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FIGHTING FOR CIVIL RIGHTS:
SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN BOSTON (1965-74)

COMBATTERE PER I DIRITTI CIVILI:
LA DESEGREGAZIONE SCOLASTICA A BOSTON (1965-74)

The article aims to reconstruct the public dissent by part of Boston citizenship about an event which has shocked the Massachusetts' public eye for a decade. It is a paradox that the center of US education generated a brutal opposition by its population, sometimes resulting in lynching attempts towards the African-American minority. Between 1960s and 1970s, Boston was shocked by a period of urban protests concerning the change of public school system. The core of Irish-American citizenship, led by the president of Boston School Committee, Louise Day Hicks, opposed to the Racial Imbalance Act in 1965. This law supported the improvement of the Boston school body's racial balancing within public schools. In 1972, the court case Morgan v. Hennigan created a gap in the Boston public school system, which kept supporting segregation. The status quo of this clear segregation between white and non-white students lasted until 1974, when the US federal judge Arthur W. Garrity claimed the Boston public schools as segregationist, forcing the moving (by three years) of 20,000 non-white students within 'white' public schools. This coercive approach proved to be a failure during the so-called Boston Busing Crisis (1974-88) and led to several clashes between the law enforcement and the inhabitants of South Boston neighborhood. The lack of closeness between federal authorities and Boston citizenship led to an ethnic struggle, which produced a big decrease of the attendance in public schools.

L'articolo si pone l'obiettivo di ricostruire il dissenso pubblico di parte della cittadinanza di Boston su un evento che sconvolse per un decennio l'opinione pubblica del Massachusetts. È un paradosso che il centro dell'istruzione statunitense abbia generato una brutale opposizione da parte della sua popolazione, sfociata talvolta in tentativi di linciaggio contro la minoranza afro-americana. Tra gli anni Sessanta e Settanta, Boston fu sconvolta da un periodo di proteste urbane inerenti al cambiamento del sistema scolastico pubblico. La cittadinanza Irish-American, personificata dal presidente del Boston School Committee, Louise Day Hicks, si oppose al Racial Imbalance Act del 1965. Tale legge appoggiava il miglioramento del bilanciamento etnico del corpo studentesco di Boston, che continuava a essere di stampo segregazionista. Lo *status quo* di questa evidente segregazione tra studenti bianchi e non bianchi durò fino al 1974, quando il giudice federale Arthur W. Garrity dichiarò segregazioniste le scuole pubbliche di Boston, costringendo quindi il trasferimento (entro tre anni) di 20.000 studenti non bianchi all'interno delle scuole pubbliche etnicamente sbilanciate. Tuttavia, questo approccio coercitivo si dimostrò un fallimento, sfociato nella cosiddetta Boston Busing Crisis (1974-88), che produsse numerosi scontri di piazza tra le forze dell'ordine e gli abitanti del quartiere di South Boston. La mancanza di vicinanza tra le istituzioni federali e la cittadinanza di Boston condusse a un conflitto etnico che provocò un forte decremento della frequenza studentesca all'interno delle scuole pubbliche.

Key words: Arthur W. Garrity; Boston; Louise Day Hicks; public school; Racial Imbalance Act; racial segregation.

Parole chiave: Arthur W. Garrity; Boston; Louise Day Hicks; scuole pubbliche; Racial Imbalance Act; segregazione razziale.

Introduction

The historical issue of school desegregation in Boston is a case study that has been addressed by the American historiography since its own development. The first direct testimony of the turbulent environment was written by the Socialist Workers Party activist Willie Mae Reid in a *pamphlet* in 1974 (Reid 1974). Instead, thanks to the historically accurate book of journalist Alan Lupo *Liberty's Chosen Home*, the newspaper reports became history making way for the rationalism of analysis (Lupo 1977). As Jack Tager has wisely observed, Boston history has been characterized by its rebellion against foreign shapes of abuse on citizenship since the origin of United States (Tager 2001, 171-226). This was also confirmed by the 1950s for the Boston Irish-Americans, when the foreign thread was the African-American community. Despite the fact that comparative studies about school desegregation between US cities have been written (Taylor 1998), the Bostonian case, over time, became the evidence of a citizenship's contradiction, although advanced in education, violently expressed its disagreement to a law, the Racial Imbalance Act (from now on RIA), on the recognition of the culture right. According to the historian Ronald P. Formisano, the public reaction to school desegregation was the results of unplanned judicial proceedings, but rather brutally ordered by default without consulting the neighborhood authorities (Formisano 2004, 69-70).

