by itself wreck education in that school, or that the practice of terrorizing white teachers offered any long-term solution to the problems of educating black children in New York City. Yet having allowed the question of Nauman's continued presence in Ocean Hill–Brownsville to become a test of "authentic" black identity, McCoy, like the other principals to the controversy, had little choice but to act as he did. As the second citywide teachers' strike began, then, Lindsay, Doar, Shanker, and McCoy were all prisoners of their ideologies, their constituencies, their fears, and the facts they had helped create.

Negotiations to end the second strike soon took on a repetitious quality, with Shanker demanding that Lindsay and Doar force the local board to take back the teachers, and the mayor and the Board of Education president refusing to do so. Finally, after a brief suspension of the local board did nothing to shake its resolve, and some muscle-flexing by the union in the form of fifteen thousand white pro-

UFT demonstrators at City Hall—at least four times the size of the largest Ocean Hill rally—the parties reached an uneasy settlement on September 29. The Board of Education agreed to guarantee classroom teaching assignments for the returning UFT-ers, and to station observers in the schools to report incidents of noncompliance. The union teachers would be paired in teams with the replacement teachers. Doar, continuing to advocate "voluntary compliance," opposed the settlement as too harsh toward the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, but was overruled by Lindsay. On Monday, September 30, the teachers once again went back to work.[41]

The settlement began to unravel almost immediately. Nauman and the other UFT-ers received no teaching assignments on Monday and Tuesday. Donovan shut JHS 271 on Wednesday after community residents, including local board members, invaded the school and engaged in altercations with observers and teachers. On Thursday and Friday, with 271 once again open, Principal Harris, on orders from the local board, assigned most UFT teachers to lunchroom, hall, and bathroom duty, or to empty classrooms. The replacement teachers shunned the UFT-ers. Over that weekend, the local board instructed McCoy to remove all UFT teachers from the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. When McCoy and the principals announced their intention to obey this order, Donovan suspended them, along with the local board. On Wednesday, October 9, he also closed JHS 271 after clashes between UFT and replacement teachers. But that Friday, at Doar's urging, Donovan did an about-face. Claiming that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville principals had now promised him that they would give the UFT-ers teaching assignments, he reinstated them, and ordered 271 reopened for the following Monday.

JHS 271 did, indeed, reopen that day, but without UFT teachers. Instead, they were once again outside the school carrying picket signs. Shanker, enraged at what he considered Donovan's duplicity, had obtained yet another strike vote from his membership over the weekend.[42] For the third time in a month, the city's teachers were on strike.

6

LIKE STRANGERS

The Third Strike and Beyond

The third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike was the most bitter of all. It drew in the rest of the city. The strike divided the city in two important respects. First, by pulling blacks and Jews apart, and bringing Jews and white Catholics together, it reconfigured New York's social landscape in sharp, defining shades of black and white. Second, it brought long-simmering class resentments to the surface, arraying poor blacks and corporate, government, media, and intellectual elites against the teachers and their allies in the city's white middle-class population.

Shanker raised the stakes in this final, five-week drama. He demanded the permanent removal of McCoy and the local board, and the termination of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. This, in turn, brought virtually the city's entire black community in on the side of Ocean Hill–Brownsville—even moderates like the Urban League's Whitney Young, who had previously been skeptical of community control—on grounds of racial loyalty. The city's white middle-class population, traumatized by images of disorder and violence emanating from Ocean Hill–Brownsville, closed ranks behind the UFT, ending decades of ethnic, religious, and political animosity as they did so. Jewish teachers, who had long regarded Irish policemen as goons, now looked to them for protection on picket lines from angry blacks. A reporter for the *Nation* looked on in amazement as these erstwhile

enemies chatted cordially outside one Ocean Hill–Brownsville school, separated from black counterpickets by police sawhorses. The policemen, he observed, were half-smiling, half-smirking, at "the birth of an ally."[1]

As the Jewish-Catholic alliance gestated, relations between blacks and Jews deteriorated. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis brought out the unrealistic expectations each had for the other. Anti-Semitic material circulated in Ocean Hill–Brownsville and in the city's other black neighborhoods during the strike, some of it quoting approvingly from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Vann, Campbell, and other ATA members also issued anti-Jewish statements, which linked the UFT to alleged acts of "mental genocide" against black schoolchildren.[2] The most notorious example of anti-Semitic animus came in the form of an unsigned letter placed in the mailboxes of UFT teachers at JHS 271:

> If African American History and Culture is to be taught to our Black Children it Must be Done By African Americans who Identify With And Who Understand The Problem. It is Impossible For The Middle East Murderers of Colored People to Possibly Bring To This Important Task The Insight, The Concern, The Exposing Of The Truth That is a *Must* If The Years Of Brainwashing And Self-Hatred That Has Been Taught To Our Black Children By Those Bloodsucking Exploiters and Murderers Is To Be Over Come. The Idea Behind This Program Is Beautiful, But When The Money Changers Heard About It, They Took Over, As Is Their Custom In The Black Community, If African American History and Culture Is Important To Our Children To Raise Their Esteem Of Themselves, They Are The Only Persons Who Can Do The Job Are African-American Brothers And Sisters, And Not the So-Called Liberal Jewish Friend. We Know From His Tricky, Deceitful Maneuvers That He is Really Our Enemy and *He* is Responsible For The Serious Educational Retardation Of Our Black Children. We Call On All Concerned Black Teachers, Parents, And Friends to Write To The Board of Education, To the Mayor, To The State Commissioner of Education To Protest The Take Over Of This Crucial Program By People Who Are Unfit By Tradition And By Inclination To Do Even An Adequate Job.

The letter was never linked to any person officially connected to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment, and the district's replacement teachers, approximately 40 percent of whom were themselves Jewish, issued a statement disavowing anti-Semitism. Shanker reprinted five hundred thousand copies of the letter and distributed them throughout the city; their effect on the Jewish community was shattering.[3]

Jewish leaders who expected their black counterparts to issue specific denun-

ciations of such material during the strike were bitterly disappointed when they were rebuffed.[4] But, as Floyd McKissick of CORE explained, "if a black leader is to be responsive to the needs of his people, he cannot be a Jewish leader, he must be a black leader. By definition, this means that the interests he represents will sometimes be in conflict with other groups, sometimes Jewish groups."[5] McCoy was more blunt: "We have more things to be concerned about than making anti-Semitism a priority."[6]

Black leaders, however, were equally unrealistic in their expectations that Jews forego their own interests during the strikes. "The real Jews," wrote one such leader, Preston Wilcox, "are out on the street helping us. The others . . . are rejecting their own heritage."[7] The ATA's Albert Vann argued that Fred Nauman and the other Jewish teachers who received the May 9 letters were obligated as "responsible" Jews to support the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, despite its attempts to remove them from the district's schools.[8]

Behind the unfulfilled expectations and demands of both groups during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, however, lay an uncomfortable truth. New York's outer-borough Jews, after decades of ambivalence, now viewed themselves as "white," with more in common with Irish and Italian Catholics than with blacks. When black writer James Baldwin, a supporter of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, later wrote that "it is cowardly and a betrayal of whatever it means to be a Jew, to act as a white man," he captured the essence of what was driving Jews and blacks apart during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis.[9]

Black intellectuals like Baldwin, Harold Cruse, and Julius Lester had long complained of Jewish ambivalence—an ambivalence of convenience, in their view—toward white identity. These criticisms peaked during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis. Black supporters of the local board responded to allegations of anti-Semitism by arguing that they harbored no special animus toward Jews. They opposed the UFT teachers, they maintained, not because they were Jewish but because they were white, and acting "white." As a writer in *Liberator* put it, "the Jew should not be singled out for any particular righteousness or duplicity. For ultimately, in the American context, he is a white man, no more, no less."[10] During the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis, black resentment at what they considered the unfair privileges of Jewish racial ambivalence—identifying as white or as a besieged minority, depending on the circumstances—finally burst to the surface. By attempting to fire Fred Nauman and his UFT colleagues, McCoy and the local board forced a choice. And, in October and November 1968, the Jews of New York's outer boroughs made their choice. Pushed by a black community that regarded them as "whites, no more, no less," and pulled by the promise of a race-based coali-

tion with white Catholics, they used the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis to complete their journey to unambiguous white identity, the last group of Caucasians in New York to do so.

A poll conducted by Louis Harris & Associates in the immediate aftermath of the strikes confirmed this new configuration. Harris found that Ocean Hill–Brownsville produced "a new coalition of Jews and white Catholics, . . . not simply in the city's politics but in the behavior of individuals in their daily lives. The basis for this coalition was essentially negative: fear and an active aversion to the thrust of the blacks." Harris's data showed the attitudes of the city's black and Jewish-Catholic populations to be reverse-mirror images of each other. Jews favored the UFT in the dispute 63 to 8 percent, white Catholics by 48 to 9 percent. Blacks supported McCoy and the Ocean Hill local board 50 to 14 percent. By 66 to 12 percent, Jews believed that blacks preached anti-Semitism during the dispute; white Catholics agreed by 40 to 20 percent. Blacks, by 40 to 23 percent, dismissed anti-Semitism as an issue. And, in a clear break with past patterns of belief, Jews now saw blacks, not white Catholics, as the main source of anti-Semitism in the city, by a margin of almost 2 to 1. "Seven out of ten Jews, Italians and Irish in New York City," Harris concluded, "have clearly joined common cause." In contrast, Harris observed that "it is almost as if blacks and whites are living in different worlds instead of the same city."[11]

The third UFT strike also turned the city into a cauldron of class anger. The union, Lindsay said disdainfully, lacked "moral authority" in city life. The *Post*'s Jimmy Breslin termed Shanker "the worst public person I have seen in my time in the city of New York," and compared him to Joseph McCarthy. "There are maybe six people you will meet in your life," he added, "who are as good as John Doar."[12] Whitney Young described the union's white middle-class supporters as "affluent peasants." "You're more likely to find prejudice," he argued, "among lower- and middle-class whites who've just made it—who are a generation away from WPA and welfare—people with middle-class incomes but not undergirded by civilized views, by aesthetic, cultural and educational experiences."[13]

Shanker responded by attacking "an alliance of civic groups, the newspapers and the Ford Foundation." "Listen to the radio, read our 'free' press, watch your TV screens," wrote one UFT rank-and-filer. "They are all against us."[14] UFT-ers picketed the offices of the hostile *New York Times*, and began a boycott of Ford products. Shanker demanded an end to the Ford Foundation's tax-exempt status and attacked "people on poverty payrolls" for "using public offices, public funds and daytime hours to engage in strikebreaking activities."[15] UFT pickets taunted the child of a prominent businessman and community control supporter, who had been sent by his father to an Ocean Hill–Brownsville school in a show of solidarity,

with cries of "WASP! WASP!" Expressions of UFT anger sometimes bordered on farce. A female teacher picketed the Ford Foundation offices wearing a girdle outside her dress, carrying a sign reading "This Is My Ford Foundation."[16]

The contrasting events of one day during the third strike, October 15, provide a snapshot of class divisions in the city. On that day, the United Presbyterian and Episcopal churches announced their support for the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board, with the latter accompanying its endorsement with a four-hundred-dollar donation. The Protestant Council of New York City added its backing, attacking the UFT as "intransigent," and stating that "the people in Ocean Hill–Brownsville must be supported by all the people in New York City. This experiment must have a chance. We must return the schools to the people. It's as simple as that." John Robertson, a high-ranking administrator at the New York University School of Education, warned that "we cannot treat the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district as a colony run by a colonial government and demand submission as the price for education. . . . We in the white establishment seem bent on crushing the spirit of the people who can save our schools." The New York branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, which four days earlier had issued a report classifying community control as a protected civil liberty and supporting the local board, defended itself against harsh UFT criticism. And the *New York Times,* in an editorial, called the strike "an illegal, inexcusable play for power by a militant special interest group," that had "destroyed an entire school system."[17]

That same day, the New York Central Labor Council reiterated its "full support" for the UFT; the Council of Supervisory Associations voted to back the third strike, as it had the two others; and the National Maritime Union sent sound trucks through the streets of Manhattan denouncing the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board as strikebreakers. Shanker charged that Lindsay, McGeorge Bundy, and other civic and business leaders were seeking to form "a big-name committee" to force an unfavorable settlement on the union.[18]

And, that night, in what his aide Barry Gottehrer later called "the low point in his mayoralty," Lindsay was booed off the stage of the East Midwood Jewish Center in Brooklyn by a crowd of 1500 as he tried to address the congregation. When the rabbi sought to quiet the crowd by asking "is this the exemplification of the Jewish faith?" the hecklers answered, "Yes! Yes!" Five thousand UFT supporters stood outside the synagogue, chanting "Lindsay must go!" The mayor was forced to leave by way of the fire escape. As he drove away, the crowd surged around his car, pounding on the hood, kicking the doors, and throwing trash at it.[19]

Two days later, at a City Hall rally attended by some forty thousand, virtually all white, UFT supporters—the largest such rally veteran political reporters had ever seen—demonstrators cursed and baited Breslin, Murray Kempton, and others in

10. Albert Shanker and John Doar (left) at a televised debate moderated by WNBC's Gabe Pressman during the third teachers' strike. United Federation of Teachers Collection, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

11. Mayor John Lindsay is heckled by a pro-UFT crowd at the East Midwood Jewish Center in Brooklyn, October 15, 1968. Vincent Riehl, *New York Daily News*.

the hostile media. Kempton had recently written a column accusing union teachers of avarice and indifference to black school children. He attacked Shanker as a "goon" bent on "breaking the Ocean Hill local board and making certain that no other community body raises its head to suggest that a teacher or supervisor do an honest day's work again." He also had described Nauman, back at work after the second strike, as "not teaching, of course, but gathering grievances." Enraged UFT-ers at the rally set upon him, spitting and kicking.[20]

Another striking teacher chose a somewhat more peaceable venue to answer Kempton's charges. Writing in the *Village Voice*, in an article pointedly entitled "Why Teachers Strike: A Lesson for Liberals," UFT-er Patrick Harnett expressed

BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

12. UFT demonstration in City Hall Park, October 17, 1968. United Federation of Teachers Archives, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

the fear of an alliance between "Park Avenue" and the black poor that haunted the teachers during the strike:

> I believe that people like John Lindsay and John Doar, who are products of an upper middle-class milieu, together with intellectuals like Nat Hentoff (of the *Village Voice*) and James Wechsler (of the *Post*) find it genuinely difficult to deal open-mindedly with a teacher group who represent, in the main, a lower middle-class ethos. . . . The sympathies of white liberals and intellectuals are with the truly oppressed in our society—black people. They know that black people, in their struggle to gain the place and dignity of human beings in our society, find that their most immediate and rabid enemy is the lower and lower-middle economic class of whites.
>
> There is a reason for this, however, not always recognized for what it is. It is the white person from this economic group whose life is most immediately and actually affected by the struggle of blacks for social justice. This person's job, his home, his neighborhood—often his physical safety and well-being—are directly affected by the social waves created by an out class struggling desperately to get in. His life is affected in ways which the white liberal minister living on Park Avenue or the white liberal intellectual living in his Connecticut Shangra-La [*sic*], can have no experience.
>
> The upper middle-class person and the intellectual are therefore really outside the conflict of black insurgency—safely removed and able to abstract the situation. What they often abstract is a group of grasping white bigots denying the black person his basic rights for no other reason than they are intrinsically racist. Everyone knows that the less affluent class of whites are the most "bigoted," this thinking goes. Everyone knows that the slave-owning Southern gentleman was less bigoted than the non-slaveowning white.[21]

Harnett's imputation of a link between the average white southerner and the middle-class white teachers of New York, which would have been almost unimaginable only a few years before, during the southern phase of the civil rights movement, now elicited few disavowals from the strikers. Indeed, some white teachers were now talking publicly about voting for George Wallace, whose presidential campaign was then in full swing. Although this support never materialized, it was clear by the third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike that the emergence of an angry, self-conscious white middle class had called into question many of the accepted truths about the structure of class relations in the city.[22]

New York's population could no longer be divided neatly into groups of "bosses" and "workers," as so many in the city's left-wing activist and intellectual communities sought to do. No one who had seen forty thousand vociferous

white UFT supporters in front of City Hall on October 17 could argue seriously that they and the city's poor black population were "natural" allies. And no one who had observed the scene outside the East Midwood Jewish Center on October 15, as Lindsay fled from a debris-throwing white mob, could claim that the city's white middle class was "in the pockets" of "the rich." Ocean Hill–Brownsville clarified the changes in New York's class structure that had taken place over the past quarter-century. It established the city's white middle class as an independent force, with a distinct voice of its own and interests that were different from both the city's poor and Manhattan elites. The crisis crystallized its language of fear. It made white middle-class New Yorkers sufficiently afraid to engage in acts of public violence—acts they had heretofore associated almost exclusively with the black poor—in order to defend their culture, and their New York.

