

THE

MEANING

OF

COMMUNITY

CONTROL

--Preston Wilcox

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The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN EDUCATORS was organized on June 8, 1968 in Chicago, Illinois. At that time over 1,000 members of the Black community - Teachers, Administrators, Parents, Students and Community Activists - all educators - welded themselves into a wholly Black-initiated, Black-implemented, Black-controlled body.

The general intent of the NAAAE is to establish a form and process through which Afro-Americans can begin to employ education as a nation building tool - in intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, economic and political terms - with self-determination, self-pride and survival as a creative and humane people being key goals. Education for Black people is perceived as a multi-faceted process - anti-colonialism, deniggerfication, de-programming, self-assertion, self-definition, self-development and self-survival - collectively.

The organizing process in itself is part of the nation-building agenda: it is a conscious, deliberate undertaking to help Black people to deal with and relate to each other; to integrate Negroes with Black people; to remove white racists from positions of control over the private and ethnic decisions of Black people and to articulate humane models for the Black world, and then to proceed toward the realization of these models.

NAAAE has divided its organization into Regions. Interim activities and program are being handled by a National Organization Planning Committee. The December, 1968 Progress Report from the desk of the National Chairman, Preston R. Wilcox, indicates that the following special projects are in operation:

PROJECT: Community Control which is designed (tentatively) to:

- (a) collect and disseminate materials from various schools and cities across the country;
- (b) establish a network of communication among the various schools and cities;
- (c) relate the struggle for control of schools to the Black Liberation and Restoration Movement, nationally and internationally;
- (d) move toward the identification of participants in and the establishment of a COMMISSION ON SCHOOL-COMMUNITY CONTROL within the framework of the NAAAE.

Members of local communities involved and/or planning for control of schools are urged to share materials and to participate in the development and escalation of the movement. Write: Sister Grace Boggs, Historian - 3061 Field St., Detroit, Michigan (48214) and "foresight", P.O. Box 494, Detroit, Michigan (48204)

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For further information on regional organization, membership, services,
etc. please contact the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN EDUCATORS,
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Dues and donations should be forwarded to Brother Hugh Lane, Treasurer,
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INTRODUCTION

The continuing battle over the minds and aspirations of the masses of minority group children - Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American and Appalachian white - has created a confrontation between the haves and the have-nots; those who claim to have "made it" and those who are being "done in" by those who claim to have made it. Interestingly enough, both groups would call themselves Americans. The "haves" would say that America gave them a chance. The "have-nots" would say that America gave them a chance. The "have-nots" want that chance because presumably America guarantees it. They differ only in that the haves would say that everybody can't make it - somebody has to fail and/or be poor. The "have-nots" would say that unless everybody makes it we will have no America. This observer would state that the basic testing round for proving this nation's presumed greatness rests on its ability to respond to the have-nots and the ability of the have-nots to hold America accountable.

The community control movement represents an effort to develop, at the local level, the ability to hold this nation accountable, and to employ dissent as an instrument to reshape the relationships between the have-nots and the haves. It is an attempt to mobilize communities to improve the lot of the haves. It is an attempt to mobilize communities to improve the lot of the masses. The one-by-one approach which produced Jackie Robinson and Senator Edward Brooke has not touched the masses. Neither has the achievement of the "talented tenth" had a measurable effect on the masses. Unless every child has the right to grow into responsible adulthood, protected, nurtured and sustained, then America will have succeeded only in demonstrating its massive failure.

If our community is rife with problems, it is important to understand that it has largely occurred because our community has been controlled by people other than us. Everybody in the Black community knows this, but it still might be worthwhile to quote another source:

What white Americans have never fully understood - but what the Negro can never forget - is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

--Report of the NATIONAL ADVISORY
COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS.

March 1, 1968, page 1

If this power is clearly understood, we will also understand that things could not be worse if we controlled our own community. Surely things will not change overnight, but they never have. This movement is designed to produce a winning attitude and to accept the reality of odds against us all. The point here is that we need to control our own communities so that we can enact our own programs as against reacting to plans made for us.

This statement contains three parts:

- A. What do we mean by community control?
- B. Resistance forces.
- C. Positive forces.

