AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE CONGRESS OF
RACIAL EQUALITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DESEGREGATION
ACTIONS FROM 1954 THROUGH 1973

DISSERTATION

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I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, Vicki, for her assistance in helping me complete the dissertation. I lovingly dedicate this study to my daughter, Michelle.
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INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

...we conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment....

With these words, on May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Brown v. Board of Education to Topeka, Kansas. This decision caused white Southerners to react "...with a combination of frustration, resentment, anger, and resignation. Negroes, on the other hand, hailed the decision as a giant step toward a future of legal equality and full acceptance into American Society."

Brown v. Board of Education was one of four cases that had been combined for review by the Supreme Court. The other cases were on appeal

1 Oliver Brown, et. al., v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, et. al. (347 U.S. 483, 1954).


from Federal District Courts in South Carolina and Virginia, and from the State Supreme Court of Delaware. The Court's decision in these cases was later extended to include a similar case that was on appeal from the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. 4

The Supreme Court's decision in the Brown case became known as the "benchmark" case in school desegregation. The National Association For The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a major civil rights organization since 1909, was primarily responsible for this breakthrough in school desegregation. Through their strategy of presenting the Supreme Court with five test cases that had been expertly prepared, NAACP attorneys were able to cast doubt upon the utilitarianism and morality of the "separate but equal" doctrine handed down by the Court in Plessy v. Ferguson. 5 The Brown case convinced NAACP attorneys that fighting public school desegregation through the Country's court system would be the most expeditious approach to eliminating school segregation.

The federal courts of this country have been largely responsible for what gains in school desegregation have been achieved. Likewise, several major civil rights organizations in this country (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Congress of Racial Equality) have been responsible for exerting the pressures necessary to bring their desegregation efforts to fruition. A variety of tactics have been utilized by these organizations in order to attempt to achieve the desegregation of public school

5Plessy v. Ferguson (163 U.S. 537) 1896.
facilities. Those tactics which seem to have proven to achieve the

greatest degree of success are those which dealt with attempting to

litigate segregation through the federal courts. Several of the more

important cases litigated in federal courts are listed and described

below:

- **Green v. County School Board of Kent County, Virginia** (391 U.S. 430, 1968) The Supreme
  Court ruled out all freedom of choice plans for formerly de jure segregated school
  systems.

- **Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education** (402 U.S. 1, 1971) The Supreme
  Court ruled bussing was a viable desegregation method and could be used if necessary
  to desegregate schools.

- **Keys v. School District No. One, Denver**
  (303 F. Supp. 270, 313 F. Supp. 61) The Federal District Court held that when
  a board of education develops a desegregation plan, any effort by subsequent boards
  to rescind the plan results in de jure segregation and is therefore considered
  illegal. On June 21, 1973, the U.S. Supreme
  Court announced its decision in Keys. The
  Supreme Court remanded the case back to the
  trial court for final disposition, but
  noted that:

  "Where plaintiffs prove that the school
  authorities have carried out a systematic
  program of segregation affecting a substan-
  tial portion of the students, schools,
  teachers, and facilities within the school
  system, it is only common sense to conclude
  that there exists a predicate for a finding
  of the existence of a dual system."

- **U.S. v. Board of School Commissioners of Indianapolis** (322 F. Supp. 655, 1971)
  A Federal District Court held that a desegregation plan involving only Indianapolis
  was not workable and ordered the adding of suburban school districts surrounding
  Indianapolis as parties defendant.
Federal District Courts ruled that the Richmond, Virginia, and Detroit, Michigan, school systems could not desegregate
without utilizing neighboring suburban districts. On May 21, 1973, the U.S.
Supreme Court was equally divided in its decisions, thus, affirming the Appeals
Court decision. The permissibility of crossing school district boundaries for
purposes of desegregation was left for a later decision. This decision could
come during the Court's 1974 session in the Detroit case.

The above court cases represent the major thrust of one major civil
gights organization—the NAACP. This thrust has been documented in many
legal and professional publications as well as through several relatively
thorough research studies. During the late sixties and early seventies,
the efforts of the NAACP have been directed toward achieving the desegre-
gation of urban school systems through the utilization of the suburban
communities that surround them.

The NAACP had been the uncontested spokesman and proponent for Negro
civil rights and integrated school facilities since the early days of the
civil rights movement. In the late sixties and early seventies the NAACP

Mack, Raymond W., Our Children's Burden: Studies of Desegregation in Nine American Communities, New York: Random House), passim.

discovered that it was being challenged as a spokesman for black people and challenged in the courts on its stand that totally integrated school facilities are the only available means to achieve educational equality. This challenge was made explicit by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). CORE's position is best exemplified by a statement made by Roy Innis, its current executive director, in an interview which appeared in the New York Times:

"...people today talk about control of their community schools. Integration is counter to the mood of the black people."

The role of CORE in school desegregation actions has had limited documentation, which has resulted in that organization's positions being unknown, misrepresented, and generally not clearly understood. For example, Robert Crain's much acclaimed study of school desegregation published in 1968, makes only several minor references to the role CORE has played in the school desegregation actions he studied. Thus, it would be possible for some to generalize that CORE has played a relatively insignificant role in public school desegregation actions. The question which needs to be answered is whether or not this is an adequate and justified evaluation of CORE's role? This research project will attempt to begin to answer that question. In order to place CORE's role in perspective, it is necessary to examine the historical development of CORE as an organization.


Historical Development of CORE as an Organization

The Congress of Racial Equality is not as young an organization as many people believe. The lack of national publicity until the sixties tends to leave the impression that CORE did not exist until then. CORE had its initial beginnings in Chicago, in 1942, as a committee for equal rights. This committee was a division of a pacifist group called the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The original name for CORE was the Chicago Committee for Racial Equality. James Farmer was one of three men credited with the creation of CORE and was later to become one of its most distinguished executive directors.

In an Amicus Curiae brief filed with the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, CORE described itself as "...a non-partisan, nationwide organization of American citizens of various backgrounds, professions and occupations, having member chapters in various states. All CORE members are dedicated to the principle of racial equality and religious and political freedom." 10

James Farmer, who was most influential in establishing CORE, had long been disturbed about the ineffectiveness of other organizations seeking equal rights for black people. 11 After considerable study of the methods of Gandhi, he proposed the establishment of an organization based on non-violent direct action. The approach, advocated by Gandhi and adopted by CORE, generally took the following form:

10 Bradley v. The School Board of Richmond, Virginia (U.S. Court of Appeals, 4th District, No. 3353) pp. 1-2.

- efforts would be expended to convert the opponent through negotiations
- if negotiations failed, agitation was employed to arouse public opinion to put pressure on the opponent
- if this failed, then came parades and demonstrations
- if these failed, picketing, strikes, boycotts, and sit-downs would be utilized
- finally, if all else failed, outright civil disobedience would be utilized

Farmer noted that the doctrine of non-violent direct action was adopted by CORE for two main reasons. First, philosophically it seemed to be a sound technique for accomplishing the goals of the organization. Secondly, it was a practical approach because it "...assumes that it is suicidal for a minority group to use violence since it would simply result in complete control and subjugation by the majority group." \(^{13}\)

Throughout the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's, CORE utilized non-violent direct action techniques to fight one form of segregation after another. Farmer urged blacks to become united and take part in the fight against segregation. He noted that blacks could not "...change the manifest meaning of their separated existence solely by the force of their own wills." \(^{14}\) Armed with the Gandhian principles of non-violence and the techniques of direct action, CORE began moving to fight segregation in three main areas: housing, public accommodations, and public schools. \(^{15}\)


\(^{13}\) Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 795.


\(^{15}\) Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 794.
In the early 1960's a change began to take place within CORE. The organization that had utilized non-violent direct action principles so effectively for twenty years was now beginning to reassess its approach. August Meier writes, "Only in the 1960's under the impact of rapid changes in the nature of its membership, and disillusionment arising from the frustrations of vastly heightened expectations did this early ethos erode and ultimately disappear."16

Not only did CORE's method of action change, but also, as a result, the type of person who joined CORE changed. As CORE adopted a more militant approach to attaining equal rights for blacks, it began to attract a more militant membership. Young, black activists from the ghettos of the U.S. began to look to CORE as a possible organization to which they would like to belong. CORE was organized and seemed to be a 'do something' group, which appealed to those who wished to become physically active in the civil rights movement. The NAACP seemed to confine its activities to areas where the physical presence of members was not necessary, as in court actions. On the other hand, black nationalist organizations tended to be perceived as too radical and pursuing courses of action that were not legally acceptable. CORE seemed to provide the type of program which would allow members to become actively involved in not-so-radical activities.

During the middle 60's CORE began to change its emphasis somewhat. Integration, which had been the primary goal since the organization was founded, began to receive less emphasis. Farmer wrote that CORE was

16Meier, Ibid., p. 799.
"...focusing less on desegregation and more on political action, economic discrimination, and problems with Negro communities."

CORE began to concentrate upon the problems inherent in segregated communities. With this new approach, directed toward the masses who were being discriminated against, came new and greater numbers of members. These "New Jacobins, disillusioned with America's rhetoric of equality..." began to demand "...total war to achieve total rights. If there is any word more hated in the struggle than moderation it is tokenism." Thus, as CORE began to take on the aspects of a mass movement, the doctrine of non-violence seemed much harder to advocate.

With the advent of Black Nationalism came a decreased emphasis upon integration. Groups like the Black Muslims constantly attacked the idea of integration and the doctrine of non-violence. Robert Williams, in his book *Negroes With Guns*, expressed the feeling of many Black Nationalists that "...it is because our militance is growing that they (white liberals) spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to convert us into pacifists..." The effects this trend had upon CORE can best be described by quoting a passage from a study of CORE by Inga Powell Bell:

> ...CORE chapters began to play down those aspects of their ideology that conflicted with Muslim philosophy and with natural inclinations of the Northern ghetto population. Opposition to black chauvinism and emphasis on social integration were increasingly soft-pedaled, and non-violence.

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18 Farmer, *ibid.*, p. 77.

was played down in favor of an emphasis on power structure.20

With the new emphasis being directed toward militance, CORE began to assume a political approach toward achieving equal rights. This political approach was geared to eradicating racism rather than being directed at achieving an integrated society. The aim was to develop the latent political power that existed in all black communities. There could be little doubt that a "goldmine" of power existed in all black areas of the country. Major efforts were placed upon unifying black communities in an attempt to put this potential political power to its best possible use. Thus, a move was begun which ultimately led to a call for self-separatism. James Farmer cautioned blacks not to adopt the doctrine of self-separatism for the wrong reasons. He wrote, "...if in the heart of hearts, the Negro believes that self-separatism is only a rationalization for cowardly acceptance of segregation, then separatism will fall." 21

Thus, during this period the CORE leadership reviewed the major thrust of the organization and determined that less emphasis should be placed upon integration as an immediately attainable goal. This reassessment of goal priorities led to a major emphasis being placed upon the pursuit and attainment of self-separation.


Introduction to the Problem

In 1954, as noted earlier, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a ruling in the Brown decision that led to the desegregation of school district after school district.

The NAACP has been the prime mover in most of the major public school desegregation actions. The organization's role in school desegregation actions is well documented in court case after court case. Not so well documented is the role that CORE has played in public school desegregation. CORE was in existence twelve years before the Brown decision and had been a viable organization. Is it to be assumed that this organization, which basically maintained the same overall philosophy as the NAACP during the 40's and 50's, attacked racial injustices in all areas other than public schools? A search of the literature finds very few references to the role that CORE, as a national organization, has assumed in public school desegregation actions.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to trace the involvement of The Congress of Racial Equality in public elementary and secondary school desegregation actions since the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.

The research conducted in this study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What was the extent and scope of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation actions?
2. What were the precise goals and objectives of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation actions?

3. What specific strategies were utilized by CORE in order to achieve their goals and objectives?

4. What shifts in policy, philosophy and/or strategies have occurred with regard to CORE's approach toward public school desegregation?

5. How did the organization's leadership feel concerning the viability of CORE's role in public school desegregation?

6. What evidence exists which would support the contention that CORE's school desegregation activities have been practiced through legally acceptable approaches?

7. What are possible implications of CORE's involvement in desegregation actions upon future school district organization patterns.

The Design of the Study

This study utilized the investigative procedures employed in conducting historical research. Historical research is "...the critical investigation of events, developments, and experiences of the past, the careful weighting of evidence of the validity of sources of information on the past, and the interpretation of the weighted evidence."\textsuperscript{22} The methodology utilized by the historical researcher is similar to that utilized by all researchers, in that data are collected, evaluated for validity, and interpreted. Kerlinger writes, "...the historical method, or historiography, differs from other scholarly activity only in its

rather elusive subject matter, the past, and the peculiarly difficult interpretative task imposed by the elusive nature of its subject matter."\textsuperscript{23}

The importance of the historical method can, perhaps, be best summarized by the following statement from a publication of the Social Science Research Council:

"Historically has a necessary relevance to all the social sciences, to the humanities, and to the formulation of public and private policies, because (1) all the data used in the social sciences, in the humanities, and in the formulation of public and private policies are drawn from records of, experience in, or writing about the past; because (2) all policies respecting human affairs, public or private, and all generalizations of a non-statistical character in the social interpretations of, or assumptions about the past, and because (3) all workers in the social sciences and in the humanities are personalities of given times, places and experiences whose thinking is consequently in some measure conditioned and determined by the historical circumstances of their lives and experiences."\textsuperscript{24}

In addition, Kerlinger notes that historical research is important to education because "...it is necessary to know and understand educational accomplishments and developments of the past in order to gain a perspective of present and possibly future directions."\textsuperscript{25}

In the collection of data, the historical researcher is concerned with primary sources of data: (1) the testimony of eye and ear witnesses to past events, and (2) actual objects used in the past that can be examined directly.\textsuperscript{26} Every attempt is made to gather first-hand

\textsuperscript{23}Kerlinger, \textit{Ibid.}, 698.

\textsuperscript{24}Kerlinger, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 700.

\textsuperscript{25}Kerlinger, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 698.

information in order that a more thorough reconstruction of the past can be developed.

Although every effort is expended to search out primary sources, it is sometimes necessary to make use of secondary sources. Secondary sources are those that provide information by a person who did not directly observe the event, object, or condition.\textsuperscript{27}

The historical researcher is concerned with the validity of his sources of information. It is therefore important for him to view these sources with a critical eye. Two types of criticism are utilized in the evaluation of source validity—external and internal. External criticism involves determining the authenticity of the source and evaluating it to determine if it is a sound source of information.\textsuperscript{28}

According to VanDalen and Meyer, internal criticism deals with evaluating the meaning and trustworthiness of the data within the source. The researcher is concerned with what the author meant by each of his statements and with the credibility of each statement.\textsuperscript{29}

The final step for the historical researcher is the interpretation of the data. George Mouly writes, "While the principal task of historical research is to give a factual picture of past events and conditions, it should not stop with summarizing isolated facts, but should organize the material into an interpretive narrative."\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27}VanDalen and Meyer, ibid., p. 179.


\textsuperscript{29}VanDalen and Meyer, op. cit., p. 184.

This study is designed to determine the historical involvement of the Congress of Racial Equality in public school desegregation actions since the famous Brown I decision of 1954. The time span from 1954 to the present has been divided into two periods that roughly correspond with what CORE officials feel are the most significant phases of the organization's historical development:

I 1954-1968; the influence of James Farmer and Floyd McKissick era

II 1968-1973; the influence of Roy Innis era

CORE officials believed that significant changes took place within the organization during the terms of office of each of its three national directors. "Since its beginning in 1942, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) has made significant changes in programs, tactics, ideology, and priorities." During the Farmer era, emphasis was placed upon non-violent direct action. Toward the end of Farmer's term of office and during most of McKissick's term, increased emphasis was placed upon the call for Black Power. The call for Black Power was translated "...into programs for Black Nationalism, Black Self-Determination, and control of capital instruments, and black institutions operating in black areas," during the term of Roy Innis.