Ocean Hill–Brownsville also symbolized the expansion of the idea of "class" itself in city life beyond conceptions of pure economics. The teachers hated John Lindsay, John Doar, and McGeorge Bundy not so much because they were well-to-do, but because they had influence, knowledge, and access to power. They also sensed, moreover, that Lindsay and the others disdained them as much for their values—their doggedness in pursuit of upward mobility, their materialism, their cultural insularity—as anything else. This sense of siege, of attack on both fronts by those who rejected them for the way they lived and acted—Shanker, after all, was not good enough to step into Lindsay's living room, and his teachers, to Young, were nothing more than "affluent peasants"—turned groups of normally quiescent, respectable, men and women into a cursing, screaming, trash-throwing mob during the third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike.

It is ironic that, in a decade known more for civil disorders in black neighborhoods, a series of white middle-class "civil disorders" not only ended the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy, but changed the political, economic, and social landscape of the city for years to come. But, this is essentially what occurred in October 1968. While these white middle-class upheavals, to be sure, did not produce the loss of life and property damage associated with those in urban ghettos, they were similarly effective as expressions of discontent. Ocean Hill–Brownsville's third strike unleashed white middle-class rage as an ongoing impulse in the political and cultural life of the city. Whether it played out, as here, in raw, public fury, or more quietly and subtly, as in the case of white acquiescence in municipal social service cuts during the 1970s, city leaders ignored this impulse at their peril. As much as Lindsay may have believed in the redistributive potential of community control in the city's public education system, as much as he may have believed that conditions in black neighborhoods were traceable to the racism of the white middle class, and as much as he may have believed that the values of the white

middle class were shallow and vulgar, he could not afford to ignore two-thirds of the city's population.[23] When civil servants with master's degrees and mortgages became angry enough to take to the streets, Lindsay knew not only that the UFT had beaten him at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, but that his brand of racial politics had failed as well.

Lindsay had hoped to use the power of New York's civic and professional elites to secure racial justice for the city's poor black population. He had also hoped to attract enough of its white middle class to make this endeavor successful. Now, with much of that middle class calling, sometimes literally, for his head, he knew that his plan had not worked. Henceforth, white middle class New Yorkers would determine the direction of racial politics in the city, and if Lindsay wished to survive as a politician, he would have to adjust his own, more expansive vision to theirs. By late October, with the third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike in full fury, Lindsay knew that, as difficult as it was to swallow, he would have to give Albert Shanker what he wanted.

Even so, the strike dragged on until mid-November. In late October, Lindsay offered to personally guarantee the safe return of the UFT teachers, to immediately suspend any individual who interfered, and to allow the union to decide if any Ocean Hill–Brownsville school should be closed in the event of violence or harassment. Shanker's distrust of the mayor was so intense at this point that he rejected this offer to virtually cede managerial powers over the Ocean Hill schools. Shanker continued to hold out for the permanent removal of McCoy and the local board, and the termination of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. But Doar, tugging at the mayor's other sleeve, continued to insist that this would constitute a cave-in to the city's unions and a betrayal of the black community. The strike ground on.[24]

During the first week of November, both Shanker and Lindsay began grandstanding, each seeking to exploit their respective strengths. Lindsay proposed submitting the dispute to an arbitration panel composed of prominent citizens. Shanker, wary at this point of any initiative involving "prominent citizens," almost predictably countered with an offer to conduct a binding citywide referendum, which the mayor and Doar, just as predictably, rejected.[25]

Shanker then sought to ratchet up the pressure on the local board by calling for a special session of the State Legislature to address the entire question of community control. This enraged black leaders, such as Whitney Young and Kenneth Clark, who had heretofore been at least on speaking terms with the UFT, because Shanker had promised he would never do this. A special session of the legislature with the schools in chaos could only bode ill for community control, as Shanker

well knew. Moderate black leaders interpreted Shanker's demand as a gratuitous slap at the black community, and moved closer to the McCoy/local board camp. Young, whom many in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community had previously derided as an "Uncle Tom," was especially vociferous. He pulled out of back-channel negotiations aimed at settling the strike, blasting Shanker for fomenting "racial strife." Blacks, Young said, "have a historic, intuitive sense" of bias, and implied that he was now getting that sense from Shanker. Shanker in turn accused Young himself of bias: "It is unfortunate that Mr. Young does not believe that teachers, too, should enjoy civil rights. His failure to denounce racism and anti-Semitism, his failure to denounce violence, will do much to impair his effectiveness as a civil rights leader and will lend encouragement to backlash forces in the white community."[26]

This bitter exchange was the breaking point for the black members of Van Arsdale's Central Labor Council, who had become increasingly restive during the strikes. Three major Central Labor Council unions had a black membership of at least 30 percent—Local 1199 of the Drug and Hospital Workers, District Council 37, AFSCME, and District Council 65 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. When the third strike began, the leaders of these three unions had sponsored a resolution in the Central Labor Council supporting both due process rights for teachers and the idea of community control. Shanker had used his influence with Van Arsdale to prevent the resolution from even reaching a vote. By November 13, New York's black unionists had had enough. Fifty of them staged a sit-in at Van Arsdale's office demanding he end, or at least temper, his support of the UFT, for whom he had raised over a hundred thousand dollars during the strikes. Leslie Roberts of District Council 65 threatened that "if we have to split the labor movement and go our own way, we will," sentiments echoed by Thomas Mitchell, vice president of Local 1199: "Those of us who are black and Puerto Rican will set up our own labor movement." Another black unionist told a reporter he considered himself a black man first and a union man second.[27]

Conspicuously absent from the sit-in were the only prominent black labor leaders to support the UFT during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute, democratic socialists Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph. Both were clearly influenced by their institutional ties to the union, which, through sponsorship of the Randolph Institute, essentially employed them, but there was more to it than that. Randolph and Rustin had dedicated their careers to the cause of interracial social democracy. Randolph, the longtime head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a founder of the influential Negro American Labor Council, and Rustin, the inspiration behind the 1963 March on Washington, believed that civil

rights and labor rights were mutually reinforcing principles. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy, however, put those beliefs to a severe test, and forced the two leaders to make a choice.

Randolph and Rustin chose the UFT. In September, they placed an advertisement in the three major New York City newspapers, which they induced twenty black labor officials to co-sign. The advertisement stated that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute was essentially about class, not race, and that its "real issue" was "the right of every worker to be judged on his merits, not his color." "If due process is not won in Ocean Hill–Brownsville," it argued, "what could prevent white community groups in Queens from firing black teachers? Injustice must not be camouflaged by appeals to racial solidarity."[28]

But by the third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike, the pull of racial solidarity had become too great for other black labor leaders to resist. On October 16, fifty-four leading black unionists, including most of the signers of the Randolph/Rustin advertisement, wrote to Lindsay in support of community control.[29] Randolph and Rustin, argued one such leader, were asking the impossible by demanding that "the black union member support the teachers against his black brothers in the ghetto [and] repudiate the black man's right to demand equality of opportunity if it conflicts with the alleged right of a predominantly white group. This position is unrealistic. It matters not whether we see it [that] way. The black people of New York see it that way."[30] The UFT, charged another, was "burning whatever remaining bridges it has to the Negro community." And by the time black Central Labor Council members sat in at Van Arsdale's office in November, Randolph and Rustin stood virtually alone, written off as race traitors by their erstwhile colleagues. "People like A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin do not speak for us," said Leslie Roberts. "[They have] sold out. Whatever you have done in the past, you have destroyed."[31]

Randolph and Rustin never regained their stature among black unionists, or in New York's black community as a whole. The contradictions between class and race that had lurked beneath their vision of social democracy throughout their careers burst to the surface at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and they were no more successful in resolving them than were the black unionists who sat in at Van Arsdale's office. Their defeat symbolized the failure, for both men, of a lifelong struggle to unite the races under the banner of economic democracy. New York, as Ocean Hill–Brownsville had shown so dramatically, was not so much a city of bosses and workers as it was one of blacks and whites.

By November, the third strike had, in the words of one observer, "become nihilist." White UFT supporters screamed "nigger scab" at a black teacher in Ocean

13. Albert Shanker with UFT supporter Bayard Rustin. United Federation of Teachers Collection, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

Hill–Brownsville, "nigger lover" at a white replacement teacher, and called a local board ally a "cannibal."[32] The word "genocide" now appeared in the public statements of local board members on almost a daily basis, in a clear attempt to inflame Jewish sensibilities. Shanker's words of choice were "extremists" and "mobs." Even Whitney Young, whose relationship with Shanker had been poisoned by the latter's call for a special session of the State Legislature, appeared to lose control, asking rhetorically, "it's a pity, isn't it, that there are only two thousand blacks you can get killed on Ocean Hill."[33]

With the entire city ready to snap, State Education Commissioner James Allen realized he had to enter negotiations directly and somehow end the strike. In early November, he began laying the groundwork for a settlement. Shanker distrusted Allen, a longtime community control supporter who had sponsored the demonstration school principal idea that so vexed the UFT membership. But he believed that Allen was more likely to use the power at his disposal to ensure that Ocean Hill–Brownsville complied with the settlement terms that would be agreed on than Lindsay, who, in his view, had reneged twice before. And he preferred Allen's pragmatism to what he saw as Doar's sanctimony. Allen, as Shanker knew, harbored national ambitions—he later served as United States Commissioner of Education in the Nixon administration—and the strikes were damaging his reputation. Shanker also knew that while most of his constituency still backed the strike, his ranks were beginning to thin: 15 to 20 percent of the teachers were now crossing picket lines.[34]

Allen began sketching out a plan that would give the UFT most, but not all, of what it wanted. Nauman and all other UFT teachers would return to their schools, with written teaching assignments distributed in advance. To enforce this, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district would be removed from the jurisdiction of the Board of Education and placed under the control of an Allen-appointed state trustee. And to protect UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville and around the rest of the city from reprisals, a three-man supervisory committee would be empowered to conduct hearings and mete out punishment, including suspensions, dismissals, and school closings. Shanker would have veto power over the composition of this committee. Echoing the agreement that ended the first strike in September, involuntary transfers of teachers would be made contractual grievance matters, with impartial hearings, appeals, and other due process protections, although Allen had to twist Doar's arm to get him to agree to this clause.

Allen, however, insisted that McCoy be allowed to continue as unit administrator of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental project, provided he obeyed the orders of the state trustee. And, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control

experiment itself would continue, albeit with the local board under suspension. Once the district returned to normal operations, the trustee would step aside and reinstate the board.[35]

As the parties haggled, the negotiations received a push from an unexpected source. The demonstration principal issue had hung over the controversy ever since a state court had held them illegal in March 1968. The principals had retained their jobs while the Board of Education appealed this ruling, standard procedure in such circumstances. Donovan had suspended them in October for refusing to give Nauman and the UFT-ers teaching assignments, then reinstated them, thereby provoking the third strike. Now Shanker insisted that the demonstration principals be removed from the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, not only because he did not trust them to give Nauman and the others teaching assignments when they returned, but because he considered their appointments a violation of the merit principle. Allen and Doar dug in their heels, and negotiations appeared to be breaking down over the issue, when, on November 14, the Appellate Division, New York's intermediate appeals court, surprised everyone by releasing its decision: the demonstration principal appointments were indeed illegal, and the lower court ruling invalidating them was affirmed.[36]

The Board of Education vowed once again to appeal, this time to the state's highest court, the New York Court of Appeals, which normally would have allowed the principals to retain their positions in the interim. But now Shanker dug in his heels. Appeal or no appeal, he wanted them out, or the entire settlement was off. After thirty-seven lost school days, millions in municipal financial losses, and with both blacks and whites in the streets, Lindsay could take no more. He asked Allen to give in on the demonstration principal issue and settle. At 10 A.M. on Sunday, November 17, Shanker, Lindsay, Allen, Doar, and Donovan shook hands warily across a Gracie Mansion conference table.[37]

Oliver and Powis, representing the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board as nonparticipating "observers," had walked out hours before, when the parameters of the settlement became clear to them. "Hey, baby, now we burn down Brooklyn," Powis had barked as he left.[38] Despite his customary apocalyptic rhetoric, he had reason to be angry. Throughout the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute, Shanker, Lindsay, Donovan, and the other negotiators had talked about, and sometimes around, the local board, but they had rarely talked to them as equals. When the mayor or superintendent made promises to Shanker, they made them on behalf of the local board, not in conjunction with them. In the end, even the city officials who supported the idea of community control in theory, like Lindsay, hesitated to allow the local board an independent voice at the bargaining table. While Lindsay was legally correct in this position—in late November, a federal judge, ruling on

14. Albert Shanker and John Lindsay, flanked by Council of Supervisory Associations President Walter Degnan and State Education Commissioner James Allen (holding document), announcing the settlement of the third and final teachers' strike on the steps of Gracie Mansion, November 17, 1968. W. Sauro/*The New York Times*.

the local board's challenge to its suspension, held that the board was merely "an unofficial body of citizen advisers"—this may have been beside the point under the circumstances.[39] For all their talk of "self-determination," Lindsay, Allen, and Doar never really tried community control in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. If Powis and Oliver felt as "sold out" by their ostensible friends as by enemies like Shanker, they had much justification.