That fifteen-year period (1974-88) of racial protest and civil riots (with bulk 1974-76) was defined by the US historiography as the Boston Busing Crisis, since the symbol about the unwanted school desegregation took shape in the compulsory busing of non-white students into the racial imbalanced public schools. The most meaningful image of Boston Busing Crisis' racism was caught on April 5, 1976, in the famous photograph *The Soiling of Old Glory* taken by the *Boston Herald* reporter Stanley J. Forman, in which a young man was shown in front of the City Hall in an effort to pierce the African-American lawyer Theodore Landsmark with a US flag (Anglin 1976, 1; Masur 2008). Contrary to what we might imagine about the progressive stereotype symbolized by the Kennedys' political role, the Irish-American and Italian-American communities never advocated a social and political approach open to non-European minorities. The majority of Bostonians hadn't been able to easily accept the forced and sudden integration of African-Americans, who begun to settle in New England and Midwest by getting away from the revival wave of Ku Klux Klan in the southern states [Boston Redevelopment Authority (from now on BRA) n. d., 4, fig. 7.4]. The article aims to focus the busing and the *de facto* racial school segregation's issues in Boston from the perspective of the main players representing the urban white majority.

The social and demographic context

Between 1950s and 1970s, the city modified in urban geography, economy and population. The development of gentrification and services sector caused a qualitative and

quantitative change in citizenship, which fell by a fifth from 800,000 to 640,000 inhabitants. At the same time, the African-American community in Boston increased its number from 42,000 to 104,000 people (BRA & Housing Task Force 1973, 5; BRA & Boston Urban Observatory 1975, 209, tab. V-3), while highlighting some districts in which the percentage came down to 1 percent. These neighborhoods were mainly inhabited by Irish-Americans together with smaller Italian, Polish and Lithuanian ethnic groups, all united by the same Catholic faith and complexion. Still in 1975, the urban segregation in white and black neighborhoods kept persisting in North End, Charlestown, South Boston, East Boston, Roslindale and Hyde Park, where 96 percent of their inhabitants were white, and *vice versa* in Groove Hall and Roxbury, where 70 percent of their population were non-white (BRA 1972, 5; BRA 1976, 20, tab. 6). The majority of African-American population resided in a single urban belt named “Black Boomerang”, located within the suburban districts of Dorchester, Roslindale and Roxbury (Sullivan 1972, 141; Massachusetts Advisory Committee 1963, 3-10, tab. 2).

Although in the southern states the school segregation *de iure* started to be reported and then abolished from the mid-1950s because of the court sentences, in the northern states such as Massachusetts the racial segregation in public schools kept existing *de facto* until the mid-1960s. The main reason maintaining the segregation was geographic, since the African-American students kept attending the public schools within their neighborhoods and, at the same time, both the state and local authorities never worried about the clear school imbalance. In Boston, the school segregation was present *de facto* until 1960s and this was extended to a clear ghettoization of the African-American minority within some suburban districts. Therefore, the black population tended to attend their neighborhoods’ public schools, which were worst in the education field than the white districts’ public schools. Back in 1961, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (from now on NAACP) reported to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination a marked state of racial imbalance in Boston public schools. However, the latter argued that discrimination in Boston was not a problem if compared to the violent acts in the southern states. It was clear that there was no need for an inquiry concerning a social issue that did not seem to exist in Massachusetts (Delmont and Theoharis 2017, 194-95).

