

**Discipline, Contradiction, and the Mis-Education of Philadelphia:**

The African and African-American Curriculum in  
Philadelphia High Schools and the  
Challenge of Junior ROTC,  
1967-2005

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[History Honors Thesis]

## *Introduction*

The dramatic expansion of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program from 1994-present has sparked deeply divided debates over the role and merit of its presence as an educational program in many of the nation's high schools. The program's own justifications and those of its supporters within the military and political establishment have themselves provoked a sharp controversy—arguments about the program's merits fall into two general camps. Because the program targets inner city youth of color, its supporters generally point to its ability to provide discipline and order in these often troubled schools and communities, and they claim thus that it provides a solution to many of the problems there.<sup>1</sup> The program's critics have cited various drawbacks to the program, among them the correlation between the program and military recruitment, its de-emphasis of traditionally liberal and humanistic style education, and its racial and class-based focus.<sup>2</sup>

However, most analyses have failed to take a properly historical look at the program—no attempt has been made to locate its antecedents, or the conditions from which it has emerged, and thus the cultural, political, social, and economic trajectories of which it is a part. This paper seeks to locate the JROTC program in the Philadelphia School System as part of a historical response to unrest and demands for reform among African-American students. It contends JROTC is best explained, as its supporters claim, as a supposed solution to problems of racial unrest in the school system. Framed in such

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, CSIS, "JROTC: Contributions to America's Communities."

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Lutz and Bartlett's "Making Soldiers in Public Schools."

a way, the program finds its historical antecedent in a previous era, that of the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> During the period from roughly 1960-1971, we see conditions of racial unrest and demands for school reform emerge, and we see two types of responses to these claims—to change the school structure to meet the needs of African-American students, or to ignore the demands of students and instead propose discipline, order, and nationalism as solutions to the problems of African-American youth.

In the 1960's, the discipline response is signified by Police Commissioner Frank L. Rizzo and his supporters, and the Philadelphia Police Force's response to student demands for an African and African-American curriculum in Philadelphia High Schools, and the support this response received from society at large. In the 1990's, the JROTC is a self-professed attempt to deal with problems of black unrest in the school system through "discipline," order, and nationalism, and the program enjoys considerable support specifically for these reasons. Previous studies have failed to examine the contemporary JROTC program in conjunction with earlier attempts to deal with black school unrest, such as that of Rizzo. It is the goal of this paper to draw a connecting line between these two attempts to "solve" racial unrest in the Philadelphia public schools, arguing that the merits, effects, motivations, and goals of the JROTC program cannot be understood otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The 1960's are chosen not because the JROTC first commented on racial issues or school reform in this period—in fact, the JROTC was entirely irrelevant to the debates on school reform that occurred in the sixties. Further, its modern inception in the 1910's seems to have had nothing to do with any racially focused considerations as it was targeted primarily at white students. Instead, the 1960's are the antecedent period because it was in this period that discussion over reforming the black student occurred from which followed a particular paradigm in terms of which black student reform is later addressed. It is not until the 1990's that JROTC addresses the black student at all, *but then it does so in terms of the paradigm developed in the 1960's.*

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that while unrest in the schools seemed much more dramatically visible in the 1960's, the state of schools today, and the way they are governed, appears to be a *generalized* state of unrest. The existence of armed hall monitors, metal detectors, and the like, as well as frequent violent school

*The Background of Racial Educational Reform in America,*  
*1954-1967*

The educational reform movement which focused its attention on racial inequality in the public school system scored its first success with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, and the wave of civil rights activity upon which this decision rode. The case, declaring that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, gave legal legitimacy to denunciations of separate but grossly unequal conditions in education not just in the South, where such inequalities were most evident, but in the North as well, where inequalities were hardly less gross or dramatic.