Much of the UFT membership also felt sold out, albeit for different reasons. When Shanker took the proposed settlement to the union's Delegate Assembly for ratification on the evening of Sunday, November 17, he was shouted off the stage by furious rejectionists. Shanker had overplayed his hand with his membership by demanding the permanent removal of McCoy and the local board, and the dismantling of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental district. When he did not deliver, the delegates shouted him down with cries of "sellout." Shanker, usually

15. Fred Nauman enters Junior High School 271 under police escort, November 22, 1968. James Garrett, *New York Daily News*.

the master of his membership, could not even bring the proposed settlement to a vote, and stalked off the stage, muttering that his own delegates resembled the "mobs" and "extremists" he had so recently encountered in the city's black community.[40]

Shanker was able to have the settlement ratified only because the UFT constitution permitted the full membership to override an action, or in this case, a nonaction, of the Delegate Assembly. Given an extra day to allow cooler heads to prevail, the rank-and-file members, the vast majority of whom had supported the strikes, and who were facing the prospect of more payless paydays, ratified the agreement by 17,658 to 2,738. At a mass UFT "victory rally" in Madison Square Garden, dissidents were in short supply. Shanker and the other top union officials received loud ovations from the assembled teachers, who booed ritualistically each time the names "Lindsay," "Bundy," "Doar," and "McCoy" were mentioned.

16. African-American Teachers Association President Albert Vann (left) and Ocean Hill–Brownsville local school board chairman C. Herbert Oliver after their arrest for illegally entering Junior High School 271, November 26, 1968. Charles D. Hogan/*The New York Times.*

On Tuesday, November 19, Nauman, his Ocean Hill–Brownsville colleagues, and 57,000 other UFT teachers returned to work.[41]

This time, the settlement held up. There were, to be sure, some rough moments. The suspended Oliver and Vann sought to enter JHS 271 and were arrested, setting off a series of disturbances that prompted the state trustee to close the school temporarily. A pupil at 271 accused Nauman of striking him, forcing the teacher's temporary reassignment to Board of Education headquarters. But on the whole, at least the formalities of the agreement remained in place. McCoy, after some initial difficulties, gradually settled back into his unit administrator's job.

In January 1969, the demonstration principals got their jobs back, when the State Court of Appeals reversed both lower courts and upheld the validity of the position. The court, however, sharply limited the scope of its ruling, allowing the category only as an experiment and refusing to exempt it from the requirement of written examinations in the future.[42] It ruled, in essence, that the demonstration principal idea violated the State Constitution and the merit principle, but that the disputed principals could return in the general interests of racial peace at Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Shanker had lost on the immediate issue, but, once again, received most of what he wanted in the end.

Shanker also moved to settle scores with UFT members who had opposed him during the strike. He took particular aim at those with connections to the Communist-influenced Teachers Union (TU), a longtime rival of the UFT's socialist antecedent, the Teachers Guild. The Teachers Union, which had disbanded in 1964, had long championed the study of black history, producing a series of annual "Negro History Week" supplements in its newspaper.[43] TU alumni were active on the UFT's Committee on African-American History, and had chafed at Shanker's attempts to control its work.

In 1969, the committee produced a volume entitled "Lesson Plans on African-American History," containing material almost guaranteed to raise Shanker's hackles. TU veterans on the committee, who had opposed the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, inserted in "Lesson Plans" a passage endorsing a report issued by the New York Civil Liberties Union which was highly critical of the UFT. Shanker had the passage removed, and deleted the names of the authors of "Lesson Plans" from the final version of the volume, to punish the TU-affiliated members of the committee for their apostasy on Ocean Hill–Brownsville. He also removed material that he considered too incendiary, including two chapters on Malcolm X; the Kerner Commission's conclusion that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal"; and Frederick Douglass's assertion that "power concedes nothing without demand."[44]

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy had been the UFT's version of civil war, and by 1969, it was clear that Shanker had emerged victorious in his struggle, having branded opponents of the strikes, like the former TU members, as disloyal. His leadership position within the union was virtually impregnable. Thanks in large part to Ocean Hill–Brownsville, Shanker and his allies would dominate the UFT for the next three decades.

In March 1969, the state trustee recommended that Allen reinstate the local board, which he did, on Oliver's promise to obey the orders of the central Board of Education. By this time, most of the white UFT teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, having made their point, had left the district. Nauman himself would depart at the end of the school year. Even the replacement teachers who had come to the district to work for community control were leaving, many disillusioned by the hostility of the ATA-ers. Vann and Campbell, stung by the local board's defeat, had retreated behind a wall of racial separatism. It was as if they could not abide the sight of any white teachers, even sympathetic ones. Less than half of the original cohort of replacement teachers remained in Ocean Hill–Brownsville after the 1968–69 school year.[45]

By early 1969, Ocean Hill–Brownsville began to lose its daily spot on the front pages of the city's newspapers, as the district quieted down. But it had left a sour, angry taste in the mouth of the city as a whole, one that did not easily fade. It was as if, in the words of one observer, blacks and whites in the city were "talking a different language."[46] Polls taken after the strikes showed blacks and whites inhabiting different interpretive universes on the issue of whether racism even existed in New York, with a large percentage of whites denying its presence altogether.[47]

The strikes, moreover, had clearly affected Jews more than any other white group. Jews now were the most likely to report that they feared black-inspired racial violence in the city, as well as black crime. Blacks and white Protestants had replaced white Catholics as the groups Jews feared most.[48] Campbell certainly did not help matters when he read a poem on alternative radio station WBAI in December 1968 dedicated to Albert Shanker, the first two lines of which were "Hey, Jew boy, with that yarmulke on your head / You pale faced Jew boy—I wish you were dead."[49]And Thomas Hoving, the blueblood director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also raised Jewish hackles with his handling of the furor over the gallery's January 1969 "Harlem On My Mind" exhibit, a multimedia display of work by Harlem residents. The exhibit catalogue contained statements such as "Our contempt for the Jew makes us feel more completely American in sharing a national prejudice . . . ," and "behind every hurdle that the Afro-American has yet to jump stands the Jew who has already cleared it." In the face of Jewish protests, Hoving at first defended this language as "anything but racist." The author's statements, he averred, "are true. So be it," before Jewish community pressure forced him to withdraw the catalogue from circulation. The exhibit, ironically, had also been criticized and picketed by black leaders, who contended it portrayed a "white man's view of Harlem."[50]

Two reports on bias during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy, one commissioned by Lindsay, the other by the Anti-Defamation League, illustrated the perceptual differences between white Protestants and Jews in the aftermath of the crisis. Lindsay's report cited an "appalling amount of racial prejudice" on both sides during the strikes without emphasizing specific instances of anti-Jewish words or behavior by members of the black community. The Anti-Defamation League, in contrast, found a "crisis level" of anti-Semitism in the city, originating in the black community, but abetted by Lindsay, Doar, Bundy, and other members of the "Establishment," who looked the other way in the interests of preserving community control.[51]

New York's Jewish community exacted retribution against blacks and city elites for their behavior during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis, shifting the city's po-

litical landscape rightward. In the wake of Ocean Hill–Brownsville, Jewish support for social welfare programs in New York dropped sharply, to a level close to that of traditionally fiscally conservative white Catholics. A post–Ocean Hill poll showed Jews supporting welfare cuts, in fact, even more enthusiastically than white Catholics, by a margin of 45 to 35 percent.[52] And in the 1969 mayoral race, Jews, who had helped elect John Lindsay four years earlier despite the fact that he was opposed by a Jew, turned to two conservative Italian-American candidates; they received 55 percent of the total Jewish vote. A chastened Lindsay won only because of the divisions among his opponents. His second term featured fewer of the bold pronouncements and initiatives on racial matters that had characterized his first. In the post–Ocean Hill–Brownsville city, the road to electoral success ran through the Jewish and Catholic neighborhoods of Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island.

Ocean Hill–Brownsville had helped reconfigure the political landscape of the city. While historian Godfrey Hodgson's pronouncement that outer-borough Jewish defections to white Catholics "tipped the balance from liberal to conservative predominance" in New York may have overstated the case, there was little doubt that the city was a more conservative place after Ocean Hill–Brownsville than before.[53] A diminished liberal coalition of blacks, white Protestants, and Manhattan Jews simply did not possess the electoral muscle to enact Lindsay's ambitious racial agenda: a civilian review board for police, increased levels of spending for social services, and community control of education in black neighborhoods. In this sense, Ocean Hill–Brownsville helped make what was possible in 1965, impossible by 1969.

But Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and the realignment of outer-borough Jews it produced, changed the city in a more elemental way. Jews had traditionally served as mediators between black and white New Yorks, a cosmopolitan influence that helped blunt the force of more primal racial passions. Ocean Hill–Brownsville, in the words of sociologist Jonathan Rieder, turned outer-borough Jews from "optimistic universalism" toward "nervous provincialism," aligning them with most of the rest of the city's white population.[54] By marking the Jewish passage from racial ambivalence to unmistakable white identity, Ocean Hill–Brownsville helped reify the "white" and "black" New Yorks that had gestated over the past three decades.

If it had changed Jewish attitudes, Ocean Hill–Brownsville merely confirmed and made public those held by other groups, both black and white, in the city. In this sense, John Lindsay and Albert Shanker—and Rhody McCoy and Fred Nauman, as well—had severely damaged New York's pluralist experiment, bequeathing a city so simmering with racial resentments that religion and ethnicity,

which once seemed to matter so much, paled before the starker realities of black and white. Of course, race had always "mattered" in New York, and the city's veneer of cosmopolitanism and pluralism had often had a self-delusional quality to it. But myths have their uses, and New Yorkers enjoyed at least the outward accoutrements of municipal civility between the end of World War II and the mid-1960s. Ocean Hill–Brownsville's legacy was a New York more realistic about itself, to be sure, but also more openly unapologetic about its prejudices. The crisis may have taught black and white New Yorkers more about each other than they needed to know. Ocean Hill–Brownsville, destroyer of illusions, stripped away a facade of civility to reveal a city of strangers.

Albert Shanker had received most of what he wanted from the strike settlement, but not everything. Above all, he had not been able to destroy the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment in its entirety. In the spring of 1969, he moved to complete this unfinished business. The Marchi Law, which had delayed a final resolution of the school decentralization issue in the State Legislature for one year, expired in May. The permanent law to be passed by the legislature would determine the fate of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district. As he had the previous year, Shanker began calling in political chips. Thanks to the fallout from the strikes, he found allies among traumatized outer-borough Democratic legislators, as well as upstate Republicans. Shanker knew that some type of decentralization bill was certain to pass, but if he could limit its scope, the UFT might still retain its co-managerial prerogatives in the New York public school system.

In many respects, the battle over the permanent decentralization law in the State Legislature reprised that of Ocean Hill–Brownsville, with a similar cast of characters. Lindsay, Doar, Allen, Galamison, and Clark, along with the Ford Foundation, the New York Urban Coalition, and the major civil rights organizations, lined up behind a proposed bill that permitted local boards to hire and promote teachers, set New York State certification as the basic qualification for educational personnel, and ended the examination system in its entirety. In these and most other respects, the so-called "Regents" bill echoed the long-standing demands of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board.

This battle, however, would not be anywhere near as long or as bruising as the one at Ocean Hill–Brownsville the previous fall. Except for the relatively small number of black and Puerto Rican legislators, who were joined by an equally small group of "New Politics"-oriented white Democrats from Manhattan, the Regents bill simply did not have the votes. The upstate Republicans who had supported community control for New York City a year earlier had not done so out of any

great concern for civil rights; they merely wished to permit schools in the city the same local prerogatives that their own schools enjoyed. But the dislocations of Ocean Hill–Brownsville had aroused their conservative instincts, and the Republicans were now in a mood to punish community control supporters for their "misbehavior." The Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy had also cemented Shanker's relationship with outer-borough Democratic legislators whose constituents were also in a vengeful mood. As one such legislator put it, "my people were so frightened by the character of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy, I'd be a fool to vote for a liberal bill." Governor Nelson Rockefeller, a Republican keenly interested in expanding his party's base among the state's unions, also came in on the side of the UFT, and applied the coup de grace to the Regents bill.

On April 30, the State legislature passed a final decentralization law that would govern the New York City public school system until 1996. The new law had Shanker's fingerprints all over it. It was, emphatically, a decentralization and not a community control law. Shanker had argued strenuously during the lobbying process that "objective standards must not be lowered," and he got his wish. The Board of Examiners, long-standing target for community control supporters, remained in place, along with its array of competitive examinations governing hiring and advancement. The "rule of three" would continue to govern teacher selection, although Shanker did agree to a compromise under which school districts ranking in the city's bottom 45 percent in reading could choose any applicant who passed the National Teacher Examination. Principals would also continue to be chosen by examination, although no longer in strict rank order, and existing principal eligibility lists—which were composed almost entirely of whites—would be used until exhausted. A new seven-member Board of Education, with one member to be chosen by each of the five borough presidents, and the other two by the mayor, would replace Doar, Galamison, and the rest of the Lindsay-appointed Board. Local school boards would have the power to select district superintendents and principals, choose textbooks from a Board of Education–approved list, and allocate monies independently up to a maximum amount of $250,000. In a crucial victory for Shanker and the UFT, all involuntary interdistrict transfers by local boards would be prohibited. And finally, the city would be divided into approximately thirty school districts, each with a minimum student enrollment of twenty thousand. This meant that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district, with far fewer students, would be folded into a new and larger District 23.[55]

In this backhanded way, the Decentralization Law of 1969 announced the demise of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment. The law set elections for local board positions in each of the new districts, including District 23, for March 1970. A little over three months later, on July 1, 1970, when the

elected local boards officially took office, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district would pass out of existence. It had taken Albert Shanker two years, but he had, yet again, gotten what he wanted.

But McCoy, Oliver, Powis and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board did not plan to go quietly. The new law gave them almost a year until the new local board elections, ample time to organize a counterattack. They made a crucial tactical mistake, however, that destroyed any chance they had to retain influence in the new district. McCoy and Oliver called for a boycott of the local board elections, arguing that the "community" had already chosen a local board—theirs. In addition to the questionable logic of their claim—since their local board had been chosen in August 1967, and had never stood for reelection—they overlooked Samuel Wright's preparations to wrest power from them.

Wright, the local assemblyman, was already a member of the Oliver/Powis local board. He had, in fact, been a member when it drafted the termination letters to Fred Nauman and his colleagues. Wright had dissented from that decision, as he had from many others taken by that body. But he did not proceed out of any great affection for the UFT, due process protections, or, indeed, any ideological predilections whatsoever. Wright was an old-fashioned political spoilsman, who rewarded his friends and punished his enemies according to what they could do for, or to, him. He had long coveted the jobs and influence that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district offered, and now that the new decentralization law had created a perpetual source of patronage, he was ready to make his move. He put together a slate of candidates for election to the new District 23 local board, and began campaigning.

Oliver and McCoy, however, continued to follow the imperatives of ideology. To them, the upcoming local board elections were just another battle in the long war for community control of education. Once again, as they saw it, the white power structure, this time through the new decentralization law, sought to deprive blacks of control over their schools. And they regarded Wright, who had maintained civil relations with Shanker even during the darkest days of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, as just another white man's lackey. A boycott of the local board election, then, appeared to be in keeping with everything Oliver and McCoy had fought for at Ocean Hill–Brownsville.

But they miscalculated badly. The historical momentum that had driven the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment had dissipated. The strikes were over, Nauman and most of the striking UFT teachers were gone, and the district was struggling with the more mundane, day-to-day demands of running its schools. The election results would be binding no matter how few people voted; the Board of

Education would not allow the old local board to remain in power simply because of a low turnout in District 23. McCoy and Oliver's boycott plan, then, was a last-ditch, romantic gesture, a defiant tilt at an institutional windmill. But their moment had passed. McCoy and Oliver may have preserved their ideological purity, but at a high price. As far as the electoral process was concerned, they were now outsiders looking in.