A first turning point took place in March 1965, when a report by the Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance and Education pointed out the segregation of African-American students in Massachusetts and Boston public schools. According to the Commissioner of the Board of Education, Owen B. Kiernan, 55 schools in Massachusetts (including 45 in Boston) were found imbalanced with a white student body greater than 50 percent. At the same time, schools with an almost fully non-white student body were found. For instance, African-American students exceeded 90 percent of total in at least 18 elementary Massachusetts’ schools. Segregated public schools for non-white students gave also a lesser education than those for white students (Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance and Education 1965, 8, 27-28, tab. IIIC-1). In accordance with Kiernan, the development administrator of the BRA Edward J. Logue proposed a \$5 million budget to support the transfer of 4,000 non-white pupils

from the Dorchester and Roxbury ghetto districts to white districts as South Boston (Giguere 1965, 1). However, once Boston public schools' imbalance was observed, first disputes came through the words of the Irish-American Boston School Committee (from now on BSC) president and former teacher Louise Day Hicks. Considered as the symbol of the opposition to the school desegregation, she supported the uselessness of Kiernan's report: «Busing pupils out of Boston isn't going to solve the problems for the Negro child... Their problem is not going to be solved through osmosis by sitting next to the white child... Not one of our children is going to the suburbs» ("Kiernan" 1965, 1).

Despite Hicks' complaints, the Massachusetts General Court enacted the RIA. The law ensured «the promotion of racial balance and the correction of existing racial imbalance in the public schools» (Massachusetts General Laws 1965, 414). From the 1965-66 school year, the BSC should have prepared a report in order to plan a homogeneous student body. The two main objectives the law set out to implement for the African-American minority concerned the balance of non-white pupils throughout the Boston education system and the organization for their transportation from their homes to white public schools through school buses. The US senator Edward Kennedy proposed a federal funding of \$50 million to enforce the law (Cronin 2008, 84). However, at the same time, the act didn't set up any educational program, which would have surely favored a better awareness of the desegregation problem between the school staff. Once Massachusetts Governor John A. Volpe signed the law on August 1965, racial segregation was *de facto* recognized. The act also denied federal funding to all public schools which didn't rule a racial integration plan [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (from now on USCCR) 1975, 63-66, 79]. Therefore, full responsibility was given to the BSC (elected by the citizenship), which didn't promote any kind of school desegregation plan. In fact, the division between local and federal authorities was due to the city's political system. In Boston, members of BSC were elected by citizenship, unlike New York, Chicago, Baltimore and San Francisco where they were appointed by the mayor (Fiss 1965, 580, note 18).

It's interesting that Boston Democratic Party had a double and opposite progressive and conservative soul. On the one hand, Kennedy's Democratic trend in Washington was a supporter of racial integration in all its social shape; on the other hand, the Democratic faction led by the next Massachusetts state senator William M. Bulger was strongly opposed to the RIA. Both Hicks in BSC and Bulger in State Senate represented that group of Boston Democratic Party in line with the Boston Irish-American working class. While Hicks and Bulger never considered themselves racists, they embodied the conservative populist which defended the South Boston district's identity. It became the headquarter of the Irish-American populist wave resistant to Boston national press such as *Boston Globe* or *Boston Herald*, but very close to the neighborhood newspapers like *South Boston Tribune* or *Hyde Park Tribune* (Cronin 2008, 102). As J. Anthony Lukas wrote in *Common Ground* through the specific case of three South Boston families, we notice that school desegregation was firstly a class struggle as well as ethnicities (Lukas 2012). In particular, BSC members missed any demands of "free

enrollment” in imbalanced South Boston public schools [House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights (from now on SCCR) 1981, 281]. For instance, Hicks showed her dissent against any kind of white students transfer to “ghetto” schools in an interview with Boston’s *WEEI* radio station:

I am opposed to busing in any form, whether it is for racially balancing the schools or for overcrowded conditions. I feel that other measures can be taken. Of course, I do realize that the condition would never exist if we did have a building program in operation in the city of Boston. Because it is the lack of schools that is causing us to have the overcrowding in these sections. But this is... to me... busing... at all times. It isn’t an emotional issue with me, but rather that I feel that it’s harmful educationally, and also that I feel that we have many other aspects of busing that are very displeasing to parents. You, see, parents want their children in the neighborhood school in order that they may go and visit them and in order that the children may have all the relationships which a neighborhood school pattern does bring. Also as you well know, buses are mechanical, and what do you do with a child who misses the bus, gets sick when she’s brought out of her district?

... I personally will never vote for busing, whether it is a mandate from the educational committee, and whether it even means that they will withhold state funds (Harner and Stoler 1965, 3, 16).

