On the morning of September 6, 1979, East High School principal Ed Willis greeted a phalanx of cameras, a crowd of reporters, and 240 tenth graders with these words: “Black people are not going back to Africa, and white people are not going back to Europe. We’re going to East High School, and we’re going to respect each other.” It was desegregation’s first day in Columbus, and nowhere was its impact more dramatically felt than at East, for nearly four decades the flagship school of the black community. Busing had literally transformed the complexion of the school: its racial makeup, 99 percent black the year before, was now 55 percent white. Willis, however, would tolerate no racial turmoil. “I don’t want to hear the word ‘nig­­ger,’ and I don’t want to hear the word ‘honky,’ or I’m going to deal with you,” he told the morning assembly, no idle threat coming from a man 6 feet, 5 inches tall and 250 pounds. For weeks, Willis had been working busily to ensure an uneventful opening: “I met with the teachers and told them, ‘We can have a fight, but it can’t be in September.’ I met with the parents and told them, ‘If you send me your kid at 7:30 in the morning, I’m going to send him back to you at 2:30 in the afternoon looking pretty much the same.’” His efforts
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paid off. As the day progressed, East High saw no rocks, no riots, and no desegregation-related disorder. By noon, the national media were gone, and September 6 had become the most extraordinary ordinary day in the history of the Columbus Public Schools.

Because it involved such a radical racial transformation, East's opening served as a barometer for the rest of the system. Early reports from principals confirmed that desegregation was proceeding peacefully everywhere, and the day developed without significant disruption. "There were fights and there were verbal exchanges," remembered desegregation planner Calvin Smith, "but everybody seemed to keep more than their lid on." "We've gotten off to an exceptionally good start," beamed Superintendent Joe Davis. "I like to believe we've launched a winning streak." 4

To a business elite that had come to equate peaceful implementation with successful desegregation, September 6 was a dazzling victory for Columbus, a potential civic calamity turned unexpected public relations coup. Fearful that a Bostonlike explosion of busing-related violence could permanently tarnish Columbus's image and cripple its promising economic prospects, city leaders had rallied the community behind the cause of public peace. In defining desegregation as an urban development issue rather than an educational one, however, the "growth consensus" that shaped political and economic activity in Columbus substituted civic order for civil rights. 5 Consequently, as the unifying urgency of September 6 dissolved into education's unglamorous daily routine, the kind of energy, effort, and resources committed to peaceful implementation could not be marshaled to confront the complex problems of desegregation's difficult "second generation."

"A Small, Boring Town in Ohio":
A Brief Biography of Columbus

To understand how Columbus's civic elite conceived of and confronted school desegregation, it is necessary first to understand the
city's economic and social character. To do so, one must start with its geography. Flat, featureless, and wishboned by two slow-moving, inadequately navigable rivers, Columbus has always had one defining attribute: its central location. No Columbus existed when a group of prominent landowners from Franklinton, a trading post at the confluence of the Olentangy and Scioto rivers, offered the Ohio General Assembly a 1,200-acre tract on the Scioto's east bank to be used as the state's permanent capital. Seeking a conveniently central home, the legislature in 1812 chose the unsettled Scioto site over Dublin, Lancaster, Newark, Worthington, and Zanesville. Columbus was thus created, and would continue to be shaped, by the convergence of government and development.

The state’s new capital gradually grew into the agricultural, commercial, and political hub of central Ohio. With the coming of canals in 1831, the National Road in 1833, and railroads after 1850, the city developed links to a larger flow of goods, evolving into a regional wholesale and distribution center. Still, situated in the center of the state, Columbus lacked the water access to markets and raw materials needed to attract the new industries emerging in towns like Cincinnati and Cleveland, and the primarily native-born southern and Appalachian farmers who settled the city did not actively seek such large-scale manufacturing. Moreover, the city’s early elite, its wealth tied primarily to investments in real estate and commercial services, declined to risk the kind of start-up capital that manufacturing demanded. As late as 1860, Columbus’s largest industry employed fewer than one hundred workers. “Small shops with limited assets,” wrote historian Henry Hunker, “dominated the city's manufacturing until after 1870.” Columbus thus remained relatively small and resolutely rural until after the Civil War.

The 1869 opening of railroad links to the coal reserves of southeastern Ohio sparked an industrial and economic boom in Columbus. From 1870 to 1900, the city’s population quadrupled while its manufacturing employment more than tripled. By the turn of the century, Columbus had become a national leader in the production of shoes, railroad equipment, iron products, and carriages and buggies. Critically, however, manufacturing never came to dominate Columbus
the way it did Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and the other cities of
the "iron belt." Again, geography was in part destiny for the land-
locked capital. Though Columbus was too far from primary ship-
ping routes to develop into a major maker of goods, its central
location made it a key crossroads for their movement.\footnote{11} The growth
of governmental services accompanied the city's development as a
distribution center. The prominent presence of local, state, and, af-
fter 1900, federal bureaucracies, along with the 1872 founding of
Ohio State University, provided Columbus with a stable employ-
ment base. While Columbus stood as one of the nation's top forty
industrial cities at the beginning of World War I, services and trade
remained the largest sectors of its economy, even as manufacturing
ranked first in Ohio.\footnote{12}

By the turn of the century, Columbus had developed into a city
quite different from its neighbors on the Great Lakes and the Ohio
River. With its comparative inaccessibility and relatively stunted
industrial evolution, Columbus never became a magnet for immi-
gration, leaving the city free of both territorial ethnic conflict and
vibrant cultural flavor.\footnote{13} Columbus's service-based economy pro-
duced dependable, if unspectacular, growth, shielding central Ohio
from cyclical shocks and fostering a conservative sociopolitical
character largely bereft of the dynamism and disorder of ethnic pol-
itics or labor activism. If Columbus escaped the extremes of poverty
that more industrial cities endured, it also never saw the accompa-
nying excesses of wealth.\footnote{14} In the absence of the kind of vast for-
tunes that permitted deep-pocketed philanthropy, the growing city
retained a small-town, cultural provincialism.

While Carnegies, Rockefellers, and Fords dominated the cities
where their fortunes were built, their fortunes did not depend on the
prosperity of these cities. The wealth of Columbus's commercial
elite, however, remained uniquely and intimately tied to local in-
vestments—services, retail shops, real estate, banking—and, conse-
quently, to the health of the local economy. "Who of us is not
aware," asked the vice president of the Columbus Board of Trade in
1874, "that with the growth and prosperity of Columbus our own
private interests are largely identified?" From its inception, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce actively involved itself in the politics of development, lobbying state and local officials to initiate municipal reforms and backing bond issues to pay for public improvements. Fearing the higher wages, labor unrest, and boom-and-bust upheavals that accompanied heavy manufacturing, Columbus's economic elite sought to maintain close control over a slowly but steadily expanding city, welcoming industrial development only warily. Consequently, observed a 1976 Department of Development report, "growth was parochial, locally oriented and orchestrated by a power structure with a Southern small-town perspective consisting of bankers and merchants." 

The local dependence of Columbus business leaders bred a sense of civic loyalty and commitment to municipal matters born of economic self-interest. Embodying the often hazy distinction between public affairs, private profit, and personal power was Columbus's dominant dynasty, the Wolfe family. Beginning with the establishment of Wolfe Brothers Shoe Company in the late 1890s, Harry and Robert Wolfe built a central Ohio empire whose economic clout and political influence would span the next century. Shrouded in mystique and legend, Wolfe tentacles touched virtually every aspect of economic development in Columbus. Through the family's media mouthpieces, the whims of Wolfe patriarchs could make or break political careers and proposed public policies. Directly and indirectly, the Wolfes exerted unchallenged, if not unquestioned, authority over civic affairs in Columbus from the turn of the century to the onset of World War II, acting primarily on the premise that what was good for Columbus was good for the family and vice versa. In the process, their devotion to orderly, controllable growth lastingly shaped the contours of Columbus's economic, social, and political development.

By 1930, Columbus had become the fourth largest city in Ohio, with a population of 290,564. Because no natural barriers existed to restrain Columbus's sprawl, the annexation of undeveloped farmland had enabled what had been a "walking city" at the turn of the
century to expand from fourteen to thirty-nine square miles. Unlike many of its northern urban counterparts, Columbus by the time of the Great Depression had not been encircled by a ring of suburbs. Although a real estate boom in the 1920s sparked suburban growth, Columbus remained the only incorporated city in a county that contained eighteen villages and eighteen townships. By contrast, Cleveland in 1930 had already been hemmed in by forty-eight independent municipalities and Lake Erie. While the depression and World War II completely stalled Columbus's expansion between 1930 and 1950, the combination of locally dependent leadership, lack of industry, and landlocked location paradoxically left the metropolitan area underdeveloped enough to allow the city itself to spread significantly and without impediment after the war.

The depression had a less devastating effect on central Ohio than on other areas of the country, but its impact was still substantial. Columbus's real estate market collapsed, major civic projects were dropped, and not enough tax revenue could be raised to finance necessary new services. Total employment in Franklin County fell 10.4 percent from 1930 to 1940, even as the county's overall population rose 7.7 percent. The manufacturing sector of the region's economy suffered the biggest hit, falling 33 percent in Columbus from 1929 to 1935 and 26 percent in Franklin County from 1930 to 1940.

With business activism declining, chamber of commerce executive Delmar Starkey took advantage of the lull to stack the chamber's board with representatives from small firms eager to attract new manufacturing plants and the subcontracting spin-offs they would bring. After becoming chamber president in 1937, Starkey bypassed the city's traditional leadership and began clandestinely pressing for industrial expansion. With America's entry into World War II imminent, Starkey's negotiations bore spectacular fruit: the selection of Columbus as the site of a federally financed, $14 million Curtiss-Wright aircraft plant.

The opening of the Curtiss-Wright plant in 1941 proved an economic watershed for Columbus. At peak production, the plant em-
ployed twenty-five thousand workers, almost ten times more than any other area firm and approximately 15 percent of all Franklin County employment. The federally funded factory also sparked Columbus's first major wave of industrial unionization, breaking the hold of established, nonunionized firms such as Buckeye Steel and driving up wage levels in some economic sectors. Most important, Curtiss-Wright and the ripples it sent through the local economy lured thousands of southern black and Appalachian white job seekers to Columbus, creating both a postwar pool of available semiskilled labor and an unprecedented drain on city services.

In 1945, with production at Curtiss-Wright winding down and GIs returning from the war, Mayor James Rhodes called a handful of handpicked business leaders into his office to discuss the formation of a “citizens’ committee” devoted to passing bond issues to fund desperately needed infrastructure improvements. A generation had passed since the city's last major capital improvements effort. Sudden economic growth and rapid population increase had stretched existing services to their limits. Schools were falling apart, hospitals were needed, roads had to be built, and a severe drought had prompted concerns about the city's water supply. Rhodes told his guests that if Columbus hoped to stave off civic catastrophe without inviting out-of-control growth, a carefully constructed campaign had to be waged to gain voter support for a dramatic expansion of services and infrastructure. Out of this meeting, the Metropolitan Committee was born.

The creation of the Metropolitan Committee commenced two decades of coordinated private-sector influence over the allocation of public funds in Columbus. Between 1945 and 1967, an “executive committee” of twelve to fifteen invited business leaders decided what bond issues would appear on which ballot and then personally stumped for their passage. Planners from the city, the chamber of commerce, and the Development Committee for Greater Columbus were enlisted as de facto staff and directed to develop the details of the bond packages the committee sought. The city and county officials responsible for formally placing these issues on the ballot,
wrote one historian, “agreed to accept whatever the Metropolitan Committee recommended.”