All across the country, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the civil rights movement of which it was a part gave impetus to blacks and progressive whites around the country to challenge the *de jure* segregation that existed in many towns' and cities' school systems.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, after 1954, a wave of demands for school reform, typically led by blacks themselves and explicitly focused on issues of racial inequality, swept through many American cities. The dynamics and results of these demands varied widely—in a few places there existed sympathetic school boards and administrators who were willing to enter dialogue and attempt to meet the demands of disgruntled students; in many more places, there existed powerful authorities who were overtly hostile to the

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disturbances may suggest this—perhaps the key between the disturbances of today and those of the sixties is present black students' lack of a politically coherent articulation of unrest.

<sup>5</sup> See McAdams, p. 129

demands of school-reformers and radicals. Often, these two types of power figures existed disharmoniously in the same places. However, regardless of the response of elites, in the years following *Brown v. Board* and as the Civil Rights movement grew, African-American students pressed for educational reform in most American cities.

*The School Board Protest and the Birth of the African and  
African-American Curriculum—1967*

Demands for educational reform by African-American youths erupted in the public scene in Philadelphia on Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1967, when somewhere between 1,500 and 3,500 high school students gathered at the School Board Administration Building to protest the expulsion of sixteen students who had demanded courses on African history and had proclaimed in their schools that ‘black is beautiful’ earlier that week.<sup>6</sup>

The previous day, Thursday, November 16, adult organizers and student allies associated with the group Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and members of the Black Students’ Association had distributed leaflets to Gratz, Bok, South Philadelphia, Bartram, West Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin, William Penn, and Edison high schools, urging students to walk out and attend a “Black Student Rally” at the School Administration Building, to protest the suspension of the sixteen students.<sup>7</sup>

Gaskins-Green explained that the demands of the protesting high school students were centered on creating a positive, unique place for black students’ history, culture, and

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<sup>6</sup> “Negro Drive Lags in Philadelphia,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1967. Temple University Urban Archives, filed under “Riots,” box #197, Folder “Riots-Phila-Schools-1967, Nov.19-25. It should be noted that the students did not end up being suspended.

<sup>7</sup> “Adults Demand Closing of 17 Negro Schools,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 19, 1967. Temple University Urban Archives, filed under “Riots.” See also Appendix Figure 8, Gaskins-Green

identities, and wrote that they demanded such things as “the teaching of African American history, the right to wear traditional African clothing in school, the organizing of black clubs and social groups within the schools and the changing of the names of several predominantly black high schools to honor black leaders.”<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, the protestors drew up a list of demands to present to the School Board to express their criticism of the consideration given to black history and culture in the high school curriculum. Their demands were:

1. A call for more ‘Negro’ teachers and Principals
2. A need for ‘black history’ to be taught as a major subject by black teachers
3. More ‘Negro’ representation on the School Board
4. Exempting all ‘Negroes’ from saluting the flag because liberty and justice did not exist at all<sup>9</sup>

The protest began peacefully with students marching along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to the School Administration Building. However, they were met by police, and soon clashes erupted between the students and the police. Witnesses asserted that violence erupted after the police charged demonstrators and bystanders. For example, an article in the *Inquirer* explained that “[T]he police action was ordered after an outbreak of stone and bottle-throwing[...]. Spectators, school officials, and clergymen came under swinging nightsticks at 12:30pm when Police Commissioner Frank L. Rizzo waved his club at a formation of more than 100 policemen and shouted: ‘Go ahead men, get their

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<sup>8</sup> Gaskins-Green, Lillian Safisha. “A Critical Analysis of the Implementation Process Used to Enforce the 1969 Policy to Infuse African/African American History and Culture in the Curriculum of the School District of Philadelphia from 1969 to 1994,” Unpublished Dissertation, Temple University, p. 67, May 1998.

<sup>9</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 19, 1967. (Cited in Gaskins-Green p. 53).

asses.”<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Robert Kernish quoted Rizzo differently, on CBS National News, as saying “Let’s get these *niggers*” before charging the students (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

Among the white city establishment, only the School Board President and superintendent of schools, Richardson Dilworth and Mark Shedd attributed responsibility for the violence to the police. Dilworth recognized the black students’ claims as legitimate, and believed it was “absolutely essential to [establish] a dialog with the students.”<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, during the protests he met with student leaders in an attempt to negotiate a settlement. However, these talks were broken up by the melee going on outside.