From the Racial Imbalance Act to the Morgan v. Hennigan case

Back in September 1965, white public schools’ staff and teachers declared themselves hostile against the so-called Operation Exodus. An own initiative by the parents of African-American students involved in the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (from now on METCO). The Operation Exodus should have provided to enroll 300 Roxbury non-white students into white public schools (Board of Operation Exodus 1965). However, at the beginning of the 1965-66 school year, several white public schools were closed in protest by showing that the State authorities’ coercive will didn’t match to the citizenship’s needs. What the African-American community found to be a right, for a white Bostonians’ part seemed to be a privilege (Wolff n. d., 8). The Operation Exodus was self-financed by the parents of Roxbury’s non-white students and it lasted until 1970, when the number of pupils moved by buses expanded to 1,100. A year later, the figure drastically dropped to 171 (SCCR 1981, 281), because new schools were built into the African-American districts [United States District Court District of Massachusetts (from now on USDCDM) 1974, 77, note 27].

During the 1971-72 school year there were 96,000 admissions in elementary, junior high and senior high schools, of which 61 percent was composed by white and 39 percent by non-white students. 84 percent of white students attended public schools with an over 80 percent white student body, while 62 percent of non-white students attended public schools with an over 70 percent non-white student body. In this way, it was found that at least 80 percent of Boston public schools continued to implement the segregation, partly because of BSC, partly for a lax policy achieved by the Massachusetts General Court which adapted itself to a social reform started

by Washington with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (USDCCDM 1974, 60). Even the Democratic mayor of Boston, Kevin H. White, was characterized by his personal awareness of school desegregation matter, which nevertheless persisted within the white and poor districts. According to White, the northern states were not prepared enough to face such social change because Boston school imbalance wasn't seen as a serious problem if compared to the southern states' discrimination (USCCR 1975, 32).

Until 1972, public schools were imbalanced since the BSC made no efforts for the "open enrollment" implementation. On the contrary, in June 1971, the BSC funded the transfer of 4,000 African-American pupils from the downtown schools to suburban schools attended by non-white students. At the same time, thousands of white students from suburban districts could replace non-white students by enrolling them in the downtown schools (USDCCDM 1974, 28, 116). Unlike neighboring municipalities such as Bedford, Cambridge, Medford and Worcester, Boston public schools kept boycotting the RIA desegregation plan through parades and strikes by the school staff (Sullivan 1972, 139-40). That's how the BSC president, James W. Hennigan, referred to the Board of Education Commissioner during one of their meeting in June 1971 concerning the need for the establishment of a racial balanced plan in public schools: «If you want my quick reaction to it, I'd hold this plan in my back pocket until he demands it» (USDCCDM 1974, 28).

However, the years of silence were interrupted on March 15, 1972, when the Boston branch of NAACP filed a class-action lawsuit to the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts in order to report the school segregation *status quo* endorsed by the BSC's failure. The court case became famous as *Tallulah Morgan v. James W. Hennigan*. In his defense, Hennigan highlighted racial imbalance as an issue outside of the school education but linked to the politics, by claiming that he enforced the RIA as far as possible (USDCCDM 1974, 3). Referring to *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Keyes v. School District No. 1*¹, on June 21, 1974, judge Arthur W. Garrity, son of a NAACP white member (Cronin 2008, 97), found that Boston public schools were unconstitutionally segregated, by still calling them imbalanced (USDCCDM 1974, 137-38). BSC was guilty of knowingly keeping a laxity about the balance of student body in public schools, thus confirming «a dual school system» (USDCCDM 1974, 16; Formisano 2004, 44). Even by the Massachusetts General Court, the meaning of racial imbalance, racial balance and racial isolation were refined. According to the RIA, a public school was «racial imbalanced» if it had an over 50 percent non-white student body; a «racial balanced» school if it had a non-white student body between 30 percent and 50 percent; a «racial isolated» school if it had a non-white student body less than 30 percent (Massachusetts General Laws 1974, H6431D). Still in 1974, there were 48 elementary, middle and high schools with an over 80 percent white student body, while 67 had an over 80 percent non-white student body in 177 imbalanced public schools (USDCCDM 1974, 23-24).

¹ This was a Supreme Court case that claimed *de facto* segregation in Denver public school system.

