

Boston Latin: a bastion of bias

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Judge Arthur Garrity's decision to throw out Michael McLaughlin's lawsuit was the appropriate action to take. The lawsuit against the Boston Latin School for allegedly discriminating against his white teenage daughter was a bogus issue. The real issue is that the Boston public school system must deal with the last bastion of a separate and unequal educational institution that still inflicts harm on the original victims: black, poor and other children of color.

McLaughlin's suit blamed the original victims once again. Only historical amnesia will allow some people to forget that the Boston public school system was desegregated by a federal court order because the Boston School Committee "failed to provide black children with the equal educational opportunities guaranteed by the 14th Amendment." Judge Garrity declared that the entire system was unconstitutionally segregated because the School Committee "knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city's students, teachers, school facilities and have intentionally brought about and maintained a dual school system."

This duality still exists, and Boston Latin serves as a haven for some white middle-class parents who want financial relief after footing the bill for their children to attend private and parochial schools. Boston Latin still functions as a predominantly white base serving a clientele that also benefited from economic segregation.

This class of white people abandon the Boston school system instead of working with black parents to create an equal and quality educational system. Now McLaughlin wants to share in what little harvest that exists, without even helping to plant and maintain the crops – a typical elitist attitude.

What was widely implied within McLaughlin's suit was the issue of intelligence, inferring that whites are smarter than blacks and other people of color. The message being: You don't deserve a quality education, stupid! You don't have what it takes to succeed – which means that the school system maintains smart schools (predominately white) and dumb schools (predominately children of color).

Why aren't all of Boston's public school children getting access to a quality equal education? Why is a dual system being maintained? Whether a child wants to go on further to higher education or not does not mean that he or she shouldn't get a quality, equal education. All of

the public schools should have a reputation for high standards and academic rigor. The good residents of this city must insist on this, not a privileged individual screaming because there are not enough seats for his privileged daughter – thus blaming the less privileged children of color for the inconvenience, requesting that they be moved to make room. How horrifying for a so-called sophisticated person living in a modern, technologically advanced society.

Clearly this issue is one of access, not superior or inferior intelligence. If any lawsuit needs to be filed, it should come from parents of color and supported by white parents – especially those who can't afford to send their children anywhere else – insisting on a quality equal education under the law.

The decent residents of Boston should be in an outrage at the elitist pomposity of McLaughlin as well as Peggy Davis-Mullin and Anthony Crayton trying to win political capital at the expense of vulnerable children of Boston's working poor. This kind of grandiosity and politics are self-serving, divisive and harmful to all the people of this city.

Every fair-thinking parent would have to agree that it is unjust, cruel and outright greedy for any individual or group to ask for an additional plate of food when they already have one plate full, while others are still unable to be seated at the table. It seems that the fair thing would be to insist that we get everyone at the table, and that they all have access to a healthy nutritional meal.

The decent leaders of Boston (elected, selected, appointed, anointed, white, black, male, female, young and old) need to make their voices heard and their actions felt. After more than two decades of trying to do the right thing in fighting for a decent quality education for all students, the good people of this city cannot stop now and allow the progress made to be derailed.

All children in every public school must get an education that prepares them to successfully compete in the 21st century.

Our most valuable resources – the minds of our children – are at stake. It is a disgrace when an advanced society can allow its most precious resources to be treated so cavalierly. It is criminal when we farther distinguish equality, quality and intelligence by race. We cannot afford to take any prisoners on this vital issue.

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