Dilworth claimed talks with student leaders were broken up by police violence: “a serious effort by the school administration to speak creatively to the major tension in our city was tragically destroyed by inept and precipitous police action,”<sup>13</sup> Dilworth wrote. He claimed that the opinion among the school staff who were present for the demonstration was “unanimous that there was no threat of disorder at the time the police charge took place,”<sup>14</sup> and that the meeting with the thirty student leaders in the Administration building was progressing favorably until the police incited violence. When two hundred riot police charged through the crowd outside, Dilworth explained that it was impossible for the meetings to continue: the students “tried to run from the police, but the police followed them right up the street beating and striking them on the

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<sup>10</sup> “Untitled,” Ingram and Corr, *Inquirer*, November 18, 1967.

<sup>11</sup> CBS National News, Letter from Robert Kernish, December 15, 1967, quoted in Alma Farthing Crocker, “An Analysis of the Attitudes Common to Groups Involved in the Desegregation Process,” Unpublished Dissertation, Temple University, p. 108, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> “Shedd and Dilworth Speak Out,” *Inquirer*, p. 10, Nov. 21, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

back.”<sup>15</sup> “I spoke to four clerical staff members afterwards who were in tears because of the beatings the children received,” Dilworth recounted.<sup>16</sup>

The beaten students and others tried to get Rizzo dismissed from his post, but quite the opposite happened. Mayor Tate offered tremendous support for Rizzo’s dealing with the protests, as did the main newspapers, city officials, and most of the white public. This is at least tangentially reflected by the failure of students’ attempts to get Rizzo removed from his post, through protests and filing complaints, and later in his successful mayoral campaign of 1971.

Rizzo’s violent response to black unrest and the support it received, were in fact not a spontaneous emergence of 1967, but rather had their roots in earlier episodes of racial unrest, hysteria, and repression. In various schools throughout the city, where desegregation and general racial unrest stimulated considerable violence, the response from the white community was typically to advocate increased policing of and armed protection *from* African-Americans.

Throughout the 1960s, racial unrest plagued the city’s schools, especially those of mixed race such as, for example, South Philadelphia High and Gratz High. Riots and fights broke out between races, and reciprocal violence raged, but the white parents blamed the violence on blacks, and sought protection from them. During an episode of violence among girls at St. Maria Garetti High in 1963, a white student, Frances Corretini, was slashed and told reporters she “was going from one class to another when two Negro girls...stopped her and accused her of ‘spreading a rumor’ [and] that they had

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

a razor.”<sup>17</sup> The response was that 65 white parents, some “leading large dogs on leashes,” met outside the school to escort their children home.<sup>18</sup> These parents also demanded protection for their children from then police commissioner Howard Leary, and Leary in turn declared a “state of emergency” at the school and had 100 police officers stationed in the school.<sup>19</sup>

When the violence spread to other schools in the area, and large street brawls broke out between boys, the racial aspects of the fights were further intensified. For instance, a series of headlines in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* placed emphasis on blacks supposed responsibility for the violence, with headlines such as “All Victims in Yesterday’s Incidents were White.”<sup>20</sup> White parents pulled their children from schools, refusing to come back until their demands were met. One white parent proclaimed at a public meeting, “What will we have to do? Arm ourselves and our children?”<sup>21</sup>

Rizzo also had a previous reputation for racial violence and police brutality. Among other episodes, at a 1965 demonstration against Girard College’s segregationist admittance policy, Rizzo and his force were charged with police brutality. In an investigation memorandum issued by an assistant of Larry Groth, the assistant reports the testimony of a witness, Mr. Gay, to the alleged brutality: “Gay told me that several people had been beaten by Deputy Commissioner Rizzo and other policemen without

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<sup>17</sup> “Girl Slashed at School; extra police for S. Phila,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 4, 1963. Temple University Urban Archives, folder riot-phil-a-schools-1937-1966.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> “1,550 Absent at Southern After Racial Incidents,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 8, 1963.