Two weeks before the scheduled local board election, McCoy sent a letter to Ocean Hill–Brownsville parents touting the gains the district's children had made in reading under his regime, a sign of how desperate he had become. McCoy had refused to administer standardized reading tests during his tenure, viewing them as culturally biased, but he now informed parents that "64 percent" of Ocean Hill–Brownsville third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students had made "substantial progress," a term he did not define.[56] "If you vote in the school board elections," he told the parents, "you will [l]egalize your child's failure . . . [and] be forced to follow all of the rules and regulations that have caused such massive and severe failure for our children." "When the city-state know you are dissatisfied," he predicted, "they will have to come to you."[57] In another appeal to parents, Oliver raised the specter of Albert Shanker, who he referred to as "Mr. Charlie," returning to run the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. "Don't be fooled or used by the UFT," he warned.[58]

But on election day, March 19, 1970, Wright's slate, running virtually unopposed, won every seat on the new District 23 local board. McCoy's boycott had kept turnout down to a city-low 5 percent, as compared to 13 to 22 percent elsewhere, but as he should have anticipated, the results stood nonetheless. On July 1, 1970, police removed Oliver, Powis, and their supporters, who had refused to leave the district offices, and Wright's new board moved in. A few weeks later, a state court judge dismissed Oliver's legal challenge to the election results—he had claimed "we are operating to do what the community wants"—in a scathing decision. The judge noted pointedly that the low turnout Oliver complained of approximated the number of voters who had elected him in 1967. McCoy and Oliver, the court observed, acted as if "the perpetuation of their own rule is the only answer to the needs of the community."[59] Dismissing their challenge, he declared the Wright slate the legally constituted local board of the new District 23. His pen stroke on the decision officially ended the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment.

Across the rest of the city, Shanker had moved to co-opt the new school decentralization process. He put together slates of UFT-affiliated candidates to run in each of the districts, and elected enough of them to protect the union's co-

managerial status in the public schools, a status it retains today. Shanker also thrived professionally under the new decentralization structure. Already wildly popular in his own local union in the aftermath of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, he ran successfully for the presidency of the UFT's national parent union, the American Federation of Teachers, in 1974. He held both AFT and UFT presidencies simultaneously until 1982, when he bequeathed the latter office to his protégé, Sandra Feldman. At his death in early 1997, Shanker was the most powerful and influential education union official in America. Until the day he died, he never expressed the slightest regret over any of his actions during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy. If he had it to do over again, he always maintained, he would not have changed a thing.

The years after Ocean Hill–Brownsville were less kind to many of the dispute's other major principals. Bernard Donovan, his reputation badly damaged, retired at the first available opportunity, in September 1969. In what may have been an unconscious comment on his thirty-year career in public education, he became an adviser to the New York City parochial school system. John Doar and Milton Galamison lost their positions as president and vice president, respectively, of the Board of Education, when that body was dissolved by the 1969 Decentralization Law. James Allen, realizing his ambition, became U.S. commissioner of education under Richard Nixon. After a brief and relatively unsuccessful tenure, he died in a 1971 plane crash. McGeorge Bundy fought unsuccessfully against UFT-inspired federal legislation that restricted the scope of permissible foundation-sponsored political activities and narrowed foundation tax exemptions. He cut off Ford Foundation funding to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental district after the strikes ended, and instructed his aide Mario Fantini to steer clear of such controversial projects—or at least those that would bring him into conflict with Albert Shanker—in the future. After leaving the foundation, he taught in the History Department of New York University.

And John Lindsay, reelected mayor in 1969 only because he had the good fortune to run against two conservative Italian-American candidates who split the vote against him, found himself at a political dead end. Permanently tainted by Ocean Hill–Brownsville among the city's white middle-class population, blocked from higher statewide office by his rival fellow Republican Nelson Rockefeller, and out of step philosophically with the national Republican leadership, he became a Democrat in 1971, and sought his new party's presidential nomination the following year. His campaign was a disaster, highlighted by his almost comically wrongheaded decision to concentrate his energies on the Florida primary. Walking the sands of Miami Beach in search of votes from former New Yorkers, he instead encountered angry expatriates who eagerly told trailing reporters that they had left

the city because of Lindsay. The press was treated to the sight of the candidate retreating from his own "constituency," some shouting "Lindsay go home!" It was, one reporter mused, just like New York.[60]

By 1971, both Fred Nauman and Rhody McCoy had left Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Both had been taken care of, so to speak, by their own. Shanker rewarded Nauman for his perseverance during the strikes with the ultimate "perk" for any New York City public school teacher: a ticket out of the classroom. He gave Nauman a succession of UFT administrative positions, including one with the union's Albany office. McCoy also left the New York public school system. After Samuel Wright's takeover of the new District 23, Fantini helped McCoy matriculate at the University of Massachusetts, where he earned a doctorate in education. He wrote his dissertation, not surprisingly, on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy. Later, after a fellowship at Harvard, he worked for the U.S. Department of Education. McCoy, like Shanker, never expressed regret about any of his decisions during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute.

After assuming control of the new District 23 in July 1970, Samuel Wright quickly removed the last vestiges of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental district. One by one, he rid himself of the principals appointed during the McCoy-Oliver regime, replacing them with political allies. Wright, in fact, viewed the entire school district as little more than an employment agency for his friends. He made sure that seats on the local board, principalships, administrative jobs, and contracting opportunities went to those who helped him. Eventually, Wright overstepped himself, was convicted on bribery charges, and sentenced to prison.

Wright's reign was an example, albeit a rather extreme one, of the corruption and influence-peddling that characterized most of the city's school districts under the 1969 Decentralization Law. During the twenty-seven years the law was in effect, the city's schools were wracked by scandals involving contract kickbacks, personal use of school funds by local board personnel, and the buying and selling of principalships. Turnouts for school board elections were low, usually below 10 percent of eligible voters, permitting organized cliques to monopolize power. The rules governing entry into the public education system, however, had changed by the mid-1970s to favor black applicants for teaching and principalship positions. Inspired by the challenges to the examination system that developed out of the events at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, a group of minority educators, backed by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, filed suit in federal court in 1970 to have the New York City principals examination and eligibility list invalidated as racially discriminatory under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fourteenth Amendment. The next year, in *Chance v. Board of Examiners*, a United States District Court judge

enjoined the use of the examination and list, and ordered that new procedures be instituted that would result in more equitable hiring practices. The requirements for principal selection were revised to permit greater community involvement and the use of on-the-job performance tests; by the mid-1970s, 15 percent of the supervisors in the city's schools were members of minority groups, five times as many as had been in the system ten years earlier.[61] And in 1976, a black teacher filed an administrative class action complaint with the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare against the Board of Education, seeking to invalidate their teacher selection policies. The complaint resulted in an investigation of the Board that eventually expanded to include its student tracking procedures. Faced with an Office of Civil Rights finding that its teacher testing system was racially discriminatory, the Board agreed to a memorandum of understanding in 1977 that required it to take steps to significantly increase the percentage of minority teachers in the New York public schools. A subsequent agreement substantially reduced the use of student tracking procedures in the school system. By 1980, the percentage of minority teachers in the city's elementary and junior high schools was over 20 percent, more than double what it had been at the time of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes.[62]

In addition, the New York public education system began to change its overall philosophy. By the 1990s, much of the educational program instituted in Ocean Hill–Brownsville during the UFT strikes had become the official policy of the Board of Education. Multicultural curricula, affective learning techniques, noncompetitive instructional environments, community-based educational systems—all trace their roots to the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment. The New York City public education market changed to accommodate and reward attributes and behaviors offered by the black community as currency for upward advancement. Yet both the increased percentage of minorities in teaching and administrative positions and the changed pedagogical atmosphere in the city school system turned out to be pyrrhic victories of sorts for both black educators and black schoolchildren in New York. Despite the absorption by the system as a whole of much of the philosophical underpinnings of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment, achievement levels for black public school students, as measured both by standardized test scores and by classroom performance, declined throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The "new" rules of public education in New York may have produced more jobs for black educators, but none but the most naively optimistic of them would argue that the city schools are educating black children better today than they did before Ocean Hill–Brownsville.

In 1996, fed up with the corruption, lack of accountability, and academic failure associated with local control, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and

Governor George Pataki engineered legislation to replace the 1969 decentralization law. Ignoring the protests of both community leaders, as well as John Powis, who was still living and organizing in Brooklyn, the two Republicans engineered the passage of a new law that effectively recentralized the New York City public school system. It gave the Schools Chancellor the power to remove local board members, veto principal and district superintendent selections, and reject local budgets. In extreme cases, it permitted him to take over a school district and run it himself. Today, over thirty years after Ocean Hill–Brownsville, the administrative structure of the New York public school system resembles something Bernard Donovan might have recognized in 1966.

Rhody McCoy did not produce anything resembling a legacy of academic achievement in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. He had refused to administer standardized reading tests, but when they were given by Wright's newly installed board in the spring of 1971, the results showed the community's students moving backwards. Reading scores for seventh- and eighth-graders at JHS 271 had decreased during McCoy's three-year tenure. The typical JHS 271 student now read three years behind the national average, and only 5.5 percent were at grade level. 271 was the second lowest–ranked junior high school in Brooklyn. All Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, in fact, had higher average reading levels in 1967, before the community control experiment began, than in 1971.[63]

The community of Ocean Hill–Brownsville was dying as well. Every measure of social and economic distress had worsened by the early 1970s, including unemployment, crime, welfare assistance, out-of-wedlock births, and drug addiction. None of the antagonists at Ocean Hill–Brownsville—John Lindsay, Albert Shanker, McGeorge Bundy, or, for that matter, Rhody McCoy or Fred Nauman—had left the neighborhood in better condition than he found it. By the mid-1970s, black residents of Ocean Hill–Brownsville and white New Yorkers lived in different social, economic, and political universes. It was, however, culture, and specifically, the cultures of black and white New Yorks, that lay at the heart of these profound differences. During the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute, the African-American Teachers Association was the main vehicle through which the black community's critique of the values of white New York was articulated. The ATA's bitter cultural war with the UFT would eventually spill out into the everyday dialogue of the city as a whole. It ensured that beneath the surface of every municipal policy issue—from mayoral elections, to labor negotiations, to budget decisions—would lie racialized, value-laden arguments between black and white New Yorkers. The ATA and UFT, then, fought for more than control of the public school system before, during, and after the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis: they fought for control of the city's culture.

7

CULTURE WAR

By the time of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis, the African-American Teachers Association, fueled by the ideas of black critics of New York's dominant civic and educational culture, had emerged as a serious philosophical rival to the UFT. Modeled on the already existing Jewish, Catholic, and Italian-American Teachers Associations, it was founded in March 1964 as the Negro Teachers Association, by UFT teachers intending to maintain dual affiliations. The ATA drew its initial impetus from black teacher dissatisfaction with the tepid reaction of the UFT leadership to the February 3, 1964, public school integration boycott led by Milton Galamison and Bayard Rustin.[1] To black educators, Albert Shanker's unwillingness to officially endorse the boycott, and his suggestion that sympathetic teachers take February 3 as a sick or personal day, epitomized the union hierarchy's equivocal response to the public school integration issue as a whole.[2] While the core of the resistance to the integration of the New York City public schools came from white parents, black teachers believed that neither the central Board of Education nor the UFT were the innocent bystanders they claimed to be. The Board had underpublicized open enrollment and free choice transfer plans designed to move black pupils into schools in white communities, and balked at expanding a pairing program, in which children in adjoining black and white neighborhoods attended the same

school, beyond a few experimental areas. The UFT, for its part, strongly supported the idea of public school integration in word, but not always in deed, as its cautious response to the Galamison/Rustin boycott illustrated. Many black teachers believed the UFT leadership used the bureaucratic unwieldiness of the Board of Education as a convenient excuse for its own inaction while preserving its rhetorical pro-integration credentials.[3]

The members of the ATA were also motivated by a belief that the public education system was working for whites but failing blacks in New York City. By 1964, black educators could see the impact of the city's postindustrial economy on a black community already plagued by unemployment, crime, drug addiction, and a rising tide of out-of-wedlock births. The situation was especially bleak in the area of education. The number of pupils in the New York public schools had doubled since 1950, largely as a result of in-migration from the South.[4] Overcrowded, poorly maintained, and often staffed by teachers who had "washed out" elsewhere in the system, ghetto schools stood in marked contrast to those in white areas. Blacks constituted approximately 30 percent of the city's public school students by the mid-1960s, but earned only 2.3 percent of the academic diplomas. In Harlem, 85 percent of sixth-graders were two or more years behind grade level in reading. At Ocean Hill–Brownsville's JHS 271, 75 percent of the students were classified as not possessing the "minimum competence" to learn effectively, twice the city average.[5] Almost perversely, the more time black pupils spent in the city's public education system, the more they appeared to regress. The IQs of Harlem elementary school pupils, according to the HARYOU-sponsored study, *Youth in the Ghetto,* actually declined between the third and sixth grades.[6]

ATA members were also angered by what they perceived as the matter-of-fact acceptance by white teachers of black underachievement in the public school system. White teachers, they believed, were convinced that the culture of poverty doomed black students, and responded to this self-fulfilling prophecy with indifference and benign neglect.[7] Such teachers demanded too little of their students, on the misguided assumption they were performing acts of kindness. The ATA wanted no part of such beneficence. Its members were enraged by reports from black parents of white teachers' condescension toward their children.[8]

Black teachers joined the ATA, in large measure, because a generation of black schoolchildren seemed to be disappearing before their eyes, condemned under the tracking system to the netherworld of the "slow" classes, and, in the words of the education reformer Jonathan Kozol, "death at an early age." To ATA teachers, the mind-set of the white teacher held the key to the fate of this generation: whites had to look beyond the facts of poverty and racial difference, and believe in their students. "One can be black, reside and attend school in an enforced ghetto and

still be successfully educated to the limits of his potentialities," argued one member in 1966. And even school integration, such as it existed in New York City in the mid-1960s, was not by itself enough, since the tracking system effected, in the view of another ATA member, a new form of "segregation" in integrated schools.[9] The ATA thus represented an attempt by black teachers to head off a developing educational catastrophe among black pupils in the New York City public schools.

Black teachers also had a pragmatic reason for joining the ATA. At mid-decade, despite the fact that the city's public school system was approximately 30 percent black and less than 50 percent white, blacks constituted only 8 percent of the teaching staff and 2.8 percent of the supervisors.[10] The contrast with most other major American cities, in which the proportion of black teachers averaged approximately 30 percent, was not lost on ATA members.[11] The ATA viewed these statistics as prima facie proof that the Board of Examiners recruitment system, and the city's public education market generally, discriminated against nonwhites.