27 Backed by the visible and invisible clout of Columbus’s most powerful business leaders, voter approval was almost assured.28 The committee’s campaign strategy, recalled its unofficial chairman, Paul Gingher, was as follows: “You bring in every group in the city. You neutralize or capture any potential opposition. The newspapers assign reporters to you, give you all the space you need, all the propaganda you want. It was massive. The packaging of the proposals was important. It was a matter of putting enough things together for enough people.”

29 In eight elections over twenty-two years, Columbus voters approved forty-five Metropolitan Committee–endorsed ballot issues that, when combined with the government matching funds they secured, were worth hundreds of millions of dollars.30 This money financed the civic hardware of a burgeoning metropolitan area: new schools, sewer lines, hospitals, streets, recreation centers, parks, freeways, water and sewage treatment facilities, and municipal buildings. It also underwrote the expansion of Port Columbus Airport, the construction of Veterans Memorial Coliseum, and the improvement of existing infrastructure. In concert with the city’s aggressive annexation policy, capital improvements fund, and almost countywide water and sewer service monopoly, local business leaders were able to facilitate a suburban boom without sacrificing the growth of the city itself. By 1970, Columbus’s population had grown to 539,469, spread over 144 square miles.31 (See map of postwar annexation patterns in Columbus.)

The Metropolitan Committee represented the intimate relationship between politics and development in Columbus at its most cooperative, coordinated, and effective. By forging consensus on basic projects needed to maintain the city’s geographic and economic growth, it also papered over the potentially paralyzing factionalization of a business community that often disagreed about the direction this growth should take. While the Wolfe family remained dominant, power in Columbus became more diffuse after World War II. From 1946 to 1963, the Starkey-led chamber of commerce...
continued, with limited success, to pursue major manufacturing plants. Meanwhile, fierce disputes emerged, one between the Wolfes and a faction led by developer John Galbreath and Nationwide Insurance over the location of downtown urban renewal, and another between the Wolfes and the Lazarus family department store dynasty over the securing of federal funds for a new dam and reservoir. Thus, even as individual executives fought to direct development in
ways that would maximize their private economic interests, the Metropolitan Committee allowed Columbus's oligarchy to pursue a common agenda of publicly funded projects designed to sustain the city's growth. "We had one rule," Gingher noted. "We wouldn't support any issues that benefited one vested interest or one end of town. We only supported the things that everyone recognized were needed." 

The Metropolitan Committee eventually disbanded because, said Gingher, "the main purpose of putting the city on its way had been accomplished." Indeed, Columbus had survived the growing pains of the postwar years to reach a kind of infrastructural maturity: freeways were completed or planned, adequate water and sewer facilities were built, and city services were in place to meet the needs of Columbus's increasing business and residential sprawl. By the 1970s, the capital of Ohio had become an oasis of prosperity amid the despair of the "Rust Belt." Unlike Akron or Pittsburgh, Columbus had a diversified employment base that could smoothly adapt to the nation's transition from an industrial to a service-based economy. Unlike Detroit and Cleveland, it had escaped the 1960s without experiencing the kind of urban conflagration that could have hollowed out its inner city, accelerated middle-class flight, and decimated its tax base. And, unlike virtually all major northern cities, its growth was not choked off by a surrounding ring of suburbs. Columbus's bond rating was high, its tax rate low, and its unemployment level consistently below the national average. It was, in short, a uniquely healthy city with promising economic prospects.

Still, like a teenager caught between awkward adolescence and confident adulthood, Columbus remained a city in search of an image. If the 1950s and 1960s had been about becoming a major city, the 1970s and 1980s would be about becoming a "major league" city. For, despite its economic stability, Columbus remained undeniably, almost proudly, bland. "We do everything at almost a B-grade level," Republican mayor Tom Moody told the Chicago Tribune. "We may not be first class in anything." While Cleveland became the butt of countless "Mistake on the Lake" jokes, Columbus could
not shake its reputation for being, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, "an overgrown hick town." "[I have] yet to find an American city bereft of even one decent restaurant," humorist Calvin Trillin once observed, "although I've heard some good arguments about Columbus, Ohio." Even Johnny Carson took a swipe at the city, saying, "The most exciting thing we've ever done for [Christopher] Columbus is to name a small, boring town in Ohio after him."

"Columbus," summarized a local reporter, "hasn't the distinctive pungence of the South, sprawling confidence of the West, or decline-and-fall syndrome of the East. It has, in people and environment, a wonderful, godawful irritating solidity, productiveness, conservatism, and smugness."  

To a new generation of business leaders emerging in Columbus during the 1970s, however, the city's lack of personality was no laughing matter. The baby boom was over, jobs and people were fleeing the Snowbelt for the Sunbelt, and global competition had begun to threaten the assumed permanence of American prosperity. With both private and public resources becoming more scarce, competition to attract them intensified. Lacking stunning scenery or perpetually sunny weather, Columbus had only its elusive, undefinable "quality of life" as a promotional tool to lure the white-collar, corporate, and high-tech "growth" jobs local business leaders sought. To succeed in an increasingly competitive municipal marketplace, Columbus civic leaders came to believe that their city needed both a more identifiable national image and a more ambitious self-identity. "Columbus is a good, clean, honest, stodgy city," said Ohio State economist Paul Craig. "We don't cheat, but we don't dream, either." Concurred Sherwood Fawcett, president of Columbus-based Battelle Memorial Institute, the world's largest private research foundation, "If you look at some other cities, such as Seattle or Kansas City or Atlanta, you see a dynamic thrust, a spirit that you can't help but feel. Business is good and Columbus is prosperous, but I don't feel that spirit here."

Throughout the 1970s, Columbus civic leaders studied, disputed, and fantasized about the jewels that would give their sleepy city
some sparkle.\textsuperscript{45} They envisioned bustling downtown shopping, a busy convention center, top-quality cultural institutions, and everyone's ideal, a major-league sports franchise. Declared Clyde Tipton, president of Battelle's convention center development corporation, "This is the time to sit down and say, 'What do we want Columbus to be like when it grows up?'"\textsuperscript{46}

For executives of the city's largest locally dependent companies, individual power, personal pleasure, and corporate prosperity were all bound up in the answer. Yet, while they bickered over the engine of the area's imminent ascent, Columbus business leaders carried the customs of the Metropolitan Committee into the 1970s, cooperating reflexively to preserve the conditions that made Columbus conducive to growth. As a result, they were able quickly to achieve consensus on how to confront the most ominous obstacle to Columbus's continued progress. To become "another Seattle" or "another Atlanta," the city had to avoid becoming "another Boston." "The most vexing issue to most Columbus business leaders is a social one," observed a \textit{Dispatch} reporter, "the peaceful desegregation of the Columbus schools."\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{"You Can't Take an Ostrich Approach": Boston, Busing, and the Creation of MCSC}

By the early 1970s, the domination of Columbus's traditional patriarchs had begun to diffuse. No longer did they possess the virtually unchallenged power to set major civic priorities. New voices with new agendas—African American leaders, community activists, social service organizations, suburban interests—had an increasing impact on local affairs. Yet the influence of the oligarchy had not really waned, it had merely reconfigured to accommodate a broader range of actors and ideas. Media control, social pressure, campaign contributions, and interlocking corporate boards were just a few of
the tools Columbus's business elite could use to define the boundaries of permissible political activity. As such, they exerted a sort of "third rail" authority over local matters; the Wolfes might not single-handedly be able to initiate a major project or make a political career, but they could certainly still torpedo one. Thus, even as a more diverse group of municipal movers was emerging in Columbus, access to real power remained dependent on allegiance to the cooperative culture of civic influence established by the Metropolitan Committee, a culture built around the gospel of growth.

"Virtually all U.S. cities," writes urban sociologist Harvey Molotch, "are dominated by a small, parochial elite whose members have business or professional interests that are linked to local development or growth. These elites use public authority and private power as a means to stimulate economic development and thus enhance their own local business interests." Alarmed by sharpening municipal competition, Columbus's elites by the time of Penick had come to define "growth" as the steady expansion of economic activity, municipal boundaries, and civic stature. Public-private cooperation was geared toward sustaining all three elements simultaneously; remove one, it was believed, and the other two would falter. Potentially divisive ideological extremes were muted by this tripartite definition, which served as an interpretive screen through which business leaders filtered major municipal matters. Given the tacit boundaries set by the city's most influential individuals and institutions, political parties in Columbus never veered far to the left or right of this centrist growth consensus.

Although different interests competed within this consensus, certain assumptions went unchallenged. Because disruption could damage property and property values, tarnish Columbus's image, and generate the kind of uncertainty that could spoil the city's favorable business climate, the imperative of civic order was perhaps the most fundamental. Strikes and other labor-related disturbances historically had little impact on Columbus, with its comparatively weak manufacturing base. Racial turbulence, on the other hand, posed a very real and potentially wrenching threat to the stability of
any large, urban area. As far back as the 1920s, in the face of a massive Ku Klux Klan resurgence, white business leaders in Columbus had backed efforts to thwart racial violence and promote a baseline degree of comfort for African Americans. "There has always been some level of rather satisfactory communication between the black community and the power structure," said Robert Duncan. "The power structure in Columbus traditionally gives the black community just enough to keep it relatively happy. Whenever you push, they just sort of give up a little and they take you off guard." "They fight bush fires to keep them from becoming wild prairie fires," observed Call and Post general manager Amos Lynch, a chamber of commerce executive in the 1960s and 1970s. "We do things in this community to keep things from happening. We take people up to a point and we give them what it will require to allow them to survive but not to grow... . Enough to keep the stomach from collapsing, one side to another—as long as you're doing that, the [black] community remains very apathetic." 49

Due at least in part to an activist chamber of commerce’s efforts to reach out to moderate African American leaders, Columbus escaped the urban uprisings that scarred scores of cities during the 1960s. 50 Declaring in its 1967 annual report that "there is no question that the chief issue before our community is the problem of the socio-economically disadvantaged," the chamber brought together white CEOs and prominent figures from the black community to form the Problems of the Inner City Committee (POTIC). Though some within the chamber tagged the committee "im-POTIC," it did contribute to Columbus's relative civic calm during the long, hot summers of the late 1960s. 51 "When Dr. King got killed," Ed Willis said, "buildings were burning all over the United States, and in Columbus we were setting bonfires, we were burning leaves. It's just not a militant city." "The business community," said John Ellis, "felt that Columbus was a vibrant city with a bright future, but if chaos reigned in the streets and in the schools, businesses would be threatened and the image of the community would be damaged. . . . They couldn't tolerate riots. They couldn't tolerate burnings and
lootings and vandalism and they couldn't tolerate the minority community marching in the streets and shouting, 'We shall overcome.'

By the middle of the 1970s, however, the "domestic Vietnam" of school desegregation threatened to undermine the city's history of relative racial harmony and, in turn, jeopardize its promising economic outlook. "When I came here in 1974," said WBNS-TV news director Bill Vance, "my perception was that Columbus was a town which had been wrapped in cellophane, and the late sixties and early seventies just sort of washed around it as a result. But something as pervasive and as important as schools can wipe that kind of thing away."