<sup>21</sup> “12 Extra Police Sent to Bok to Stop Racial Incidents,” *Bulletin*, October 2, 1963.

provocation. The beating had taken place in an alleyway [and] Gay said that women and men had been beaten; one man beaten unconscious to the ground.”<sup>22</sup>

The support for a “disciplined” response to school unrest found a broader support from the broader public’s perception of racial unrest at the time. For instance, in an editorial to *The Philadelphia Bulletin* in 1970, reporter Nick Timmesch wrote, “[d]isruptive trouble in the nation’s schools is spreading like the flu and no one is quite sure how to handle it[...]. Racial strife, the shocking spread of drugs to ‘safe’ suburban and small town schools, and the increased willingness of students to get into shouting showdowns with their principles are giving schoolmen the willies, and the worst is yet to come.”<sup>23</sup> The types of response supported from white society to this perceived threat to public peace, from the early sixties up to the 1967 protests, was to “discipline” the black unruly students. Putting police into schools and Rizzo’s clubs were similarly supposed to have this effect.

Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools Mark Shedd recognized that the support for Rizzo’s response to the student protestors, and the calls for “discipline” coming from all corners of white society stemmed from a preoccupation with racial fear, a fear which was only cowed through policing and violence against a generalized black enemy. “This preoccupation,” Shedd explained,

*has clouded the white community’s view of the rather fundamental stirrings within the people who live and operate in the black community. Rising out of this is a rather generalized fear that has fed itself and generated increasingly irrational feelings and which tend to overgeneralize the feelings and attitudes in the black community.*

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum issued by Larry Groth, to Thomas P. Hadfield, titled “Girard College Demonstrations,” July 14, 1965. Appended in Gilbert.

<sup>23</sup> “School Confrontations Expected to Spread,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 3, 1970. Urban Archives.

*And I think it's beginning to reach rather serious proportions because an overgeneralized white attitude has crept in that everything that's black is bad and riotous... [emphasis added]. What's needed at this point is a return to reason by whites; a stop to this escalation of fear, escalation of suppression and escalation of resorting to methods of suppression and reliance upon force.<sup>24</sup>*

The protesting students, calling for respect of black history and culture, were protesting precisely against the mentality that proclaimed 'everything black is bad and riotous,' and reflected this in their initial claims that 'black is beautiful.' Conversely, Rizzo played on existing fear and perceptions of African-Americans' and provoked the feeling that everything black *is* bad and riotous, and offered a symbol and expression of violence and repression against it.

The debate represented by Dilworth and Shedd on the one hand, and Rizzo on the other whether to discipline or dialogue belied a basic underlying split in opinions on what was needed for school reform. Those on the side of Dilworth and Shedd and the students thought the reform had to come about through constructive *change* of the structure of Philadelphia's school system, while Rizzo and his supporters believed quite the opposite, that the system was not faulty, but the problem were the black students themselves, and consequently "discipline" seemed the most adequate response.

In the way that the two solutions to school unrest mirrored wider visions about the need for political change in American society, the call to "discipline" seems to have drawn support from a larger consensus of reaction against disorder, radicalism and perceived anti-Americanism, and from an association drawn between black protest, rioting, violence, and the breakdown of American society. Philadelphia Police Department Chief Inspector Harry Fox linked the demonstrations of students desiring change to explicitly violent activity and categorized them all under the rubric of 'civil

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<sup>24</sup> "Shed Calls for 'Return to Reason' by Whites," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 26, 1967.

disorder,' thus justifying the repression faced by the demonstrating students. In 1967, he claimed, "[c]ivil disorder is the number one police problem today. Good intelligence in this field is urgently needed to prevent tensions and demonstrations from maturing into fires, sniping, looting, destruction and death."<sup>25</sup>

In 1972, Rizzo expanded on this association, when he claimed that black protest and demands for change presented a danger to the whole fabric of American society: "Our nation is in peril, facing an assault from the radical left that threatens the fabric of American life. These misguided few glorify all that is anti-American and degrade anything pro-American."<sup>26</sup> Such characterizations did much to reinforce the concept that everything black was 'bad and riotous,' and did much to legitimize violence against the students' attempts to claim that such a characterization was inaccurate.