It does not profess to have found the truth, nor does it represent anyone's views but my own. My wish, however, is that it will serve to sharpen the insights of readers and stimulate them to make it available to other readers. In the last analysis, the real power rests with the informed public: the public which thinks for itself, guards the right of others to do so, and acquires the skills (organizational, mobilizing, technical and human) to hold those who govern accountable to the governed.

--PRESTON R. WILCOX*
December 2, 1968

*Brother Wilcox, well known to our community for his work in community organization and education, is Chief Consultant to the I.S. 201 Community Education Center in New York City. He is also Chairman of the National Association of Afro-American Educators.
(see page ii.)

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- a) School Decentralization should be distinguished from Community Control; the former turns the school into a subsystem, a branch, that is, with no measurable restructuring of the relationship between it and the central board. Community Control should represent a redistribution of power with a set of exclusive powers being assigned to the local community boards.
- b) The process of decentralizing the system or redistributing the power is a crucial determinant of the end product. Struggle should be built into the process to stimulate crisis learning and escalation and expansion of a sense of civic right and obligation. Short of this, there should be shared decisions as to the delineation of shared and exclusive powers. The process of selection of local community boards (election, appointment, designation, delegation, volunteers, etc.) should be determined by the local community.
- c) Decentralization and Community Control should be introduced as an education strategy, not solely as a surrender to failure of the existing system.
- d) Parent and community RIGHTS to have their ideas heard at the marketplace - and their RIGHTS as citizens to be involved in the supervision of public funds should be asserted.
- e) Community members who do not have children in public schools should be involved in the process by parental consent, if achieved.

WHAT IS MEANT BY COMMUNITY CONTROL

CONTROL OVER:

Expenditure of Funds - Local, State and Federal

With such powers, the local governing board can hire local people, develop its own programs, and direct money toward locally-owned businesses, through use of its purchasing power. Importantly, it will reshape the relationship with the central board and all of its bureaucrats who have the power to frustrate and little power to educate.

Hiring, Firing, Training and Reprogramming of Staff

With this power, the local governing board can select the teachers of its choice, help them to acquire appropriate training to learn about the local community and evaluate them based on pupil performance. If a teacher does not want to learn how to teach and does not want to be responsible to us, then why should he or she win tenure while our kids fail?

Site Selection and Naming of Schools

With this power we can prevent useless and destructive relocation, can effect the housing relocation programs and can name our schools after our heroes - Malcolm X., Martin Luther King, Jr., Marcus Garvey, etc. without having to obtain the approval of people who hated Malcolm X.'s guts and would not tolerate Martin Luther King until after he was assassinated.

Design and Construction of Schools

It is not accident that I. S. 201 looks like a prison; it was not designed by one of us or anyone who was capable of understanding us. The Building and Construction Union has a solid record for being anti-Black and anti-Puerto-Rican. If we had the power to award contracts, we could guarantee that locally unemployed but skilled artisans would be employed. Just imagine the encouragement to our young people to see their big brothers and fathers working to construct schools rather than standing on the corner watching others work. The presence of people who look like them would encourage them to want to become artisans themselves.

COMMUNITY CONTROL OVER:
(cont'd)

Purchasing of Books, Supplies, Equipment, Food Services, etc.

If we were in control of purchasing books, we could have our children read about how to change and improve Harlem, rather than why they should escape from it. Dick and Jane and the places in which they live are unreal content for Black and Puerto Rican minds, young enough to be shaped to respect themselves as well as others. How many books point out that Dick and Jane are obviously racist because their parents keep Blacks and Puerto Ricans out of their neighborhoods?

We can also buy supplies and equipment from locally owned businesses and, particularly, can allow our children to take "school toys" into their own homes. We can also purchase equipment which is much more honest and truthful to Black and Puerto Rican youth. Our children need to know why they have no heat in their homes and why their homes are in such deteriorated conditions. It's not their fault but they can be taught in the classroom about the way things really are.

Why can't we have soul food - Black and Puerto Rican - in our cafeterias? Why should not our children be served breakfast in school? Why can't we hire local mothers to prepare food for their own children and our teachers and staff?

Setting of Educational Policy, School and Community
Curricula and Educational Programs and Activities

Currently, we have to argue too much with the Board of Education about things which would occur naturally if we could control the education of our own children.

Every Black and Puerto Rican child has an inherent right to know about his own cultural heritage. Every Black and Puerto Rican parent has an inherent right to have a voice in the education of his own children.