There were, to be sure, extenuating circumstances. New York's public schools had undergone an extremely rapid shift in racial balance over the previous decade; as recently as 1957, whites had represented 68 percent of the student population, and blacks only 18 percent.[12] Some degree of lag in the pace of adjustment to this abrupt change was to be expected. And, of course, the promotional examinations administered by the Board of Examiners were race-neutral on their face. Nonetheless, ATA members viewed the system as exclusionary in effect. Particularly galling was the fact that much larger percentages of "acting" than "permanently licensed" supervisors in the public schools were black.[13] The first category was composed of those who had not passed the requisite promotional examination for a particular post, but who were temporarily serving until a representative from the latter category was available. Thus, blacks who were actually performing in supervisory positions throughout the city were routinely pushed aside by examination-qualified, and invariably white, applicants. Black teachers believed that New York's public education market was not the level playing field it purported to be. It was not, of course, discriminatory on an individual basis: no black applicant was ever rejected simply because he was black. But the preponderance of whites—and, specifically, Jews—in the public schools represented, for many ATA members, a more subtle, institutionally based form of racism.

There were, again, reasons for the large number of Jews in the city educational system. Excluded from many areas of the private sector, and attracted by the objective nature of the examinations and the job security offered by civil service employment, Jews had gravitated toward the New York City public schools since the 1930s. As was customary under such circumstances, and like other ethnic groups in other city agencies (notably the Irish in the Police Department and Italians in

sanitation), Jews had established an informal network that operated to draw coreligionists into the system, providing information on vacancies, job contacts, and test preparation assistance, among other advantages.[14] By the 1960s, in New York, it was almost an instinctive reaction for a Jewish college graduate, especially a graduate of the city colleges, to consider teaching in the city's schools as a career option. Black teachers were reminded almost on a daily basis that this network did not exist in their communities. The ATA, in part, represented an attempt to replicate the institutional arrangements that had served Jews so well in the public education market over the past thirty years. The organization was at once an indictment of the racism of institutions—in its focus on numbers and outcomes—and an effort to achieve group power by constructing similar institutions. As such, the ATA both challenged and sought to imitate the Jewish community in New York City.

The ATA at mid-decade, then, was a combination of trade association and advocacy group. It was critical of white teachers and the Board of Examiners promotional system, to be sure, but its demands were still couched in the traditional language of interest group politics. It sought, essentially, more jobs for black teachers and administrators, and more sympathetic treatment of black schoolchildren. It still supported school integration. Its members still belonged to the UFT. It offered no critique of or challenge to the prevailing culture of the educational market or the city at large. It was, indeed, still the "Negro Teachers Association."[15] All this would change in 1966 and 1967, as two new leaders, Leslie Campbell and Albert Vann, introduced an ideological focus, and transformed the ATA into an organization that would challenge the UFT, the city's public education market, and white New York generally, on first principles.

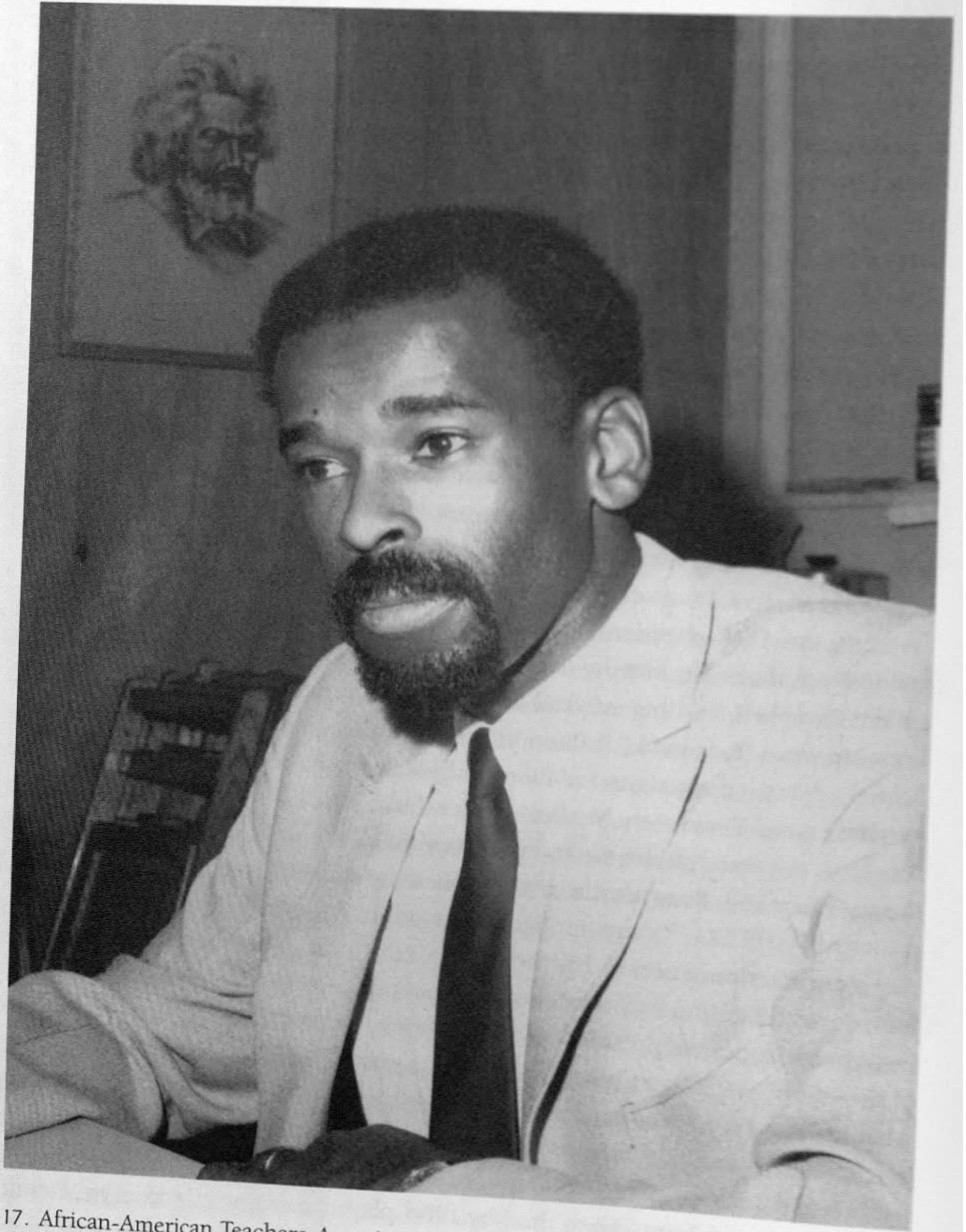
Together, these two leaders epitomized both the demographics and the politics of Brooklyn's black community. Campbell, of West Indian descent, and the son of a local Communist party official, had grown up in New York as a "red diaper baby" during the 1950s. After graduating from Long Island University in 1964, he began his teaching career in the Social Studies Department at Junior High School 35 in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. As a young teacher in the Brooklyn public schools, Campbell sought to combine Marxism-Leninism with black nationalism.[16] He infused his lessons with material on black history and the class struggle, becoming a political mentor to—or, in the opinion of his superiors, an indoctrinator of—his students.[17] In February 1968, after he defied the orders of Schools Superintendent Bernard Donovan and took one of his classes to a memorial service for Malcolm X in Harlem, he was transferred to Ocean Hill–

Brownsville's JHS 271—a move Donovan inexplicably viewed as punishment and Campbell saw as providential.

In keeping with his Marxist-Leninist orientation, Campbell portrayed himself as a vanguard leader of the black masses. He also viewed the city's lower-class black community as the embodiment of authentic racial identity. His contempt for the black middle class—including his fellow teachers, whom he viewed as estranged from their roots—was palpable and constant. Black teachers, he wrote in 1966, were "too secure and comfortable" and "obsessed with the amassing of wealth and aesthetic comfort." They held back "the struggle of the black masses. What the black masses demand cannot be granted because the Negro professional refuses to associate himself with the man on the street."[18] "The black teacher," he argued the next year, "must begin to identify with and speak the language of the black community. He cannot come to the community like a 'stranger bearing gifts.'"[19] Campbell would spend the rest of the decade transforming the ATA, a group composed of middle-income black professionals, into an aggressive defender of the city's lower-class black population and its culture.

Vann, the ATA's president, had come to Brooklyn from South Carolina as a youngster in the 1950s, during the great postwar migration. Vann was not a Marxist like Campbell, and his cultural nationalism proceeded along more traditional lines. He was a "race man," influenced by the philosophy of Marcus Garvey. Vann helped organize campaigns for increased black hiring levels at Brooklyn's Sealtest Dairies and Downstate Medical Center during the early and mid-1960s, as he sought to rise through the ranks in the local public schools. By 1967, he was also in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district, where he was a frustrated acting assistant principal at JHS 271.[20] Vann applied the lessons of his earlier struggles against employment discrimination to his own career, concluding that the city's school system, notwithstanding its pretensions to standards of individual merit, was a racist institution. Under his presidency, the ATA spoke out forcefully against the impact of the "merit system" on black teachers as a group. Results, not intentions, were what mattered to Vann. Numbers, he believed, did not lie, and the low number of black teachers and administrators in the New York public school system proved it discriminatory.

Campbell and Vann, then, had by 1966 played a major role in crystallizing the most important elements of what would become the ATA's public posture: a defense of the black lower class; a rejection of the culture of the middle class, both black and white; an adherence to group identity; and an embrace of the idea of institutional racism. Over the next two years, the ATA would engage in two emotional battles with the UFT—one involving the hiring of a black principal at



17. African-American Teachers Association President Albert Vann. Ed Giorandino, *New York Daily News.*

Harlem's Intermediate School 201, the other over the behavior of black schoolchildren—and begin to articulate an alternative vision of the culture of New York's public education market. It would seek to define a set of "black" values that could be used as a form of alternative currency in that market and in the city at large, and initiate a struggle with the UFT over these values that would continue through the events of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis and the succeeding decades.

The first of these battles took place in September 1966 over whether the newly-opened IS 201 in Harlem would have a black or white principal. Donovan's choice of Stanley Lisser, a white, as the school's first principal outraged the ATA.[21] Its members were prominent among the demonstrators protesting the Lisser appointment at the beginning of the 1966–67 academic year.[22] Lisser soon bowed to this pressure and tearfully asked the Board of Education to transfer him to another school.

Superintendent Donovan, a careful man with the lifelong bureaucrat's instinct for self-preservation and deal-cutting, sought to finesse the question of the racial identity of the next principal. He promised the anti-Lisser protesters that, while he could not guarantee explicitly that the principal of IS 201 would be black, he would grant community representatives veto power over the selection as long as the objections were "sound and serious."[23] Now it was the equally outraged UFT's turn to protest. It denounced the "sound and serious" veto as an affront to its most cherished principle: color-blind, individual merit. "'Sound and serious' objections," Albert Shanker argued, "could never be made on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, national origin, or mere unpopularity."[24]

The union leadership's demand for the reinstatement of Lisser was joined by the teachers at IS 201. Virtually the entire staff, blacks as well as whites, boycotted the school and picketed the headquarters of the Board of Education on Lisser's behalf, carrying signs that read "All Of Us Or None Of Us," and "Should Principals Be Ousted Because They Are Not Black?" "The only reason I volunteered for this school was because I wanted to serve with Dr. Lisser," one black teacher told a reporter. Back inside IS 201, a black acting assistant principal refused Donovan's offer to succeed Lisser, explaining that she objected to being selected on the basis of "color, not competence."[25]

This protest carried the day, and Lisser was returned as principal of IS 201.[26] The UFT leadership celebrated the triumph of what it considered bedrock principles. "The very integrity of the school system was at stake," wrote Shanker, "for if we had not prevailed, we would enter an era where only a Jewish principal could be appointed in schools located in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, Italians in Italian neighborhoods, Irish in Irish. It was because the integrity of our schools was at stake that I demanded Dr. Donovan refuse to accept Dr. Lisser's request

for transfer." The union singled out the black teachers at 201, who had supporte Lisser, and the black assistant principal who had turned down a chance to succee him, for special praise.[27]

The ATA, however, saw things differently. Campbell ridiculed the "color-blind black teachers and administrators who had supported Lisser, and viewed the controversy as another example of the black middle class betraying the black poor During the dispute, he wrote, "the establishment turned to its secret weapon, the Negro professional. The Negro teachers at 201 helped transform the victory into defeat. How can we dismiss the white principal when the Negro teachers refuse to allow his dismissal? How can we replace the white supervisor when Negro candidates readily admit they are not qualified? These are the echoed words of the white press and the Board of Education." The IS 201 incident, he argued, was one of many "in which the Establishment used the schism between the black masses and the Negro professional to wipe out significant gains. The new weapon will be used frequently." "How is it possible," he asked in frustration, "to wed black masses and black professionals into a oneness?"[28]

Vann also blamed the UFT and the white educational establishment for denying blacks at IS 201 and elsewhere "the supervisory positions they so justly deserve." At the same time, he complained that black teachers, and black professionals in general, "have had to fit a certain pattern," and that, due to the constraints of white society, "many of us find it difficult to be ourselves."[29] This ambivalence—anger at restricted opportunities within a white-dominated educational market, coupled with criticism of the legitimacy of the values undergirding that market—would characterize the ATA's relationship with the UFT in the years to come.

The second, and even more serious, battle between the ATA and UFT centered on the latter's attempt to address the issue of black pupil misbehavior in the public schools, and the related question of the validity of black lower-class culture in general. By 1967, school violence had become a hot-button issue among the UFT rank and file. In 1963, sixty teachers had been assaulted by students in the city's public schools. By 1966, this number had grown to 213, and would rise even higher in 1967.[30] Reports of acts of student vandalism, including window breakage, fires, and unlawful entry, also shot upward in 1966.[31] Early in 1967, at JHS 98 in the Bronx, seventy-nine white teachers staged a wildcat strike—which the black teachers at the school refused to join—over the issue of student behavior, returning only when school administrators promised them the right to unilaterally remove misbehaving pupils from their classrooms after a certain number of serious incidents.[32] A group of white teachers also walked out at PS 284 in Brooklyn over the same issue.[33]

In February 1967, under strong pressure from the union rank and file, the UFT

Executive Board passed a resolution demanding that a "disruptive child" clause, under which a teacher could expel a "seriously misbehaving" student from his class and send him to a "special service" school, be included in the collective bargaining agreement which was to be negotiated with the Board of Education for the following September. This demand to "place in the hands of the classroom teacher a major share of power of decision regarding action to be taken in the case of a disruptive child," was interpreted by Board of Education negotiators as a union attempt to assert managerial control over the operation of the school system, and thus outside the scope of collective bargaining.[34]

The reaction of black teachers, and of the ATA in particular, to the proposed disruptive child clause was sharp and emotional. To them, the clause represented more than an attempt to ensure order in the classroom: it was a white assault on the culture of poor black children and the black lower-class community. In an acid exchange with Shanker, Vann charged that the clause would "only provide teachers with police powers rather than solve any of the problems." The "so-called 'disruptive child,'" he wrote, was a function of "miseducation and ineffectiveness of education for black youth, coupled with the frustrations of being black in white America." "Improvements of education within the black community," he told Shanker, ". . . would eliminate the so-called 'disruptive child.'"[35] When Shanker sought to convince Vann that the disruptive child clause would allow "improved education for the overwhelming majority of our students whose classrooms are disturbed by students who need special treatment," Vann accused Shanker of being "obviously concerned with material matters and . . . unconcerned with matters of moral and social justice."[36]