It was the traumatic implementation of busing in Boston that galvanized city leaders to confront the controversial issue of school desegregation. On June 21, 1974, Federal District Court judge Arthur Garrity ordered a two-phase desegregation plan for the Boston Public Schools. Vowing to resist, Louise Day Hicks and the recalcitrant Boston School Committee unrepentantly dismissed the court's remedy. Meanwhile, working-class whites in two passionately territorial ethnic enclaves, South Boston and Charlestown, braced to fight Garrity's plan. As the September 12 opening of school drew near, other city leaders—Mayor Kevin White, Massachusetts governor Francis Sargent, the Boston area business community—made no attempt to brake the momentum of the antibusing movement.

As the cameras rolled, whites greeted the first black busloads to arrive in South Boston with rocks and racial slurs. The violence and anger of opening day escalated in the ensuing weeks, inflamed by antibusing protests and a white student boycott. In October, a Haitian immigrant driving through South Boston narrowly escaped after being dragged from his car by a mob of angry whites; the next day, riot police clashed with young blacks in Roxbury, leaving thirty-eight injured. Lamented the Boston Globe, "What we prayed wouldn't happen has happened. The city of Boston has got out of control." The following week, racial violence at Hyde Park High forced Governor Sargent to call out 450 National Guardsmen. And in December, 135 African American pupils were trapped for four hours
inside South Boston High by thousands of screaming “Southies” reacting to rumors that a white student had been stabbed. Only by sending decoy buses to the front of the school were police able to evacuate the students safely.\textsuperscript{54}

The violence in Boston laid bare the hypocrisy of northern race relations. From the city that was both the “Cradle of Liberty” and the capital of liberalism, the nation’s historical and intellectual hub, stark images of racial warfare were broadcast nightly to the world, eliciting uncomfortably easy parallels to Little Rock seventeen years earlier and amplifying doubts about desegregation in the minds of many Americans, black and white.

Noting that only four of the eighty Boston schools involved in Phase I of the remedy experienced substantial disruption, desegregation advocates argued that the media’s coverage distorted busing by magnifying the violence that occasionally accompanied it. “It seems there is an angry mob of white parents in the doorway of every school in the nation either anticipating or reacting to a court order to desegregate,” wrote one scholar. “But there has been much more peaceful school desegregation than violent.” The United States Commission on Civil Rights criticized the “sensationalized reporting of violence in South Boston,” maintaining that “for every Boston . . . there are a dozen other communities which have received no headlines and attracted no television coverage, where desegregation is proceeding without incident.”\textsuperscript{55}

Yet by assuming that the scope of the resistance was more important than its televised ferocity, such responses misinterpreted the national impact of the disruption in Boston. To cities facing imminent desegregation orders, that any violence occurred was more relevant than how much occurred, and that any of it was televised was more consequential than how it was televised. “The ugly racial flare-ups centering around Boston schools,” wrote the \textit{Call and Post}, “have touched a sensitive nerve with many area people who feel that if it can happen in Boston, it may happen here.”\textsuperscript{56} Columbus civic leaders believed that while Boston could survive the enduring stain of such graphically negative publicity, a growing city still seeking a national identity, a city like Columbus, might not.
By shifting public focus from the effectiveness of busing to its peaceful implementation, events in Boston shaped the parameters of debate in Columbus, transforming a troublesome educational and racial dispute into an urgent economic development issue. "Boston," recalled Mayor Tom Moody, "was an every night thing on television for us." To the business community in particular, the specter of Southie provided spur and subtext for desegregation preparation. The potential for violence loomed like a guillotine over Columbus's economic future, threatening the image of civic stability critical to new business development. "Boston is the prime example of lack of forward planning," Buckeye International CEO Rowland Brown told a chamber of commerce-sponsored gathering of one hundred area executives in April 1976. "It will take years to remove the scar tissue from the past many months of strife over schools in Boston, and in the meantime, Boston's image in the rest of the world has been badly damaged. . . . You can't take an ostrich approach—every city which has tried this has regretted it." 57

A series of alarming events nationally compounded the local anxiety provoked by the violence in Boston, which continued sporadically through the Bicentennial. OSU professor Charles Glatt was assassinated in Dayton while working on that city's desegregation plan. Desegregation-related riots occurred in Louisville. And rancorous legal battles continued in Cleveland and other cities. Meanwhile, the national NAACP had arrived in Columbus, with Nate Jones confidently declaring that intentional segregation had "been proven in Boston, Dayton, Detroit and will be in Columbus." As awareness of the school district's legal destiny grew, so did dismay over the school board's increasing antagonism. Warned Jones, "One of the great ironies is that the staunchest adherents of law and order create a climate of resistance to a court order." 58

Goaded by the absence of constructive school board leadership, decision makers in Columbus began mobilizing to neutralize the tempest that so often seemed to accompany school desegregation. Business leaders rallied behind Superintendent Ellis's contingency planning efforts, securing his job in the face of the board majority's incipient coup. Democrats and Republicans tacitly agreed to keep
the issue of school desegregation out of the potentially charged 1975 mayoral race, which pitted white Republican incumbent Moody against the city’s first black mayoral candidate, Dr. John Rosemond.59 Also that fall, a group of clergy and laypeople formed the Coalition of Religious Congregations (CORC), which called on members of Columbus’s religious community “to pledge themselves to pursue peaceful and productive approaches to the difficult issue of desegregated education.”60

The Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce’s School Issues Committee, meanwhile, was quietly conducting a study of school desegregation in other cities that would become the business community’s blueprint for confronting the controversy. “The objective of the Chamber,” the committee’s report recommended, “should be to help bring about community acceptance and support of whatever decision is reached by the court.”61 In other words, the role of the area’s economic elite should be the same regardless of Judge Duncan’s ruling: ensure civic order. The chamber, the report suggested, should work proactively to remain neutral. Any perceived ideological bias could provoke resentment in the community, confrontation in the streets, and a backlash at the cash register. The historical, legal, and educational issues that desegregation involved were too complicated, controversial, and emotional to touch. Peace, however, was as easy to support as busing was to oppose.

Further research revealed that effective leadership, information, and communication were critical for community acceptance of a desegregation remedy. The experience of other cities, reported Battelle Memorial Institute researcher George Rosinger, demonstrated that these elements could best “be achieved with a coalition of concerned interest groups.”62 “We should help form a committee to promote peaceful accommodation to whatever decision Judge Duncan may reach,” chamber chairman Robert Lazarus Jr. told an assembly of top executives, “and then work as an equal among a committee of equals.” In early 1976, a committee of ten organizations already independently involved in planning for desegregation began meeting to formulate a coordinated strategy. “We grew out of
a widely-felt community need to have some organization to imple­
ment what many people believed to be a forthcoming desegregation
plan," chamber of commerce representative John Henle said. "We
decided, 'Columbus is not going to go through the idiocy of a Louis­
ville or a Boston.'" Said Sam Gresham, then an urban policy planner
and political organizer, "The business community knew there was
a change coming. But how to adapt to that change was not to resist
it, it was to control it."63

The committee tapped Rowland Brown to pull together a broad­
based group of community leaders charged with preparing the city
for the outcome of the trial. Brown was at once an obvious and
complex choice to organize such a group. Chairman of both the
Urban Education Coalition, a local public-private advisory group,
and the Citizens Council for Ohio Schools, an independent public
school watchdog, he was a knowledgeable and passionate advocate
of urban education.64 At the same time, as a corporate CEO and a
member of numerous local boards, he could flow easily among the
city's business elite. Yet while Brown was the individual in Co­
lumbus best equipped to bridge the ideological gap between advoc­
cacy groups and corporate executives, he also embodied the ten­
sion that would ultimately break the community-wide coalition
apart: the gulf between peaceful implementation and successful
desegregation.

To the bulk of the business community in central Ohio, desegre­
gation was an economic issue, not an educational one.65 "They didn't
want a PR black eye on the city of Columbus that would stop the
growth that was in their economic benefit," said Gresham. "The
overriding concern of the business community was: 'We don't want
anything that's going to tarnish the image of the city of Columbus.
We are a growing town. We're still fighting to get our name on the
weather map.'" Agreed John Ellis, "The business community did
not like the Boston image: that the view of your city could be dra­
matically altered for the worse on a permanent basis; that your image
would be bad; that you would lose your people; that you'd lose
your economic base; that you'd lose power because of population
changes. That was one of the big fears. That was one of the few countervailing fears to the pernicious fear of racial integration."  

As head of Buckeye International, Inc., a manufacturing firm with nearly four thousand employees worldwide, Brown's corporate credentials allowed him to communicate credibly with businesspeople either ambivalent toward or hostile to desegregation. "In general," he said, they "didn't particularly have a strong view with respect to the appropriateness of court-ordered busing as a solution to the problem. They were very much concerned [about] what had happened in Boston, Detroit, Cleveland, and other areas." In a letter to Mel Schottenstein, prominent lawyer, developer, and head of the Columbus-based Yassenoff Foundation, Brown outlined "the economic impact an unsuccessful implementation would have" on central Ohio: "Borderline businesses would move out of the area, new businesses would not want to locate here. Property values would not be at realistic levels. Columbus values would go down while property values in areas outside Columbus would go up. This means less revenue for the city, therefore the possibility of reduced city services. With business moving out and people moving out, jobs would be lost. The entire Central Ohio area would be a less attractive place to live. Many businesses look at the quality of the school system in a given area as an indication of the strength of the area."  

By tying continued economic stability to the unpredictability of implementation, Brown convinced business leaders that the funding of a temporary, community-wide coalition was indispensable to the preservation of peace.  

However, while Brown understood his corporate colleagues' view of desegregation as an economic minefield, he also carried a deep personal commitment to the concept of integration as an educational ideal. Brown considered court-ordered desegregation a foregone conclusion in Columbus. As such, he regarded it not as a looming disaster but a golden opportunity, a unique chance to generate enduring areawide interest in the city schools. With good luck and skilful maneuvering, he believed, a temporary coalition formed to ensure peaceful implementation could be transformed into a permanent
organization devoted to fostering quality integrated education. "I consider the ultimate goal of this group much more than just 'cooling it,'" he told fellow committee members in mid-1976.68

Thus, while ideological neutrality was necessary to sustain the support of the business community, Brown himself was a well-established champion of integration. Moreover, though admired, Brown was never fully embraced by the entrenched power at the center of the city's corporate elite, which perceived the graduate of both Harvard and Harvard Law as an East Coast liberal with shallow roots in the community. "I remember once at a dinner party the night after the Michigan–Ohio State football game," explained attorney John Elam, then chair of the chamber's Quality Education Committee. "Rowland said, 'I don't understand. People are talking about The Game. The Game—that's Harvard-Yale!'"69 To compound this perception, Brown was linked to a liberal chamber leadership coming under increasing fire for neglecting economic development in favor of a kind of noblesse oblige social activism.

All of this meant that Brown had the capacity to convince but not the clout to convert. Only the danger of disruptive implementation could persuade business leaders to contribute their resources, money, and civic prestige. Conversely, Brown's more long-range vision was already shared by the service organizations and advocacy groups whose representatives would be responsible for the day-to-day work of the committee. Thus, in shaping a diverse, broad-based coalition, Brown had to balance conflicting conceptions of just what such a coalition's mission should be. The statement of purpose subsequently adopted by the group, which by late 1976 had named itself the Metropolitan Columbus Schools Committee (MCSC), endorsed both peaceful acceptance of the district court order and quality education in the Columbus schools.70 In embracing both while maintaining a conspicuous neutrality, MCSC's formal guidelines endowed the organization with the flexibility to respond to fluctuating circumstances, enabling it to hold together an inherently unstable alliance for the next four years.71 At the same time, by pragmatically endorsing peaceful implementation rather than successful
desegregation, MCSC’s mission statement tacitly acknowledged that the two had essentially become synonymous.