The researcher found that CORE's philosophy during the two time periods listed above was reflected in its role in school desegregation activities.

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The researcher utilized Robert Crain's Typology of Civil Rights Activity (Table 1) to conveniently categorize the public school desegregation activities of CORE during each of the specific time periods. The typology serves as a means whereby the overall role of CORE could be put into proper perspective. It should be noted that no attempt at evaluating the perceived effectiveness of the activities was attempted through the utilization of Crain's typology.

Crain notes that civil rights activity falls into four general categories. Those categories of activity are summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Protest</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Extralegal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Action designed to publicize grievances</td>
<td>Action designed to publicize grievances using direct action techniques: marches, rallies, vigils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reports, speeches, testimony at board hearings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctioning</td>
<td>Action designed to compel schools to act:</td>
<td>Action designed to inconvenience or embarass system:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suits, petitions to state or federal authority</td>
<td>inconvenient street demonstrations, boycotts, sit-ins³³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This historical research project is based upon data derived from the following sources:

1. Personal interviews were conducted with various individuals who were active in leadership positions during each of the two time periods outlined earlier.

³³Crain, Ibid., p. 329.
interviews were structured to the extent necessary to produce information relative to the six areas listed in the problem statement. Interviews were unstructured to the extent necessary to produce dialogue pertinent to the overall understanding of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation activities. The instrument utilized in these interviews was composed of certain specific questions designed to elicit specific responses relative to the role of CORE in public school desegregation activities. In addition, the inclusion of certain open-ended questions allowed the interviewees the opportunity to provide data which they felt were crucial to an enlightened understanding of CORE's involvement. Where permitted by the interviewees, interview sessions were taped in their entirety to ensure accuracy.

2. Legal briefs prepared or supported by CORE in any public school desegregation case before any state or federal court between 1954 and 1973 were studied and analyzed by the researcher.
3. Legislative proposals prepared and supported by CORE for any state or federal legislative body were studied for their implications for public school desegregation.

4. Written reports and other documents prepared by CORE staff members concerning possible public school activities were studied. These documents included any presentations made to legislative committees and other action organizations and groups.

5. CORE publications in some instances proved to be primary sources and were utilized as such. In addition, these publications were read for insights into other probable primary sources of information.

6. Outside publications such as books, unpublished manuscripts, newspapers and magazines were utilized by the researcher, with a critical analysis of the validity and accuracy of their contents. The researcher was especially interested in articles appearing in national news publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. 
Definition of Terms

1. Desegregation activity: For the purpose of the study, desegregation activity was defined as any activity of an organization that is designed to have some predetermined effect upon the racial composition of a public school facility and/or district. This activity need not be limited to the concept of reducing the percentage of black children in a school facility/district after it has attained a predominately black student population.

2. Public school: For the purposes of the study, a public school is any educational institution supported by state and/or local government funds designed to educate the masses of children (in any locality) in grades kindergarten through twelve (12).

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study was limited to the examination of the role of the National Office of the Congress of Racial Equality in school desegregation activities. Activities of CORE chapters were examined in terms of the effects of the technical assistance and encouragement offered to them by the national office. On several occasions it was necessary to detail certain specific activities of a local chapter in order to fully comprehend the future extent and implications of the national office's involvement in school desegregation actions. It is not unusual for the national staff, of any organization with local
chapters, to assume a secondary role in order to allow the local to express its own initiative. In such cases it would publicly appear that the national office's role was insignificant, whereas in fact the behind-the-scene efforts of the national were crucial to the success of the overall action.

The major limitation of the study was that the National Office of CORE, due to financial constraints and lack of staff from 1954 through 1968 did not maintain extensive historical files with regard to the organization's activities. For this reason, personal interviews with key CORE staff members were crucial to the collection of accurate data concerning the study.

The policies and strategies of the organization were not always easy to discern clearly. In attempting to fit together a coherent account, the investigator made decisions concerning the value of certain sources of information. The narrative which developed was ultimately based upon the investigator's decision to utilize, on a selective basis, materials concerning CORE's efforts in the field of public school desegregation.

The time and energy of the investigator was another limitation. The constraints of a dissertation made it impossible to examine the activities of CORE in other areas than public school desegregation. The investigator did, however, selectively choose to examine briefly certain specific areas of involvement which seemed to have some effect upon the organization's public school desegregation activities. By utilizing this method, the investigator was able to gain some insights which he believes were commensurate with his expenditures of time and energy.
Significance of the Investigation

The Supreme Court of the United States rendered its landmark decision on public school desegregation in 1954. Since that time school administrators throughout the United States have been confronted with intense pressures from representatives of both sides of the issue. The most intense pressures have been felt by urban school administrators as they have attempted to comply with court order after court order to desegregate public school facilities. The tenure of these administrators has been reduced considerably in many instances as conflict after conflict has occurred.

The most intense pressures upon these school administrators have come from two major sources: organized citizens and federal courts. In early 1973, the President of the United States entered the controversy causing a further complication. The President asked Congress and the Justice Department for a moratorium on the use of bussing to achieve racial balance. Since large scale bussing remains the only viable means to achieving a racial balance in many of our urban centers, a moratorium placed on the use of this tool would considerably hinder, if not totally eliminate any possibility of desegregating these school systems.

Harvard researcher, Christopher Jencks, added fuel to the controversy in late 1973. In a study, he criticized the use of bussing by stating that "...we do not believe that forced bussing can be justified on the grounds of its long-term benefits for students." 34

To complicate the problem even further, organizations like the NAACP and CORE have been widening the philosophical gap that separates them on matters dealing with public school desegregation. Divergent viewpoints concerning this issue, combined with the above factors, make the urban administrator's position quite tenuous.

Administrators today need to build data banks upon which to draw when decisions on issues such as public school desegregation must be made. The position of CORE, a major organization representing members of the black community, is an important input that must be considered.

The absence of any comprehensive, documented information concerning the role CORE has been assuming in school desegregation actions, makes it quite difficult for the school administrator to evaluate its importance. This research attempts to provide another source of data for the administrator which can be utilized in the decision-making process. It is hoped that this research project will create an increased awareness that will ultimately allow for a more thorough understanding, by administrators, of one of the most critical problems facing education today.

The information gained from this study could also prove beneficial to jurists, legislators, and leaders of other organizations concerned with the issue of school segregation. Individuals in decision-making positions need to be accurately informed of the past in order to more effectively develop plans of action for the future. It is hoped this study will be useful in this regard.

Organization

The remaining chapters of the dissertation will develop a narrative which seeks to describe and assess the public school desegregation
activities of the National Office of CORE. Chapter II will deal with CORE from 1954 though 1966 when integration was the policy and non-violent direct action was the means whereby it could be achieved. The National Office of CORE, during this period, did not assume a major role in any activities of the organization. This chapter will detail reasons why the organization was very seldom involved in any public school desegregation activities.

Chapter III of the study covers the period from 1968 through 1973. In this chapter are covered the organization's major actions concerning public school desegregation. It was during this period that the National Office of CORE became extensively involved in public school desegregation matters and a period which marked major changes in philosophy and tactics.

Chapter IV of the study presents the investigator's analysis of CORE's activities in public school desegregation activities. In addition, the organization's present policies concerning public school desegregation and the organization's relationship to the NAACP are evaluated by the investigator as well as the organization's two previous National Directors.

The final chapter will seek to summarize the narrative, list suggestions for further study and discuss specific problems encountered by the investigator during the course of the study.
Chapter II

CORE DURING THE FARMER-MCKISSIC ERA, 1954-1966

Emphasis on Desegregating Public Accommodations

In 1954, CORE as an organization was still in its infant stages of development. The organization had been founded twelve years earlier, in 1942, but did not become a major national organization, representing black interests, until the early 1960's.

In 1954, CORE was concentrating its efforts in the area of desegregating public accommodations i.e., restaurants, theatres, hotels, and amusement centers. James Farmer noted:

> We would use the usual techniques of the CORE organization. First we would investigate the problem. Then, we would seek to negotiate a solution to the problem. If that failed, we would utilize a non-violent demonstration, which usually involved picketing, and occasionally sitting-in.¹

CORE was attempting to fight the same discriminatory practices as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, which were the two major civil rights organizations active at that period. James Farmer noted, however, that the decision to create a new civil rights organization was not made because he or any other members of CORE rejected the objectives of the NAACP or Urban

¹Farmer, James; private interview recorded at his residence, April, 1973.
League, but rather because:

...there was a strong feeling on my part that a new ingredient needed to be added. Neither the NAACP nor the Urban League was using non-violent, direct action or any kind of direct action. The NAACP's concentration was upon legal action, through the courts, and lobbying for legislation. The Urban League's emphasis was on social work, with a heavy dose of negotiating, but action, no. So what we tried to do was add the new ingredient of direct action modeled after Ghandi. We were not antagonistic toward either of the existing national organizations. Quite the contrary, on local levels there was frequently close cooperation between them. As a matter of fact, the director of the Urban League, in Chicago, referred to CORE in this manner: 'the NAACP is the War Department, the Urban League is the State Department, CORE is the non-violent marines.'

The National Office of CORE was not involved in any public school desegregation actions during the 1950's. CORE, because of its close relationship with the NAACP, was quite satisfied with the success of the NAACP in attacking school segregation through the courts and through lobbying for appropriate legislation. In 1954, the Brown case was being litigated by NAACP lawyers, and CORE was supportive of their efforts to eliminate de jure segregation. Of this point, Farmer says:

We agreed with the NAACP and they led the fight (against de jure school segregation). Most of the battles were fought in the courts and through legislation and that was the forte of the NAACP.

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Emphasis Shifts to Public School Desegregation Through Integration

By the early 1960's, CORE leaders felt that the organization had been quite successful in desegregating public accommodations. They also

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\(^3\) *Ibid.*, Farmer interview.
felt that the NAACP had been quite effective in eliminating de jure segregation in the public schools of the South. In looking for new areas to tackle, CORE felt that the NAACP needed assistance in attacking de facto segregation of public schools in both the North and the South. So, in the early 1960's, CORE attempted to generate a greater degree of mass desegregation activity primarily in Northern cities. Farmer felt the generation of this mass activity was the major contribution that CORE could lend to the fight to end de facto segregation. Non-violent, direct action was the means by which it would be accomplished. And who else had had more experience with this technique than CORE? The idea was to involve a greater number of blacks in the fight to eliminate public school segregation than most other organizations had ever been able to involve a continuing basis. It was this decision, by CORE leaders, which led to CORE's involvement in the early 1960's. Farmer noted:

...it was in 1962 and 1963, that the battle to eliminate de facto school segregation became a major part of CORE's program in Northern cities. We had marches in New York and sponsored school boycotts in various cities in the North. We also fought against school construction sites being selected so as to perpetuate de facto school segregation.4

With the leadership of the National Office, local CORE chapters became more and more involved in school desegregation actions. For the most part, the role of the leaders of the National Office was to provide support to each local's efforts. The National Office of CORE would provide the technical assistance necessary for a local to carry out its

4Ibid., Farmer interview.
objectives, i.e. planning, organizing, training, etc. The National Office, however, did not establish national targets to be attacked, and maintained the philosophy that local chapter autonomy should continue to be pursued.

The basic philosophy of CORE, concerning school desegregation, remained unchanged from 1954-1966, according to James Farmer.

From 1954 until 1966, CORE was strictly an integrationist organization in school desegregation matters. Now, the reason was that we had little or no political power...we were a powerless people. This was the very reason for the inadequacy of the schools in the ghetto. We did not have the power to force politicians to give greater attention to these schools. The white, middle class parents, on the other hand, who had power were going to see to it that their children had a good education. If we could get our kids into those schools, we felt that our youngsters would be beneficiaries of white power.\(^5\)

Integrationist Philosophy Comes Under Attack

The integrationist philosophy of CORE came under attack in the middle 1960's. This attack was a result of a growing militance among young blacks throughout the U.S. Farmer felt the need for the organization to change directions, as early as 1964:

We directed CORE chapters to move into the ghetto in 1964, rather than standing outside the ghetto; working in the ghetto's behalf; to move into the ghetto and establish their offices and recruit from the rank and file and to become a people's organization rather than an organization of a few intellectuals.\(^6\)

\(^5\)Ibid., Farmer interview.

\(^6\)Ibid., Farmer interview.
In 1965, at CORE's national convention, Farmer called for a coor-
dinated attempt to achieve power for blacks. This move to develop black
power meant that blacks should develop political organizations, as well
as develop economic powers. The development of privately and coopera-
tively owned community corporations was one means whereby black economic
power could be developed. In the field of education, this power was
meant to include an emphasis upon compensatory education. This was a
call by Farmer, for CORE to move into the ghetto and help build a
"black identity" among the residents.

This new approach and thrust of CORE was primarily due to the
increase in the appeal of black nationalist spokesmen who advocated
separatist philosophies. Farmer had felt the "ripples" of discontent
with how organizations representing the interests of blacks were accom-
plishing the goal of attaining equal rights. In early 1964, young
activists in CORE were rebelling against the traditional tactics of non-
vviolent, direct action, as well as the leadership of James Farmer.

Historian August Meier writes:

Farmer was facing an unprecedented questioning
of his leadership for the first time, indeed,
his position in CORE was being challenged.7

Farmer faced a crucial dilemma: How could the organization take
on the image of being a militant organization and at the same time
retain the support of the many white liberals who were members and leaders
within the organization? Maintaining this support was a must since 95
per cent of the funds used to operate the organization came from whites.8

7Meier, August and Rudwick, Elliott, CORE: A Study in the Civil
8Ibid., Meier, p. 336.
In attempting to solve that dilemma, Farmer in an address to the delegates at the 1965 convention, advocated that the organization should move toward a more militant philosophy. In order to maintain white membership and support, Farmer attempted to reassure the delegates that CORE was not abandoning the tactics and goals that had been traditional with the organization. The organization was faced with both internal and external pressures to maintain and discontinue its philosophy of integration, in the middle 1960's.

Black militants increasingly were advocating separatism as a goal to be reached in the fight for equal rights. James Farmer wrote a book entitled *Freedom - When?* which was published in 1965. In order to encourage whites to remain in the organization, he warned his readers against interpreting terms which advocated self-separatism in too literal a sense.

He attempted to define self-separatism in such a way as to appeal to both the white liberals and black activists in CORE. In an interview, Farmer related his viewpoint concerning self-separatism:

> I think there is value in ethnic cohesiveness. That has been one of the weaknesses in the past years. In the 40's and even the 30's there was little cohesiveness in the black community. There was a trend among blacks to reject heritage, culture and history. I see cohesiveness as being a phase, a necessary step before we can enter into a pluralism. I see a cohesive black community working with, fitting in with, developing coalitions with cohesive units of other ethnic groups. It was only after external pressures were placed on the

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organization that the term self-separatism became to represent more of a segregated philosophy.  

Pressures by militant blacks for CORE to change its philosophy continued to increase in the mid 1960's. The Watts riot of 1965 and the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965 were two contributing factors that led to increased pressures upon CORE as an organization. The question that had to be answered by CORE leaders was, "Can CORE, as an organization, survive unless there is a change in the organization's basic philosophy?"