These rights are sacred; they cannot be surrendered, they can only be usurped or taken away by people who fail to respect Blacks and Puerto Ricans as people.

Anyone - Black, Puerto Rican or white - who respects Blacks, Puerto Ricans and whites, would not argue with these rights or participate in denying them.

We have many exciting community programs which should be a part of the school's program; but often the people who run our schools run away from our communities.

Merit Pay

We are assembling an increasing number of teachers who want their students to learn and teachers who want to do an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. We promise them the freedom to become good teachers and will protect that right with our lives. As David Spencer Chairman, I. S. 201 Complex Governing Board once said, "Don't tell me your excuses. You are professionals. Do your job." Increases in salary should be based on effective pupil performance and proven teacher effort.

A NEW OUTLOOK IN EDUCATION

The decentralized and/or community-controlled school should not replicate the centralized school - in purpose nor in distribution of roles and responsibility, climate, etc. Every opportunity should be utilized to enable students, parents and community leaders to increase the possibility that the school will become an integral part of the community - a community building which is used as a school - not a "school" which is also used by the community. The school must become a focal point for community planning; not just an educational center in the narrow sense.

As an integral part of community planning, local educators - Parents, Teachers and Students - need to immediately focus their discussions on RESTRUCTURING ROLE RELATIONSHIPS, and

NEW ROLES for:

P R I N C I P A L S

from: allegiance to Central Board to Responsibility and Responsiveness to Local Board; administrator to Leader - Enabler; direct leadership to Non-directive Leadership; educational leader to Educationist (stimulator of self-direction and philosophical development of others)

T E A C H E R S

from: curriculum implementers to Curriculum Developers; teaching methodology and techniques to TEACHING PROCESSES, e.g. Orientation; Nurturing of Peer and Group Relationships; Student Participation in establishing Social Controls; Procedures for Students to get their Ideas on the Teacher's Agenda; Use of Community Strengths and Problems as Content for Classroom; Group Assignments; Local Neighborhood Visitations; "Systematized," "Informal," "non-official" contacts with students (Greeting cards, attendance at community affairs, visiting the sick, showing up on picket lines, letters of support around community problems, revealing self as a person to students, encouraging students to place the teacher in the role of a learner, students as tutors of other students, etc.) Setting of Goals with Class; Group handling of Class Problems; Advocacy for Students and not for the System; Relating Classroom Learning to Real Life; Identification of Special Interests of Students; Effecting Relationships between Students and School; Students and Communities; Students and their Families; Accentuating the Positive; Student Evaluation of Teachers; Use of Discussion, Student and Group presentations; Discussion of Concepts; Accreditation of the transmission of Meaning rather than Words; Value of Reflection, Suspended Judgment, Logical Thinking, Independent Study, Outside Reading, Community Involvement and SELF-ACCEPTANCE (not social acceptance); Creative use of Conflict; Transmission of Skills not just information; Encouraging Student Feedback of presumed learning; Helping students to Know when they have really learned something (GUT LEARNING);

from: members of teacher subsystems (under thirty, over thirty, permanent, substitutes, etc.) to Sharing of Ideas and Responsibility for the Total School; hall monitor to Hall Pedestrian; TEACHING STUDENTS TO LEARN to LEARNING HOW TO TEACH (i.e. learning from the students how they learn most effectively).

New Roles (cont'd)

S T U D E N T S

from: individual students to members of Sub-groups (students cliques, families, clubs, etc.) pure student to student - "teacher"; single assignments to Group assignments; subject of parental interest to discussant of school concerns with Parents; student government member to Community-School Government Member; recipient of curriculum content to Contributor to Curriculum Development; isolated class member to Liaison with other classes; teacher's pet to Student Advocate; inmate to Full Citizen with Rights and Responsibilities; need for control to opportunity to develop Inner Controls; understanding content to Understanding the Function of Education.

P A R E N T S

from: mere consumers to PARTICIPANTS; supportive parents to "Teacher Parents", or better yet "Foster Teachers"; recipients of teacher reports to Sources of Information about students and communities, and Team Members in the Educational Process; school agent (selling the school) to Community Agent (advocating for community interest) parents to PERSONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT - focus on their interest as PERSONS!