Backers of both visions of MCSC laudably wanted to see the buses roll in Columbus without incident. Beyond issues of basic safety, however, their motivations for participating in the coalition fundamentally diverged. Those who considered desegregation an educational good regarded peaceful implementation as a necessary first step down the long, unexplored path to “quality integrated education.” On the other hand, those who viewed desegregation as a potential development disaster (and “effective desegregation” as an oxymoron) envisioned peaceful implementation as the relieving conclusion of an emergency effort to preserve Columbus’s potential for growth. With peaceful implementation the starting gate for one faction and the finish line for another, the goal that brought MCSC together contained the seeds that would break it apart.

“Raising Hell Is No Way to Raise Our Children”: Setting the Boundaries of Dissent

Response to Judge Duncan’s March 8, 1977, Penick ruling revealed the extent to which a “law and order” consensus had already been reached in Columbus. Major newspapers, civil rights organizations, city hall, MCSC, and the chamber of commerce all called on the school board to accept the decision and proceed quickly and quietly with developing a desegregation plan. Though the board voted 4–3 the following week to appeal, it also agreed unanimously to begin formulating a remedy.72 “I dislike using children as pawns in a chess game,” Virginia Prentice declared. “I want to make it crystal clear, however, that the judge has ordered us to desegregate the schools, and I urge the citizens of this community to obey the law.”73

The months immediately following Duncan’s decision were marked by the conspicuous quiet of a city holding its collective
breath. The judge’s firm but flexible ruling offered few specific clues as to just how extensive a remedy had to be to pass constitutional muster. Moreover, by granting remedy-formulating responsibilities to new superintendent Joe Davis rather than outside consultants, Duncan temporarily placated school officials already resentful of court control. “I did not want Columbus to be incapable of developing its own remedy plan,” Davis recalled. “I didn’t want to force the court to choose a consultant. I thought it was in the best interests of the community if the people of Columbus had to look no further than the administration, whose salaries they were paying, to say, ‘It’s our plan, and we’re here to live with the consequences.’” “This is a unique city,” declared board president Steven Boley. “Columbus can devise a Columbus remedy by Columbus people that works.”

Confrontation, meanwhile, was channeled into 175 district-sponsored Community Input Panels (CIPs). Opinions at CIP meetings, desegregation planner Calvin Smith said, “ran the gamut from ‘don’t do a damn thing and go to prison before you do it,’ to ‘do whatever the judge tells you and do it better than anybody has ever done it.’” By promoting the illusion of citizen participation, CIPs served as civic steam vents for the more than four thousand individuals who attended. “Some people may not like the final plan,” Davis said, “but no one will be able to say they were not heard while it was being drawn up.”

As details of the board’s desegregation plan began to emerge, however, the facade of community tranquillity crumbled. Davis had charged a committee of six black and ten white administrators with developing a remedy by June 6 that satisfied three criteria: “Meet the requirements of Constitutional law. Be educationally sound. [And] identify the human, material, and financial resources required for implementation.” By early May, district officials had conceded that the system’s geography and demographics made it impossible to fulfill these commands without increasing transportation substantially beyond the seventeen thousand students already bused. Still, it seemed a shock when Davis presented the outline of a three-phase, $21 million remedy that involved the transfer of nearly half
the district's students. A Dispatch headline screamed, "40,000 Pupils in Columbus Would Be Uprooted by Plan." 76

On June 10, the board majority officially voted to submit a $23 million plan phasing in the busing of 39,730 students over three years. 77 The plan eliminated predominantly black schools but left a ring of twenty-one all-white schools along the district's rapidly developing periphery. White board members qualified their invocations of order with declarations of disgust. "I have gone through many hours of mental anguish trying to accept what I must do," Redden grieved. "I have voted not to approve, not to defend, but to submit this plan. I ask all fellow citizens to work with me to uphold the law." Said Prentice, "I do not propose to like it because I do disagree with the original premise. However, the judge did order it and I expect the citizens of this city to abide by the court's decision." 78

Desegregation advocates contended that the board majority's plan barely followed even the letter of the law. The white bloc, they argued, had adopted obstructionist tactics used by recalcitrant school boards across the country: submitting insufficiently desegregative plans that placed undue burden on African American students; inflating budget numbers to inflame public criticism; and demanding unnecessary delay in the name of adequate preparation time. 79 NAACP attorney Leo Ross blasted the submitted plan's "pockets of privilege" and accused the board majority of "dragging its feet." The Call and Post declared its opposition to any remedy that "would create an enclave of publicly funded white private elementary schools." "'With all deliberate speed' was acceptable in 1954," the paper editorialized, "but too slow in 1977. It is time, indeed overtime, for the school board to begin talking about a desegregation plan that is equitable and educationally sound, rather than a plan that is the minimum or less than what the court will accept." Agreed David Hamlar, "They're asking primarily what the judge will accept, rather than what is the best plan for the desegregation of the system. They lost the case in court. They're trying to win it in the remedy phase." 80
Working with African American administrators on the planning committee, black board members put together an alternate plan that desegregated every school to within 15 percent of the district’s 32 percent black enrollment. Board president Boley permitted the minority to submit the plan to Duncan but denounced it as an effort to introduce “massive busing” and racial quotas and an attempt to induce socioeconomic change via the public schools. “Our function is to educate,” he asserted, “not to socialize.”81 Indeed, the white majority resisted deliberate efforts throughout the planning process to effect economic as well as racial integration. “Some of the school board members,” said Hamlar, “even said things as derogatory as, ‘Why put these kids in an area where the other kids have cars or nice clothes? When they see that, they will want to have those things, even if they have to steal them to get them.’”82

The antagonism escalated in late June when Duncan tabbed OSU dean of education Luvern Cunningham to be the court’s “special master.”83 White board members, “surprised and appalled” by the appointment, criticized the author of the 1968 OSU Advisory Commission Report as an eager integrationist. The NAACP countered by saying that “the only thing that would please the defendant would be the appointment of an individual opposed to school desegregation.” That same week, the Supreme Court remanded Dayton’s desegregation decision, calling for more specific findings from the district court. Justice Rehnquist’s ruling in Dayton expressed doubts that the “incremental segregative effect” of the Dayton school board’s violations was sufficient to warrant the systemwide remedy that had been ordered and implemented. Rehnquist’s declaration that the Dayton remedy was “entirely out of proportion to the constitutional violations found by the District Court” sent a hopeful signal to the Columbus board majority, prompting it to submit a revised plan concentrating only on the eleven schools specifically cited in Duncan’s opinion.84 While Langdon praised the new plan as the “least disruptive for parents,” NAACP attorneys labeled it “hot air,” “nonsense,” and “ludicrous.” “It would be better for the city as
a whole," commented the *Citizen-Journal*, "if this board would accept the peaceful desegregation of the school system, instead of frantically grasping at legal straws to avoid its responsibilities." With remedy hearings scheduled for mid-July, the simmering quiet of spring had given way to the incendiary rhetoric of summer. "Bus-ing the city schools' students to achieve racial balance," wrote one reporter, had become "the hottest topic in Columbus."  

MCSC, meanwhile, had kept a low profile since the release of Duncan's ruling, using the lull to organize a resource center of desegregation information, a speakers' bureau, and a twenty-minute audiovisual presentation called "Desegregation: A Challenge to Columbus." The committee structured its strategy around an attitude survey of registered Columbus voters conducted in the immediate aftermath of the decision. The survey identified a large local population ambivalent either in its approval or disapproval of the court order, and it recommended that MCSC concentrate on preventing this "swing vote" from shifting in the direction of disapproval. Critically, the survey found that while "'busing' and 'neighborhood schools' continue to have the same symbolic content in Columbus as they have had elsewhere . . . a majority in all parts of the city want to see the Board obey the law and white parents not use demonstrations as a tactic." Still, the survey said, for MCSC to ensure peaceful implementation, it would have to move swiftly to prevent the white board majority from assuming "a leadership role around which opposition [could] coalesce."  

Given its mission of neutrality, however, MCSC could do little to counter what its Steering Committee's April 27 minutes called "statements by certain school board members in opposition to busing that could be considered inflammatory or at least prejudicial to public acceptance of a Board plan." The May 11 minutes reflected the committee's belief that speaking out too soon could link MCSC permanently to a remedy plan that school officials privately acknowledged would contain far more busing than the community seemed prepared for, which would taint the perception of MCSC
as “a peaceful leader,” further alienate an already suspicious board majority, and possibly open the organization to blame if hostility to busing helped defeat a fall school levy. On the other hand, urged Steering Committee member Carol Lister, “We must act now because there is a vacuum in the community and it is fast becoming filled by words on the issue from the opposition.”

Indeed, as busing in Columbus moved from possibility to probability, organized and increasingly vocal resistance began to emerge. With the active support of board members Langdon and Redden, North Side homemaker and Walden Elementary parent Kaye Cook founded a local chapter of the National Association of Neighborhood Schools (NANS) in mid-May. Around the same time, Worthington real estate broker William Halley organized Citizens Against Forced Busing (CAFB). Both groups stressed change through peaceful legal and legislative means. “We’re not a bunch of rednecks trying to lynch somebody or cause a riot,” said Halley. “We’ll try to change the law. We’re a vast majority. That’s the American system.”

Likewise, said Cook, NANS “is a peaceful, non-violent group” dedicated to “the neighborhood, color-blind school [as] the only way to achieve integration.”

The week after the school board submitted its initial remedy plan, however, grassroots antibusing rhetoric began to grow more inflammatory, hinting at actions beyond peaceful protest. During a packed rally at Salem Elementary, Halley responded to a woman seeking “something [she] could do within the law to keep [her] child in school here” by declaring “there is nothing short of confrontation one way or the other that will do any good.” In a letter to the Dispatch, Cook wrote, “The purpose of NANS is to stay forced busing as well as federal intervention in schools either by a Constitutional amendment or by other means as may be necessary to accomplish this objective.” Just as MCSC’s official neutrality cloaked the integrationism of its leaders, the professed pacifism of antibusing groups seemed to disguise more disruptive designs. Chillingly, after touring Columbus in mid-June, University of Louisville Desegregation
Training Institute director Anthony Gamboa observed, “The divisiveness that exists in Columbus, Ohio is identical to the divisiveness that existed and continues to exist in Louisville and Boston.”

With the school board “falling apart” over remedy planning and a potentially volatile antibusing movement emerging, MCSC decided that city leaders needed to assume a more visible stand. During an open meeting in early June at the chamber of commerce between Rowland Brown, Mayor Moody, and several city council members, city council president M. D. Portman stated that the council stood unanimously behind the “MCSC objectives” and would “do all possible to make Columbus a model city.”

Two weeks later, Moody told a group of seventeen representatives from CAFB and NANS, “My role as mayor of the city of Columbus is not to take sides in this, but to keep peace in the community. The only side I’m taking is the side of the law.” While acknowledging his own ardent opposition to busing, the mayor, typically not given to such uncompromising language, declared, “I must enforce the law and I don’t give a damn about the consequences. . . . Fight if you want in the courtroom, but not in the streets. The minute you begin to fight [in the streets], black or white, I will lock you up and put you both in the same jail cell.” The economic future of Columbus, the mayor said, hinged on the preservation of peace: “If you could walk through Louisville and see the abandoned mall that two years ago was vibrant, you would see what I mean.”