**Relationships with the NAACP Become Strained**

Meier, refers to the mid 60's as a period when CORE was "a house divided." This division was being felt throughout the ranks of the NAACP at the same time. Farmer was always reassured by the sense of agreement and cooperation that existed between the NAACP and CORE. This cooperation was believed by Farmer to be necessary if the goals of attaining equal status and rights for blacks were to be realized. Concerning this cooperation between the NAACP and CORE, Farmer noted:

In the early 60's and up until 1966 there was agreement on objectives and goals. When CORE started going to jail and staging sit-ins, the NAACP tended to look at these tactics with a jaundiced eye. Their attorneys had always tried to keep people out of jail. So we had debates on tactics, but generally, the objective that was sought was the same.

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10 Farmer, James; private interview taped at his residence, April, 1973.

11 Ibid., Farmer interview.
In the mid 1960's, however, cooperation between CORE and the NAACP began to decrease. When the call went forth from young black militants for "Black Power" and "Black Nationalism," the leaders in the NAACP interpreted these phrases to mean that blacks should become separatists and anti-white. The NAACP, as well as the Urban League, issued statements blasting these concepts. Farmer notes:

I think it was a tactical mistake on their part because the black community was rallying around a new call for ethnic cohesiveness. The hostility between the black power oriented groups and the staff of the NAACP became mutual.\(^\text{12}\)

When CORE began seriously to consider a shift in philosophy, away from advocating total integration and toward one which was more consistent with the black power activists, all communications between CORE and the NAACP were discontinued. The groups could no longer agree on mutual goals and thus it was impossible to agree upon tactics. This lack of communication continued to the present although several attempts, which will be discussed later, were made to reunite the organizations.

Although Farmer remained a proponent of the new thrust toward creating cohesiveness in the black community, one fact remains: his interpretation of terms like black power, black nationalism, and self-separatism, was different from those of the young black militants. Farmer was never able to reconcile these differences in his own mind. This combined with the fact that whites were leaving the organization in large numbers, and because of the split between the NAACP and CORE were all factors which indicated to Farmer that he should not attempt to continue as his organization's National Director.

\(^{12}\text{Ibid., Farmer interview.}\)
McKissic Replaces Farmer as National Director

In 1965, the militants in CORE were pushing to have blacks placed in all leadership positions within the organization. They argued that the time had come for blacks to establish the goals and objectives of the organization. Farmer felt that he must support this position, even though it meant that many whites during the mid sixties, in leadership positions would probably leave the organization. Farmer supported Floyd McKissic for the position of National Director. Farmer's long time supporter and friend, Alan Gartner, was seeking the position of National Director. Gartner was white, and as a result Farmer could not support his candidacy. The result was that the 1966 convention elected Floyd McKissic National Director.

What Farmer had feared did happen: whites began to leave the organization due to pressures placed upon them by the militant blacks. To complicate the problem even further, the 1966 convention redefined the qualifications for membership in CORE. An active member had to be of African ancestry. In an attempt to counteract an impending financial crisis due to the loss of white financial support, the delegates passed a resolution urging all individuals who were already members of CORE to remain as associate members. An auxiliary organization called "Friends of CORE" and other CORE support committees were established to gain financial support for the organization. These new groups had as a secondary goal the education of those whites who had been disenfranchised, to the new goals and objectives of CORE. Edward Brown, Director of Political Affairs for CORE, noted:
The new goals and objectives of the organization were never clearly understood by many whites as well as many blacks. As a result many blacks and whites alike continued to leave the organization.13

Thus, as McKissic took over the leadership of the organization, he was faced with increasing financial difficulties. His major thrust was directed toward making CORE a financially solvent organization. But, he found himself faced with what was, basically, the same dilemma with which Farmer had been faced: how to maintain the financial support of whites and blacks who did not agree with the new trend toward a black nationalist philosophy.

Financial Problems Plague McKissic

McKissic was never able to overcome the financial difficulties of the organization. As a matter of fact the financial condition of the organization grew worse during the two years McKissic was National Director. Figure 1 is a symbolic graphic portrayal of what CORE officials reported to be the organization's membership and financial support over the period of 1954 through 1968.14

13Brown, Edward; private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City, April, 1973.

14CORE officials refused to provide exact figures because they did not wish to have exact membership or contributions divulged for what they termed as "political reasons." Figure 1, therefore, is how those figures might be visualized.
Figure 1 indicates that the number of financial contributions grew steadily from 1954 through 1964. This was due primarily to the overall general agreement of blacks and liberal whites with the philosophy of CORE. Victor Soloman said the sudden decline represented:

...the move to have blacks assume leadership positions within the organization. Most of the drop in contributions from 1965 through 1966 can be accounted for as a result of whites leaving the organization and failing to support it. The drop from 1966 through 1968 is the result of blacks leaving the organization because they could not support the move toward a black nationalist philosophy.15

McKissic's popularity never was overwhelming and it continued to decline rapidly after his election to the position of National Director. The organization had had a charismatic leader for such a long period of time that many members felt out-of-touch with McKissic. In addition, there were a number of militant blacks who were seeking to replace McKissic with one of their group. Also, Edward Brown felt that James Farmer himself was "waiting on the sidelines to come back as National

15 Ibid., Soloman interview.
Thus, it was not surprising that Floyd McKissic would be fighting to retain the post of National Director. In 1967, when it seemed almost certain that he would be replaced as National Director, McKissic in a very astute political move appointed Roy Innis, then Director of Harlem CORE, as Associate National Director. This move, Edward Brown said, "temporarily saved McKissic." Roy Innis had "pulled McKissic out of the fire." This was possible because Harlem CORE was the largest affiliate of National CORE, and Roy Innis had a great many supporters who respected the goals and objectives he had established as Director of Harlem CORE.

In addition to the financial crisis, the mid sixties was a time when CORE was faced with internal struggles for power and inter-organizational struggles for power, all of which threatened the existence of the organization. Throughout this period, National CORE was only superficially involved with any school desegregation activities. The transition from an integrationist philosophy to a separatist philosophy was in progress but was by no means clearly defined. As a result, what school desegregation actions took place were those which were taken by locals without a great deal of meaningful intervention by the National Office. The National Office, faced with critical problems had very little time to direct toward desegregation actions.

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16 Brown, Edward; private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City, April, 1973.

17 Ibid., Brown interview.
Although the organization was faced with many internal problems during the McKissic administration, the new thrust of the organization, the movement into the ghetto, was not altered. McKissic and his new assistant, Roy Innis, were in agreement that CORE "...had to become more responsive to the ghetto; lower income blacks, rather than gear it to middle income blacks."\textsuperscript{18} In addition, the organization began to take on a more national outlook. This was a period when, nationally, citizens of the United States were beginning to question our country's military involvement in Viet Nam. Many militant blacks were questioning the morality of the deaths of blacks in the war. The prevalent feeling was that the draft discriminated against lower income youths and as a result there was a preponderance of young blacks dying in the Asian conflict. CORE, having adopted a new stance toward the ghetto and lower income blacks, became "...the first civil rights organization to oppose the war in Viet Nam."\textsuperscript{19}

These actions were considered a necessity if CORE as an organization was to remain somewhat viable during the period when it was attempting to find solutions to the major internal problems which plagued the organization.

CORE's opposition concerning Viet Nam appealed to the young, black militants who were becoming members of the organization, but was also another factor which led to an ever-increasing dissatisfaction by middle

\textsuperscript{18}McKissic, Floyd; interview conducted via telephone, April, 1973.  
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., McKissic interview.
income blacks and whites with McKissic's leadership. This was due more to McKissic's overtures of alignment with any and all organizations which represented the interests of the black community over the Viet Nam issue than the mere fact that CORE opposed the war. The dissatisfaction stemmed mostly, from his welcoming the support of the Black Muslims, which was a black separatist organization. The "old timers" in the organization were not prepared for the establishment of alliances with separatist organizations. Thus, in light of all the problems facing McKissic, it was not surprising, as the 1968 CORE National Convention convened in Columbus, Georgia, that there would be a great deal of pressure to replace McKissic as National Director.

Innis Replaces McKissic

The 1968 convention turned out to be a two part convention. The convention convened in Columbus, but had to be adjourned because the delegates literally ran out of time. This is understandable, due to the many crucial issues which faced the convention delegates. Those who favored the old integrationist philosophy of CORE were at odds with those who favored a more separatist thrust and a move toward Black Nationalism. The delegates had to deal with such issues as:

1. What should be the thrust of CORE as a civil rights organization?

2. Who would be the best person to lead the organization?

3. How could the financial crisis facing the organization be resolved?

4. Could the organization survive its present threats or should CORE be disbanded?
The adjournment of the convention at Columbus, it was hoped, would provide a "cooling off" period. "It was apparent that the integrationist blacks were totally dissatisfied and each day more and more of those delegates left the convention in protest."²⁰ Thus, it was hoped that the convention and organization itself could be salvaged by adjournment to a new site, at a later date.

The symbol of resistance in the eyes of delegates who favored an integrationist philosophy, was Roy Innis. Innis was the most likely candidate for the position of National Director and his position was clear: CORE must become a black nationalist organization if it was to meet the needs of black America.

Victor Soloman discussed the frustrations of delegates:

...they (integrationist delegates) tried to personalize all the problems they had with accepting the whole black nationalist philosophy. Roy was like a monster to those delegates and the whole thrust was to keep Innis from becoming National Director. "Who do you (integrationists) want as director?" Anybody, but not Innis." "Do you want McKissic? "No, please no more McKissic, because he can't hold up the ship." These delegates didn't know who they wanted. In one board meeting, delegates gradually left until there were no longer enough delegates to constitute a quorum. They left, in order to keep from making the one decision that to them was evident had to be made; selecting Innis as National Director.²¹

In the end, Roy Innis was elected National Director during the second part of the 1968 convention held in St. Louis. His first major task was to attempt to salvage the organization. He attempted to consolidate the many

²⁰Soloman, Victor; private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City, April, 1973.

²¹Ibid., Soloman interview.
locals into one national organization. As noted earlier, until this time CORE consisted of many local, independent organizations. Locals determined their own objectives and the National Office would provide support when requested to do so. Innis felt it imperative that a strong National Office be established. It was his belief that the National Office should lead and not follow. Thus, the move to centralization was begun. Local chapter autonomy was to become less and less a major thrust as a method of organization.

**Attaining Equal Educational Opportunity Becomes the Major Thrust of CORE**

As CORE became more and more oriented to the problems of ghetto blacks, the organization began to seek out areas where it could be instrumental in achieving more rights for blacks. The CORE leadership was satisfied with the results that civil rights organizations had achieved in the area of public accommodations. Feeling that their goals had, for the most part, been achieved in that area, the leadership began to look for new areas in which to venture. Since they were no longer satisfied with the approach the NAACP was using in attempting to attain quality of educational opportunity for black children, CORE leaders felt that focusing their attention upon education, especially upon de facto segregation in the ghettos of the North, would be appropriate. By dealing with education in the Northern ghettos, it was hoped that the organization's appeal to young black militants could be increased, thus increasing membership and helping to solve the financial crisis which plagued the organization.
The beginning point was obvious. Roy Innis had been Director of Harlem CORE before becoming Associate Director of National CORE, under McKissic. As Director of Harlem he had become involved with a project that dealt with the education of black children in the largest ghetto of the United States—Harlem, New York. It was only natural for him to wish to make the Harlem CORE project a project of National CORE. This was to be a catalyst for CORE's extensive involvement in school desegregation actions.

**National CORE Emphasizes the Attainment of an Independent School Board for Harlem**

Harlem CORE, under the leadership of Roy Innis as chapter president and Victor Soloman, Innis's Associate, became concerned with the establishment of an independent board of education for Harlem, in the mid 60's. Due to the new emphasis of National CORE and the close proximity of its offices to Harlem, National CORE had become somewhat involved with Harlem CORE's thrust for an independent school board as early as 1967. This involvement had been limited to occasionally seeking the advice of National CORE officials and keeping the national officers informed of the local chapter's activities. In the early stages of Harlem CORE's project, Farmer had had misgivings about becoming involved in what seemed to be a move toward separatism.

To understand National CORE's future involvement in school desegregation matters, it is necessary to examine Harlem CORE's project to obtain a school board for Harlem's schools, which would be independent of the established New York City School System's governance structure. This one project by a local CORE affiliate was to be the catalyst which would give
rise to a totally new philosophy of the National organization concerning public school desegregation.

Harlem CORE, in developing its case for an independent board of education, noted that in 1966, 85 per cent of the school children in Harlem's schools, as measured by standardized tests, read below grade level. In addition, the organization contended that:

"...the schools (in Harlem) are little more than mills for nourishing and re-enforcing the self-hatred already harbouring in black children when they enter school."

Harlem CORE contended that the black children who attended Harlem's schools were victims of de facto segregation and that as a result the residents of Harlem had no control over their educational system. Likewise, CORE contended that all efforts to integrate the schools and thus upgrade the quality of education in Harlem, had failed. The failure was attributed to two major reasons:

1. The shift in population which sent whites further away from the ghetto and into the affluent schools and;

2. The New York City's Board of Education's responsiveness to white pressure groups opposed to integration.

In an effort to respond to the conflicting pressures of whites and blacks, the New York City Board of Education began to pump large sums of money into Harlem's schools under the well-known title, "Compensatory education." The New York State Civil Rights Commission termed these

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23 Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 1.
compensatory programs as being, "...more showmanship than solid education." CORE officials referred to them as "...fraudulent window dressing designed to divert the attention of Negro parents."\textsuperscript{24}

Harlem CORE proposed a feasibility study by committees composed of parents, teachers, lawyers, social scientists, and representative members of community organizations to determine the effects and implications of an independent school board for Harlem. They noted that such a board could be effective by:

- being composed of individuals with common interests;
- being open to new ideas and not constrained by bureaucratic red tape;
- being representative of the community at large and not by members who would be considered alien.\textsuperscript{25}

The thrust for an independent School Board for Harlem became more and more a project of the National organization as Roy Innis assumed greater responsibilities within the organization. It was noted earlier that there were power struggles, from 1964 to 1968 going on among individuals in leadership positions within National CORE. McKissic's most serious threat had been Roy Innis. As a result, Innis was made Associate Director in 1967 and pressed for making Harlem CORE's project a major project of National CORE. Innis had fairly easy going in his efforts to make the Harlem project the National's project due to the fact that the 1966 National CORE Convention had adopted a resolution urging the National to commit itself to "nationalist programs." It was the delegates' contention that institutions in black communities should be controlled and

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., Innis and Soloman.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., Innis and Soloman.
directed by the people that those programs affected.

In the spring of 1967, the New York State Legislature called for a Constitutional Convention to revise portions of the Constitution which needed attention. A Constitutional Convention Education Committee was appointed to hear testimony concerning changes that should be made in the Constitution which affected education.

It was at this juncture that Harlem CORE decided to take its fight for an independent school system for Harlem through legislative channels. Roy Innis and Victor Soloman testified before the education committee for the establishment of an independent school board in Harlem. These efforts were not successful, due to the fact that the noted sociologist Kenneth Clark testified in opposition to Harlem CORE's concept. Since Clark was a member of the New York Board of Regents his opinions carried considerable weight.26

Kenneth Clark was viewed as the person who most significantly effected the death of CORE's plan for Harlem. Clark's opposition to the establishment of what would be a separatist school system is explained by his belief that integration was the only means to achieving improved educational opportunities for black children. In fact, Clark was an "expert witness" called before the Supreme Court of the United States, to testify in the Brown case. His testimony was viewed by the Supreme Court Justices as highly significant and led to the Court's overturning the "separate but equal doctrine" in its landmark desegregation decision handed down in the Brown case of 1954. CORE could not effectively combat the arguments of such a noted individual.