School desegregation didn't concern the students only, but also the teachers. In fact, 75 percent of non-white teachers worked at public schools with an over 50 percent non-white student body. In Boston, even 81 public schools never hired a non-white teacher. Between 1967 and 1972 the percentage of non-white teachers in non-white schools increased from 67 percent to 74 percent. For instance, in the 1972-73 school year, 244 out of 356 non-white ordinary and substitute teachers worked in public schools with an over 50 percent non-white student body. During the 1972-73 school year, the ordinary teacher staff amounted to 4,243 people, of whom 231 were non-white (5,3 percent). It's a low percentage if we compared it to the non-white citizenship (16 percent) and the non-white students (33 percent)² (USDCCDM 1974, 25, 96, 106-107).

According to the sentence, it was decided to re-plan the school desegregation from the 1974-75 school year for a period of 15 years, by following 2 phases. Phase 1: by September 1975, the Garrity plan would have made the student body of the 80 most imbalanced white public schools at least 33 percent non-white, including African-American, Asian-American and Latin-American pupils. At the same time, City-wide Parents' Advisory Council would have set up in order to monitor the eventual BSC's failure. Phase 2: between 1975 and 1988, school desegregation should be carried out within the 22 Boston school districts under the Supreme Court's jurisdiction and without consulting of the BSC, by trying to cut down the transport costs for students needed to move in schools in other neighborhoods through school buses. Such mobilization procedure should have involved about 20,000 children and teenagers (USCCR 1975. *School*, 76, 79-80, 85; USCCR n. d., 28; USDCCDM 1974, 150,152).

A loud and folk resistance

As an immediate reaction to Garrity's judgment, an anti-desegregation movement was founded by Hicks in July 1974, the Restore Our Alienated Rights (from now on ROAR). According to Formisano, the ROAR became the most concrete example of the so-called «reactionary populism» (Formisano 2014, 172), which mainly involved white working class living in South Boston. Hicks considered unconstitutional the judgment, even demanding the attention of the Congress and the President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford, for the RIA's repeal. On March 18, 1975, 1,500 members of ROAR met in front of the US Capitol claiming for an Amendment's bill, which should have repealed school desegregation in Boston (USCCR 1975. *School*, 54). By Ford, however, the implementation of an act should have been the priority for the federal government:

At the outset, I wish to make it very, very direct. I deplore violence that I have read about and seen on television. I think that's most unfortunate. I would like to add this, however. The court decision in that case, in my judgment, was not the best solution to quality edu-

² Between 1965 and 1972 the non-white student body increased from 21,097 to 35,059 (Massachusetts Department of Education 1972, 1).

cation in Boston. I have consistently opposed forced busing to achieve racial balance as a solution to quality education. And, therefore, I respectfully disagree with the Judge's order. But having said that, I think it is of maximum importance that the citizens of Boston respect the law and I hope and trust that it's not necessary to call in Federal officials or Federal law enforcement agencies. Now, the marshals, if my information is accurate, are under the jurisdiction of the court, not directly under my jurisdiction. As far as I know, no specific request has come to me for any Federal involvement and therefore I'm not in a position to act under those circumstances (USCCR 1975. *School*, 115-16).

Despite the fact that Hicks was supported by Massachusetts US Representative John J. Moakley³, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice chairperson, Robert W. Kastenmeier, refused the possibility that the Hicks' demand could be discussed:

I have concluded that it would be inappropriate for my subcommittee, and indeed, all proposed legislation for my subcommittee to intervene, either legislatively or by holding hearings, with the relationship between the United States District Court and local governmental units within the city of Boston.

... In view of limited jurisdiction of the subcommittee and the obvious constitutional limitations on Congressional intervention in the powers of the Judicial Branch, I regret that it is not possible to schedule hearings in Boston on Federal Court desegregation orders⁴.