If Moody’s warning reflected a stepped-up sense of urgency among city leaders, it took a civic disaster dress rehearsal to pull MCSC itself from behind the scenes. A Fourth of July KKK rally on the steps of the Ohio Statehouse spiraled into violence when Imperial Wizard Dale Reusch returned the taunts of hundreds of demonstrators chanting “Ku Klux Klan—Scum of the land!” “The air was filled with flying debris, swinging fists, and flailing flagpoles as the battle was joined,” the Call and Post detailed. The mini-riot shook an already jittery city. “If that is the way Columbus is going to accept desegregation,” said state senator Michael Schwarzwalder, a central Ohio Democrat, “we will injure ourselves, our children, and our communities.”

The KKK madrebral and full-page advertisements were a new tactic in the 1970s, designed to alienate potential voters and businesses. The advertisements were printed in local newspapers. The one published in the Columbus Dispatch on June 27, 1971, declared, “Rally Against Busing.”

“Strong language from white leaders has echo chamber effects. It can be very difficult for people in the community to think clearly and calmly,” said Moody. No matter how well-intentioned, white leaders had to make it clear that they would not tolerate such behavior.

In an interview with a local station, which Moody believed 70 percent of the city listened to, he said, “We want you to reassert which it did, ‘raising hell’ for white voters, anyone who says anything about busing more than is necessary.

A week later, a group of white protesters made it onto the air, spelling out a 107-second challenge to Columbus Mayor Moody: “Your city’s not ready for busing more than is necessary.” The mayor replied, “You’re not ready for the busing more than is necessary.”

The next day, Moody wrote a letter to the editor of the Columbus Dispatch, saying, “We are not going to be intimidated by the threat of violence.” The letter was signed by the mayor and the city council, as well as the mayor of Louisville, with whom Moody had been meeting. The letter was a clear signal that the city was united in its opposition to antibusing violence.
observed, “The divisive and the Boston.”

During an open meeting, a council member said, “We must do all possible to end violence and promote harmony.”

The KKK disruption spurred MCSC to move forward with the opening salvo of its privately funded public relations campaign: a full-page ad in the July 27 edition of Columbus's two daily newspapers. The dramatic ad pictured an assortment of cans, rocks, and sticks in front of a STOP FORCED BUSING sign. The caption declared, “RAISING HELL IS NO WAY TO RAISE OUR CHILDREN.”

The ad, which MCSC Community Awareness Program chair Carol Lister conceded was “a bit of a bombshell,” sent antibusing activists scrambling to reassess their right to peaceful resistance, exactly the response MCSC was seeking. “It was designed to capture people's attention, which it did,” Brown explained. “We wanted those who oppose court-ordered desegregation to clearly disavow any resort to obstruction or raising hell.”

A week later, MCSC ran a second, “more upbeat” ad. “Let's make it work, Columbus,” it urged over a set of children's blocks spelling out “education.” “Desegregation is the most crucial challenge Columbus has ever faced. We've learned too valuable a lesson from the disastrous mistakes made in Boston, Louisville, and other cities to make the same ones in Columbus.” Noted Brown, “We didn’t say anybody was wrong, but how they went about trying to prove they were right was critical.” Combined, the two ads braked the antibusing momentum that had been building in the city, sending an
unmistakable warning to enemies of school desegregation that opposition was allowable, but disruption was not. "I think the message was pretty clear," Moody said, "that if you try to start something over this, you're going to end up in trouble and you're not going to lead a popular movement."  

With civic order seemingly threatened, Columbus's elite-driven growth consensus, in the form of MCSC, had responded, demonstrating once again its capacity to define the boundaries of permissible dissent. Anyone who stepped beyond these boundaries, said David Hamlar, risked being "smacked down." "We thought we might as well hit the papers with a splash," recalled MCSC executive director Don Pierce. "It was a message, and the message [was] that it's going to be peaceful, and the business community—your bosses—are behind the peace. You may disagree with it and you have a right to disagree, but we're not going to have a Boston. I think basically MCSC's job was done then. I think that set the tone."  

"Feeling Like a Yo-Yo": Rehnquist's Stay and the Uprooting of MCSC

Sandwiched between the two MCSC ads was Judge Duncan's July 29 ruling declaring the remedies submitted by the Columbus and state boards "constitutionally unacceptable." "The entire Columbus Public School System was unconstitutionally segregated," the judge wrote. "The law requires, then, that the remedy have the hope of desegregating the entire system." After Duncan's ruling, Superintendent Davis said, "it became apparent that there could be no privileged sanctuaries in the school system." Finally, on October 4, Duncan approved a Columbus board plan that desegregated every school in the system to within 15 percent of districtwide black enrollment. The judge ordered implementation the following September, reluctantly dismissing NAACP requests to begin desegregation
that January. "The delay is unfortunate," he wrote, "but not to delay is unreasonable. When balanced against a more orderly and better planned fall implementation . . . the January implementation does not in my view merit the substantial risk of getting the desegregation process off on the wrong foot." 99

Having already authorized an appeal of Duncan's Penick decision, the board voted 4–2 to contest the judge's remedial order as well. The appeals were consolidated, and oral arguments were heard by a three-judge panel in Cincinnati on February 15, 1978. The Sixth Circuit judges had little sympathy for Sam Porter's efforts to undercut Duncan with the "incremental segregative effect" dictum from Justice Rehnquist's Dayton I opinion. Before the board attorney began, Judge George Edwards warned, "You ought to know you have a big job here. You have to demolish the detailed, thorough and well-reasoned opinion of Judge Duncan." Throughout Porter's presentation, the judges peppered him with caustic questions and openly sarcastic comments. "We got bombed!" Porter, the scion of the city's largest law firm, recalled. "That's one of the worst professional experiences I've ever been around. It was awful. They were just all over me. The presiding judge got so mad at me he turned his chair away and wouldn't even look! It was terrible." 100

In the panel's unanimous July 14 decision, Judge Edwards declared the Dayton defense inapplicable and the approved remedy appropriate. "It was not just the last wave which breached the dike and caused the flood," he wrote. "Beyond doubt the sum total of . . . violations made the Columbus school system a segregated school system in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and thoroughly justified the District Judge in ordering a systemwide remedy." 101

The Sixth Circuit's unambiguous ruling seemed to lift what MCSC vice chair Frank Lomax called "the cloud of uncertainty" surrounding school desegregation in Columbus. In its aftermath, the city and school district steeled for fall's apparently inevitable implementation. Stepping up police training and intelligence work, Moody declared, "We are prepared for the worst and hopeful the worst never comes. Columbus will abide by the law, and recognize
the tinder box situation." While MCSC readied its massive public relations program, the school board voted unanimously to approve a Redden-sponsored "peace pledge" proclaiming its "total commitment to obeying the law." "We are hopeful that the Columbus example will prove one for other cities facing court-ordered desegregation to imitate, not to avoid," the Dispatch wrote. The editorial's headline captured the business community's nervous vigilance: "Obeying Court Order Key to City's Image."^102

In early August, 83,000 students received their assignments for the 1978-79 school year; 42,000 would be sent to new schools, 37,000 would be bused. The nation's fourteenth-largest city school system, gradually girding for desegregation since late 1977, now worked feverishly to move an estimated 22,000 desks and chairs, 2,000 boxes of equipment, and 500,000 textbooks. At a gathering of administrators a month before the first day of school, Superintendent Davis declared, "We are prepared."^103

The board majority, however, had one last legal card to play. On August 1, Sam Porter petitioned Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart for a stay of implementation. When Stewart rejected the request without comment the following day, Porter went "justice-shopping," filing the petition next with a sympathetic William Rehnquist. Convinced that the scope of the remedy ordered in Columbus far surpassed the nature of the violations found in Penick, Rehnquist saw the school board's request as a gateway through which to mount an all-out challenge to a decade of desegregation law. If successful, he could transform the concept of "incremental segregative effect" into controlling precedent, effectively precluding the possibility of systemwide remedy.^104

On August 11, Rehnquist ordered an indefinite stay of implementation pending the Columbus school board's petition for Supreme Court review. Not even the power of protocol could prevent the justice from reversing Potter Stewart's original rejection. "While I am naturally reluctant to take action in this matter different from that taken by [Stewart]," he wrote, "I am of the opinion that the Sixth Circuit in this case evinced an unduly grudging application of
In a memo to the Court, Rehnquist justified the authority of his action while tacitly acknowledging its audacity: "It is my understanding that an applicant for a stay may go from Justice to Justice, and that even though he is turned down by eight of the nine Members of the Court, the ninth member nonetheless has the authority to grant it. Obviously, for a ninth Justice to go in the teeth of the recorded views of his eight Brethren would smack of arrogance, but that goes to the question of the wisdom of the action rather than the authority for it."

Though John Paul Stevens agreed to the NAACP's request that the Court convene a special session to review Rehnquist's stay, the majority of the justices, vacationing around the country, were ambivalent toward or opposed to such an extraordinary action. Cautioned Burger, "Justices cannot get involved in a continuing 'ping-pong game.'"

Rehnquist's order, recalled Porter, was "the only stay that was ever granted that stopped the process" of implementation. "We were in shock," commented one school administrator. "It was like putting the brakes on a speeding train." The following day, an overjoyed board majority voted to revert to a "status quo" school year. Antibusing activists volunteered to do anything from stuffing envelopes to moving furniture to get the schools "back to normal" by September 7.

Black leaders, on the other hand, expressed a mix of outrage and anxiety at an action they viewed as a local manifestation of a national conservative backlash against African American advancement. Upon learning of the stay, said Columbus Youth Services Bureau director and MCSC Youth Task Force chair Clifford Tyree, "I experienced feelings that I had felt only on three previous occasions—the death of President John Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Senator Robert Kennedy—the feeling of anger, disbelief and frustration." "I'm worried about what the mood of Columbus and the mood of the state and the mood of the nation is," said Hamlar. "The only protection minorities have is the court, and when the court starts turning on them, it's almost like backing a guy in the corner. He's got to fight his way out." Stated Columbus NAACP
President Tom Fullove, "Our efforts to wipe out segregation and discrimination in Columbus, Ohio are starting to take a beating. Segregation is the water for a growing fervor of discrimination, racism, unemployment and poverty. If black people have not recognized this yet, then we had better start learning how to 'Shuffle' and 'Yes sir boss' again in order to live in this town."  

Caught in the middle, meanwhile, was an MCSC thoroughly surprised by and utterly unprepared for Rehnquist's stay. For the better part of a year, the organization had been working on two fronts to ready the city for desegregation that September. A multifaceted public relations campaign had been assembled that included an onslaught of television, radio, and print ads scheduled to begin ten days before the start of school. At the same time, MCSC task forces established programs designed to foster positive leadership within desegregated schools and productive communication between communities linked by the remedy. By postponing desegregation indefinitely, however, Rehnquist's stay forced MCSC to shelve the PR offensive and suspend the task force programs. Robbed of any immediate role, MCSC suddenly found itself facing troubling questions about its identity and its future. "It is undoubtedly frustrating, feeling like a yo-yo," Brown told an August 16 special meeting of the Steering Committee. "If our purpose was to deal with frustrations of the community, we must first deal with our own frustrations."