CORE Adds Legislative Lobbying As A New Tactic

With the failure of attempts to establish a separate school system for Harlem, CORE turned its attention to the New York State Legislature and supported Proposition 1226-A which would tend to accomplish indirectly what couldn't be accomplished directly. This proposition called for the temporary establishment of separate school districts for economically deprived areas of more than four thousand population. CORE led the fight for the approval of this measure by providing speakers, holding press conferences, and through lobbying. Once again CORE's efforts were futile because the convention delegates saw in the proposition a means to establish a separate school system, and they voted to defeat the measure.

Though CORE's efforts to establish an independent school board for Harlem were not successful in the Constitutional Convention, they did produce some limited results in the state legislature. Legislators were feeling the pressures of organized groups to support decentralization efforts and were probably fearful of possible "riots" in the nation's largest city. It should be noted that the late sixties was a period when many urban areas had experienced racial disturbances. For whatever reasons, the legislature passed a measure which requested Mayor John Lindsey to submit a decentralization proposal to the Legislature.
Chapter III

CORE DURING THE INNIS ERA, 1968-1973

National CORE Assumes a Major Role
in the Harlem CORE Project

When Roy Innis became National Director of CORE in 1968, he moved swiftly to insure that National CORE would assume a major role in obtaining what was now termed an 'autonomous school system' for Harlem. The first step was to develop a proposal for a study which would examine what measures would have to be taken to develop an autonomous school system. This was part of CORE's strategy to gain support for the concept of an autonomous school system. Meeting after meeting was held in Harlem to develop the grass roots support that would be necessary to secure passage of a bill.

In their proposal for a study, CORE noted that their's was a goal of providing a structure whereby professional educators could work with parents and other residents for quality education.¹ It was emphasized that CORE had not set program or curriculum whereby quality education could be achieved, but rather, felt that this was a task for the local community and its educators to assume. It was CORE's contention that an enduring relationship between the community and its schools had to be developed. CORE leaders realized that they had neither the expertise nor

the resources to devote to the type of a study which was necessary to bring about this relationship. CORE called on experts to help in this effort.

In their proposal, CORE introduced the concept of Harlem being a social entity. This concept, of a black community being a social entity, was to turn up in future proposals which advocated separate school systems for black communities throughout the United States; i.e., Richmond, Mobile, Detroit and Los Angeles.

CORE leaders realized that the major obstacle to the success of their concept of establishing an autonomous school district in Harlem would be the proponents of integrated education. In an effort to alleviate the fears of those who advocated integrated education, CORE noted that their goal was to provide a school system that was so excellent that whites would seek to have their children attend Harlem schools. CORE was careful to note that the goal of making the schools attractive to persons of all nationalities, colors, and incomes was secondary to that of improving the quality of education being received by students who were then attending Harlem's de facto segregated schools. They also realized that the possibility of whites ever wishing to send their children to Harlem schools was minimal.

In order to establish a precedent for this proposal, CORE cited the autonomous school district established and operated for the Navajo Indian Tribe in Rough Rock, Arizona. CORE pointed out that the success of the Navajo school was due to "...the extensive involvement of the community with the school and the cooperation between the school's staff and the
community."² A basic component of the school's program was the development of a sense of pride in children concerning their Navajo heritage. Likewise, CORE's thrust was to instill a sense of pride in black children concerning their heritage.

CORE identified the benefits of an autonomous school system in Harlem:

- It would increase the involvement of the residents of the community in the educational program of the community;
- It would raise the quality of the intellectual life of the community;
- It would provide greater self-realization for the children in the community;
- It would improve the community's image in the eyes of the residents of the community as well as those who lived in neighboring communities;
- It would make the board of education more accessible to the community;
- It would cause a board of education to be appointed that had as its members' main concern, the needs of the community;
- It would make the schools of the community a rallying focus for self-help projects.³

CORE's efforts to educate the people in Harlem concerning the proposed autonomous board of education, and to gain their support were only partially successful. The greatest support came from the more youthful members of the community who were identifying with the nationwide thrust toward Black Power.


Legislators, feeling the pressure of this new doctrine and watching city after city being racked by riots, agreed upon a compromised bill. Instead of establishing an autonomous board of education, the State Legislature passed permissive legislation which would allow the New York City Board of Education to develop a decentralization plan for New York City's schools. The legislature also suggested that Mayor Lindsey appoint board members who held favorable opinions or were at least neutral toward the concept of decentralization. CORE then began to press the Mayor for the appointment of such individuals, but the Mayor failed to respond to this pressure. 

*Legislative Lobbying Becomes a Major Tactic*

The failure to adopt CORE's concept of an autonomous school board for Harlem did not deter the organization from continuing to fight to accomplish its goal. In order to prepare for the 1969 legislative session, CORE appointed what was termed the Harlem Board of Education Organizing Committee. In March of 1969, this group published a document entitled, "The Schools in Harlem - The Need, The Cure: A Proposal For An Independent School System." It was hoped that this publication would serve as a tool to build support for a bill to be passed during the 1969 legislative term.

The proposal noted that Kenneth Clark, in his book *Dark Ghetto*, reported on research that indicated the achievement of children attending

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4 Brown, Edward; (private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.

schools in Harlem was considerably behind that of children throughout the country and that the gap tended to widen as Harlem children progressed through school. In building their case against the schools in Harlem, the Committee also quoted a finding of the NEA Task Force on Civil and Human Rights:

The educational institution is so structured that the white middle class is able to exclude the community of the poor and the black from their share in the responsibility for decision-making.

The entire emphasis of the Committee's proposal was such that a rationale for a separate school system serving black children in Harlem was developed. This rationale was to appear in most of CORE's efforts in school desegregation actions from 1968 through 1973. It was CORE's contention that the segregated and unequal treatment of minority students could be rectified by integrating them into white schools, was a false assumption.

The Committee noted that in Harlem's case, integration was impossible to achieve because of:

- the geographic concentration of the black community;

- the resistance of the white community to integration;

- integration fails to recognize black people as a valid special interest group with needs that are unique.6

This philosophy was the basis upon which CORE has built each of its school desegregation actions through the early 70's.

The Committee noted that the schools of Harlem were examples of de facto segregation because the children who attended them were isolated

6 Ibid., Harlem Board of Education Organizing Committee.
in a system over which members of the black community exercised no control and had no responsibility, and within which they were powerless to effect meaningful changes. The move for community control began with the public schools because CORE felt that the schools were the transmitters of values, the molders of self-image, and because they provided the technical and psychological skills for human survival.

This proposal, published by the Harlem Board of Education Organizing Committee, is quite significant as one looks at the recent history of CORE. The philosophy of the organization changed very little from 1968-1973. Only the tactics or the means were modified or changed in an attempt to achieve separate school systems for black children.

CORE's effort to establish an independent board of education for Harlem once again failed. The 1969 legislative session produced no meaningful legislation designed to accomplish CORE's goal. It was the belief of CORE's leadership that the 1969 bill was defeated due to the fact that black legislators were split on the issue of establishing a separate board of education. Many black legislators persisted in feeling that integration, not separatism, was the ultimate answer to New York's education problems. Most of these legislators were or had been members of the NAACP and supported fully that organization's attempts to achieve an integrated school system. For the most part, they rejected the concept of self-separation as advocated by many of the younger leaders in the Black Nationalist and Black Power movements. In addition, CORE had

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7Ibid., Harlem Board of Education Organizing Committee.

8Brown, Edward; (private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.
its effectiveness hampered considerably by the internal struggles between the organization's members and leaders over the role the organization should be assuming in the struggle for equal rights for blacks. As a result, it wasn't until late 1969 and early 1970 that the organization was beginning to overcome financial difficulties which had plagued the organization since 1965. It became apparent, however, that the organization had begun to define its role by late 1969 and embark upon a course of action that was in complete contrast to earlier CORE approaches to school desegregation actions.

By the late 60's CORE had for the most part abandoned non-violent direct action as a major tactic. In its place was substituted political action and legislative lobbying as major tactics. The fact that CORE was relatively inexperienced in this field, because they had previously left this function to the NAACP, was a contributing factor to their lack of success. Their lack of experience and expertise was frustrating to many leaders in the organization, but did not deter their enthusiasm to seek new strategies to obtain their ends. This enthusiasm was the major cause for CORE's adding an additional tactic to their mode of operations in the 1970's--court action.

**Court Action Becomes a Major Tactic**

The Congress of Racial Equality under the leadership of Roy Innis and Victor Solomon, did not move to seek redress in the Federal Court System overnight. Innis knew that if CORE was to be successful, the organization would have to develop a sound basis for its new challenges. CORE would be challenging a concept which had been endorsed sixteen years
earlier by the Supreme Court of the U.S.; integrated schools; with a new concept; separate school systems; as well as challenging the NAACP as a spokesman for the rights of blacks. Victor Soloman notes the following as what CORE leaders felt would be the major obstacle which they would have to overcome if they were to be successful:

...the NAACP had created a problem for everybody by presenting before the courts all these years since 1954, only one possible way to fulfill the Constitutional requirements of equal protection under the law - equal educational opportunity - only one way and that was through integration. It (NAACP) programmed the various courts to think in terms of abolishing the segregation system by integrating. That's unfortunate, because it has closed out other certain possibilities which might enable black people to enter the mainstream, to succeed in general and more effectively. Now, as CORE moved into the court, we knew we'd have an uphill fight for a while. We had to educate the courts and unprogram them.9

CORE leaders felt if they were to educate the courts and redirect court opinions, it would be necessary to carefully develop a school desegregation plan which would support its newly-established position of advocating separate school systems for black and white children in urban centers. In addition, it would be necessary to choose test sites and cases for the implementation of its new desegregation plan that would provide them with the impetus necessary in establishing precedents. What area of the United States would be most receptive to a school desegregation plan which advocated separate school systems for black and white children? The logical answer to that question was, of course, the South.

9Soloman, Victor; (private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.
The CORE Desegregation Proposal Is Developed

CORE leaders then embarked upon two major tasks: the development of a desegregation plan and a rationale to support that plan; and involvement in several initial court cases where CORE affiliates were attempting to disestablish school segregation. The latter would serve as a training ground for the tactics which would be required to be successful in pleading their case for their desegregation proposals before various courts.

It should be noted that the development of a proposal and the courtroom training were to be carefully planned. The plan was to be a conceptualization of the new CORE philosophy when Roy Innis and Victor Soloman had been attempting to refine since they took control of the organization in 1968. Having been somewhat successful in dealing with the organization's financial crisis and internal power struggles, Innis was now ready to develop a consistent philosophy and methods of implementing that philosophy. The desegregation plan was the conceptualization of that new philosophy as it related to public school segregation, and it was this plan which formed the basis for every legal action taken by National CORE through the early seventies.

The plan developed by Innis and Soloman was ready by February of 1970 and centered around the establishment of community school districts. The plan was entitled, A True Alternative: A Proposal for Community School Districts.10 Because this proposal was the basis from which most all future CORE desegregation actions were to eminate, it is important to detail the contents of that proposal.

The proposal consisted of four major sections: a rationale, the actual plan, a discussion of the legality of the plan, and finally an abbreviated conclusion page. Perhaps the most interesting section and by far the most detailed section was the rationale. It is from this section that one begins to glean an understanding of the new philosophy of CORE as it related to public school desegregation. It is through this section that CORE leaders began to attempt to re-educate integration advocates as to other potential solutions to eradicating segregation in the public schools of the United States.

Innis and Solomon knew that there was a great deal of turmoil surrounding any plan which advocated busing as a means to achieve racial balances. It was decided that this turmoil was threatening to the success of any educational program for black children. Innis and Solomon noted this concern in the rationale section of their proposal:

This proposal for a pragmatic, achievable alternative to school segregation is maintained by the conclusion that all pet theories--be they liberal or racist--which have contributed to the present impasse in the public schools must be debunked and scuttled if we are to get on with the important business of educating our children.11

Both Innis and Solomon knew that if they were to be at all successful with any plan which advocated the establishment of what in essence would be separate school systems, they would have to attempt to reverse prevailing opinion on two major points: that racial exclusivity means inferior schools and that integration provides equal educational opportunity for black children.

11 Ibid., Innis and Solomon, p. 1.
The point was made by Innis and Soloman that the fact that a school is composed of predominately black students does not make that school inherently inferior. Concerning this point they note:

The inherently inferior theory is not only spurious on its face but insidiously racist in its implication that black children alone among the different races and groups of the world must mix in order to be equal. 12

The proposal attempted to build a case for black control over schools where the student bodies were all or predominately black. They attempted to leave the impression that an all black or predominately black school did not necessarily have to suffer as a result of being composed of a particular percentage of black students and did not have to be termed segregated as a result of those percentages. Innis and Soloman were attempting to provide a new definition for the term segregation; a definition which would be built upon the existence of or a lack of black authority over the operation of a school rather than upon mere percentages of white and black children who attended a particular school.

The second point which had to be attacked was that integration provided equal educational opportunity for black children. It was commonly held belief among many noted educators, sociologists, and politicians, that the unequal and segregated treatment of black children could be rectified by integrating them into white schools. On the subject of integration, Roy Innis expressed these views in an interview:

...I say that integration should not be an end in itself. It should be a means to an end - toward true equality and justice...They (Easterners and Northerners) steam-rollered the whole country into feeling that there was something synonymous between integration as a means and integration as an end. 13

12 Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 2-3.

In their proposal, Innis and Soloman listed four premises which they felt indicated that school integration had not solved the problems caused by segregation:

1. Through integration there is a failure to recognize black people as a valid special interest group with needs that are unique;

2. There is no research that supports the premise that integration in and by itself guarantees a good education;

3. Equal education implies more than equal space and the same teacher. It implies an equal right to policy makers;

4. An integrated setting is as potentially damaging psychologically as a segregated setting.\(^{14}\)

In discussing these four premises, the authors noted that integration usually resulted from a court mandate. "The court can offer black teachers and administrators very little protection from the crippling abuses which arise daily in an integrated setting where whites don't favor union."\(^{15}\) Most accounts of attempts to integrate school systems tend to support that statement. Efforts to integrate are usually met with a great deal of opposition. The authors were using the white resistance to integration, irrespective of the magnitude of that opposition, as a means to support their case for separate schools. It was pointed out that where school systems had been forced to eliminate dual systems, the new system would usually be controlled by the same people who controlled the original segregated system. Blacks, consequently, still did not have control over their own schools.


\(^{15}\) Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 5.
The authors argued, in the proposal, that integration had not been a satisfactory means of curing the ills of segregated schools because:

It is insidiously racist in its implication that black children alone among the different races and groups of the world must mix in order to be equal... They (blacks have been told -- and they believe -- that it is exposure to whites and by itself that makes blacks equal citizens.\textsuperscript{16}

Innis and Soloman stressed the point that separation of black children from white children was not the cause of black children receiving a poor quality of education, but rather the poor education was due to the premise that those who control the educational program of black children do not adequately provide for the needs of black children. The writers listed three characteristics of segregation (not separation) which make it impossible for black children to receive a quality education:

- ...Whites set blacks apart, by law or in fact, without their consent. This constitutes the arbitrary imposition of authority from without;

- ...the local school boards systematically deprive black schools of resources;

- ...the local school board, usually all white or predominately white, exercises control.\textsuperscript{17}

The events of the mid sixties, tended to create a new feeling of self-worth within many blacks. It has been suggested by some psychologists that, the Black Power Movement, Black Nationalism, etc., provided the impetus necessary for many blacks to develop healthy attitudes toward themselves as a people. This fact is also utilized by Innis to indicate that blacks were ready to manage their own affairs--schools were integral factors because they were molders of values. Blacks were

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 7.
prepared to take a more active part in the operation of schools and ready
to insure that black children would receive equal opportunity to succeed
with white children.