During the spring of 1967, the ATA offered its own proposal for addressing the issue of the "disruptive child"—a term the organization invariably placed in quotation marks. It advised teachers to practice "complete openness," employ "judicious praise," "accept the student's challenge to authority," and take "an objective view of a child's obscenities." Administratively, its plan required a misbehaving child to be evaluated by a school supervisor who was "indigenous" to the community and approved by the child's parent. The supervisor would use a "guideline-oriented approach" with the student, with numerous hearings, and a special guidance class within the school itself as a last resort. There were to be no expulsions, and no "dumping" into special service schools. "The ATA submits," the proposal concluded, "that 90 percent of students will respond to effective classroom management administered by dedicated teachers able to place in perspective . . . social, emotional and pedagogical problems."[37]

The UFT rejected the ATA plan out of hand. White UFT rank-and-filers ridiculed its premises. "Young jackanapes and emotionally unstrung hoodlums,"

wrote one, "will tax the patience of the most saintly and ingenious teacher. A
energetic youngster [from] a family where authority is respected has no proble
conforming with acceptable behavior patterns. If the Afro-American teachers fin
it discriminatory to remove problem children from the room, their objectivity
greatly suspect." The ATA, she argued, "oversimplified" when it assumed "that a
a good teacher has to do is put a gentle hand on the shoulder of the obstreperou
child and lead him to his seat. Anyone who has tried this procedure on such
child has rued the day."[38]

Neither the UFT, the ATA, nor the Board of Education retreated from their respective positions during the summer of 1967. In September, the union struck the city's schools over the disruptive child clause, as well as over funding for its More Effective Schools program and salary issues.[39] ATA members refused to join the strike, and worked to keep their schools open; all schools in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district, thanks in large part to the efforts of Vann, operated throughout the strike. The UFT, aware of the racial volatility of the disruptive child issue, sought to portray the strike in race-neutral terms. A union flyer, for example, did not mention the disruptive child clause specifically, but instead referred euphemistically to "special facilities" for such children.[40]

Longtime UFT ally Martin Luther King Jr. sent Shanker a telegram voicing his concern over the handling of the disruptive child issue. "To avoid misunderstanding and confusion," he wrote, "I urge you to pay special attention to clarifying the issue of the disruptive child. The utmost care is necessary to avoid oversimplified illusory solutions."[41] Shanker's deliberately evasive reply to King was an indication of the union president's determination to downplay the racial implications of the disruptive child contract demand: "We share your concern that proper facilities be provided for those children who cannot now be educated in regular classes and whose disruptive behavior makes it impossible for others as well."[42] Despite Shanker's indirections, however, there was no way to finesse the racial issue. To the black community in New York, the disruptive child clause was about their children, and their culture. A Harlem parent at IS 201, which also remained open during the strike, captured the prevailing sentiment: "We don't have disruptive children. We do have a lot of disruptive teachers, however."[43]

After a two-week strike, a combination of resistance in the black community and Board of Education insistence on its "right to manage" the school system—not to mention a generous wage offer—had worn the UFT down on the disruptive child issue. The union agreed to a compromise whereby a teacher, after lodging formal complaints with his principal and district superintendent, could request an outside committee, on which UFT representatives would be in a minority, to discipline a misbehaving pupil. Since in practice matters rarely would proceed be-

yond the level of the principal, the UFT had lost this round. But this was little consolation to the embittered ATA members, most of whom left the UFT over the issue.[44] It would continue to divide the two organizations—now independent of each other—in the future, as increasingly angry rhetoric served to illustrate the magnitude of the perceptual gap between them.

By early 1968, Vann would go so far as to argue that an assault by black intruders on two white principals and a teacher at JHS 117 in Brooklyn was merely a reaction to "a kick in the community's rear [by] the UFT," and the realization "that [blacks] have no control over forces that directly and adversely affect their lives and the lives of their children." "The initial precipitating act," he wrote, "is quite inconsequential as we view the total atmosphere in our schools. It is a wonder that black and Puerto Rican people have kept their emotions restrained for so long. . . . One day a principal and two teachers [*sic*] get punched around a bit. Daily, hundreds of children are psychologically and academically whipped. Daily, our community dies a little."[45]

Support for Vann's position came from the ATA's allies among grassroots black community organizations and New Left–influenced intellectuals and educators. Brooklyn CORE defended the so-called "disruptive child" as a "high-spirited nonconformist" with a "highly creative imagination," who was "not willing to accept mediocre education." Cursing and even physical confrontations, CORE argued, "are commonplace occurrences in ghetto communities. . . expected and understood," albeit "shocking to most teachers whose frame of reference is totally alien to those in neighborhoods in which they work."[46] Joseph Laspro of the New Coalition, a pro–community control dissident group within the UFT, echoed Vann's sentiments, arguing that "teachers overlook the open and subtle forms of violence perpetrated on minority groups in education. The violence done to [minorities] by failing to provide them with the fundamental skills . . . far outweighs the individual acts of students whose occasional outbursts reflect the horrible frustrations they have been made to suffer every day of their lives." In the future, he predicted, "the great majority of our student population will become so-called 'disruptive children.' Perhaps then, a more appropriate epithet for these youth will be 'revolutionaries.'"[47]

In contrast, an angry UFT leadership complained, in an advertisement placed in the *New York Amsterdam News*, that "teachers are beaten in classrooms by self-styled prophets of educational reform." It vowed that it "would not permit our teachers to be used as scapegoats for the failures of a system for which we are not responsible."[48] White rank-and-file teachers also expressed their frustration. The minutes of a March 1968 meeting between Ralph Rogers, the black principal of PS 144 in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district, and three white UFT teachers, provide

an illustration of the philosophical and perceptual gap between black and white educators on the subject of the disruptive child:

> MISS FLISS [TEACHER]: The whole atmosphere is very unschool-like. My children are afraid to go out of their rooms because they will be beaten up.
> MISS GOLDSTEIN [TEACHER]: There is a tendency for the older disruptive children to be the troublemakers.
> MR. ROGERS [PRINCIPAL]: This is a community-controlled school. The policy is no suspension. We do not want children out in the streets.
> GOLDSTEIN: Teachers are exhausted with discipline problems. Children see others striking teachers . . . and nothing is done. . . .
> FLISS: A child came into my room, shouted and hit children. When I tried to take him by his arm he practically tore my arm off. The child is still in the school. He later slammed another child with a window pole. This is not an isolated case. It happens every day. . . .
> MR. RUBINSTEIN [TEACHER]: . . . . You cannot teach when a child comes over to a teacher and uses foul language continually. Something has to be done. . . .
> ROGERS: You have to devise your own method of dealing with discipline. Most of the time it is the teacher and not the child. . . ."[49]

The issue of the disruptive child, then, had created serious fault lines between the UFT and ATA, and between black and white educators in New York City, by early 1968. Most white teachers viewed the disruptive child phenomenon as a result of the culture of poverty's impact on young black lives. To the ATA, however, it was merely an excuse for an attack on the culture and values of poor blacks in the city. The disruptive child issue catalyzed a debate between the UFT and ATA over related questions which were already points of contention between black and white intellectuals and activists in New York, and which, by the late 1960s, had filtered into the dialogue of the city as a whole. These broader questions—relating to the legitimacy of lower-class black culture, and the applicability of "middle-class" values to the city's black population—pitted the ATA against the UFT in a cultural war characterized by clashing assumptions, perceptions, and proposed solutions. It would spill out beyond the specific events of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis and outlive them, dividing black and white teachers, and to a large extent, black and white New Yorkers, for years to come.

Even as its argument with the UFT over the disruptive child was developing, the ATA was moving to place the values of both the black lower class and the white middle class in New York at the center of its critique of the culture of the school system and the city. Vann attempted to align his organization with the black poor,

seeking to overcome what he considered the stigma of the group's middle-class economic status. "In spite of our material gains and educational achievements and adopted attitudes," he wrote in November 1966, "[poor black children] really are our brothers and sisters." The following month he asked his colleagues: "Are we suffering from a middle-class syndrome, fear, self-hate or plain apathy? We can reach no higher esteem, nor be any better, than our downtrodden brother unless we help him, and by doing so, help ourselves."[50]

ATA members rarely missed an opportunity to articulate their vision of what an "authentic" black culture was—and was not. They appropriated what they perceived to be the values and attributes of the lower-class black community—mutualism, cooperation, and egalitarianism—and sought to use them as a new form of currency in the city's public education market. ATA members counterposed these "authentic" black values to those they associated with whites. To them, "white" values—individualism, competition, materialism, elitism—constituted those of the "anti-community," a dog-eat-dog world with overtones of Social Darwinism and Calvinism. ATA members believed that the UFT epitomized this cold, acquisitive white culture. During the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute and beyond, the ATA would move from a defense of the culture of the black community, as in the disruptive child controversy, to an attack on the values of the middle class in the educational system and city, values which the organization sought to link exclusively to whites. In this endeavor, it received assistance from an ironic source—white teachers themselves, who, with rare exceptions, seemed as willing as ATA members to define middle-class values as "white."

In December 1967, ATA member John Hatchett, a probationary teacher at a Harlem elementary school, published an article in the organization's newsletter, the *African-American Teachers Forum,* entitled "The Phenomenon of the Anti-Black Jews and the Black Anglo-Saxon: A Study in Educational Perfidy." In it, Hatchett argued that Jewish schoolteachers had "educationally castrated" black pupils and had engaged in "horrendous abuse of the [black] family, associates and culture." Overshadowed in the furor over the issue of black anti-Semitism that resulted from the article, however, was Hatchett's attack on blacks in the educational system who, in his view, had adopted "white" attributes. He saw these "power-starved imitators" of Jews as "black Anglo-Saxons," who wished to be white.[51]

Hatchett believed that "black Anglo-Saxons" became "white" by becoming middle-class. The black teachers he criticized in the article were those who accepted the premises of the Board of Examiners system, who studied for tests and advanced degrees, who were upwardly mobile, and whose behavior appeared indistinguishable from that of the white middle-class UFT teachers he scorned. When Hatchett criticized the "cowardly black Anglo-Saxon, who has become so

18. New York City policemen guard the entrance to Junior High School 271. United Federation of Teachers Collection, UFT Photo Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

assimilated that he believes only middle-class people pay taxes," he was arguing, in effect, that they were "assimilated," or "white," because they were behaving like, or "imitating," middle-class whites.[52] To Hatchett, middle-class values could never inform any conception of "authentic" black culture because of their association with whites, and because they were antithetical to those of the black lower class as he envisioned them. This direct linkage of "middle-class" behavior to "whiteness" would become a central theme in the ATA's philosophical challenge to the UFT in the ensuing years.

By late 1967, the ATA, having changed its name from the Negro Teachers Association earlier in the year at Vann's behest, claimed approximately two thousand members, representing almost half the total number of black teachers in the city's public school system. It was especially strong in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district.[53] In February 1968, Campbell joined Vann at the district's flagship school, JHS 271. There, the two brushed aside the nominal but ineffectual principal to become its most influential figures—Vann as an administrator from the assistant principal's office, and Campbell as a pedagogical leader and cultural gatekeeper from his position in the Social Studies department.

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board's termination letters to Fred Nauman and his colleagues in May 1968 served a dual purpose for Vann and Campbell. The dismissals would, they hoped, establish the local board's right to govern the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district independent of the UFT and the central Board of Education. The ATA leaders also expected them to consolidate the organization's influence in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, since the rest of the union teachers in the district were likely to walk out in protest of the local board's action; this was, in fact, what occurred two weeks later. Except for brief intervals, UFT teachers would not return to Ocean Hill–Brownsville until November, some six months later, at the conclusion of the last of the citywide teachers' strikes.[54]

The walkout gave District Administrator McCoy, the local school board, and the ATA the opportunity to choose a group of replacement teachers from outside the Board of Examiners system, to staff the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. They recruited an inexperienced, politically radical, and racially mixed group from Ivy League college campuses, Ph.D. programs, and law schools. Eager to participate in what appeared to be an innovative experiment in community-controlled educational democracy, the replacement teachers were willing to defer to Vann, Campbell, and other ATA members in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools—on philosophical grounds as well as practical ones, since the latter were among the small number of experienced teachers remaining after the UFT walkout. With a sympathetic teaching staff, support from the local administration, and no interference

from a striking UFT membership, the ATA was positioned to impose its will on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools.

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools during this period of ATA dominance featured a new educational approach that focused on the student as an individual. The ATA's stress on what educational theorists termed the "affective" component of learning—developing feelings of self-worth, of control over one's surroundings, and of personal identity and growth—was a departure from the prevailing focus in the city's public schools on "cognitive" pedagogy, which stressed rational thought, substantive knowledge, and adjustment to one's surroundings.

This concern with the pupil as an "affective" being derived from two other aspects of the philosophy of the ATA and its allies. The first was opportunity theory, the germinal idea behind the War on Poverty's community action program, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experiment itself. Opportunity theory provided an alternative for critics of the UFT-endorsed culture of poverty and cultural deprivation ideas. Instead of viewing poor students as needing to overcome their lower-class environments, opportunity theory argued that their culture was essentially sound as it was: the poor simply required a sense of control and empowerment. As an educational theorist sympathetic to the ATA argued, "the values of the community must become those of the school . . . [and] values in education incompatible with the child's life conditions [must be] changed to become natural extensions of those values and beliefs which already exist in the community. Those goals which are deemed worth striving for—equality, freedom, etc.,—can be reflected in the operations of the school."[55]

The ATA and its supporters combined this idea with one of the central tenets of the Progressive education movement as popularized by John Dewey—that children learned from their own surroundings. They argued that if teachers showed respect for the culture of lower-class black students, made instruction relevant to their lives outside the classroom, and accepted them as they were, they would respond as they had not for the UFT teachers. In the context of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district in the spring and fall of 1968, "affective" education meant giving students a clear sense of racial identity. Vann's goal, as he once put it to an interviewer, was to create "big black men, not little white men."[56] The ATA, accordingly, launched a campaign against attributes and values it associated with white teachers and the UFT. These included examination-based competition and materialism, as well as the cultural idea of the middle class in general, which ATA members viewed as embodying a rigid, stifling belief system that, like the examination structure itself, rewarded blind obedience and conformity.