### *The Impact of the Demonstration*

However, despite wide support for "disciplining" restless black students, however, the immediate result of the student protest was an official piece of legislation, ratified and accepted by the School Board, that demanded the integration of an African and African-American curriculum of history and culture. This piece of legislation was an institutional recognition and legitimation of the need for the development of a space in which a positive black self-image could develop among students.

Issued on April 16, 1969 from Superintendent Shedd's office, the plan for implementing "African and Afro-American History and Culture" into the Philadelphia

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<sup>25</sup> *History of Brutality*, p. 4

<sup>26</sup> *History of Brutality*, p.2

High School curriculum dictated that the new “policy of the School District...requires every school to provide a well-rounded program of African and Afro-American history and culture for every child as an integral part of his total school experience.” The legislation continued:

Psychologists, students, parents, educators, and members of the Philadelphia communities we serve have all made the point with increasing vigor recently that our traditional curriculum lacks adequate emphasis on African and Afro-American history and culture—an omission that deprives thousands of our students of any deep sense of their own heritage, sense on which personal identity must be built. At the same time, it is an omission which permits distorted perceptions of black people on the part of many whites.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the visionary tone of this document, the program was never implemented on a city-wide scale.<sup>28</sup> As Gaskins-Green and Kenneth J. Rometo explain, the implementation of such a curriculum did not occur on a major level in Philadelphia,

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<sup>27</sup> The 1969 Official School Board Policy on African and Afro-American History and Culture, #448-3441, April 16, 1969. Appended in Gaskins-Green, p. 127

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that as of the 2005 school year, the School Board is requiring all public high school students to take a course on African and African-American history, and is making the course a requirement of graduation for students of 2009 and later. Accordingly, some may claim that to claim “the program was *never* implemented on a city-wide scale” is fallacious, modifying the claim to read: “never implemented, until now.” This is of course what the School Board would claim. However, the current program, while city-wide in reach, is quite limited in scope—it falls dramatically short of the demands of the student protestors of 1967 (see above). Its timing would also suggest that it is not a direct response to the historical demands of black students (i.e. its not directly following any particular protests, and is not created out of a dialogue with black students), but rather a particular component of the city’s larger program of standardizing the city’s curriculum. This aspect of the program seems to have dubious results for the interests of African-related courses in that the *non*-standardization of the city’s curriculum allowed some degree of freedom and autonomy in schools, so that in some cases schools could implement program respective to students needs or desires. The timing of the program has raised further problems as well—absent the dialogue and responsiveness of any black community in the creation and implementation of the new curriculum, to other minority groups such an effort appears arbitrary: latino/a and Asian Americans have expressed anger at the lack of any similar efforts directed at teaching about their histories of cultures. All of this suggests that the new program is in no way the sudden fulfillment of the demands of the 1967 protestors, or of any notable black community in general, but rather is characteristic of the dubious and contradictory—dare we say ‘hypocritical’—nature in which the city has responded to the interests and demands of black students. Lastly, while it is pure speculation, it is quite likely that this new effort is in part designed to deflect some of the criticism taken by the school board for its hearty acceptance and multiplication of JROTC—lest we forget the efforts of Philadelphia’s CEO of Schools Paul Valles in Chicago, where he made his name championing JROTC, and in Philadelphia, where he is doing the same. For more information on this new program, its outline, and reactions to it, see Karla Scoon Reid, “Phila. To Require Black History Class,” *Education Week*, 6/22/2005, Vol. 24, Issue 41, p.10, 2005.

but instead the implementation was, as the principle of the Ed Pastorius School explained, “only effective with schools that wished to engage in” them.<sup>29</sup> The result was that the program expanded only modestly in scope or size between 1967 and the present.<sup>30</sup>