To some on the Steering Committee, Rehnquist's stay warranted a fundamental shift in the group's mission, from promoting quality education and peaceful acceptance of federal court orders to pressing actively for integration within the Columbus Public Schools. "'Busing' is a fake [issue]," Capital University president Thomas LANGEVIN argued. "We are for peaceful, integrated, quality education." In his poststay statement to the press, Rowland Brown declared, "We have a strong commitment to achieving higher quality education and greater opportunities for integrated educational experience in Columbus. We have never accepted the proposition that quality education had to suffer by reason of school desegregation in the school system."
Others, however, argued that the organizational integrity of MCSC should not be compromised by individual impatience and frustration. "People should not confuse their personal philosophy with the functions of MCSC," Steering Committee member John Henle cautioned. "It is important to realize that people here wear at least two hats—this Committee plus a strong interest in integrated education; but I would like to stress that it is important for everybody in the group to re-read the purpose of the Committee. We have been subject to the attack that this group is pro-busing and interested in speedy integration. Its purpose was to respond to court orders." MCSC could use its official commitment to "maintaining quality education in metropolitan Columbus" to justify its continued existence. The problem, as Henle recognized, was finding a way of translating this commitment into action without jeopardizing MCSC's already precarious position as a neutral coalition devoted to the promotion of civic peace.

Indeed, while MCSC had effectively conveyed the message that disruption and demagoguery would not be tolerated in Columbus, its stated neutrality left it largely powerless to counter criticism. As a result, antibusing leaders on the board and in the community were able effectively to portray MCSC as what one writer called "some kind of pro-busing bête noire, dominated by suburban liberals whose kids would never see the inside of a public school." Particularly feisty was the telegenic head of NANS, Kaye Cook. Over the course of a year, Cook had become the main mouthpiece of the antibusing movement in Columbus, positioning NANS as a law-abiding champion of nondiscrimination and freedom of choice. In the process, she developed a public prominence far out of proportion to the size of her organization. Describing one televised debate with Moody, Cook recalled, "During the cutaway, he said, 'You're really good. When this whole thing is over with, I'm going to have you working for me.' I looked at him and said, 'Mayor, when this thing is over with, you might be working for me.'"

That Cook's debate opponent was Moody, himself an avowed critic of busing, demonstrates one of MCSC's unexpected problems:
the absence of a pro-desegregation organization in Columbus to counter the accusations of antibusers.\textsuperscript{117} This void was due in part to the participation of so many civil rights groups and African American community leaders in MCSC. On a deeper level, however, it reflected the basic fact that there simply were no "probusing" advocates.\textsuperscript{118} In fifteen years of antisegregation protest, no black leader had ever demanded or endorsed busing as an end in itself. Rather, blacks viewed busing as one tool among many at the disposal of school officials charged with providing equal educational opportunity.\textsuperscript{119} The anger that followed the stay was directed not at Rehnquist's suspension of busing but at a school board that seemed to expend far more effort avoiding its constitutional charge than answering it. Asked Curtis Brooks, executive director of the Columbus Metropolitan Area Community Action Organization (CMACAO), "How can we teach [our children] to respect the 'Star Spangled Banner' if our leaders are still whistling 'Dixie'?"\textsuperscript{120}

Black anger at the school system's persistent refusal to integrate, however, masked a growing ambivalence about desegregation itself. Earlier in the decade, white resistance seemed only to fortify black determination to gain equal access to the resources of the school district. "The huge overwhelming majority [of blacks]," said Duncan, "figured that the South Boston situation just presented another fight and we had to go out and win that kind of a fight: 'Those people are the enemy and we've got to overtake them to get across this line into this promised land.' And what's in the promised land? I don't think anybody thought too much about that."\textsuperscript{121}

A decade of opposition, however, had transformed the language of public debate over desegregation; concern for equal educational opportunity seemed increasingly overwhelmed by contempt for "forced busing," "neighborhood schools," and "racial balance." Twenty-five years after Brown, many blacks were beginning to ask themselves if desegregation in bad faith might be worse than no desegregation at all. Will Anderson, director of the district's pre-desegregation staff development programs, used an apocryphal conversation with a bigoted white teacher to explain this hollow,
haunting sentiment: "'Did you go through the [staff development] training?' 'Yes, I went through the training.' 'Were you sensitized?' 'Yes, I was sensitized. I'm going to try to teach those niggers better.'" With growing legitimacy, some blacks argued that desegregation was inherently destructive; school board member and antibusing zealot Bill Moss consistently characterized "so-called desegregation" as a conspiracy designed to sustain white supremacy by inflaming racial tensions and robbing blacks of control over the education of their children. Following a forum on the question "Is desegregation good or bad for the black community?" a Call and Post reporter concluded, "Consensus in the black community seems to be that desegregation per se is not what is important. What is important . . . is what happens in the classroom. What's being taught, who's doing the teaching, how those persons are responding to the needs of students and the quality of available facilities, the community seems to believe, are more important questions to be answered."\textsuperscript{122}

For many Columbus African Americans, an enduring and inertial faith in the benefits of integration ultimately outweighed justifiable misgivings about the process of school desegregation.\textsuperscript{123} The ambivalence that existed, however, meant that no organized opposition would emerge to combat the crusading ardor of the antibusers. "[It] would have made it easier," Henle said, "if there was a parallel on our left to the anti-busers, because then some of the kooks would be throwing their barbs at them." Instead, MCSC became, by default, the designated villain of antibusing forces on the board and in the community. By the time of Rehnquist's stay, MCSC had been successfully painted as a "pro-busing, pro-desegregation advocacy group."\textsuperscript{124}

The difficulty of sustaining a claim to neutrality in the face of this perception of partiality straitjacketed MCSC's poststay movements. Absent the urgency of imminent desegregation, it could find neither the mandate nor the money to expand its role. Since its inception, MCSC's cash flow had come from separate streams emblematic of the divergent visions within the organization. Federal
grants underwrote its major grassroots efforts, the Youth Task Force and Cooperating Neighborhoods programs. Local, private sector donors, meanwhile, funded the Community Awareness Program, MCSC's elaborate public relations campaign.

Efforts to merge the two streams in the lull following Rehnquist's stay, however, proved futile. With the pressing imperative of peaceful implementation temporarily relaxed, local business leaders were reluctant to pay for programs designed to enhance acceptance not of the court's orders, but of integration itself. Moreover, MCSC's welcome had been worn down by both the drawn-out time line of desegregation and the relentless criticism of antibusers. Describing how doubts about MCSC's continuing relevance made it difficult to pry more money from local foundation and chamber of commerce coffers, Brown told the Steering Committee, "Our problem is not in the staff but at the trustee level. They are tired of hearing from me. [Executive Director Don Pierce] and I are told we have a vested interest." Though he "personally" agreed that the organization's endeavors should extend beyond implementation, John Henle confirmed that the chamber held "a narrower view of MCSC's role: work toward peaceful acceptance of school desegregation." As a consequence, MCSC operated for the first half of 1979 on a bare-bones budget of $20,000.

Rehnquist's action had lifted not just the urgency of desegregation's imminence, but also the sense of its inevitability. "No matter how you slice it," Brown told the Steering Committee, "our present School Board wants to suppose there is no desegregation in sight." The leaders of MCSC's task forces agreed: "In some segments of the Columbus community, the stay has created the illusion that desegregation will never occur in Columbus. This misconception has resulted in apathy and the assumption by some that the issue is now and forever dead." 

Steering Committee members feared the stay might dangerously relegitimize radical opposition to desegregation. "The potential for non-compliance, major civil disobedience, and violence remains," one private report read. "The situation is now more serious since
community involvement in the desegregation process could be more difficult in the future.” “In September,” asserted an MCSC application for federal funds, “the community—while not liking the idea of busing—was ready to accept the idea of peaceful implementation. Now, after the stay, a prevalent attitude appears to be summed up in this statement, ‘See, even a Supreme Court judge says that Duncan’s decision is wrong.’ Without organized community effort and leadership, the once well-prepared groundwork will yield unproductive results that will produce only community discord.”

Penick’s April 24, 1979, Supreme Court hearing only exacerbated the fears and frustrations of MCSC officials. Guided by sympathetic questions from Rehnquist and Lewis Powell, Sam Porter confidently laid out the board’s claim that the violations cited by Judge Duncan “were isolated findings that . . . cannot support a system-wide remedy.” Arguing for the first and only time before the high court, the school board’s attorney redeemed himself for the debacle in Cincinnati a year earlier. “Porter’s reception in the Supreme Court,” wrote NAACP attorney Paul Dimond, “was considerably more friendly than the one he suffered at the hands of the Sixth Circuit. As I listened at counsel table, I had the sinking feeling that the decision had already been made.” “When we left,” Porter recalled, “they carried me out on shields. They thought I’d won that case. I did too.”

By early summer, many had come to believe that a rightward-leaning Supreme Court would further delay, drastically curtail, or even reverse Columbus’s desegregation remedy. For the first time, MCSC was forced to confront the discouraging prospect of promoting public acceptance of a court decision with which the desegregation advocates on the Steering Committee fundamentally disagreed. “If a finding of liability would be reversed,” warned John Henle, “a strict interpretation of our statement of purpose would be that the schools had done nothing wrong. In the event that happens, we will have a lot of personal problems.” “These meetings are getting more depressing,” Anti-Defamation League representative Carol Lister complained in mid-May. “We have to establish a demilitarized zone in this room.”
Demoralized by public criticism and paralyzed by a lack of private support, MCSC officials fretted that months of inactivity had crippled the group to such an extent that it could not even respond effectively to a favorable ruling. "Our situation is like planting a tree and nurturing it for two years," said OSU president Harold Enarson, "then pulling the tree out by the roots, [replanting] it and expecting the tree to flourish."  

“What We Must Do, We Must Do Well”: MCSC and the Campaign for Peaceful Implementation

The wait for word from Washington continued through June, the days passing agonizingly without a decision. Speculation grew that the delay signaled deep divisions on the court, that the justices were in a battle over the soul of school desegregation a quarter century after Brown. Finally, shortly after 10:00 A.M. on July 2, the last day of the Supreme Court’s 1979 spring term, the ruling came down.  

“For the reasons set forth in the opinions filed with the clerk,” Justice Byron White announced, “the judgments of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit are affirmed.” Writing for the majority, White declared that, “the [Columbus] board’s conduct at the time of the trial and before not only was animated by an unconstitutional, segregative purpose, but also had current, segregative impact that was sufficiently systemwide to warrant the remedy ordered by the District Court.” Deferring to Duncan, White found “no apparent reason to disturb the factual findings and conclusions entered by the District Court and strongly affirmed by the Court of Appeals.”

Though by no means the definitive statement some expected, the Columbus ruling, along with the Court’s accompanying Dayton decision, arrested at least temporarily the antidesegregation course the court had taken for the previous five years. “These are the
decisions that determine which century modern America celebrates," commented the New York Times, “the post-Reconstruction abandonment of black Americans, starting in the 1870s, or the birth of liberty heralded by the 1770s... Columbus showed a pattern of segregative choice that the justices could not condone.” Twenty-eight months and one false start after Robert Duncan’s original order, the highest court in the land had sanctioned the systemwide desegregation of the Columbus Public School District. Wrote the Citizen-Journal, “The federal suit charging Columbus schools with illegal racial segregation was filed six years ago. Many of the facts cited during the local trial go back for decades. It is time for Columbus to get on with desegregating its public schools—justice demands it.”

At a closed-door meeting with the school board on July 12, Duncan pronounced fall implementation “unavoidable.” Three weeks later, the judge firmly rebuffed the board’s last-ditch pleas for delay, formally declaring that “full implementation of the remedy plan must commence for all grades in September, 1979.” Neither cost nor convenience, he admonished, could obstruct the “timely vindication of Constitutional rights.” Ironically, the speed with which the district dismantled desegregation in 1978 boomeranged in 1979, as Duncan responded to the board’s logistical laments by dryly suggesting that it “call upon the experience gained in the rapid rescheduling of students last year after the Supreme Court stay order was entered.” In his conclusion, Duncan returned to the melding of civic and Constitutional concerns that had so animated his original order: “The plaintiffs’ day for the enjoyment of rights according to our law has arrived. Any further delay will only make more burdensome an already arduous undertaking. We of this community must get on with it with a view to the day when this court’s involvement in the affairs of the Columbus school district will be concluded. The sooner the better.”