Two of the major educational programs instituted in the Ocean Hill–Browns-

ville schools, Project Learn and the Bereiter-Engelmann reading program, were notable for their emphasis on individual self-actualization and on cooperative instruction. Project Learn featured programmed learning materials in a variety of academic subjects, through which pupils proceeded at their own pace. Academic tracking, grade levels past the first grade, and even marks themselves were eliminated, and, in a precursor of "elective" systems, students were encouraged to "set their own goals" and to study subjects that interested them.[57] The Bereiter-Engelmann program provided individualized reading instruction in a self-consciously egalitarian setting, one in which, in the words of one of its administrators, "the onus of school failure is taken from the child and placed on the school." It operated on the assumption "that every child can achieve, if he receives adequate instruction," and that "a child who fails is a child who has received inadequate instruction." Children who showed progress in this ungraded program were rewarded with ritualized and repeated chants of "Are you smart!"[58]

The ATA and replacement teachers sought to create a flexible, encouraging, and non-hierarchical atmosphere in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools. "If they think you like them, they respond a lot better," said one replacement teacher, describing his philosophy of instruction.[59] Students were encouraged to help teachers build lessons around their everyday life experiences, so that, in the words of an Ocean Hill–Brownsville student, "the system will fit our community, not some community in Queens."[60] "We approach the children with an expectation of success which we communicate to them and to which they are responding," wrote a group of replacement teachers in a published newspaper advertisement, referring with pride to their "relationships of mutual trust and respect" with the students. Another attributed his class's progress almost entirely to such positive expectations: "I decided mine was going to be the brightest class and that's just what happened."[61]

Sympathetic visitors to the district from New York's intellectual and literary communities, including I. F. Stone, Alfred Kazin, and Dwight Macdonald, praised the cooperative, positive relations with students that the replacement teachers had produced, as contrasted with the more heavy-handed tactics of the UFT teachers. "The flame [of learning] burns hotter than ever" in Ocean Hill, wrote Kazin, comparing the schools favorably with those he had attended as a child growing up in the same neighborhood decades before.[62] Macdonald praised the "hum of cooperative effort" in the Ocean Hill classrooms. They and other observers reported reduced incidents of vandalism and student misbehavior.[63] Rhody McCoy summarized the operative philosophy of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools during this time: "What is [teacher] 'competence'? It isn't the grasp of your subject or your ability to make an effective lesson plan. The absolutely rock-bottom mini-

mal aspect of competence today for teaching in the ghetto schools is respect f[illegible] the kid. . . . If you go into your classroom with a string of Ph.D.'s and all sorts [illegible] other 'qualifications' and still you're convinced that this kid is doomed by natu[illegible] or by something else to lead a shrunken and curtailed life, then you're basicall[illegible] incompetent to teach that child."[64]

The ATA and replacement teachers believed that the most important elemen[illegible] of "affective" pedagogy in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools during the month[illegible] of the UFT walkout involved defining a clear sense of black identity for their students. Given the cultural climate in the city's schools at the time, it was hardly surprising that this effort would be driven by what was "not white," and, specifically, by attempts to avoid or denigrate values and practices which the ATA and its supporters defined as "white."

They were, for example, determined that "white standards" not be used to judge the achievements of black students. When a white replacement teacher at JHS 271 sought to motivate his English class by telling them to think of themselves as being in competition with middle-class white schools, Vann called him into his office and dressed him down. He told the teacher that his use of whites as a point of comparison was a manifestation of racial prejudice. The teacher was reprimanded on another occasion for including the works of William Shakespeare in his curriculum.[65]

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville district's refusal to administer standardized reading and mathematics tests between 1967 and 1970 was also a challenge to what ATA and replacement teachers viewed as a mindlessly overcompetitive, white-dominated educational system designed to measure only the "cognitive" abilities it associated with whites. Standardized achievement tests might well be appropriate for "middle-class children," a replacement teacher charged, but were useless in evaluating black lower-class students. Such tests, he wrote, "fail to measure the extent to which a child has been educated; they simply test rote memorization [and] stifling of initiative. . . . Unleashed creativity or a critical outlook would probably lower a child's scores on these examinations rather than raise them."[66] McCoy, describing his philosophy of education in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, said: "The schools were not there to teach the skills, i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic, but to present or prepare a learning environment where youngsters would be educated. Too often, we got caught up in saying, 'Our kids can't read and write, and they don't do well on standardized tests,' and we lost sight of the fact that we've got millions of our kids who *can* read and write, and who can pass standardized tests, who are basically not educated in terms of what's going on in the real world."[67]

The ATA also took aim at the competitive ethos of the Board of Examiners sys-

tem, which it also linked directly to whites. One member, explaining the paucity of black personnel in the city's educational system, argued that "if a [black] wants to succeed, he has to 'become white,' and the degree to which he becomes successful is directly related to the degree to which he becomes white—mentally."[68] Another argued that white society had attempted to force its competitive ethos down the throats of the black community. "The point of pivot," he wrote, "is competition. Competition for what America is calling the basic economic and cultural goods. The question to be asked is can anyone be expected to love, to have compassion, or even to have a mind of one's own? America has propagated not the myth of success, but the obsession with failure." An ATA supporter distinguished between a "destructive," "white" style of capitalism, characterized by "cutthroat competition and heartless dealings," and a "black" style, in which "black businessmen help each other."[69]

The ATA also attacked what it viewed as the rampant materialism of the white UFT teachers. The white teachers' "greatest joy," charged a black teacher at JHS 271, "is the security of the job."[70] Another described them as "petty civil servants" who "like their jobs because of the nice salaries, health plans, and medical coverage."[71] John Hatchett said the UFT was the epitome of "white decadence."[72] An ATA supporter accused whites of seeking to subvert blacks "by the traps of individualism, materialism and integration."[73] Implicit in this rhetoric was the idea that black educational and social structures would not repeat the mistakes of the "joyless, grasping white man."[74] Thus, when an ATA teacher complained that "I was educated to be what I could not possibly be—a white person," he was indicting an educational system that, in his organization's view, condoned the worst excesses of the white middle class.[75] Striking white UFT teachers, however, answered back, angrily defending as virtues what the ATA and its allies condemned as vices.

White UFT teachers went to great lengths during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy to justify the same competitive and individualist values that black teachers attacked. They sought to link them to a well-established American culture of opportunity and advancement. A white teacher accused critics of the Board of Examiners of fomenting "an irresponsible revolution to uproot the whole structure of a competitive merit system, which is embedded in our democratic tradition and state constitution."[76] Another wrote that black underrepresentation in teaching and administrative positions was not the fault of whites, but a result of "the failure of black people to compete successfully in the open marketplace of the merit test system." "The end of the merit system," he continued, "will enable those who can't make it on ability to reach the top on the basis of their skin color."[77] Still

another noted that the costs for the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control experiment "will be borne principally by the tax dollars collected from those who live and work elsewhere," referring to middle-class whites, and charged that the leaders of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville district did not understand that the purpose of the school system was to instill in the student "a desire to learn, and a desire to behave, and a desire to advance by merit."[78] "50,000 of us," wrote a Brooklyn teacher, "are striking to preserve the sanctity of the Civil Service System, and particularly, the merit system . . ."[79] "The curriculum at Ocean Hill," charged a striker in the *United Teacher,* "is not designed to produce young American citizens well prepared to enter the job market—just well prepared to hate whitey."[80]

White teachers also openly flaunted their materialistic lifestyles. No reader of the *United Teacher* during this period could fail to notice the advertisements for vacation trips, summer camps, furniture, appliances, and other creature comforts —conspicuous testaments to the material success of UFT members.[81] Most white UFTers, moreover, shrugged off criticism that their "attitudes [were] as middle class as [their] possessions."[82] Writing in the *Village Voice* during the strike, a white teacher articulated the rationale behind this impulse, justifying it as, like the related ethos of competition, a typically "American" characteristic:

> We hear the charge that teachers today are acting like "plumbers," that they are not "dedicated." What is interesting to me about these charges is not that they are false (there is much truth in them), but that if teachers act like this it should really be surprising to anybody. The public school teachers in this city are in the main a "lower-middle-class" group of people; that is, they reflect the values, thinking, goals and life-style of a group of people whose parents were working-class. They are people who did not have "things" and now want "things," the same things that everybody in our consumer culture wants—and if they have to act like members of an electricians union to get them, they will.

The age of the self-abnegating teacher, who was rewarded "not in the money he was paid but in the shining eyes of a child mastering his numbers" was over, he argued, and critics of the UFT in the black community would simply have to get used to it.[83]

The union leadership, which had won unprecedented wage increases for its members during the 1960s, agreed. Shanker scoffed at those who criticized teachers for acting in their own interests. "The Board of Education does, the teachers do, and so does Lindsay," he retorted.[84] Shanker argued that the role of education was not primarily to cultivate the student as an "affective" being, but to teach him how "to *make it* within our society."[85] And David Selden, the president of the UFT's parent, the American Federation of Teachers, and a supporter of the strike,

responded to critics in the black community who complained that "schools teach white, middle-class values and skills," by defending "those middle-class skills and values—reading, mathematics, respect for work and initiative—which serve as the basis for upward social mobility." "Slum life," he maintained, "no matter how romanticized in current literature, has a deadly intellectual undertow which only the exceptionally able or lucky can survive."[86]

It was, indeed, the linked ideas of the culture of poverty and the ethos of the middle class that informed the white teachers' critique of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville educational experiment, and of the culture of the lower-class black community in New York. By the time of the Ocean Hill crisis, many white teachers were using the culture of poverty to "explain" black behavior, and appeared to be as convinced as the ATA that a "middle-class" culture was by definition a "white" one. The problem with education at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and in the black community generally, a UFT member wrote, was "a situation where a shift of population results in a broken-down student potential," that was "beyond the control of the Board of Education" and the classroom teacher. "The deterioration of the neighborhood," he argued, "was accompanied by the deterioration of the schools not only scholastically but physically."[87]

Others cited the black family, and not the school, as the key determinant of a black student's achievement level: "If pupils have 'environmental handicaps,' no school can do much to make them learn at a faster rate than they are learning anywhere else."[88] The primary goal of the schools in Ocean Hill–Brownsville and other black neighborhoods, wrote a white teacher pointedly, should be to promote "education for family living."[89] Other teachers were even more blunt. "If only these people took an interest in their children," lamented one. "If only they had a male symbol."[90] And a white teacher at JHS 271, commenting on community control at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, said: "We believe that the people of this community are not educated enough to run the schools. They must become middle-class before they can participate."[91]

It would fall to Shanker to make the most explicit connection between middle-class values and those of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville educational experiment. In an interview immediately after the conclusion of the strike, he described education in the Ocean Hill schools as a "cruel hoax . . . where they take over a school in the name of rectifying this horrible tragedy and say: 'We're going to run a good school and teach your children a lot of good things. But forget about the middle-class values of reading, writing and arithmetic. Don't evaluate us by that standard.' The hoax is perpetrated by these community control people when they experience failure in getting kids to achieve. Then they say forget middle-class virtues and they try to convince parents that reading and writing don't count."[92]

By the time the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis ended, then, blacks and whites had developed clashing approaches to the values that would govern both the public education system and the city as a whole. Vann, Campbell, the ATA, and the replacement teachers had sought to create an alternative culture in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools, one that would reward those who held values they associated with blacks and "blackness" by facilitating success in the public education system. The curricula and activities in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools during the UFT strikes were an attempt to use attributes that these educators considered unique to black New Yorkers as a new form of currency, a means to empowerment, identity, and respect. White educators, however, would not allow the rules of this system to change without a struggle. These differences—in perception, prescription, and understanding—would only widen in the years that followed.

The battle between the UFT and the ATA continued after the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes ended in November 1968. If anything, the rhetoric on both sides became more inflamed, and divisions more pronounced. The ATA and its allies, stung by the resolution of the immediate issues of the Ocean Hill controversy substantially on the UFT's terms, lashed out at the culture of poverty idea in the years following the crisis. "The concepts of poverty, broken homes and emotional traumas permit an easy exit for [white teachers]," wrote one ATA member. "You may always blame the runaway father for the school's failures." Another ATA teacher took this a step further, seeking to distinguish the extended African-American family structure from that of whites on the basis of its African roots. "In Africa," she argued, "'family' defines individuals beyond the immediate members. The structure of black family life differs from the family organization of the white majority in America. Adoption does not undergo the many 'legal' processes necessary for upper and middle-class Americans. Instead, maternal love [an inheritance from Africa] governs." Behavior whites labeled as "illegitimacy," she argued, was "generally accepted" in black families, "because we as black people consider life as sacred." "The black family," she concluded, "is being judged by the standards of white society and not by Africa from which it stemmed."[93]

The ATA's white allies during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy—New Left–influenced intellectuals, educational activists, and community action organization leaders—took similar positions. The Institute for Community Studies, through which the Ford Foundation had funneled funds for the Ocean Hill experimental district, argued in its newsletter that community control was "a challenge to the prevalent middle-class vision of what education entails, to the attitude that the black poor are unteachable in the absence of a drastic reform of their social, cultural and familial conditions in directions accepted as normal by middle-class

whites." "The crisis in education," it argued, "is a crisis in values," and "what is holding up the education of poor blacks is a set of values masquerading as facts, which are held by middle-class whites."[94]

Ellen Lurie of EQUAL and United Bronx Parents viewed the culture of poverty idea as a means for white teachers to assert an unwarranted cultural superiority over their black students. In her 1970 book, *How to Change the Schools,* she asked rhetorically, "if a student talks about Garvey and a teacher quotes Roosevelt . . . if a teacher loves Berlin, and a child sings plenas and bombas . . . if a teacher enjoys reading erotic novels with off-color language and a student enjoys using those words and talking about sex, which one is culturally deprived?" The educational system in New York, she argued, "is based upon the assumption that the child has deficiencies that must be overcome: his family background is deficient, his language is deficient, his cultural heritage is deficient, his life experiences are deficient. . . . [S]chools teach [students] to be ashamed of their parents and their homes." United Bronx Parents leader Evelina Antonetty dismissed the arguments of white teachers who linked family structure to academic achievement: "What happens to orphans? They learn, don't they?"[95]

The ATA and its supporters also pressed their assault on the values they associated with white teachers and the UFT after the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike ended. Campbell wrote in 1970 that white-run schools "encourage the individualist instincts . . . [and] perpetuate the idea that any knowledge worthwhile must come from a book, to set the so-called 'educated' apart from the community." He advocated an educational system based on "black values," which he defined as "working and living together for the common good." A year later, Vann blamed a white-dominated competitive ethos for fostering "the concept of individual achievement and success at the expense of fellow human beings." The ATA's 1972 annual convention issued a call for "a black value system, which will make unity a way of life rather than an abstraction," and that would "eliminate the negative concepts of individualism and competition." "Individualism," editorialized Vann in 1971, "is a myth."[96]

The ATA and its allies also continued to attack the "test culture" of the city's educational system, and rejected the use of "cognitive" learning skills they associated with whites as currency for advancement within this culture. "How do we identify giftedness in black children?," it editorialized in 1971. "Shall we use tests? Of course not. The man has been testing for the past two decades. The man has defined the abilities he considers important as being cognitive. Then he defines what he calls cognitive. We maintain that even though we have cognitive abilities, there are probably more important abilities. For black children in a racist school, giftedness would be identified by pupils' challenge of authority, defending

other students 'in trouble,' independence, and curiosity."[97] Rhody McCoy cr cized "the general failure of the philosophy of American education, namely, its cessive preoccupation with grades and test-passing at the expense of 'humanizi usages of liberal education."[98] And Ellen Lurie described the city school syste as a place where "[c]hildren learn that competition is important, marks are ever thing. Knowledge, if it is not going to be on a test, is worthless. A child who hel another is not cooperating; he is cheating."[99]

As they had during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis itself, ATA members an supporters strove to distance themselves from attitudes and values they associate with the white middle class. "During my first year [of teaching]," an ATA membe wrote in 1970, "I felt myself disliking being referred to as a teacher, since, to me this term had become synonymous with 'white' and had only negative connotations. . . . I am absolutely speechless when a child in anger refers to me as a 'white ass' or says 'I'm black and I'm proud and you're white so you know what you can do!'" "I don't want to be like the white teachers," she continued. "I'm not even sure whether I want my own children to be or act the way their [white] teachers want them to act. I know I don't want them to be like their own teachers."[100]

Another black educator defended community control of schools as a challenge to a system "too based on industrial values—hard work, obedience, conformity—to even contemplate admitting rebellious, outspoken, noncompliant and 'uneducated' members of the urban population [who seek] equalization of economic and educational advantage."[101] "Black people are not white people," wrote Vann in 1972. "Their goals and purposes cannot truly be obtained through white schools. As black educators we must take our proper position in regard to and for the greatest benefit of the mass of black people."[102] The public schools, complained another ATA member, "relate only to the dominant non-black middle class."[103] Rhody McCoy attacked a group of black teacher assistants who had joined the UFT for "seeking to rise to middle-class professional status at the expense of their allegiance to their roots."[104] And a black teacher warned his fellow ATA members to "try not to confuse your 'hustle' with your job! As a black teacher, you are doing a hustle."[105]

The most comprehensive critique of white middle-class values in the city's educational system by an ATA member, however, came from a principal, Alton Rison. Rison, who headed JHS 117 in Brooklyn, was one of the few black principals serving in the New York public schools when he published "How to Teach Black Children" in the *African-American Teachers Forum* in 1972. He began by distinguishing what he labeled "black" and "white" (or "Middle-European") styles of learning. Whites, he argued, "are conditioned to a high degree of structured, stiff learning," and "can tolerate monotonous, boring, mostly lecture or oral teaching.