### *Contradictions*

In fact, not only has the full implementation of this new curriculum never come about, but many of the problems out of which 1960s protests and school conflicts erupted still exist today in much the same form. The role of “discipline” in black schools as well has increased tremendously, with many schools looking like prisons more so than schools.<sup>31</sup>

In response, some have recently re-emphasized the importance of implementing an African-American curriculum. For instance, on November 17, 2003, commemorating the original student protests of November 17, 1967, the African and African Descent Curriculum and Instruction Reform Committee and other community groups held a rally to call attention to the fact that, as organizer Mukasa Afrika pointed out, “the District has

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted anonymously in Gaskins-Green, p.133.

<sup>30</sup> See Gaskins-Green, or Kenneth J. Rometo, “Administrators’ Opinions of Minority History Implementation in Selected School District of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” Unpublished Dissertation, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> In addition to the vast literature on the increasing militarization and policing of inner-city high schools, this author saw the details of these studies first hand during his visits to many schools with JROTC programs in Philadelphia. Squads of roving police security, roughing up and insulting 14 year old youths, among other things such as metal detectors, created an atmosphere much more similar to a prison than what is typically thought of as a school. For one example of literature on the subject, see *The Underground History of American Education*, by John Taylor Gatto.

failed to follow through on decades of promises to infuse African American studies into the curriculum.”<sup>32</sup>

In fact, in 1994, we even see the School Board of Philadelphia acknowledge its own failure to implement African and African-American studies curriculum. In a news release titled “Board of Education reaffirms commitment to African-American studies,” the school board claimed to have

made the reaffirmation at its June 27 meeting (sic) in response to what it called ‘serious national and local concerns about the historic “miseducation” of African and African-American students’ as well as ‘the harm caused to all students due to omissions and distortions of the African and African-American experience’ in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and staff development....Of the estimated 214,000 students enrolling in Philadelphia public schools this September, nearly 134,500 will be African-American.<sup>33</sup>

This re-emphasis on the African-American curriculum is an implicit acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Dilworth and Shedd and the student protestors’ position as to the problems faced by students of color. However, what we also see in 1994 alongside the emphasis on black curriculum is the rapid and vast expansion of the Junior ROTC program, itself in tune with the trajectory of discipline in schools as responses to the problems of black youth. The JROTC program is an absolute contradiction to the claims of the School Board to reaffirm its commitment to an African and African-American curriculum.

### *JROTC*

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> “Board of Education reaffirms commitment to African-American studies,” released August 1, 1994. Appended in Gaskins-Green, p.139.

The JROTC program has been around in modern form since 1964, but it was not until the presidency of George H.W. Bush that the program began to expand dramatically in the early 1990's<sup>34</sup>—and it did so with a specifically racial tone.

The contemporary expansion of the JROTC program stems from the Operation Capital program enacted by President Bush in 1992. The program specifically targeted inner-city, minority schools in Washington, DC for JROTC units, and proposed JROTC as a solution to the problems in these schools. In support of this new image of the program, Colin Powell spelled out how it would be a solution to the problems of “troubled” schools, and he in fact connected the need for JROTC directly to the incidence of the LA Riots and the need for “discipline” in the wake of such riots. Powell reflected, “inner city kids, many from broken homes, [find] stability and role models in Junior ROTC. They [get] a taste of discipline, the work ethic, and they [experience] pride of membership in something healthier than a gang[...]. The junior program can provide a fresh start for thousands of endangered kids, particularly those from minorities, living in crime-plagued ghettos. Junior ROTC is a social bargain.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> As stated earlier, JROTC appears to have been entirely irrelevant to issues of racial school reform in the decades preceding the 1990's. While documentary evidence is scant—no historical military documents exist on JROTC in Philadelphia, something the author found through extensive searches, phonecalls, and visits to current JROTC schools, due to the non-existence of any policy of record-keeping aside from those records immediately useful to the programs functioning—the irrelevance of the pre-1990's JROTC to racial issues in the school system seems confirmed by a particular fact: while the program existed in the 1960's, never was it proposed for those schools which saw the most interracial violence (South Philadelphia, Gratz, etc), nor for those predominantly black schools where there occurred frequent and dramatic disturbances of a political or racial character, for instance West Philadelphia High in the years following the 1967 protests. Instead, there appears to be no race-based pattern to JROTC's programs in the 1960's, when most of the schools in which it operated were predominantly white. Therefore, absent actual recruitment materials of the 1960's JROTC, which would clearly highlight racial motives, we can refer to the annual Philadelphia *School Board Journals*, which contain notes on all program proposals for Philadelphia high schools, accepted or not, of which JROTC is one.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Powell (with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 556-557).