According to Hicks, the public schools should have been «neighborhood schools for neighborhood children» (Feeney 2003) along with Boston, homeland for white Bostonians only. In the correspondence between Hicks and Garrity, it appears that the member of Boston City Council asked for a meeting with the judge in order to change his mind about the school desegregation⁵. Hicks even highlighted that non-white neighborhoods were crime areas unlike the white ones. For this reason, «no child should live in a high crime area»⁶, least of all the white and Irish-American South Boston children. Their parents, in fact, were never willing to move their sons into African-American schools. Here is the statement of a South Boston family man:

³ John J. Moakley, 1927-2001. "Correspondence between John Joseph Moakley and Louise Day Hicks of the Boston City Council regarding busing, December 1975-January 1976," *Moakley Archive & Institute*, <http://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/9104>. Accessed 21 July 2018; John J. Moakley, 1927-2001. "Correspondence between John Joseph Moakley and South Boston constituent regarding busing, and bumper sticker, 1 December 1975," *Moakley Archive & Institute*, <http://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/536>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

⁴ John J. Moakley, 1927-2001. "Correspondence between John Joseph Moakley and Louise Day Hicks of the Boston City Council regarding busing, December 1975-January 1976," *Moakley Archive & Institute*.

⁵ Arthur W. Garrity, Jr. Chambers papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997. "Letter from Louise Day Hicks, Boston City Councilor, to Judge W. Arthur Garrity, 28 July 1975," *University of Massachusetts Boston, Joseph P. Healey Library*, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15774coll33/id/11>. Accessed 21 July 2018; Arthur W. Garrity, Jr. Chambers papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997. "Letter from Louise Day Hicks, Boston City Councilor, to Judge W. Arthur Garrity, 9 December 1974," *University of Massachusetts Boston, Joseph P. Healey Library*, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15774coll33/id/5>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

⁶ Arthur W. Garrity, Jr. Chambers papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997. "Correspondence between Louise Day Hicks, Boston City Councilor, and Judge W. Arthur Garrity, August-October 1974," *University of Massachusetts Boston, Joseph P. Healey Library*, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15774coll33/id/1>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

Would you believe that 90 percent of the crime in downtown Boston in done by blacks? ... Go to court any time. Or come into the station. Or go to Boylston Street. See for yourself. It all comes down to one word: discipline. In Roxbury, the kids don't have a home life, and they don't get discipline. Of course, we only see the bad people, not the good. We see the white maggots, too. But 90 percent is black. The blacks who aren't like that move away. My boy is only 10. He's young enough so I can still put my arms around his shoulder at a Little League game. I'm putting a lamb in with the lions (Jehlen 1975).

Through the use of a politics of fear, Hicks traced back 223 crimes of murder in Boston between 1973 and 1974 to the African-American violence, by hiding the truth that most of these homicides were due to the outbreak of an Irish gang war between two South Boston criminal factions (Sandbrook 2011, 53; English 2005, 291-323).

On average, in the early days of 1974-75 school year, there were several absences by the white students, who largely preferred to enroll in Catholic private schools rather than share school spaces with non-white students (Glinski 1988, 78). For instance, the first day of school half the student body attended at William Bradford Annex School in Dorchester; 124 out of 1,300 students attended at South Boston High School; only 20 students at Roxbury High School (Weinbaum 2004, 4). Private schools were excluded by the RIA desegregation plan because they were run by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and were composed by an almost entirely white student body. In the 1974-75 school year only 4,029 students out of 81,540 were African-American, Asian-American or Latin-American (Glinski 1988, 68, tab. 1, 78). As far as the 82,000 public schools' students was concerned, their attendance approximatively averaged 75 percent during the 1974-75 school year. Rash of absence involved half of the whole student body in public schools during the National Boycott Day on October 4, 1974 (USCCR 1975, 76).

The peaceful complaints started to be replaced by violence especially in neighborhoods such as South Boston, East Boston, Hyde Park, Charlestown, Dorchester and Roxbury. These districts turned into real battlefields between demonstrators and law enforcement by September 1974 ("Police" 1974). The hatred for Garrity showed up in anonymous letters, in which explicit death threats were written: «I hope you die a very miserable death preferably by cancer»⁷ and «What this nation needs is more hanging judges»⁸. At the end of October, for instance, a teenager was arrested for manufacturing 8 Molotov cocktails which should be used «to intimidate black students» ("Busing" 1974) moved to Hyde Park High School. Furthermore, the stabbing of a white student by an African-American student in South Boston High School became the reason for kidnapping 131 non-white students inside the school by a thousand white students (Kifner 1974, 30).