The actual plan covered only two pages in the proposal. Without
being specific—it was not politically safe to be too specific—the plan
was designed to create a separate school system in areas where natural
definable communities were made up of persons with common interests and
special problems. What this meant was that in many urban areas, instead
of having one school system for the entire city, a school system would
exist for each definable community within the city. In other words, the
black community would have a separate school system controlled by a
separate board of education whose members would be elected from that com-
munity and, as a result, would usually be black. Wouldn't this bring
almost complete separation of black children from white children? Innis
answered the question by stating:

...No, no more than in the separation of different
kinds of people that goes on naturally. You didn't
have de jure segregation in the North, but black
kids still stayed in their own areas. It's natural
that people of a particular interest or ethnic back-
ground tend to congregate together. That's the way
we do everything in our society.18

The major question remained to be answered—was it legal? Innis
and Soloman answered this question then as they do today:

...The Supreme Court has ruled that each school board
must run a unitary school system in a school district.
That is, if there are white and black children in a
school district, the school board may not set them
apart. Each district proposed in this plan would be
run as a unitary system. Moreover, the process of
redistricting proposed can only be done with the

18Ibid., Innis and Soloman, p. 12.
consent of the persons affected and with the legal agreement of the state. This is equivalent to the parties to an action arriving at a settlement out of court, without violating any law.\textsuperscript{19}

The authors of the CORE desegregation proposals attempted to build their case for separate school systems by stating that segregation was unconstitutional only when those segregated were forced to be so. The Supreme Court had stated in Brown I that dual systems in the same school district had to be eliminated, and the CORE plan would create two school districts instead of one, through redistricting. This redistricting would be controlled by a board of education whose members were to be elected from the new districts. Thus, CORE argued, their plan would comply with the intent of the Brown decision.

When asked, if he thought the federal courts would accept this plan, Innis stated:

I am certain the federal courts will accept this because it's a unitary plan. There's no coercion and there's no circumvention. It's a matter of the affected parties working out a pragmatic solution to their own problems.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Mobile is Chosen as a Test Site for the CORE Plan}

Both Innis and Solomon felt their plan would be hailed by Southern political leaders who were being pressed by the federal courts to desegregate their schools. CORE's plan would allow those political leaders the opportunity to support a desegregation plan that did not require them to integrate and a plan that was being advocated by a black civil rights

\textsuperscript{19}bid., Innis and Solomon, p. 13.

organization. It was the decision of Innis and Soloman to choose a Southern city where desegregation was an issue, for the first test of CORE's new plan. The city chosen was Mobile, Alabama. Innis noted that Mobile was chosen because:

...it's large. I wanted to see large efficient systems—not so large they became cumbersome, like New York or Washington, but large enough to be efficient. But at the same time, the people have a certain homogeneity and a desire to be in the same institutional unit and manage their own resources.21

Victor Soloman gave a somewhat different view as to why Mobile was chosen for a test site:

...I think the whites would have given up a black school district. We found that the law in the state of Alabama enabled that kind of development much more easily than most Northern situations. Law in Alabama favored the creation of school districts, with respect to race. Our touching base with elected officials indicated that they were receptive to the idea and were committed to create these districts in a clean way and not just steal everything. They were actually moved to—providing money and resources to make it work, because of the pressure on them to desegregate.22

It was obvious to CORE leaders that they would ultimately have to fight their case in court. Thus, they set out to attempt to lay a base for those court battles and at the same time gain expertise in presenting cases for adjudication before the court system of our country. They knew that they were not yet ready to argue a case before the courts in the Mobile situation. As a result, they attempted to implement their proposal for a community school district by attaining mutual consent of

21 Ibid., U.S. News and World Report, p. 31.

22 Soloman, Victor; (private interview recorded at National CORE's Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
all parties concerned with the Mobile situation. Unfortunately for CORE leaders, they received the support of most white community leaders, but ironically were completely rebuffed by the black community.

Most blacks in Mobile were not active supporters of any civil rights organization and were not prepared to support the separatist plan being advocated by CORE. Blacks who did belong to an organization supported the NAACP and its position of integration. CORE organizers were not successful in gaining the necessary grass roots support for their plan. Soloman notes that in terms of geography, Mobile was ideal, but in terms of black support it was not.

...Mobile was never touched by the civil rights movement. It remained a place in the South and this made community organization slower. Mobile is, also, not receptive to outsiders, so that it made the finding of local converts slow.23

CORE Is Involved With Its First Legal Test Case

The NAACP, in Mobile, brought suit in a number of instances to bring about the desegregation of Mobile's schools. CORE's process of educating and attempting to gain the support of the black community for its proposal was interrupted by the fact that the Supreme Court of the U.S. agreed to consolidate several Mobile cases and review them as one case. The case was Birdie Mae Davis, et al. v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County, et al. (1970). CORE would have preferred to wait to "get its feet wet" in court actions, but they were now faced with having to respond

23ibid., Soloman interview.
to the NAACP's brief, if CORE were to continue its fight for separate school systems. *

In the Mobile case, CORE developed and filed an Amicus Curiae brief as an interested party in opposition to the brief filed by the NAACP. In its brief, CORE presented what was essentially its proposal for the creation of a new school system which would encompass an all-black section of the eastern part of Mobile. The boundaries of the black community were well-defined geographically. Thus, CORE for the first time, argued its case for the creation of a community school district before the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Court was not receptive to the CORE plan and rendered a decision which was supportive of the NAACP. In its decision the Court remanded the case to a lower court to implement a plan that involved substantial busing of students, the pairing of schools and the breaking down of high schools in order to create junior high schools. 24

*Since the Mobile case had been a case prepared by the NAACP against the Board of School Commissioners, CORE had to present its position in the form of an Amicus Curiae brief. This type of brief is a means whereby an interested party, who has new information or a different set of facts to present in a court action, can do so if the courts approves of the filing of such a brief. This was to be the major means whereby CORE was to become involved in court actions. The NAACP was responsible for bringing court actions against school systems in order to have those school districts desegregate their schools through the use of actions such as busing or the physical movement of black and white children. CORE, then, proposed that students not be moved and favored the creation of community school districts. The two positions were opposite, and thus the court consented to allow CORE to present its new information or plan through the development of an Amicus Curiae brief.

CORE leaders had not expected to be successful in this case due to the fact that this was their initial effort to win approval of their community school plan through the courts. In addition, the resistance of the black community of Mobile to the plan was a major obstacle which they did not have adequate time to overcome. Victor Soloman stated what he felt was positive about the Mobile experience:

The experience in Mobile pretty much refined our techniques and approaches. We standardized certain procedures which we were able to apply elsewhere.  

Soloman also spoke about the negative aspects which CORE leaders felt resulted from the Court's decision:

There was a net loss of experienced teachers in black schools due to a teacher assignment program ordered by the Court. Our best black teachers were transferred to white schools and black schools got inexperienced white teachers... There was student unrest, fights at schools, disruptions and a general lack of stability in the black community.

Following their court defeat in Mobile, CORE leaders for the most part, abandoned any plans they might have had for that city. Their goal was to continue their efforts to win approval for their plan through the courts. They sought out further testing grounds for their plan.

CORE Seeks Further Test Sites

CORE legal advisors developed a brief for presentation in the case of Norwalk CORE v. Norwalk Board of Education. In this brief, CORE, for the first time, dealt with the issue of busing children. CORE

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25Soloman, Victor; (private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City, April, 1973

26Ibid., Soloman interview.

officials felt that they had a case against the unilateral busing of
black students into white communities. Soloman noted the basis of
CORE's case:

...the basis of our case in Norwalk was that if
there was a burden to busing, and there is,
then that burden should be spread equally among
everybody; or if there are benefits in having
a neighborhood school, then everybody should
partake of those benefits equally, so that there
just shouldn't be whites having their neighbor-
hood schools and blacks having to go out of
their neighborhoods and districts.28

Once again, CORE, was not successful in having the District Court
rule in favor of its position, but it had begun to deal with specific
concerns opponents had with CORE's new approach toward desegregation.
CORE leaders felt they had to choose their issues carefully because at
some later point they would want to prepare for a major test of their
plan in the courts. The knew, for instance, they had to change the
impressions that many jurists had concerning CORE; that it was a separa-
tist organization. They had to establish their credibility. It was
not surprising to see that in another case, Carter v. West Feliciana
Parish, Board of Education,29 CORE legal aides argued in support of a
plan which would disestablish segregation by means of integration. The
means was not to be busing or the moving of pupils, but rather to the
development of area schools which would be integrated. CORE leaders
felt that support for such a plan would not jeopardize acceptance of
their separatist plan and such support could be utilized later as an

28Soloman, Victor; Private interview recorded at CORE's National
Offices in New York City, April, 1973.

indication that they would support the most effective means to desegregating schools.

In the fall of 1970, another case concerning the busing of students to achieve racial balance came before the U.S. Supreme Court. CORE leaders knew that they would have to file a brief in this most important case. They applied for and received permission to file an Amicus Curiae brief in the case of Swan v. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education.\footnote{Swan v. Board of Education, 402 U.S., 1 (1971).}

In this brief, CORE sought to have the case remanded to a lower court for the purpose of the development of an alternative desegregation plan to the one proposed by the NAACP. Attorneys argued that CORE supported fully the concept of integration that had been set forth by the Supreme Court in the 1954 Brown case. They cited, as evidence of a test of that support, their involvement in the case of Carter v. Feliciana Parish Board of Education where CORE had argued for integration as a means to disestablish segregation.

In addition, CORE cited a statement made by Chief Justice Burger in the Court's decision in the case of Northcross v. Board of Education of Memphis\footnote{Northcross v. Board of Education, 397 U.S., 232 (1970).} that they felt questioned whether or not racial balance was constitutionally mandated. In that decision Chief Justice Burger wrote the following concerning the major questions which needed to be answered:

...Whether as a constitutional matter, any particular racial balance must be achieved in the schools; to what extent school district and zones may or must be altered and a constitutional matter; and to what extent transportation may or must be
provided to achieve the ends sought by prior holdings of the court.32

The Supreme Court did not mandate busing but did support the concept of busing as being an alternative which could be utilized in desegregating school systems. CORE leaders felt the fact that the court would not direct busing to be utilized in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, and because they did not rule on the constitutionality of requiring a racial balance in all schools, that they had been somewhat victorious. Until this time, the Supreme Court's position had been that racially imbalanced schools would have to be broken up until a suitable racial balance was achieved. CORE leaders considered the Supreme Court's decision as a beginning of a trend toward a more conservative stance on the part of the Court concerning public school desegregation issues.

In the brief for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg case, CORE attorneys argued that results of attempts to enforce, by law, racial dispersal were often counter-productive. They argued against racial dispersal by stating that:

- ...the constitution does not mandate school integration, but outlaws segregation;
- ...the constitution does not anoint integration over other means as a way to establish a unitary school system;
- integration is mandated when it is the only means and most effective means to bring about desegregation at the earliest possible moment;
- two tests of any means are effectiveness and earliest practicable date.33

32Ibid., Northcross v. Board of Education.

CORE leaders felt the Supreme Court's failure to deal with the issues they had presented indicated that there was hope for the success of their school desegregation plan. This bolstered their spirits and they felt that renewed efforts would provide for the attainment of their goals concerning school desegregation.

CORE Moves To Gain Popular Black Support For Its Plan

Innis and Soloman knew if they were to be successful in their fight to gain the support of the courts for their community school district plan, they would have to also gain the support of blacks and whites who resisted any programs that even hinted of separation. CORE's efforts during the next two years, 1971 and 1972, were directed toward gaining that support and refining their Community School District Plan for a further possible test in Richmond, Virginia, where they felt a major court case concerning massive busing and the changing of district boundaries was developing.

Gaining support for their Community School District plan was an uphill fight, but CORE leaders persisted. CORE began to overcome its severe financial problems toward the end of the 60's as more and more militant blacks began to become active in the organization. CORE's shift in emphasis and philosophy, away from programs geared to obtain integration of the races and toward the development of black communities as strong entities in themselves, brought young militant activists into the organization. Thus, as the philosophy of the organization changed, so did the makeup of its membership. As the members who had favored the integration philosophy of CORE gradually left or were forced out of the organization there became fewer and fewer internal battles concerning
the new CORE philosophy. CORE leaders could direct more and more of their efforts and resources to gaining the support of other citizen organizations, legislators, jurists, etc.

In order to gain that support, the membership needed to be viewed as united in their new quest. The 1970 CORE National Convention provided the unified support that Innis had sought for so long. That convention, was held in Mobile, Alabama. The site had been chosen carefully so as to give support to the CORE Plan for Mobile. The delegates passed a number of resolutions:

...expressing fear of the emergence of a unique type of segregation growing out of the attempts of local school boards to comply with desegregation orders; whether in good faith or not... The CORE resolutions observed that integration plans which are presently designed and implemented have not worked to satisfy the end ordered by the courts to satisfy the constitutional requirement of equality.34

In addition to the need to show unification the organization had changed its tactics and its position on integration as a means to obtaining equality for blacks. These arguments would have to be sound for they would ultimately be used to gain the support of the courts. Concerning the change in tactics and emphasis of the organizations, the following rationale evolved:

A reassessment of its (CORE) programs and strategies in the mid 1960's indicated to the organization that it had been consistently and decidedly rebuffed in its assaults on discrimination in housing and education. It became apparent that new strategies would have to be devised to deal with the entrenched nature

of discrimination and racism in those areas. Aside from its obvious importance in the quest for equality, education was seen as the area to which new strategies could most feasibly and profitably be applied. The organization has therefore concentrated a major portion of its resources in the field of education over the past number of years.35

The second area, the shift in philosophy away from integration, was dealt with by indicating that:

...CORE's experience and periodic reassessment of its methods of achieving its goals have caused it to question if in fact integration in every case is the most practicable and most desirable means of obtaining equal education for black Americans. Field experience and each successive court case in which it has been involved as either Amicus Curiae or as plaintiff cast doubts as to the universal workability of integration as a pathway to equality.36

Roy Innis believed that it would be unwise and suicidal, politically speaking, for the organization to take a too aggressive stance concerning separatism. In speeches, interviews, and written materials, the rhetoric was such as to be acceptable to all concerned; attractive to black militants, but at the same time somewhat appealing to those whites and blacks alike who opposed the approaches of the more militant black nationalist organizations. Terms like self-determination, racial independence, community schools, unitary school districts, were used rather than terms which would connote separatism.

One of Roy Innis's most dramatic speeches was given at the Chanukah Service for Soviet Jewery at Madison Square Garden on December 13, 1971.

Innis had accepted the invitation to speak to the groups because extensive speaking engagements were one means to gain the support of outside organizations for the new CORE philosophy. In addition, many Jews had been members of CORE when it was first organized and had left the organization as it embarked on its new approach toward achieving racial equality.