In fact, it is primarily through “discipline” as a solution to the social problems of inner-city schools and communities that JROTC has been supported. In a report prepared for the military, CSIS hints at the nature of these problems when they write of JROTC and other related military-educational programs, “[i]n one way or another, these organizations all seek to channel the latent energies of our youth away from ‘hanging out’ as individuals or in gangs and toward realizing their potentials for self-improvement and service to others in higher causes directed to the welfare of the communities and their nation.”<sup>36</sup> The emphasis is on the deviant activities of inner city, minority youth, and their destructive effect on their communities, and it is argued that JROTC is a solution to these behavioral deviances.

This model of targeting inner-city schools for the program was reproduced throughout the country, and Philadelphia saw its programs expand into primarily impoverished, all-black schools and communities. For example, there are programs presently at West Philadelphia, Overbrook, Franklin, South Philadelphia, Germantown, Bartram, King, and Gratz High schools, in addition to JROTC academies (schools entirely devoted to the program) underway.<sup>37</sup>

What we see then is that the justification for JROTC builds (at least partially on) its portrayal of an undisciplined black society, responsible for its own problems and homogenously ‘at-risk.’ JROTC’s supposed ability to counteract these tendencies, to transform the black student into a disciplined, orderly subject, is cited as its number one benefit. The strength of the JROTC program, then, stems from perceptions of African-American youth as essentially ‘bad and riotous’, precisely the characterization applied to

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<sup>36</sup> CSIS, “Contributions,” p. xi

<sup>37</sup> *School Board Journal*, 2004, 2005

them in the 1960's, and precisely the characterization fought by the 1967 protestors.

Pauline Lipman explained:

the ideological thrust of [JROTC] military schools is to publicly define African American and Latino youths as undisciplined...the schools were established with much public fanfare in low-income African American communities—not white or middle class communities. The media coverage of the schools boot camp discipline commends them for bringing under control ‘dangerous’ and ‘unruly’ youth and ‘at-risk’ students, by exposing them to order and discipline....The schools are exemplars of a new ‘truth’—if schooling is going to work for urban youth of color, it will need to be highly regimented.”<sup>38</sup>

Because JROTC is predicated on as well as reproduces such a negative image of African-Americans, it stands in direct opposition to the development of a positive African-American self-identity, as is the aim of the African-American curriculum.

### *Mis-education and the JROTC Curriculum*

JROTC essentially counteracts the positive image supposed to be pursued through the black curriculum; it assumes all African-Americans are “bad and riotous,” and seeks to discipline them accordingly. As such, it emphasizes the need for African-American youth to construct national identities, and de-emphasizes the importance of a positive view of African and African-American history, culture and identity.

Aside from actually sometimes precluding students from participating in African and African-American related courses, the JROTC curriculum leaves no room for the development of a positive self-image for African-Americans. In the key text used by the JROTC to teach American history, Leadership and Education Training (LET) Vol. 4,

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<sup>38</sup> Lipman, “Chicago School Policy and the Regulation of Black and Latino Youth,” in *Education as Enforcement*, p. 94

*Citizenship and American History* (recently revised due to criticisms of not being racially or ethnically balanced), *only two pages out of 422* are employed to describe the entire Civil Rights era. Furthermore, ¼ of these two pages slyly reinforce the riotous and disorderly character of blacks, and at least implicitly suggest that a lack of discipline is the problem. “Even with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, poverty continued to be a problem for blacks. Life in the inner city was, and still can be a horrible existence,” the text begins.