CHANGES IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

- the Community and its problems come into the classroom - Housing, Health, Discrimination, Drug Addiction, etc. etc. etc.;
- Controversial Issues should be discussed;
- Cultural Content - using home, guest speakers, tours, newspapers, etc. - should pervade the Curriculum;
- Open discussion of class conflicts, feelings, problems, etc.;
- Accreditation of Outside Reading, Independent Study, etc.;
- "Flackenization" in all areas.

--through--

- Student Evaluation of learning-teaching process;
- Modifying the student-teacher relationship from super-ordinate-subordinate to coordinate phases, when possible and appropriate;
- Valuing thinking for oneself above giving the "correct" answers;
- Focus on Comprehension, Investment, Effort, Interest - rather than correct spelling, correct answers. Comments on papers should raise questions, inquire into, not punish obvious mistakes, point to interesting related sources, raise questions about developing interests and patterns, relate subject to real world, offer opportunities to present ideas to class, offer student opportunities for private conferences, etc. etc. etc. etc.
- Individual and Group Conferences - not just about in-school affairs, but about extra-school interests of students.

RESISTANCE FORCES

1. EDUCATORS who have successfully FAILED to educate Blacks and Puerto Ricans in the past - and are afraid that Blacks and Puerto Ricans will do a better job.
2. TEACHERS who have become trained to follow orders rather than to participate in shaping them.
3. PRINCIPALS who have become conditioned to pass on orders rather than helping staff, students and the community to shape school policy, etc.
4. ADMINISTRATORS who deal more easily with puppet-like parents than self-directed parents.
5. Autocratic and inflexible LOCAL LEADERS who, instead of taking the people's side and helping the minority or little man, identify themselves with an oppressive system.
6. LOCAL RESIDENTS who have come to believe that white is right and if you are Black get back! These are the true "reverse racists" because they deny racism in the same way that white racists who benefit from it deny its existence.
7. COMMUNITY GROUPS who doubt their ability to shape community policy.
8. UNIONS which are racist, salary-oriented vs. student oriented, and who are more interested in union strategy than educational strategy.
9. CENTRAL BOARDS which refuse to decentralize POWER, which attempt to limit parent/community voices to advisory functions, which fail to share technical (education, research, etc.) assistance with the local communities, which have the "National Guard" on their minds, which are racist or non-representative, which view themselves as "the public," which view education only as that which takes place within the classroom, which do not share information fully, which refuse to address community needs in political and legislative actions, etc. etc. etc.
10. UNIVERSITIES which are more interested in university development than the community development, which shun community conflicts, which fail to relate their curriculum to the current scene, which learn about the community but not from the community, which are not responsible to the local community, which fail to advocate on behalf of local interests, which fail to develop educational programs for local parent/community leaders and which are more interested in developing university power and prestige than they are in helping local communities to develop their own.

POSITIVE FORCES

1. Community Control should reflect a change in relationships between the gatekeepers and the consumers - in structure, in effect, in content, in frequency and intensity of contact and in meaning and comprehension.

2. Community Control should involve a redistribution and a pluralistic democratization of power: shared powers and exclusive powers.

3. New divisions of labor and function should be identified and elaborated in action: parent functions, teacher functions, students functions, community functions. Expertise is also distributed along the same continuum.

4. Lines of demarcation should be erased between school and community, e.g. the school building will become a regular meeting place seven days per week, rather than an island in a colony that is open only when the outsiders are present. Why can't we have weddings, parties, funerals and even religious services in our schools?

5. The development of Parent Power will force schools to put onto their agendas the usually overlooked concerns - poor housing, inadequate heat, low welfare allowances, ineffective police protection, etc. The school will begin to reflect local concerns.

6. The meaning to the children of seeing their parents and leaders as active participants in the school.

7. Local communities will have a chance to learn how to make real decisions and to manage their own lives.

8. THE COMMUNITIES WILL BEGIN TO BELIEVE THAT THE SCHOOLS ARE THEIRS AND THAT EDUCATION IS FOR THEM, NOT JUST FOR OTHERS.

Questions:

- (a) To whom are you going to pass this on to read?
- (b) What is your own personal, private opinion?
- (c) Have you discussed your ideas with others?

OUR SCHOOLS PROVIDE US WITH THE INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGING SOCIETY
(not kids) and HUMANIZING MANKIND!!!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?