As abruptly as Rehnquist’s stay had uprooted MCSC, White’s opinion replanted it. “MCSC is in business,” Brown told a rejuvenated Steering Committee on July 2, “and what we are being asked
to do is exactly what we are structured to do.” With MCSC as the institutional rallying point, the mechanisms of the city’s growth consensus immediately produced a flurry of activity aimed at ensuring civic order. Businesses “loaned” executives to MCSC to assist with public relations and administrative tasks. Banks donated money for a full-page newspaper ad. Foundations and corporations kicked in the additional funds needed to fine-tune MCSC’s Community Awareness Program. Politicians predicted peace, the police department prepared for violence, and the board of education unanimously restated its “total commitment to obeying the law.”

Having exhausted all avenues of legal protest, antibusing board members publicly embraced the goal of peaceful implementation. “I didn’t give a hang if we did anything or not,” Redden recalled. “I was almost ready to defy the court—that’s how adamant I was that we were doing the wrong thing. [But] we are to obey the courts, we are to obey those over us, regardless of what they are . . . . That was the only thing that kept me from going out on a limb.” Virginia Prentice, whose itch for higher office had moderated her once unflinching opposition to desegregation, captured the reluctant resolve of the board majority with a phrase that would become the district’s implementation credo. Standing before an MCSC-sponsored assemblage of business, political, and community leaders, Prentice proclaimed, “What we must do, we must do well!”

With implementation imminent, hectic preparations commenced to ready the district for its September 6 opening day. The Columbus Council of PTAs organized thousands of volunteer “soothers” to greet students at bus stops and welcome them at schools, while the Coalition of Religious Congregations pledged to have at least one clergy member meet the buses at every building. Principals and teachers held open houses to introduce parents to their children’s new surroundings. “Activity buses” began running with the opening of fall high school sports practice; drivers were given special training and a thirty-three-page handbook emphasizing their importance as front-line representatives of the district. Finally, well aware
of the danger of misinformation, the administration resurrected FACTline, a telephone information bank eliminated by budget cuts earlier in the year. For a month after Duncan's August 2 order, its four phones were inundated with four to five hundred calls a day.144

FACTline also doubled as the "nerve center" of a "community information and rumor control plan" linking 270 East State Street, the district's central administrative offices, with the Columbus police department.145 Officials considered a positive police presence essential to peaceful implementation, particularly in light of the department's painful legacy of police brutality and its historically antagonistic relations with the black community. "The demeanor of police officers was a very substantial problem," said Moody. "There was a lot of work to be done simply to change the vocabulary and the approach of these officers."146 After studying police tactics in Louisville and Boston, the department assigned over half of its entire force to twelve-member security teams.147 The officers received at least seven days of special training, including psychological and sensitivity orientation designed to familiarize them with the unique circumstances of school desegregation.148 At a daily cost to the city of $300,000, the department's specially equipped force would be dispersed throughout the district during the first few days of implementation. Its ultimate goal, noted Desegregation Task Force chief James Rutter, was to go unneeded: "We trained for [violence] and are prepared for it. But if we don't have to use that money, we're not going to."149

Meanwhile, the school system's transportation planners worked intensively to re-reconfigure the district. To desegregate every school to within 15 percent of the system's 35.6 percent black enrollment, an estimated 35,636 students would be bused, twice as many as the year before. Two thousand bus pick-up points—triple the 1978 total—were designated, most within sight of the rider's front door. The district's transportation routes, Joe Davis liked to point out, totaled 31,000 miles a day, the equivalent of six times around the earth every week.150
It was amidst this blizzard of behind-the-scenes activity that MCSC finally assumed center stage, dusting off the media campaign Rehnquist's stay had shelved the year before.\textsuperscript{151} As opening day approached, the faces of five Columbus elementary school students, three white and two black, began appearing all over the city. Gazing from forty-six billboards and two thousand posters, all earnest eyes and plaintive smiles, the innocent quintet accompanied a simple slogan: "We All Look Up to You." The same phrase was repeated in 738 radio spots and 62 television ads, the final line of a ubiquitous jingle that became the theme song for Columbus school desegregation:

Think of us Columbus, and give us kids a break.
Stop and think it over, our futures are at stake.
Remember we'll be learning from what we hear and see.
So think about the kind of kids you want us kids to be.
Think of us Columbus, no matter what you do.
Remember this September, we all look up to you.\textsuperscript{152}

The messengers were small, but their message was powerful. "It was kind of a guilt trip," said John Henle. "'Don't screw up these children's future.'"\textsuperscript{153}

Developed by Hameroff-Milenthal, a local advertising agency, the positive yet pointed media blitz was the centerpiece of MCSC's $300,000 Community Awareness Program.\textsuperscript{154} "We treated it much like a campaign," Brown explained, "a campaign for education and non-violence." Like a political party, MCSC utilized every available outlet to take its message to the citizenry: PTAs, cheerleaders, churches, talk and call-in shows, company newspapers, unions. Even the legendary Woody Hayes, Ohio State's former head football coach, was pressed into service, telling an assembly of student leaders, "When you win, you win together." In the process, the committee sought to create a climate in which complying with the court order was considered both a parental obligation and a civic duty. "The smartest thing MCSC did," said Brown, "was to develop the idea that the people of Columbus, the parents and everybody, had a
responsibility not to let the children down. We had the vast majority of the people in the city, including parents who were very disturbed by busing, feeling like they owed it to the children not to vent their spleen."\textsuperscript{155}

MCSC's media offensive even seemed to make antibusers long for school desegregation, if only as a way to escape the omnipresent advertising jingle. "Whenever I hear the phrase 'we all look up to you,'" read one letter to the \textit{Dispatch}, "I grab my nearest bottle of aspirin. Yes, it actually gives me a headache. Why? Because they are pushing this busing ad down our throats. I hope when school does start, this disgusting commercial will end." The \textit{Dispatch} called Nicole Arena, a red-haired, freckle-faced fifth grader featured in the television spot, "better known right now in these parts, probably, than [TV stars] Loni Anderson or Catherine Bach." Anyone unable to recognize the phrase "we all look up to you," commented the \textit{Citizen-Journal}, "qualif[i]es as a hermit."\textsuperscript{156}

The coda to MCSC's campaign was a final full-page newspaper advertisement funded by the city's three largest banks.\textsuperscript{157} So different from the bombshell two years before, the ad pictured a child's drawing of smiling stick figures, an old-fashioned schoolhouse, and an American flag. Scrawled in crayonlike letters over the binder-paper background was the message, "New faces, new places, but school is still school." For the national media descending on Columbus, the campaign had become as significant a story as desegregation itself, a lesson in transforming urban controversy into civic mission. "Columbus is going to take a test tomorrow," Joe Davis declared the day before implementation, "and the whole nation will be watching. I have every reason to believe we shall pass this test and demonstrate that Columbus is a city to be reckoned with in the future." Though police reports warned of disruption from outside extremists, desegregation planner Damon Asbury later said that "we had had very little happen in the community to suggest that there was going to be any kind of violence." By the time the buses rolled, said Moody, "it is my gut feeling as a politician that
we ended up with over 90 percent of the people in Columbus understanding that obeying the law and making the best of it was the smart way to handle things. It became popular to be peaceful."\(^{158}\)

"Declare Victory and Disband": Peaceful Implementation, Successful Desegregation, and the Demise of MCSC

In an employee newsletter sent out a week before opening day, Superintendent Joe Davis wrote, "To my knowledge, we are the only major city in the country that will be implementing a full-scale remedy plan this fall, and it is inevitable that we will be the focus of a great deal of attention." Indeed, as desegregation dawned on a clear, muggy Thursday, it was greeted by a media barrage unprecedented in the district's history. To cover what WTVN-TV news director Mark Pierce called the "most important thing to happen to Columbus in many, many decades," the three local television outlets dispatched at least six news crews apiece, while the \textit{Dispatch} sent out over thirty reporters and photographers. Combined with the cameras, lights, and microphones of the national press, they formed a teeming media presence that seemed everywhere opening day. As the first bus arrived at Buckeye Junior High, Principal Larry Metz quipped, "Finally the students outnumber the reporters."\(^{159}\)

If the national media had come to Columbus anticipating controversy, they uncovered only calm. Early reports phoned from relieved principals to an anxious Davis indicated that desegregation was proceeding peacefully throughout the district. Eastmoor High: "Everything started off smoothly. Roof's still on and windows are still in." Mifflin High: "So quiet the volunteers have nothing to do. Beautiful start." Brookhaven High: "Not at all different; just a different bunch of kids."\(^{160}\) Pauline Radebaugh, then a school board candidate and
FACTline volunteer, recalled the scene in the administration’s downtown “war room” as the day developed without disruption:

We had desks for *Time, Life, U.S. News and World Report*, the wire services, all the major networks, radio and television—and all these people were in there. They were primed. They’ve got open lines, hot lines all over the country. They started getting antsy around 6:30 [A.M.]. They almost had nervous breakdowns by 8:00. They were chewing nails by 9:30. By 10:00, they were ready to leave: “You haven’t done anything!” They had cars out on Fifth Street ready to roll to take them everywhere they wanted . . . to follow the riots and the violence. And they were disappointed. They were completely gone, out of downtown by noon. They couldn’t find any stories. You know, “Columbus can’t give us the headlines that Boston and everybody else did.”

“They were so used to the fact that when you don’t have conflict you don’t have a story,” Rowland Brown said, “[that] they simply packed up their bags and left, even though they had shot thousands of feet of stuff.”

The uneventfulness of September 6, said Brown, was “almost unbelievable.” The specially equipped officers of the Desegregation Task Force spent most of their time throwing footballs, reading, and playing cards. “We saw the police reading comic books and *Playboy* magazines because there was nothing for them to do,” said PTA volunteer Eleanor Zeller. Boredom reigned in the war room, as well. “Phones were ringing and [reporters] kept coming in to see what we were talking about,” Radebaugh recalled. “And I will never forget—I was answering one call and it was about vacation time. Some parents were double-checking because they had reservations to make, and this [reporter] said, ‘Jesus Christ, all they want to know about is vacation!’” “Columbus is a unique city,” said the school board’s Steven Boley, “and I knew our citizens wouldn’t react like those in Boston, Louisville, or Detroit.”

Other than a few minor logistical blunders, even common opening day chaos largely failed to materialize. “Usually the first day is
kind of ragged," observed Willis. "But everyone has been working hard to make desegregation go. This is probably the smoothest first day that we've had in the nine years I've been here." From OSU basketball twin towers Herb Williams and Granville Waiters at Champion to the "flower ladies" at Binns Elementary, thousands of volunteers met students at bus stops and greeted them at schools. "Some of the students," the Cincinnati Enquirer reported, "appeared more frightened by the onslaught of adult volunteers—both black and white—than the prospects of attending a new school."