During the course of his speech, Innis asked the question, "Do you support the right of blacks to self-determination?" In response, a large number of people in the audience shouted "No!" Innis spontaneously responded:

Hear Me! Do not ask me to come here to speak only of your needs. Support is not unilateral. It is not a one way street. I am not one of those black leaders who comes to you to beg and pray on his knees, I am not a lacky! You must know it is not without some risk and question that a black leader in these times comes before you. I, this past summer, went to the Soviet Union and was confronted immediately with questions about my support for you which I had given on numerous occasions. I stood firmly on my position.37

It was with this speech that Innis made it known that CORE would support the causes of other organizations only in return for their support. At the same time, he made it known that CORE was not just another Black Nationalist Organization led by radical individuals filled with contempt for all whites. This was an example of a politically aware individual attempting to assume a position that would not be viewed as too radical by liberal whites and blacks nor too conservative by the young black militants of the organization. Innis's style was further highlighted by the dramatic conclusion of his speech:

37Innis, Roy; "An Appeal to All Pharoahs," (an address presented to the Chanukah Service for Soviet Jewery), December 13, 1971.
No man is an island unto himself. No man is free until all men are free and I say to the pharoahs in the U.S.S.R., let your people go! I say to the pharoahs in the U.S.A., let my people go! 

CORE's Plan Becomes Known as "The CORE Unitary School Model"

As CORE leaders and legal advisors became more and more involved with the refining of their judicial approaches and techniques, it became apparent that the term Community School District Plan was no longer acceptable. The term community schools had become so widely used to describe so many different educational phenomena that it no longer served the purpose for which it was intended. Innis, Soloman and their legal advisors decided that this plan needed a new title. They finally decided on the term Unitary School Plan:

...the term unitary was used because the Supreme Court had ruled in Brown that school districts who operated dual school systems (one for blacks and one for whites) had to terminate those systems and in their place create a unitary school system. 

It was this type of logic which indicated that CORE, as an organization, was maturing. No longer were decisions being made on the spur of the moment with little consideration to their political feasibility, but rather CORE leaders were seeking counsel from reliable sources as to the effect particular courses of action would have on the overall goals of the organization. This objective and rational approach to decision-making fostered the development of a more viable organization.

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38Ibid., Innis, Roy; An address to the Chanukah Service.

39Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
CORE's Role in the National Black Political Convention

In March of 1972, more than 3000 elected delegates representing all ideological and class facets of black America met at what was called the National Black Political Convention. This convention was held in Gary, Indiana, and the events that transpired there proved to represent a major victory for CORE leaders in their attempt to gain the support of blacks for what was now termed the Unitary School Plan.

On Sunday afternoon, during the final session of the convention, the chairman of the South Carolina delegation read the following resolution and urged its adoption:

We condemn forced racial integration of schools as a bankrupt, suicidal method of desegregating schools, based on the false notion that black children are unable to learn unless they are in the same setting with white children. As an alternative to busing of black children to achieve racial balance we demand quality education in the black community through community-controlled state school districts and a guaranteed equal share of all educational money.40

The motion to adopt the resolution was seconded and discussion was opened. CORE leaders Innis, Solomon and Brown had carried on behind-the-scenes lobbying and had been successful in getting the chairman of the Florida delegation to offer the following amendment to the resolution:

Be it resolved that we condemn any anti-busing constitutional amendment that does not include a section allowing for black community-control of schools. The Black Political Convention goes on record in support of the CORE Unitary School Plan as a legitimate method of desegregating schools and a viable and desirable black alternative to racist imposed integrationist tactics to destroy black schools.41

41 Ibid., CORE Magazine, p. 10.
The amended resolution passed by a voice vote. There was a great deal of concern expressed by delegates from integrationist organizations such as the NAACP, SCLC, PUSH, PCs, Urban League and others concerning the decision of the convention to support the CORE Unitary Plan. The fact was that those delegates had been "out-hustled" by CORE.

The result was that several delegations walked out of the convention. CORE officials, in an attempt to indicate this did not show a lack of support for their plan, argued that only a few delegates from Michigan had actually walked out. They noted that the South Carolina and Florida delegations left immediately after the vote to catch buses home, and that this left the false impression that delegates were walking out. The number of delegates who walked out of the convention because of the passage of the resolution was not significant, although there were more delegates who walked out than CORE officials were willing to admit.

The fact remains, that for the first time an assembled body of black leaders from all over the United States had given their support to a desegregation plan that did not advocate busing or integration as a means to achieve equal educational opportunity. CORE's leaders' efforts to dethrone the NAACP as the major spokesman for the rights of blacks were beginning to bear some meager, fruitful results. Their efforts to win support for their plan by members of the black community were showing positive results. Victor Solomon noted:

With the Gary convention we saw the tide changing in the black community. The individual self-interest of the participants was obliterated so that what came out was the general tendency of and direction of the group. In Gary, the basic feelings of the people came out. It resulted in support for a nationalist program and an endorsement of CORE's Unitary School
Plan. The most significant thing was that it was support for self-determination as an approach to solving the problems of blacks. It was that rather than support for programs whereby blacks could be absorbed into white society and have their identity as a people abolished.42

Soloman's view that what had happened had been the attainment of consensus on the part of blacks that integration was no longer a major goal of the black movement, is perhaps not an accurate assessment. The will of the group was not necessarily supported by all individual members. Those who were opposed to attempts to establish separate school systems, for the most part, remained opposed to those attempts after the convention. Several of them even attempted to have the National Black Assembly's steering committee reverse the resolutions passed in Gary, but instead of meeting with success the steering committee reaffirmed the Gary resolutions. CORE was challenging the NAACP and that organization's concept of integration, and they were beginning to see positive results. The time and effort expended on developing tactics and refining those tactics was beginning to pay off.

Two weeks following the National Black Political Convention, the National Black Congressional Caucus Conference was held in Washington, D.C., on March 29, 1972. This conference was sponsored jointly by the Black Congressional Caucus and the NAACP. The purpose of the conference was to develop a national policy for blacks concerning education. NAACP leaders had just suffered defeat at the hands of CORE at the Gary convention only two weeks previously. As a result, they had been successful,

42Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at National CORE offices in New York City), Aprile, 1973.
when developing the agenda for the conference, in avoiding considering the issue of black community control, which was a major concern of CORE. CORE leaders were at work, again behind-the-scenes, in gathering the necessary support of certain delegates for Roy Innis to address the Caucus and for the Caucus to give support for CORE's Unitary School Plan.

What CORE leaders later termed a "spontaneous rebellion from the floor" was neither spontaneous nor a rebellion but in reality was a well-planned tactic to have Roy Innis address the Caucus. At any rate, it was successful and a special session of the Caucus was called to hear Innis.

In his special presentation to the representatives of the Congressional Black Caucus, Innis once again attempted to build support for the CORE Unitary School Plan. He spoke of the need for community control and the need for an "enlightened self-interest" which provides that people can best deliver services to themselves. This concept is the major component of CORE's plan and had been since the organization had become involved in the battle for community control of Intermediate School 201 in New York City during the mid sixties.

Irrespective of the fact that CORE's fight for community control in Harlem had failed, Innis said:

The drive for community control nevertheless continues. We in CORE have come up with a plan for community control of our schools, different from the segregationists' plan (the Nixon-Wallace plan) which has been ruled illegal by the courts, and different from the integrationist plan being ordered by some of the lower courts.43

43 Innis, Roy; (An address to a special session of its National Policy Conference on Education for Blacks), The Congressional Black Caucus, (April 1, 1972), Washington, D.C.; transcript of session, p. 2.
Innis's reference to the "Nixon plan" was his response to a proposition made by President Nixon that what was needed was to increase the resources being spent in black schools, thereby upgrading the quality of education. Under Nixon's plan busing to achieve a racial balance would be eliminated. Innis further elaborated that:

The Nixon plan—separate and equal schools—would pour money into poor black schools but would not affect the white power monopoly. The CORE plan calls for creating school districts in such a way that blacks will be that power monopoly in their own communities—their districts. We are talking about creating two districts, two boards, two school systems in an area—one black and the other white. The boundaries would conform to black-white housing patterns. The CORE plan is imminently fair. It seems to satisfy the needs of those who want more power and control over our institutions and it does it without infringing on the rights of those who need to receive services from an institution in which whites are a majority.44

Innis argued that the CORE plan was indeed a true alternative to plans which advocated segregation and integration. It was his contention that those type of plans caused increased dissension between blacks and whites and that the CORE plan would eliminate this dissension.

The result of Innis's presentation and planning was that those present voted for the establishment of a Caucus on Community Control. The membership of the Caucus was heavily weighted in favor of community control and although its recommendations were never ultimately adopted by the full membership of the Black Congressional Caucus, CORE leaders still recorded a major victory. This victory was three fold:

44Ibid., Innis, Roy; The Congressional Black Caucus, p. 2.
1. CORE leaders were able to get the delegates to vote to have a special session to hear Roy Innis describe the merits of CORE's desegregation plan;

2. CORE leaders were successful in having the delegates vote to establish a Caucus on Community Control;

3. CORE leaders were successful in having the Caucus on Community Control support the resolutions of support for the CORE plan that had been passed at the Gary convention.

CORE legal advisors could use the results of Black Congressional Caucus to add support for the organization's contention that the NAACP was no longer the sole spokesman for the interests of blacks in the U.S. These legal experts would utilize the Gary conference, Black Congressional Caucus, and a number of other instances, in future legal briefs filed with various federal courts concerning school desegregation cases.

**CORE Seeks To Become Involved In Richmond, Virginia**

CORE leaders and their legal advisors had been watching with interest the events that were taking place in Richmond, Virginia. There, Federal District Court Judge Robert Merhige ordered the predominately black school district of Richmond, Virginia, to merge with the suburban districts of Henrico and Chesterfield counties. Metropolitan desegregation became a much discussed term with its merits and drawbacks detailed by proponents and opponents of the concept. This decision caused CORE leaders to become concerned, because for the first time a federal court had presented the possibility of integrating black schools in urban areas with

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the white schools of adjacent counties and using school buses to do it. If this concept were to be upheld as a viable means to desegregating schools by the Circuit Court of Appeals and then by the U.S. Supreme Court, the CORE plan would no longer be viable.

CORE leaders were opposed to the concept of metropolitan desegregation, primarily according to Soloman:

...because segregation had left large numbers of black concentrated in urban areas. This concentration provided blacks with a huge amount of power over those areas. The magnitude of this power was a first for blacks and metropolitan desegregation would only tend to minimize that power and strength and continue to allow whites to control blacks.46

The suit against the Richmond School Board had been brought by the NAACP and they applauded the decision. CORE leaders realized that the time was at hand when they would have to file an Amicus Curiae brief in the hopes that they could get Judge Merhige's decision reversed. On April 12, 1972, CORE attorneys filed a motion with the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals asking for permission to file an Amicus Curiae brief with that Court concerning the case of Bradley, et. al. v. The School Board of Richmond, Virginia, et. al. In that motion, it was noted that:

....All CORE members are dedicated to the principle of racial equality and religious and political freedom. The purpose of the organization is to aid in furthering and effectuating the constitutional guarantees as to personal and group political liberties.47

46Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.

47Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia (Motion of the Congress of Racial Equality for Leave to File Brief Amicus Curiae on the Merits), April, 1972, p. 2.
The tenor of the motion was such as to indicate that CORE was not an organization that advocated separatism of the races but had long fought for the attainment of equal rights for blacks through a number of means, one of which was integration. They made reference to the Carter, Norwalk, Mobile and Swann Cases in which CORE had been involved earlier. In addition, they cited the endorsement of the Gary convention and Black Congressional Caucus for CORE's school desegregation plan as indicators that many blacks supported CORE's plan and that the NAACP did not speak for all blacks.

We seek to file to assure the Court that the NAACP does not in fact represent the total black community, and to seek to guarantee that blacks who are the injured part in most education cases are adequately represented.48

CORE leaders knew that if they were to be successful they would have to discredit the NAACP's contention that it represented the interests of the majority of blacks in Richmond. It was for this reason that they advocated the use of a referendum of blacks in Richmond to demonstrate whether or not the NAACP represented the interests of the entire class of blacks affected in the court action. They noted that:

In Richmond, CORE became involved at the request of many black parents who are distressed over the failure of schools to educate their children. They expressed the feeling that the District Court's order would result in a new and possible disastrous course with increased inconvenience and little promise for educational improvement.49

48 Ibid., Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia (Motion to File Brief Amicus Curiae), p. 7.

49 Ibid., Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia (Motion to File Brief Amicus Curiae), p. 3.
To further enhance their argument that all blacks did not support the NAACP's approach to school desegregation, CORE officials made reference to the Florida primary election of 1971 where black residents of Gadsden County, the only county with a black majority, had endorsed a proposal against busing 3 to 1.

All of the arguments presented in CORE's motion to file an Amicus Curiae brief were designed to indicate that:

1. Black people were opposed to forced busing to achieve racial balance when there was an alternative available and;

2. The ideological stranglehold the NAACP had held on the black community had been broken and it no longer held the monopoly on the solutions to end segregated education.\(^{50}\)

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth District approved CORE's motion to file an Amicus Curiae brief on the grounds that there was adequate cause to suspect that the CORE brief would present new and pertinent information for the Court's consideration. CORE officials and their legal advisors set about the task of preparing their brief. The successes they had achieved over the past several months had renewed their strength that indicated that they would be successful in challenging the NAACP in school desegregation actions.

CORE Utilizes Congressional Lobbying as a Tactic

While CORE legal advisors had been preparing to carry their case through the federal court system, other responsible leaders in the organization were lobbying for their plan in the Congress of the United States.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., Bradley v. Board of Education, p. 6.
Roy Innis felt strongly that CORE had to pursue its cause through as many different avenues as possible. The organization's efforts were directed not at just organizing the community, but also to seeking redress in the legislative and judicial branches of our government. The days of non-violent direct action became a part of the past, but a part of the past that could easily be revived if the situation should necessitate such action. The ability of the organization to adapt its techniques and approaches to modern day needs can be attributed to the leadership of Roy Innis and indicates that CORE was truly maturing as an organization.

In the spring of 1972, at approximately the same point in time as the Gary convention, the Black Congressional Caucus and the filing of a motion by CORE to present an Amicus Curiae brief in the Richmond school desegregation case, the Congress of the United States was considering several proposed anti-busing amendments to the Constitution of the United States. A joint proposed amendment had been presented to the Senate and the House of Representatives by Senator Brock and Congressman Lent. The Judiciary Committee of both houses held hearings on the proposed amendment and CORE leaders petitioned to appear to testify before the Committees considering the proposed anti-busing amendment. CORE's Associate Director, Soloman and Political Director Brown were invited to appear before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on March 16, 1972, and before the Senate Subcommittee on April 11, 1972. The testimony before both subcommittees was quite similar but, surprisingly, was not limited to supporting the proposed amendment.
Solomon stated that CORE supported the basic sense of the Brock-Lent amendment, but could not completely agree with all sections of the amendment. When asked by Committee member McCulloch if CORE supported the amendment before them for discussion or was proposing a new amendment, Solomon responded:

We have been in dialogue with Congressman Lent and Senator Brock and in our recent discussions we have agreed that the amendments they have submitted are deficient in one very important aspect and I would like to address myself to specifically where they are deficient. We would like to have section 1 of the Brock or Lent amendment to read: That no public school pupil shall be forced, be assigned or required to attend or excluded from a particular school.\footnote{Solomon, Victor; (Testimony before U.S. Senate Subcommittee Considering Anti-Busing Amendment to the U.S. Constitution), April 11, 1972, p. 1040.}

The wording of section 1 of the Brock-Lent amendment read: "No public school student shall, because of his race, creed, or color, be assigned to, required to attend, or excluded from a particular school."\footnote{Ibid., Solomon, Victor; p. 1037.}

In his testimony, Solomon went on to note that the change in terminology would strengthen the intent of the amendment and would still allow those who wished to be bused to another school to be bused. It is important to note that this was an important piece of strategy by CORE leaders, in that the Brock-Lent amendment was considered by many as being an attempt to maintain separation of the races because all busing to achieve racial balance would be prohibited. CORE wanted to convey the impression that they were not totally opposed to busing. The various spokesmen for the organization during previous months had been advocating equality of the races and indicating that they were not opposed to integration. In their
desegregation plan they had intentionally included the provision that any resident of a unitary school district who wished to attend school in another district could do so. The change in wording in the amendment was consistent with their unitary plan and served the purpose of indicating to those concerned that CORE was not an organization that advocated separatism, but rather was concerned only with obtaining equality for all blacks.