Riots in the inner-city sections of America’s major urban centers were common during the mid to late 1960s. Burning, looting, and violence resulted in the injury or death of hundreds of people. President Johnson appointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to investigate the spreading violence and to find a solution to prevent future riots.<sup>39</sup>

It is not mentioned whether or not a solution has been found.

Such a portrayal of African-American students leads to the subsumption of black identities into an ‘improved’ national identity. In fact, the program’s literature explicitly reflects this. At the heart of the program’s mission is to create better “citizens.” Thus, modestly put in the 1993 Defense Authorization Act, “It is the purpose of the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps to instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the value of citizenship [and] service to the United States.”<sup>40</sup> However, from this modest objective, the goal is extended to create a strong national identity, specifically among youth of color: as the CSIS, one of the key institutional supporters for JROTC explains, “Although citizens may disagree about which values are right, it is essential for our heterogenous society—which lacks the ties of a single shared

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<sup>39</sup> Leadership and Education Training (LET) Vol. 4, *Citizenship and American History*, p. 56 (year?).

<sup>40</sup> CSIS *Contributions*, p.5

ethnicity or religion—to develop and maintain *a shared sense of identity*. JROTC acknowledges this imperative through the objectives it pursues, the foremost of which are citizenship and patriotism.”<sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, the program implicitly asserts that the solution to the problems of ‘at-risk’ African-American youth is to be transformed from the black ‘at-risk’ youth into patriotic national “citizens”—if the black youth is specifically targeted by JROTC to be made in to patriotic “citizens,” then without JROTC, the black youth is clearly outside of—and beneath—this worthy group. By presenting the norm of black students and life as “at-risk,” and discipline as the solution, JROTC asserts that black youth need to be *disciplined out of their perceived blackness* and into a ‘shared sense of identity’ based around citizenship and patriotism in order to solve their problems. This identity requires an abnegation of a positive view of “blackness,” that is, African-American culture and history.

### *Conclusion*

The JROTC program is a direct attack on attempts to develop a positive identity for African-Americans in the Philadelphia Public School system, a project begun in 1967 by courageous students, but which has not been fully implemented since. Today CEO of Schools Paul Vallas claims to be dedicated to developing a curriculum that is “inclusive” to African-Americans, yet simultaneously has led the largest expansions of the JRTOC program in the country.<sup>42</sup> By allowing the program to flourish while simultaneously

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.35

<sup>42</sup> *Notebook*, p.1

acknowledging the need to rectify the ‘mis-education’ of black students, the School Board is displaying a profound and perturbing hypocrisy. Even worse, the JROTC program presents itself as a “social benefit” to ‘at-risk’ students of color. It proposes that it may provide the “discipline” needed to cure African-American students and communities of their ills. This was the same proposition of Frank Rizzo and his supporters—that the problem with schools is that they lack order and discipline, and simply need it provided to them.

However, in stark contrast to the “discipline” proposed by Rizzo and JROTC, when given the chance, some African-Americans have elaborated vastly different solutions to their problems in the schools. In 1967, students elaborated a curriculum that would represent a positive history and culture of Africans and African-Americans, and would thus contribute toward building a positive educational experience and self-image for black youths. Today, advocates such as Mukasa Afrika are still advocating this project as a first necessary step to real improvement for the psychic and real conditions of the black community. The Philadelphia School Board, by allowing the expansion of the JROTC program, is allowing the erosion of its own supposed goals of reaffirming the necessity of this project. The JROTC program in Philadelphia offers critical insights into educational reform and the relationship between the city and its black student population.

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In the context of JROTC, the contradictions of the city's approach to reform are brought into stark relief, and future assessments of reform must be viewed in the same manner.