Recalled MCSC Youth Task Force chair Cliff Tyree, "I have never experienced a day like that in my life here in Columbus. There was a feeling like, almost festive, of love and concern. . . . I said 'we should bottle this.'" 164

Meanwhile, the "outside agitation" dreaded by school administrators and city officials never appeared. That, said Brown, was more than mere good fortune: "We were told several groups were coming up from Tennessee and Kentucky to raise hell. As it turned out, the state police were alerted. Whether these various steps by law enforcement officials were legal or not, the fact is these folks were 'discouraged' from coming farther north." Only a pair of bomb hoaxes and a handful of picketers hinted at the disruption dreaded for half a decade. "The beauty of the day the buses rolled," said Moody, "was that it was nothing." 165 In a tribute to the triumphantly mundane, the headline in that evening's Dispatch proclaimed: "Opening of Schools Is Normal." 166

Both locally and nationally, the lack of a story in Columbus became the lead story about Columbus. "The fact that nothing had happened," Dispatch editor Robert Smith said, "was just as big news as if something had happened." The city's response to implementation was heralded as an inspiring demonstration of constructive leadership and community goodwill. The Akron Beacon-Journal gushed, "What happened in Columbus . . . should have dealt a blow to cynics and restored the faith of doubters in the basic goodness of civilized people. Children attended classes peacefully, with no more
trauma than ordinarily accompanies an opening day, and with the support of the community. . . . In a world so often torn by selfishness and dissent, a city of half-million that can put aside individual differences for the good of the community and its children offers an encouraging example for all.” Kudos also came from Cleveland, where an even more bitterly fought busing order would begin the following week. “The Columbus experience,” commented the Cleveland Plain-Dealer, “shows busing can go smoothly even though it is initially opposed.” Said Moody, “People across the country were saying, ‘We don’t know how it happened, but it worked in Columbus. They got away with it.’”

In a kind of accidental alchemy, surprised city leaders saw an assumed civic stain metamorphose into public relations gold. A letter to Rowland Brown from John Hamill, president of First Trust Company, captured the business community’s bewildered delight at the revelation that any good could come from desegregation: “I believe that the important message that must get across to the community and to any new businesses coming to town is that while we have busing, the impact of it will not ruin the notion that Columbus is a good city in which to live. I don’t mean to whitewash the situation regarding desegregation of the schools but if, in fact, busing is not as terrible as most believe, it is then that message that has to be promoted.” Somehow, peaceful implementation had not only preserved Columbus’s encouraging growth prospects, it had enhanced them. “The city of Columbus has done something that probably promises more for the future of Columbus than anything else we could possibly do,” Moody told a Kiwanis Club luncheon. “If we can continue this, we will not set back Columbus for three or five years. We can keep the community healthy for investment.” Chamber of commerce president Al Dietzel affirmed that the beginning of busing had not impaired business recruitment. “I haven’t heard anything negative,” he said. “In fact, it’s been to the contrary. There have been a lot of comments nationally over the way desegregation began. It’s been a credit to the school system and the citizens. It speaks well for the community.” Noted a Dispatch story, “While there will
be years of debate over how busing has affected the education of Columbus students, no one argues that Columbus got a king-size helping of 'positive' national publicity." "The people who were looking at us for business dealings didn't stay away," said Moody. "[Peaceful implementation] enhanced our reputation outside the city a great deal more than the people who live here know." It also boosted Columbus's self-image, as Rowland Brown observed: "The city came away feeling very good about itself. This made it, during the eighties, a more attractive place than other cities. . . . It was quiet testimony to the character of the city." 168

Many factors contributed to desegregation's uneventful implementation in Columbus. 169 Foremost among them, however, was the capacity of the city's powerful, business-led growth consensus to absorb dissent by marshaling its sweeping influence behind the cause of civic order. As the institutional manifestation of this consensus, MCSC justifiably received much of the acclaim bestowed on Columbus in the afterglow of implementation. Assistant attorney general Drew Days III issued a "rare" Justice Department statement expressing "congratulations to the citizens of Columbus, Ohio and to the Metropolitan Columbus Schools Committee on their splendid efforts to ensure a peaceful transition to desegregated schools." MCSC, one reporter wrote, "turned out to be a bigger story than desegregation itself. . . . Columbus may have just had the finest experience of any major city in starting school desegregation." And in its 1979 Annual Report, the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce boasted, "We were one of the primary supporters of the Metropolitan Columbus Schools Committee, which affected a nationally unprecedented peaceful implementation of this city's school desegregation plan." 170

The applause was a gratifying reward for the individuals who had guided MCSC through a tumultuous three years. "Since June '76," an appreciative Brown told the Steering Committee shortly after opening day, "we've come a long way." Yet Brown and his colleagues also understood that this distance had only taken MCSC to the starting line, that civic order could not be confused with "successful
desegregation”: “Peaceful implementation of desegregation was a positive beginning for the school system. MCSC realizes that peaceful desegregation is not the same as successful desegregation. Successful desegregation is an ongoing process requiring continuing adjustment and assistance in the transition from the logistics of desegregation to effective education in an integrated setting.” In other words, while a tranquil start to the school year was imperative, the real challenges lay ahead. As the headiness of opening day dissipated, concerns reemerged about desegregation’s perplexing but predictable “second generation” complications, the obvious and invisible clashes that arise when ingrained prejudices meet unprecedented racial and economic diversity. The building-level problems MCSC officials observed were confirmed by Damon Asbury, director of the district’s desegregation monitoring office: escalating discipline problems; declining teacher morale; diminishing parental involvement; and racially disproportionate suspension, expulsion, corporal punishment, extracurricular participation, and special education “tracking” statistics. All of these intractable dilemmas were developing in a school system that had not passed an additional operating levy since 1968, a district whose science textbooks still wondered if humans would ever set foot on the moon.

Desegregation advocates in MCSC believed that its postimplementation momentum should be channeled into addressing these issues. “There is a continuing need,” a November internal report declared, “for an agency, independent of the school system, to operate a program dealing with second-generation desegregation problems.” For the next several months, committee members brainstormed the structure and purpose of such an agency. Should it be a school district watchdog? A desegregation monitor? An educational research group? Should it advocate specific issues, develop grassroots programs, or nurture school-business partnerships? And, the most basic question, should it proceed as MCSC or assume a new name and different mission?

Initially, committee leaders maintained that MCSC had the community credibility to proceed under a broader mandate. “MCSC
is perceived as a functional, viable coalition of people interested in schools," Brown said. "We have created an image of an institution that can do Columbus some good." Moreover, officials noted, "We are the only citywide organization dealing with schools right now in the desegregated setting outside of the system." However, it was business community participation that had legitimized MCSC and business community money that had sustained it. Consequently, business community support would be essential if MCSC were to continue in its existing incarnation.

Only a few weeks after the opening of school, signs began to appear signaling that such support would not be forthcoming. In the years between the formulation of MCSC and the implementation of desegregation, a significant shake-up had taken place at the chamber of commerce that marked the completion of a generational and attitudinal shift among Columbus's business elite. With the blessing of a new line of old names, an emerging crop of aggressive young entrepreneurs—impatient with the low-key leadership of President Kline Roberts—had commandeered the chamber. Roberts, they believed, had for too long emphasized social issues at the expense of the chamber's primary mission: economic development. Meanwhile, municipal competition had increased and Columbus's growth had slowed. A new brand of unabashed boosterism was needed to sell the city, and the chamber was its logical headquarters. "After two decades of boom expansion," Dispatch reporter David Lore wrote in late 1977, "the local economy appears to be returning to the moderate growth patterns which marked the pre-war years. At the chamber, businessmen seem to be saying the ride is over. It's time to get out and push. And many don't view Roberts as a pusher." Lore's article, part of a six-part series on the changing nature of city leadership, served as a public warning of Wolfe family opposition to the longtime chamber head. An unmistakable omen, it marked the beginning of the end of Roberts's tenure; by late 1978, he was gone, replaced by Al Dietzel, executive director of the local United Way.

With Dietzel as president and dynamic young developer Jack Kessler as chair of the board, the chamber of commerce quickly
signaled its new direction. "We did an analysis and found a relatively small amount of chamber money actually goes to economic development," Dietzel announced, promising a fourfold increase. During the fall of 1979, the chamber launched "Columbus, We're Making It Great," an extensive advertising and marketing campaign designed to sell the city to outside businesses and promote civic pride. Stated the chamber's 1979 annual report, "We believe we have laid a solid foundation for a newer, bolder Columbus Chamber for the 1980s. . . . In essence, we do not intend to be a passive observer." 175

The emergence of this new boosterism pushed MCSC's allies at the chamber of commerce out of favor. 176 With them went any hope of securing private-sector support to maintain or expand the committee's activities. To a business leadership that had always equated peaceful implementation with successful desegregation, MCSC's was a mission accomplished. The goal of preventing "another Boston" had little to do with struggles in the classroom and everything to do with battles in the street; consensus could be built around programs seen as promoting civic order, not programs perceived as promoting desegregation. "The business people in this community," MCSC vice chairman and Urban League executive director Frank Lomax lamented, "are saying, 'Okay, we got the buses rolling; it's over.' That's simply not right. There's a long, long way to go yet." "Perhaps too many of us think of our program only in terms of community awareness and billboards," Brown scornfully suggested. What Brown and Lomax saw as the beginning of the fight, however, business leaders viewed as the end of a war. "My belief," said John Elam, the chamber's MCSC representative, "is that—as in Vietnam—this group should declare victory and disband." 177

It was evident by the end of 1979 that the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce had no interest in extending its imprimatur to either a reconstituted MCSC or a reconfigured successor. Tellingly, the chamber's endorsement was conspicuously missing from MCSC's final application for federal funds. 178 Said Lomax, "The people who don't pay attention to the system . . . assume the job is already done." Absent the cash and clout of the business community,
MCSC itself clearly could not continue. Instead, vowed John Henle, "a generation of new ideas . . . will arise from [its] ashes." By April 1980, Steering Committee diehards had reached a "consensus . . . that within a year MCSC should cease to exist, but should be replaced by another vehicle concerned with broader issues in public education." Eventually, Brown believed, "some other organization" would emerge "to meet . . . a growing demand by business, labor, religious and civic groups to play a more direct role in the future, not only of the Columbus Schools, but of education in Central Ohio in general." 179

No such phoenix would arise, however, to take MCSC's place. "The people of this area respond very well, shoulder to shoulder, in emergencies," Moody observed, "[but] we let things slip away from us in our calmness and smugness." 180 Impending implementation had created a sense of unifying urgency in Columbus that the daily routine of desegregation could not inspire. For four years, two often overlapping visions had coexisted within MCSC: one viewed school desegregation through the prism of economic development, the other through the lens of human development. Only the former, however, could galvanize the growth consensus that shaped political and economic activity in Columbus. Despite the efforts of its adherents to preserve such a fragile and fragmented coalition, the glue that held MCSC together dissolved on September 6, 1979. Over the next nine months, unable to secure either federal funds or sufficient local support, MCSC—and the immediacy that had sustained it—gradually, inexorably disintegrated. 181 Finally, during the summer of 1980, without fanfare and without declaring victory, it noiselessly disappeared.

Though one can easily regard MCSC's demise as an opportunity lost, there is no guarantee that its continued existence would have produced constructive contributions to urban education in Columbus, particularly given the dogged resistance of educational bureaucracies to the scrutiny of outsiders. More than anything else, the history of MCSC reveals both the broad power and the narrow limitations of the business-led growth consensus that governs Columbus.
By successfully rallying the community behind the laudable goal of peaceful implementation, city leaders displayed their capacity to define both the parameters of public debate and the boundaries of permissible dissent in Columbus. At the same time, however, the equating of peaceful implementation with successful desegregation—the prioritization of civic order over civil rights—implicitly exposed the assumption that economic development and efforts to ensure equal educational opportunity are inherently incompatible.