⁷ Arthur W. Garrity, Jr. Chambers papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997. "Letter to Judge W. Arthur Garrity, 25 June 1974," *University of Massachusetts Boston, Joseph P. Healey Library*, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15774coll33/id/98>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

⁸ Arthur W. Garrity, Jr. Chambers papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997. "Threatening letter sent to Judge W. Arthur Garrity, 19 January 1975," *University of Massachusetts Boston, Joseph P. Healey Library*, <http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15774coll33/id/101>. Accessed 21 July 2018.

A few months before Sargent was beaten by his Democratic opponent, Michael S. Dukakis, for the Massachusetts Governorship's election, the judgment led to a drastic decline of white students in public schools. Therefore, clashes and boycotts against busing and school desegregation took place, sometimes culminating in assaults against bus drivers or police officers (Kifner 1974, 27). Mayor White [ironically renamed by the anti-busing movement as Mayor "Black" (Jehlen 1975)] and Boston Police Department Commissioner, Robert DiGrazia, opposed the complaints of Hicks and the new BSC president, John J. Kerrigan, by deploying 300 policemen, 100 Metropolitan District officers and 2.000 national guardsmen in defense of the buses which had been subjected to rock drills by white districts inhabitants ("Guard" 1975, 68). The buses became the symbol of the Boston Busing Crisis as they were considered the primary means for an invasion against the Irish-Americans in South Boston especially. By order of Sargent, from October 1974 the Massachusetts State Police joined the Boston police at South Boston district, increasing by 300 agents the number of policemen until the end of the school year (USCCR 1975. School, 137, note 307). For the first year only, the desegregation project cost \$18 million including the expenditure for busing and law enforcement (Kifner 1975, 48).

Between September 1974 and March 1975, the public schools of riotous neighborhoods such as Hyde Park or South Boston were subjected to continuous checks by the Police Department (Rosen 1974; USCCR n. d., 29-30). Even the backpacks were checked in order to avoid irreparable accidents between white and non-white students. In six months, the Boston Police Department broke up dozens of fights where 57 students were arrested. South Boston became a militarized district and it showed as «the most ethnically isolated community in America» (Greenblatt, Schindler and Willie n. d., 5) for the US public opinion. The trouble in accepting that change was explicable, because the shared poverty exacerbated the ties of Irish-American community, by making South Boston an urban space devoted to the «traditional values of family, neighborhood, religion and patriotism against the often threatening changing values of the outside world» (Kifner 1975, 48; Vale 2007, 321). This was a conviction always advocated by Bulger, fearful that the coming of African-Americans in South Boston would have seriously damaged the Irish traditions (Cronin 2008, 102). Unemployment also fueled the anger of young people, since in May 1975 South Boston still had an unemployment rate higher than the urban average (15,6 percent out of 14,1 percent). Two thirds of them were between 26 and 45 years old. In addition, 20 percent of Boston unemployed between 16 and 25 came from South Boston (BRA 1976, 2, 13, tab. 2, 19, tab. 5).

Conclusion

The Garrity plan was set up as a Top-down strategy, according to which thousands of students were uprooted by their neighborhoods as well as their families without a gradual integration into new urban areas which until then were surrounded by an atmosphere at the limit of apartheid (Cronin 2008, 122-26). According to a BRA re-

port in June 1974, the Garrity's desegregation plan would have caused unrest in poor districts such as Roslindale, Hyde Park or South Boston, because both white and non-white students would hardly have moved to another neighborhood. In fact, 21,000 families of the three aforementioned districts lived with an annual income less than \$10,000. Unable to have personal transport to move thousands of minors, student mobility remained very low (BRA 1974, 11-12). During the Boston Busing Crisis' years a slow but inexorable decline of violence occurred, along with a decrease in public schools' enrollments. In the 1981-82 school year, Boston had the worst US enrollment rate in public schools and South Boston proved to be the core of this dramatic statistics with a daily student attendance of 55,6 percent (Malloy 1986, 278). Even today, diaries and testimonies of South Boston people, such as Ione Malloy or Michael P. MacDonald, may help us to better understand the unhappiness and drama spirit that came to South Boston in the 1980s. In addition to the spread of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, even the scourges of drug addiction and delinquency were joined. For all these reasons, the death rate increase in South Boston was due to the several overdose, murder and suicide cases (MacDonald 1999, 10-11, 215) happened in a scary and ghostly conspiracy of silence.

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