Section 2 of the proposed amendment read:

A sizeable community of persons, of like educational interest, regardless of race or color, shall have the option of being constituted a state school district. This option shall not be denied because of existing city, county, or other intrastate boundaries.⁵³

CORE leaders had been successful in having this section included in the amendment. This section would allow for the creation of separate school systems where there was a large black constituency, if the residents of that area were in agreement. This, if passed, would have allowed for the implementation of CORE's Unitary School System Model. The authors of the amendment in order to gain the support of certain segments of the black population had freely included this section at the advice of CORE leaders. The support of some militant blacks for the amendment would tend to give credence to the argument that the amendment was not developed to further segregation. Although the amendment was never passed, the fact that CORE had successfully maneuvered and lobbied to have its concerns expressed in it, is a further indication that the organization was maturing as a viable force with which to be reckoned.

⁵³Ibid., Soloman, Victor, p. 1037.
Solomon and Brown, in testimony before the committee fully supported Section III of the amendment, which guaranteed each school district an equal share of the sum of all local and state resource allotments. CORE leaders felt strongly that this was imperative if a black school district was to be effectively controlled by that community. If the control of the resources remained in the hands of whites, a black school district could never be completely free to operate its schools in a manner that was consistent with the desires of the members of the community. This concept had been written into the basic structure of CORE's Unitary School System Model.

CORE leaders knew their battle in the courts would be somewhat facilitated by Congressional action which would give courts some new directions to consider on desegregation matters. This was suggested to the Senate Subcommittee by Soloman:

In addressing this committee, we will offer testimony to the effect that it is very possible that the courts need some guidance, that the Constitution needs to be amended for the purpose of clarifying certain basic guidelines, and it is our contention that we have got to talk about an extension in a sense of the 14th amendment and equal opportunity provisions therein.54

Of course, the new directions to which Soloman referred dealt with the acceptance and implementation of CORE's desegregation plan. Soloman argued that the courts had, in the previous cases, been presented with only one alternative to desegregating schools and that alternative was total integration.

54Ibid., Soloman, Victor; p. 1039.
...the courts are not totally the culprits in the bind they have placed the Nation in. There is no doubt that we are all against the wall. We are on the ropes on this one. The resolution against busing is a testament to that. The polarization between the races is a testament to that. The courts have at times had to rule between two alternatives, that of the old fashioned segregation and the integration approach which has been presented to them, primarily, by the one organization let into the court, and that is the NAACP.55

Solomon noted that *Swann v. Charlotte-Mechlenburg* was the first school desegregation case where the court had allowed an *Amicus Curiae* brief to be filed which offered a position different from that presented by the NAACP. Thus Solomon argued that the Court's lack of experience with alternatives to integration as a means to desegregating schools had led to numerous conflicts between whites and blacks when school districts were ordered to integrate. The turmoil which resulted from these rulings often led to the disruption of education in the communities involved. Solomon argued that CORE offered a plan that would tend to eliminate racial strife and offer children, white and black, a greater opportunity to obtain a quality education.

The fact that CORE leaders had been invited to appear before both committees of Congress was seen as a major success in their attempt to gain credibility as a spokesman for the interests of blacks. Ed Brown stated that:

...this was evidence that we were gaining on the NAACP. For the first time we were at least being listened to where previously we had been ignored as a radical, separatist organization. We felt good about our appearance before the committees of Congress and it gave us the exposure that we so badly needed.56

55Ibid., Solomon, Victor; p. 1042.

56Brown, Edward; (Private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.
CORE Files an Amicus Brief in the Richmond Case

In June of 1972, CORE filed an Amicus Curiae brief in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in the case of Bradley v. the School Board of the City of Richmond, Virginia. In this brief, CORE presented a case in which the arguments and positions had been formulated with great care. The experiences of the previous year and a half served to allow for the refinement of the arguments and positions presented in the brief. The result was probably the best legal expression to date of the CORE organization's position concerning the desegregation of public school systems. In fact, when the Richmond case was later placed before the United States Supreme Court, CORE's basic arguments were the same as those presented to the Court of Appeals. CORE leaders felt that they could do little more to improve their brief. It is for this reason that consideration should be given to the facts presented in that Amicus Curiae brief.

The Supreme Court of the United States in Brown I and II mandated an end to dual school systems at the "earliest practicable date."\(^{57}\) The Court did not mandate a particular method to accomplish that task but suggested that school districts which maintained dual school systems should seek alternatives that would most effectively lead to the creation of one non-discriminatory, unitary school system. The Court's decision was directed at those Southern school districts in which certain schools were designed for use by black students and certain schools designed for the use of white students, which resulted in what was in reality two

separate school systems within the one school district. The Court mandated that these dual school systems were in fact practicing de jure segregation which was unconstitutional and that if a school district maintained dual systems that it must consolidate those systems into a unitary, or one, school system.

CORE's initial argument in their brief was that the Supreme Court did not mandate a specific means to accomplish the task of disestablishing segregation. What evolved, however, was that integration or the attainment of specific racial balances in schools determined by the courts to be segregated, became the only method to be utilized to disestablish segregation. This, CORE argued, was due to the fact that courts had sought guidance from the NAACP which had advocated integration as the only possible means that would be consistent with the Constitution. Other possible means were never considered. Several questions are presented in the brief:

(a) Is the Constitutional mandate to disestablish school segregation a mandate to establish school integration?

(b) If the answer to (a) is no: Is racial dispersal a possible legal means of fulfilling the Constitutional mandate?

(c) And assuming the answer to (b) is yes: When and/or where integration is the most "effective" means and the means that can be achieved at the "earliest practicable date," is integration then mandated to fulfill the ends required by the Constitution? 

58 Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia; (Brief for the Congress of Racial Equality as Amicus Curiae), U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 3353, June, 1972.
Edward Brown noted that what CORE was attempting to do was:

...to get the appeals court to suggest that integration was not mandated by the Constitution. To uphold integration as the mandated method would be to sustain the decision of Judge Mershige and we felt sure that the Justices on the Appeals Court were not eager to mandate the massive busing which would be necessary to implement such a decision. 59

If the Appeals Court would not mandate integration as the sole method to disestablish segregation, CORE leaders felt that the implication would be made that there must in fact be other methods that could be considered. CORE officials noted, in their brief, that the Supreme Court in Brown, Green, and Alexander had held that segregation was illegal because it violated the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which guaranteed equality under the law. It was argued the only question which should be entertained by the courts was whether or not blacks within a given school district were or were not being denied equal protection under the law. 60 If a court determined that blacks were being denied their equal protection, then that equality must be attained by utilizing the most "effective" means which meets the Constitutional mandate at the "earliest practicable date."

...does the District Court order in the instant care meet the criteria of being the most "effective" pathway and the one that can fulfill the Constitutional requirement at the "earliest practicable date?" 61

59 Brown, Edward; (Private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.

60 Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia; (Brief for the Congress of Racial Equality as Amicus Curiae), U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 3353, June, 1972, p. 7.

The other pathway or means that CORE referred to concerned the possibility of adjusting or altering school district boundaries to achieve equal protection for blacks in segregated school systems. The major point they wanted the court to understand was that the altering of district boundaries was a viable alternative if it led to providing blacks with equal protection under the law but not necessarily a viable method if it led to achieving certain racial balances in individual school buildings. Integration or the attainment of a racial balance would not necessarily guarantee equal protection under the law. Roy Innis notes:

...we had to persuade the Justices that equal protection was mandated and not integration. If you could attain equal protection in all black schools, then the fact that the school happened to be all black would be inconsequential.62

The next major point which CORE had to address in its brief dealt with a definition of segregation. It was imperative that the definition of the term segregation not be limited to the numbers of whites or blacks present in a specific spatial area. The point which needed to be presented was that the fact that a particular school was composed of all or predominately black students did not necessarily have to indicate that that school was segregated. CORE listed three major characteristics of segregation which made it unconstitutional:

1. Whites set blacks apart, by law or in fact, without their choice or consent.

2. The local school board, usually all-white or predominately white, exercises control over both white and black schools and favors the white schools.

62Innis, Roy; (Private interview conducted by telephone), May, 1973.
3. The local school board systematically deprives black schools of resources. 63

Defining segregation in terms of the three above characteristics means that blacks were the victims of segregation whenever the system would not allow them control over the situations which affected their destinies and/or when they were powerless to effect any meaningful change in the system. Mrs. Roy Innis, Director of Publications for CORE, defined segregated schools, as being:

...any school whose membership is predominately black or all-black in which parents, students, and neighboring community have little or no authority to oversee the operations of the school. Resources, both material and human, are dispensed to a segregated school by a predominately white board of education, usually without any consideration of local community needs, wants, or desires. 64

The suggestion was made by CORE that whatever was proposed to replace segregation should be measured in terms of how much control would be possessed by the black community itself. In order to disestablish school segregation, then, a major fundamental restructuring of school district organizational patterns would need to take place. Instead of reorganizing or restructuring individual schools, efforts should be directed at the restructuring or reorganizing of school districts so that non-discriminatory, non-exclusionary, unitary school systems would be established.

63 Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia; (Brief for the Congress of Racial Equality as Amicus Curiae), U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 3353, June, 1972, p. 9.

64 Innis, Mrs. Roy; (Private interview conducted at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
In its *Amicus Curiae* brief, CORE noted that the establishment of unitary school systems would meet the Constitutional requirement of providing equal protection for blacks, only if such systems were not racially exclusive and were not controlled by a white power monopoly. In addition, however, the following would have to be considered in order to guarantee that a unitary school system would, indeed, offer blacks equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment:

- The fact that blacks are a valid special-interest group with needs that are unique;

- The fact that wherever there exists a sizeable black community, blacks constitute a community of educational interest;

- The fact that black communities are increasingly and ever-more clearly demanding the opportunity to fulfill their educational interest and not have them always subordinated to the white community of educational interest;

- The fact that equal education implies more than just sharing equal physical space with whites... further implies opportunity to equal whites to structure curriculum, to equal access to all available resources, and to equal access to and equal representation among school policy makers and managers;

- The fact that an integrated setting can be as potentially damaging psychologically as a segregated setting is amply supported by a growing body of scientific data.65

CORE's plan for the desegregation of the Richmond School System was then presented to the Court. The plan was a proposal to restructure the existing school district among natural community lines so that each

65 *Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia*; (Brief for the Congress of Racial Equality as Amicus Curiae), U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 3353, June, 1972, pp. 11-12.
community of educational interest would constitute a unitary school district. Two state school districts would be created from the existing one district. In order to guarantee that neither of the districts would be racially exclusive, any student from one district who wished to pursue his education in the other district would be permitted to do so. The Court was presented with maps indicating the proposed boundaries for the new unitary school districts.

CORE argued that its plan met all of the constitutional requirements necessary for it to provide blacks in Richmond with equal protection of the law.

The voluntary aspect of this plan aids "good faith compliance." Its simplicity allows for this compliance to occur "at the earliest practicable date." This plan does not require massive social dislocation: this is the most "effective" way to create unitary school districts.66

In their brief, CORE leaders had to deal with the question of whether or not racial dispersal was mandated by the Constitution. The NAACP and proponents of racial dispersal had referred to the fact that the Supreme Court in the Brown case had held that de jure segregation resulted in inherently unequal educational opportunities for black children. They cited the Coleman report as substantiating that finding. CORE leaders responded that the Supreme Court's finding, when placed in the proper context, was indeed accurate. Legally segregated school systems were inherently unequal because that type of segregation:

...imposed a stigma, and because in dual school systems...the black part in the systems was overtly or covertly, but always systematically, short-changed.67

CORE did not refute the total Coleman report, but rather noted that racial dispersal was but one variable in providing equality for black children. The other, and perhaps more important factor was that of the socioeconomic class of the black and white students. The Coleman study made no claims of educational improvement for random racial dispersal, without regard to specific racial percentages. Coleman's study indicated that black children were the only ones to benefit from integration and then only when they were lower-class children integrated into a white middle-class school, and in a percentage that did not exceed 30 per cent.

Victor Solomon noted that:

...before we can definitely state that racial dispersal is educationally sound extensive and intensive social research must be conducted. To drastically alter school district boundaries, as was proposed in Richmond, on the basis of the Coleman report would be unjustified.68

CORE further stressed that arguments which proposed racial dispersal as a Constitutional mandate suggested that blacks were inherently inferior to whites. These arguments would suggest that blacks could be equal only if they were in the presence of whites. CORE argued that blacks could attain equality, under certain conditions, by being separate from whites:

Voluntary separation and separation arising out of the operation of market forces are not the same thing as enforced segregation. There is no

68Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
evidence to the effect that an inferior education must by necessity result from the former one.69

The third point, concerning mandated racial dispersal which was addressed by CORE, was that the enforcement by law of racial dispersal was often counter-productive. CORE noted that in areas where racial dispersal had been mandated by the courts, that resegregation often resulted. It cited as examples the city of Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Baltimore, and Cleveland. Whites continued to flee schools when the percentages of black students was increased;

paradoxically, residential separation does not create racially isolated school necessarily; many attempts at integrating the schools racially creates residential separation. It may be concede that as we enlarge the graphic area over which any single attempt to attain the goal of racial dispersal is made, the possibility of success in attaining it decreases.70

CORE spokesmen were very careful to indicate that they would not be opposed to integration as a means to desegregating schools where it was feasible and when the costs, human and material, were not excessively high. However, the important factor which they felt needed to be considered was whether or not those integrated schools met the specific needs of a community of educational interest.

The final argument made by CORE on the subject of racial dispersal was that implementing racial dispersal plans on a large basis would hinder the local communities in their attempts to operate schools that were responsive to the desires and needs of those local communities. This

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69 Bradley v. Board of Education of Richmond, Virginia, (Brief For the Congress of Racial Equality as Amicus Curiae), U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 3353, June, 1972, p. 18.

was an important point because if metropolitan desegregation plans were
implemented, then CORE's concept of community control would be for all
practical purposes a "thing of the past."

The Court of Appeals Rules in the Richmond Case

The U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals delivered its decision in
the case of Bradley v. School Board of the City of Richmond, Virginia
on June 5, 1972. The Court ruled:

May a United States district judge compel one of
the states of the Union to restructure its internal
government for the purpose of achieving racial
balance in the assignment of pupils to the public
schools? We think not, absent invidious dis-
 crimination in the establishment or maintenance
of local governmental units, and accordingly reverse.71

With the reversal of Judge Merhige's order for metropolitan dese-
gregation, CORE's Unitary School Plan remained viable. Although the Court
did not propose that CORE's plan be considered, the fact that the Court
ruled out the indiscriminate use of racial dispersal plans to desegregate
schools, was viewed as a victory by CORE leaders.

