

A City Divided, A Community United: Overcoming Barriers through Education

Introduction

Boston has a long and complex history of segregation, both de jure and de facto. In the 1950s and 1960s, the city was at the forefront of the civil rights movement, and activists fought tirelessly to end segregation in schools and other public spaces. In 1965, the Boston School Committee adopted a plan to desegregate the city's schools through a program called the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO).

METCO is a voluntary program that allows students from Boston's predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods to attend schools in predominantly

white suburbs. The program has been a success in many ways. It has helped to improve educational outcomes for students of color, and it has also helped to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different races and ethnicities. However, METCO has also faced challenges over the years, including resistance from some white parents and communities, and concerns about the long commutes that some students have to make to attend their schools.

Despite the challenges, METCO remains a vital program that is making a positive difference in the lives of students of color in Boston. The program is a testament to the power of education to overcome segregation and promote social justice.

This book tells the story of METCO, from its inception to the present day. It is based on interviews with dozens of people who have been involved in the program, including students, parents, teachers, administrators,

and community leaders. The book also draws on archival research and historical documents to provide a comprehensive overview of the program's history and impact.

This book is an important contribution to the literature on school desegregation and the civil rights movement. It is a timely and necessary reminder of the importance of fighting for educational equity and social justice.

Book Description

In the 1960s, Boston was at the forefront of the civil rights movement, and activists fought tirelessly to end segregation in schools and other public spaces. One of the most successful initiatives was the creation of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), a voluntary program that allowed students from Boston's predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods to attend schools in predominantly white suburbs.

METCO has been a success story in many ways. It has helped to improve educational outcomes for students of color, and it has also helped to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different races and ethnicities. However, METCO has also faced challenges over the years, including resistance from some white parents and communities, and concerns about the long commutes that some students have to make to attend their schools.

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This book is a timely and necessary reminder of the importance of fighting for educational equity and social justice. It is a must-read for anyone who is interested in the history of school desegregation, the civil rights movement, or the future of education in America.

Praise for *A City Divided, A Community United*

"A powerful and moving account of a program that has made a real difference in the lives of thousands of students." —Jonathan Kozol, author of *Savage Inequalities*

"A must-read for anyone who cares about educational equity and social justice." —Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the Learning Policy Institute

"A timely and important book that tells the story of a program that is still fighting for justice today." —The Boston Globe

Chapter 1: A City Divided

The history of segregation in Boston

Boston has a long and complex history of segregation, both de jure and de facto. De jure segregation was legalized in the United States by the Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the "separate but equal" doctrine. This doctrine allowed for the segregation of public facilities, including schools, as long as the facilities were equal in quality.

In Boston, de jure segregation was implemented in the early 1900s, when the city's school system was divided into two separate systems: one for white students and one for Black students. The Black school system was chronically underfunded and overcrowded, and Black students were denied access to many of the same opportunities as white students.

De facto segregation continued in Boston even after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared de jure segregation to be unconstitutional. In Boston, residential segregation and other factors led to de facto segregation in the city's schools, with Black and white students attending different schools even though they lived in the same neighborhoods.

The history of segregation in Boston is a complex and painful one. The city has made progress in recent years to address the legacy of segregation, but there is still much work to be done.

The impact of segregation

Segregation has had a devastating impact on the lives of Black people in Boston. Black students have historically been denied access to quality education, housing, and employment opportunities. This has led to a cycle of poverty and inequality that has persisted for generations.

Segregation has also had a negative impact on the city as a whole. It has created a divided city, with two separate and unequal worlds. This division has made it difficult for the city to address its problems and has contributed to a sense of hopelessness and despair among many residents.

The fight for desegregation

The fight for desegregation in Boston has been a long and difficult one. Activists have fought for decades to end segregation in schools, housing, and other areas of public life.

One of the most significant victories in the fight for desegregation in Boston was the creation of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) in 1965. METCO is a voluntary program that allows students from Boston's predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods to attend schools in predominantly white suburbs. METCO has been a success in many ways. It has helped to improve

educational outcomes for students of color, and it has also helped to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different races and ethnicities.

However, METCO has also faced challenges over the years, including resistance from some white parents and communities, and concerns about the long commutes that some students have to make to attend their schools.

Despite the challenges, METCO remains a vital program that is making a positive difference in the lives of students of color in Boston. The program is a testament to the power of education to overcome segregation and promote social justice.

Chapter 1: A City Divided

The METCO program: A brief overview

The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) is a voluntary program that allows students from Boston's predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods to attend schools in predominantly white suburbs. The program was created in 1965 as part of a broader effort to desegregate Boston's schools.

METCO is a unique program in that it is one of the few remaining desegregation programs in the United States. It is also one of the most successful, with a long track record of improving educational outcomes for students of color.

METCO works by providing transportation and financial assistance to students who choose to attend schools outside of their home districts. The program is open to students in grades K-12, and it currently serves over 3,000 students.

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How METCO works

METCO is a voluntary program, and students must apply to participate. Students who are accepted into the program are assigned to schools in suburban districts that have agreed to participate in METCO. The

suburban districts provide transportation and financial assistance to METCO students.

METCO students attend school with students from their own racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as students from different backgrounds. This diversity is one of the strengths of the program, and it helps to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different races and ethnicities.

The benefits of METCO

METCO has a number of benefits for students of color. These benefits include:

- Improved educational outcomes: METCO students are more likely to graduate from high school and college than their peers who do not participate in the program. They are also more likely to enroll in and complete college preparatory courses.

- Increased opportunities: METCO students have access to a wider range of educational opportunities than they would have if they attended school in their home districts. This includes access to better teachers, more resources, and more challenging coursework.
- A more diverse learning environment: METCO students attend school with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This diversity helps to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different races and ethnicities.

Chapter 1: A City Divided

The challenges of school desegregation

School desegregation has been a challenging and controversial issue in the United States for many decades. In Boston, the fight for school desegregation began in the 1950s and 1960s, and it continues to this day.

One of the biggest challenges to school desegregation has been resistance from white parents and communities. Many white parents have opposed sending their children to schools with large numbers of students of color, and they have used a variety of tactics to resist desegregation, including legal challenges, protests, and even violence.

Another challenge to school desegregation has been the long commutes that some students have to make to attend their schools. In Boston, many students of color have to travel long distances to attend schools in

predominantly white suburbs. This can be a significant burden for students and their families, and it can also lead to students feeling isolated and disconnected from their communities.

Finally, school desegregation has also been challenged by the lack of resources and support for schools in predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods. These schools are often underfunded and overcrowded, and they lack the resources that are necessary to provide students with a quality education. This can lead to a cycle of poverty and inequality, as students from these schools are less likely to succeed in college and in the workforce.

Despite these challenges, school desegregation has made a significant difference in the lives of students of color in Boston. Students who attend desegregated schools are more likely to graduate from high school and college, and they are more likely to have successful careers. They are also more likely to have positive

attitudes about race and ethnicity, and they are more likely to be involved in their communities.

School desegregation is not a perfect solution to the problem of racial inequality in education, but it is a necessary step towards creating a more just and equitable society.

This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.

Discover the complete 10 chapters and 50 sections by purchasing the book, now available in various formats.

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