Their whole tradition programs them to respect their teacher, good or bad. To them, the high mark is more important than short-lived rebellion and failure."

When white students trained in this "Middle-European" style became teachers themselves, Rison argued, they attempted to replicate it in their black students, to whom it was culturally foreign. "There is no way," Rison wrote, "that black children will sit still listening to a verbal lecture assault by teachers of Middle-European, Germanic philosophical structure. In excruciating, tortuous moments, they will misbehave, squirm in their seats and make life miserable for those incompetents who may very well be competent somewhere else, but not among black children."

White teachers, he maintained, misunderstood this reaction, blaming it on the culture of poverty or labeling the students "disruptive," when in reality it was a manifestation of a unique black culture. "Black children," Rison wrote, "are innovators, inventors, creators, actors and performers. They like exciting styles, fashions, colors and constant change." These "healthy, bubbling energies," he argued, were evidence of "rare distributive talents which many whites lack," and thus misinterpret. White teachers, he charged, attempted to impose their cold, abstract, and intellectually elitist educational culture on black children whose frame of reference was concrete and spontaneous.

"White teachers," wrote Rison, "would like blacks to begin with the book. Many black children would rather begin with their talents and create in reality ideas found in books." Unable to understand this, white teachers instead sought to "have black students become identical objects of themselves or their own children and values." Obsessed with competition, they focused solely on "the achievements of their bright black classes. Very seldom do they speak of their larger middle and slower groups." Rison explained this by arguing that high-achieving black pupils "appear to [white teachers] to be more similar to white students than to their fellow blacks. They can act more white. . . . They seem to have similar values as whites. White teachers would like all blacks to follow the white route. This is an error."[106]

Rison thus contrasted the "monolithic talents" of white students with the "many moving talents" he attributed to black children. He explicitly associated competition, individualism, and cognitive learning with whites, and egalitarianism, mutualism, spontaneity, and the affective component with blacks. He and the ATA had, by the early 1970s, drawn a cultural line in the sand in New York City's educational system.[107] They did not act alone, however. White UFT teachers also participated during this period in the process of distinguishing "white middle-class" and "black lower-class" values.

Whites did so by employing the culture of poverty theory to criticize the learn-

ing styles and behavior of black youngsters in the school system. The underlying assumption behind white teachers' use of the culture of poverty idea was that blacks, by becoming middle-class, should become like them. The UFT supported a variety of compensatory programs in the 1960s and 1970s with this aim—MES, the Higher Horizons "cultural enrichment" program, school lunch and after-school programs, Head Start, and, more generally, housing, full employment, and guaranteed minimum income programs.[108] White UFT teachers believed that if lower-class blacks could be thus elevated to middle-class economic status, the rest would follow—and the "rest," in this case, would be the jettisoning of a flawed culture for one that more closely resembled their own.

The implications were clear. Becoming middle-class meant approximating whites and whiteness as closely as possible. But by not admitting to the possibility of a distinctively black approach to middle-class culture, and, indeed, by assuming that middle-class culture was the only one appropriate to whites, white teachers made it that much easier for black educators to associate middle-class values exclusively with whiteness. In a similar vein, the strong competitive and individualist ethos of the white teachers—their support for testing, tracking, and the "merit system," their passionate upward mobility and undisguised materialism—allowed frustrated black teachers, who believed that the city's public schools were failing both them and black students, to position themselves in opposition to what appeared to be a white-defined culture.

The UFT and its allies did make some attempts to respond to ATA criticism by defending "middle-class values" as essential for both whites and blacks in New York. The union acknowledged the possible "conflict in the poor urban black community about accepting middle-class values," its "fear of loss of blackness in becoming middle class," and its "criticism of middle-class values and attitudes as essentially 'white.'"[109] Shanker labeled the "romanticization" of black poverty "condescending and insulting," and criticized the projection of poor blacks "into the role of revolutionaries come to save the white middle class from their boredom and their sins."[110] And a UFT supporter wondered whether "a youngster will have a ghost of a chance at securing dignified employment with only the assets of 'walking tall,' [and] being proud of his racial heritage . . ."[111]

But, whatever their motivations, white teachers nonetheless boxed black educators in. Their very act of embracing middle-class values forced many black teachers who were searching for an identity separate from that of whites to a difficult choice: they could either walk in the shadow of whites, or define themselves in terms of what whites were not. Black teachers who, like the members of the ATA, chose the latter course, ceded the realm of middle-class values to whites, in large measure because whites had appropriated them first.

The dangers presented by this choice were not lost on ATA teachers, least of all on their leader, Albert Vann. In an interview with *Ebony* magazine shortly after the end of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike, Vann sought to clarify his position regarding "white middle-class" values and behavior. "By no means," he said, "are we saying that it's not important to read, write and manipulate numbers. But we're saying it's also important that you begin to understand yourself, that you've had a glorious past and can have a glorious future, and therefore you can achieve. . . . The Man is not going to give us these values. They have to be earned by a new kind of black man that we don't have yet."[112] Similarly, ATA teachers did not disapprove of discipline in the schools per se, only its administration by whites, as in the case of the "disruptive child" dispute with the UFT. They called for strong black authority figures in the classroom and were particularly outspoken in their attacks on student drug use.[113]

Such attempts by ATA members to construct a black middle-class alternative to white middle-class values were marked by ambivalence, however. On the one hand, they wished to change the rules of the city's public education market to reward attributes they associated with "blackness." On the other, their attacks on the "white" examination system, and on the values they ascribed to it, led many whites to conclude that ATA members rejected that market in its entirety. As a white observer during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike noted, Vann "couldn't figure out whether he was an outlaw ranchhand or a fence-building sheepherder," and the often overheated rhetoric of Vann, Campbell, and other ATA supporters distorted their intended message.[114] By insisting on defining themselves primarily as "not white," Vann and his colleagues minimized the more beneficial aspects of the middle-class ethos. While there was, of course, nothing inherently "white" in respect for authority, or a desire to improve one's material condition, the ATA, by taking the position that whites had effectively preempted the field of middle-class values, and that there was only a "white" way to be middle class, lost an opportunity to navigate the waters between the white middle class and black lower class. In attempting to ignore the obvious fact of their own middle-class economic status, and in throwing in their rhetorical lot with the black poor, they preserved their antiwhite credentials, but at a high price.[115]

The ATA had raised important questions about the content of culture in both the public education system and the city as a whole. ATA teachers and supporters had challenged the values of an educational market that equated high examination scores with the acquisition of knowledge, encouraged students and teachers to compete against each other, and disparaged the abilities of children raised in a "culture of poverty" to learn effectively. They offered instead a set of alternative values built around cooperation, mutualism, egalitarianism, and racial iden-

tity, one that offered a competing set of values to those of white teachers, and indeed, of New York's white middle class in general. But by failing to distinguish effectively between the middle-class values they wished to discard and those they wished to retain, ATA teachers sent a series of unclear signals to the black poor they hoped to reach. Aiming harsh rhetorical fire at "white" culture, they contributed to what may have been an unnecessarily sharp divide between "white" middle-class and "black" lower-class values. During the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis and in its aftermath, ATA members groped for ways to combine racial authenticity and middle-class values in the New York City school system. Trapped both by historical circumstances and by the implications of their own words, they offered a powerful critique, but an ambivalent message.

Thus, both white and black teachers bore some responsibility for the divide between white middle-class and black lower-class culture that existed in New York's public education system by the early 1970s. By failing to acknowledge the possibility of a middle-class culture on anything other than white terms, whites placed blacks in the position of having to reject that culture in order to forge a distinct racial identity. Forced to associate middle-class values with "whiteness," black educators in turn were unable to define a viable middle-class voice of their own, effectively abandoning the field to whites. Driven by what appeared to be ineluctable circumstances, as well as by their own assumptions and biases, blacks and whites in the New York City public education system had formed distinct cultures built largely around negative reactions to attributes each associated with the other. The result was a school system and city in which whites and blacks spoke past each other, inhabiting, both literally and figuratively, two separate New Yorks.

Aided by superior finances, greater manpower, and more favorable public relations, the UFT finally emerged victorious in its battle with the ATA in 1974.[116] The UFT's negotiation of agency shop status in its 1969 collective bargaining agreement with the Board of Education meant that union dues would be deducted from the paychecks of all city teachers, whether or not they were union members. Many black teachers found it too expensive to pay ATA dues as well, and membership in the organization dropped.[117] The UFT and its allies also prevailed upon the New York Urban Coalition and the federal government to cut off over five hundred thousand dollars in ATA funding in the early 1970s, with Shanker enlisting President Richard Nixon himself in this effort.[118] And finally, the UFT exhausted the ATA's treasury in 1973 by winning a judgment against it under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for excluding a white teacher, who had been sent by Shanker to create a test case, from one of its meetings on public school property.[119]

In the early 1970s, Vann left the public school system, and turned his attention

to electoral politics. He did battle with the black representatives of the Brooklyn Democratic political machine, and eventually won a seat in the New York State Assembly. Leslie Campbell also left the public schools to operate a private black nationalist academy. Under his new name, Jitu Weusi, he continued to work as a grassroots activist in Brooklyn, until, in an ironic twist, he regained a position in the public school system. But by the end of the 1990s, there was no ATA for him to lead. It was, in fact, a distant memory. With its finances depleted and its leadership decimated, the group had long since ceased to exist.

While the ATA did not survive its battle with the UFT, its critique of white middle-class values and attitudes, in both the educational system and the city at large, did. Founded as little more than a trade association, it had developed by the time of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy into the cutting edge of a challenge to the culture of white teachers, and New York's white middle-class community. By accepting this challenge, whites joined a debate over the parameters of civic culture in New York, and the relevance of middle-class values to the lives of the black poor. Driven by different impulses and assumptions, whites and blacks came to agree on the essential "whiteness" of attributes that each associated with the middle class in New York, and established a broad cultural demarcation between "white" and "black" values.

Beginning in the late 1960s, an ambivalent, uneasy black middle class in New York would wrestle with the implications of this demarcation. It would be torn between its rising standard of living and discomfort with the ominous levels of social dislocation among poor blacks, on one hand, and anger at persistent white racism and fear of loss of racial authenticity, on the other.

There were, of course, those in New York's black middle-class community during the 1960s and 1970s who sought to defend the authenticity of black middle-class values. One of the most prominent, Roy Wilkins, asked rhetorically, "[does] a man become a 'Tom' simply because he has managed to escape poverty?" He warned that "the supermilitants in their automatic resentment of anyone who has made it may end up making a romantic virtue of deprivation," and attacked their "anti–middle class, anti-professional attitude." Much of this sentiment, however, was indeed "Tommed," chilled and driven undercover by the dominant voices in the black community as a whole. Whatever opinions it may have expressed privately, the New York middle-class black community's public defense of "middle-class values" during this period was muted and defensive.[120]

The fate of John Burrus, a self-described "middle-class Negro" who attempted to drum up support for the UFT in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, is instructive. Burrus was ridiculed as an "Uncle Tom" by virtually every leading personality in the

Ocean Hill experimental district, including McCoy, Vann, Campbell, other ATA leaders, and members of the local school board. Mayor Lindsay viewed him as unrepresentative of the Ocean Hill community and ignored him.[121] It is also significant that after the 1968 incident at Brooklyn's JHS 117 in which two white principals and a white teacher were beaten, the only black parent who wrote the *New York Amsterdam News* in protest, and who described the assailants as "hoodlums," asked that his name be withheld.[122]

Defining a distinct, racially authentic cultural identity would thus prove no easier for black middle-class New Yorkers than for Vann, Campbell, and the other members of the ATA. That process of self-definition continues today, a classic American dilemma made infinitely more difficult by the unique burdens of history, memory, and race.

By thus racializing behaviors that they associated with the other, Ocean Hill–Brownsville sparked a cultural war between blacks and whites that would last for the rest of the twentieth century, and on into the twenty-first. It would affect virtually every public policy choice New Yorkers would make during this time. Whether the specific issue at hand involved a mayoral election, a labor dispute, a budget decision, an anticrime initiative, or a welfare reform plan, culture—and competing black and white cultures—lay at or just beneath the surface. Arguments during the mayoralty of David Dinkins over condom distribution in city schools, "outsider"-run businesses in black neighborhoods, and control of civil disturbances, and during that of Rudolph Giuliani over panhandlers, policing tactics, and workfare, are the lineal descendants of the cultural battle joined at Ocean Hill–Brownsville.

Rhody McCoy once observed that, to white teachers, the behavior of blacks during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute was "a negation of the rules of culture itself."[123] McCoy was correct in more ways than he knew. This phrase encapsulated black views of whites during and after the crisis as well. Neither side had any illusions about the consequences of losing Ocean Hill–Brownsville's cultural war. When a white UFT teacher complained that "our whole way of life is at stake!" a local board supporter's rejoinder was telling: "You got it! That's exactly right."[124] In New York City today, the stakes remain high, and the battle continues.

8

AFTER THE CRISIS

At the height of the third Ocean Hill–Brownsville strike, two major figures of the New York activist Left, Dwight Macdonald and Michael Harrington, debated the merits of community control in the pages of the *New York Times* and the *New York Review of Books.* Along with the personal mudslinging and political posturing customary to such exchanges, they offered a trenchant analysis of the controversy from the rival UFT and local board perspectives. Macdonald, supporting the local board, described the Ocean Hill–Brownsville project as "a deeply imaginative experiment that may have lessons for all ghetto schools." He praised the "friendly, serious, relaxed" atmosphere that prevailed in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools when he had visited them, and argued that schools in white neighborhoods, too, could benefit from community control.[1]

But Harrington, supporting the UFT, was much less sanguine. He, unlike Macdonald, had personal experience with groups such as PAT. "It happens," he wrote, "that [the issue of due process for teachers] has arisen first in the ghettos, but it can spread to predominantly white areas [and] local reactionary forces. . . . They are eagerly waiting in the wings for *their* turn."[2]

Harrington was both right and wrong. Whites in New York were indeed using the lessons of Ocean Hill–Brownsville for their own purposes. But they were not