Victor Solomon noted:

We knew the verdict would be appealed to the U.S.
Supreme Court. We feel assured that the conserva-
tive makeup of the Court will be a vital factor
in the Supreme Court's decision. If we can get
the Supreme Court to uphold the Appeals Court we
feel the issue of racial dispersal, on a large
scale, would be in serious danger as being the only
approach to desegregate schools. Courts, legisla-
tors, school officials, etc., will, perhaps, be
much more receptive to considering our plan.72

71 Bradley v. School Board of Richmond, Virginia, (462 F. 2d. 1058,
1060, 1972).

72 Solomon, Victor; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National
Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
What followed the Court of Appeals decision in the Richmond Case was a complete re-examination by CORE leaders and their legal advisors as to the merits of the Amicus Curiae brief they had filed with the Court of Appeals. A determination had to be reached as to the strengths and weaknesses of their brief before any decision could be reached concerning the argument of their case before the U.S. Supreme Court. According to Edward Brown:

It was determined that the Amicus brief we would file with the U.S. Supreme Court would be essentially identical to the one filed with the Court of Appeals. We felt the Supreme Court would uphold the Appeal Court's decision and thus any further expense and effort would not be very meaningful. We decided to 'clean up' the wording and reproduce a more professional looking document, but beyond that we would do very little.73

CORE Becomes Involved in Atlanta, Georgia

In early 1973, a unique set of circumstances occurred which caused CORE to become involved in a 15-year-old school desegregation action in Atlanta, Georgia. The Atlanta desegregation case had been filed by the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund. The Legal Defense Fund had been created as a separate arm of the National NAACP to fight desegregation cases. Earlier plans for Atlanta proposed by the NAACP had involved the busing of approximately fifteen to twenty thousand students, most of whom would have been black students.

The Atlanta case had been remanded back to the Federal District Court for disposition. The Court had proposed that local government and school

73 Brown, Edward; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
officials negotiate a settlement with the local NAACP organization and present it for Court approval. It was assumed by all concerned parties that the result would be some variation of earlier plans proposed by the NAACP which would involve massive busing. A number of parents in the Archer High School area became concerned that their high school age children would be bused outside of the Archer area and these parents met to consider alternative actions to discourage mass busing of black students. Several members of the group which met suggested that perhaps they could invite CORE to become involved in the case. CORE's Unitary School Model, which could allow for the creation of a separate school district for the black area of Atlanta was appealing to parents who did not wish to have their children bused outside of their neighborhood school area. Victor Soloman of CORE's National Office was invited to Atlanta to discuss the problem with those concerned parents.

We were invited down to get involved in the school case; invited down by some local community people who felt that they were not being properly represented, in fact, they felt that they were being "sold down the river" by the NAACP and the Legal Defense Fund... These community people had been trying thus far, to influence the NAACP to change their minds and approach, and they hadn't been successful.\textsuperscript{74}

Soloman, after initial meetings with the parents involved, recommended to Roy Innis that CORE should become involved in Atlanta.

We felt that the conditions were right to gain publicity for CORE's plan and at the same time allow CORE to challenge the right of the NAACP to represent blacks.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{74}Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., Soloman interview.
CORE leaders upon counsel from their attorneys, determined that CORE should immediately file a motion in Federal District Court to intervene in the action based on the fact that the poor people in the community were not being adequately represented by counsel.

CORE's motion to intervene was denied by the Court because the Justices considered it to be untimely. They noted that after fifteen years the parties involved were on the verge of attaining a compromise solution to the problem. CORE submitted its brief on February 25 and the Court had scheduled a hearing for March 8 to review the compromise plan developed by local school officials and the local chapter of the NAACP. Therefore, on the eve of this compromise solution, the Justices felt that CORE might place any compromise plan in jeopardy.

The compromise plan was made public on March 5 and was a shock to all concerned, even to CORE officials. The massive busing which had been feared would be proposed was, indeed, not proposed. The plan called for only the minimal busing of 814 white students and 1,246 black students. Several predominately black schools would remain as such. But the plan also called for the appointment of a black superintendent of schools to be appointed when the present superintendent resigned. In addition, the decision-making bodies in all departments of the Board of Education would consist of a 50-50 racial balance. CORE noted that if the plan was implemented that:

the system would be less integrated than expected, but blacks would have more control.76

The initial reaction of Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP was one of praise for the compromise plan. However, five days later Wilkins changed his position and condemned the plan because, according to Henry Moon, Director of Public Relations for the NAACP, "The compromise was in conflict with the organization's policy of maximum integration." Wilkins then ordered Lonnie King, President of the local NAACP chapter to condemn the plan. When King refused, he and other officers of the local were ousted as leaders in the Atlanta branch of the NAACP.

On March 8, the hearing on the compromise plan was held in Federal District Court. The justices were extremely frustrated with the latest turn of events. They noted that the Legal Defense Fund attorneys had taken an active role in the writing of the compromise plan and then were opposing the imposition of the plan. In addition, the local chapter of the NAACP was under the threat of suspension if it did not oppose the plan which attorneys for the National NAACP and the local chapter had previously agreed to. Victor Soloman, who was present at this hearing related his observations:

...the judges were furious because the local lawyers who had stated to the court previously that they were supporting the compromise plan were now opposing the plan. The judges were so frustrated that they began talking of the possibility of holding an election to find out who really represented the persons involved in the suit.

The Court then recognized counsel for CORE, who suggested that reconsideration should be given to CORE's motion to submit a brief in the

77 Ibid., Davis, p. 61.

78 Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at CORE's National Offices in New York City), April, 1973.
instant case since it was obvious that no agreement in the case had been reached. The justices agreed that CORE attorneys should submit a motion to the court for reconsideration of their previously denied motion to intervene. CORE was given 10 days to file such a motion.

CORE leaders seized on the opportunity to challenge the NAACP. First they voiced support for the compromise plan and charged that the NAACP was not responsive to the needs of blacks. Secondly, they invited Lonnie King the ousted President of the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP to join CORE. Although King did not accept their invitation, the offer was a propaganda plus for CORE.

CORE filed a motion with Federal District Court to intervene in the Atlanta case. In their brief, CORE proposed that Atalanta be divided into four separate school districts that followed natural neighborhood boundary lines. Two districts would be black, one integrated, and one nearly all white. Members of district school boards and the central board of education would be elected by Atlanta residents. CORE also proposed that residents would also have major input into selection of superintendents to head the local and central boards.

In addition to seeking court action on their plan, CORE officials submitted their plan to the Georgia Legislature. The lower house approved the CORE plan and it was sent to the upper house for action. The upper house, ultimately failed to approve the proposal but the optimism of CORE leaders was not denied. The Rev. W.T. Lewis, Southern Regional Director of CORE perhaps expressed it most clearly by stating that:
Even if we don't break through right away, we will eventually. No one in the South wants massive busing... The Nationalist approach to things can find acceptance in the South. The future looks overwhelmingly great.79

The Atlanta situation, was the first real opportunity for CORE to "lock horns" with the NAACP over the issue of integration v. local control. Victor Soloman noted:

...this is the first time that we've gone to intervene as a party in a case that represented a specific class. Prior to this, we've been involved only as an Amicus party. This is also, the first time we've been in court, together with the NAACP.80

CORE continued its fight for its Unitary School Plan in the courts and through the legislative process. CORE leaders felt reassured of ultimate success when the United States Supreme Court was equally divided in its decision in the Richmond case. Their decision came on May 21, 1973, and essentially upheld the Appeals Court decision in the Richmond case. Thus CORE's plan remained viable in the absence of a decision which would have supported racial dispersal as the only means to attaining equality for black school students. The permissibility of crossing school district boundaries for purposes of desegregation, therefore, had been left for a later decision--possibly the Detroit case--which could come during the 1974 session of the Supreme Court.

80 Soloman, Victor; (Private interview recorded at National CORE's offices in New York City), April, 1973.
Chapter IV

AN ANALYSIS OF CORE'S ROLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ACTIONS FROM 1954-1973

The dissertation describes the involvement of the Congress of Racial Equality in public school desegregation activities in the United States from 1954 through 1973. Within this period of time, the active sponsorship of separate schools for blacks and whites was the first stage in the organization's attempts to obtain equality of educational opportunity for black students. Although this was the first stage dealt with in this dissertation, and the one which received the most attention, antecedent stages were explored. This dissertation provides an account of the strategies utilized by the organization in its attempts to implement its goals and objectives at various specific points in the time span studied by this researcher.

Research Questions Analyzed

The seven major questions which guided the research conducted in this dissertation are listed in Chapter I. These questions directed the collection and analysis of materials. The collection process consisted primarily of documentary research and focused interviews.

The first question was: What was the extent and scope of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation actions?
The extent and scope of CORE's involvement, for the most part, was
determined by the philosophy expounded by those individuals who held the
position of National Director from 1954 to 1973. James Farmer, Floyd
McKissic, and Roy Innis, each played significant roles in determining
how the organization approached school desegregation.

James Farmer, the founder of CORE, had been interested in directing
the attentions of CORE toward the desegregation of public accommodations.
It was not that Farmer did not have an interest in obtaining equality of
educational opportunity for blacks, but rather that he felt the NAACP
was adequately dealing with public school desegregation. In 1954, the
NAACP's victory in the Brown case tended to divert attention away from
the public school desegregation issues. In addition, school desegregation
was not as dominant an issue among blacks as was the desegregation of
public accommodations.

CORE, as an organization, had to maintain a high degree of visibility
in order to maintain financial solvency and remain viable as a spokesman
for black equality. Public school desegregation, in light of the NAACP's
victory in Brown, was not an issue that Farmer felt would provide that
visibility, due to the successes of the NAACP in dealing with the issue.

CORE, during the Farmer years, had a very limited involvement in
public school desegregation activities. It was not until the early
sixties, after the desegregation of public accommodations had been
accomplished, and, as a result of Farmer's efforts to explore other
possible areas for the organization's involvement, that CORE began to take
an active interest in public school desegregation. This new interest in
school desegregation was also spurred on as a result of the feeling that
the Brown decision had not resulted in any appreciable changes in the quality of education received by black children.

The Black Power movement of the mid-sixties caused Floyd McKissic, then National Director, to seek areas where the organization's resources could best result in obtaining the support of militant blacks. In order to gain this support and maintain his own position within the organization, McKissic chose to appoint Roy Innis as Associate National Director. In doing so, National CORE became involved in Harlem CORE's quest for an independent board of education in Harlem. It was this decision on the part of McKissic which established public school desegregation as an issue toward which CORE would direct many of its resources in the next seven years.

From 1968 to 1973, CORE, under the leadership of Roy Innis, made public school desegregation the major concern of the organization. This one issue dominated CORE's attempts to obtain equality for blacks during this period.

The second question which guided research for this dissertation was: What were the goals and objectives of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation actions?

During the Farmer period, the goals and objectives of CORE concerning any public school desegregation action in which they participated, were limited primarily to indicating CORE support of the NAACP's activities. The only other major objective for CORE's school desegregation involvement during this period was to show support of the actions of local CORE units. It was often necessary to show that the national office of CORE supported various chapters which were fighting to obtain equal educational opportunity.
The major goal of CORE's school desegregation involvement during the McKissic term of office, was to gain the support of black activists. The organization was in the midst of a financial crisis and it had to develop a thrust which would appeal to black activists and thus tend to boost membership. A second goal during this period was to provide assistance to Harlem CORE in its attempts to establish an independent board of education.

Initially, during Roy Innis' term of office, it became the goal of the organization to utilize the national office of CORE to establish the elusive independent school board for Harlem. When it became apparent that there would be very little chance of ever establishing an independent school for Harlem, Innis determined that it would be advantageous to seek the establishment of separate school systems for blacks nationally. The overall goal of CORE during the Innis era was to obtain equality of educational opportunity for black children and the means by which that goal could be achieved, it was believed, was by establishing school districts in which the schools were operated by and for blacks.

The third question which guided this research was:

What specific strategies were utilized by CORE in order to achieve its goals and objectives?

The major strategy utilized by CORE during the Farmer era was that of non-violent direct action. CORE leaders would educate local chapter leaders in the use of this technique and would help organize successful demonstrations.

For the most part, direct action techniques continued to be utilized during the McKissic years. Demonstrations, marches, and boycotts, were
the major weapons utilized in the organization's attempts to achieve an independent school board for Harlem.

Roy Innis realized that if the organization was to be successful, that it could not depend solely upon non-violent direct action to achieve the goals of the organization. Thus, legislative lobbying and court action became strategies which CORE began to utilize. Innis realized that in order to change the system, it would be necessary to use the system. It was this decision that provided CORE with the opportunity to become a more effective organization.

The fourth question was: What shifts in policy, philosophy, and/or strategies have occurred with regard to CORE's approach toward public school desegregation?

The most notable shift in philosophy took place in the mid-sixties, as CORE responded to the 'black power' activists. It was at this point in time that CORE abandoned its advocacy of integration as an effective means to gaining equality for blacks and in its place substituted the concept of separatism upon which the organization's future policies, philosophy, and strategies were to be built. During this period, membership requirements were redefined to insure that only persons of African ancestry could become full members of the organization. This new separatist philosophy was the foundation upon which CORE developed its Unitary School Model, and remains the foundation upon which all of the organization's actions concerning the welfare of blacks are built.

This complete shift in philosophy, away from integration as a goal and toward the advocacy of separatism, was responsible for the financial crisis which plagued the organization during the mid and late sixties. The crisis reached such proportions that some proposed the actual
disbandment of the organization. Floyd McKissic never knew quite how to
deal with the situation, but Roy Innis was quite positive in his approach.
Innis felt that it was imperative that CORE develop strategies which would
appeal to black activists. He felt assured that this approach would
ultimately lead to increased membership and thus alleviate the financial
problems facing the organization. This black activist program was built
exclusively upon the development of the Unitary School System concept.

The fifth question was: How did the organization's
leadership feel concerning the viability of CORE's role in
public school desegregation?

CORE did not place any major emphasis upon public school desegregation
until its efforts to gain an independent school board for Harlem, followed
by its efforts to gain approval for its Unitary School Model. It was
James Farmer's contention that when CORE began advocating the establish-
ment of separate school systems for blacks, that the organization's role
no longer remained viable. Farmer felt strongly that the Unitary School
concept as proposed by Innis, would appeal to those whites who wished to
maintain segregation of the races, and if the public schools were to be
segregated that there would be very little chance that segregation in
other areas of society could ever be eliminated. The type of school
system advocated by CORE in its Unitary School Model was contrary to those
beliefs so long fought for by Farmer and other respected black leaders
in the United States.

Floyd McKissic held a somewhat similar position as Farmer concerning
CORE's school desegregation efforts. McKissic believed that integrated
schools were the answer to the educational problems facing black children.
He firmly believed that the implementation of the Unitary School Model should only be considered for areas where the black population was so large that integration could not be accomplished without the imposition of a tremendous burden upon all concerned. McKissic believed in and fought hard for the Harlem project because he felt it was the only way to achieve some measure of educational excellence for the children of Harlem. He believes in what he terms "Multiple principles of desegregation," meaning that each situation should be viewed as unique and proposed solutions should be developed on the basis of that area's uniqueness. It was for these reasons that McKissic felt that CORE's Unitary School Model of school desegregation was not, in most instances, a viable approach.

Roy Innis, who was the force behind the development of the Unitary School Model, believed that this type of approach was extremely effective. Innis felt that the white power structure would never allow blacks to receive a high quality of education. It was his contention that such a desegregation concept as he advocated was the only means to achieve educational equality for blacks. He did modify his original concept somewhat, by conceding that the CORE Model was designed for those areas where, because of the size of the black population, integration could not be achieved. This modification was meant to appease those in the organization and courts who did not favor any type of desegregation plan which smacked of separation. Innis' major goal was to attempt to gain whatever approval was necessary in order to be able to implement the concept in a test area. Thus, his position was probably due more to expediency rather than to conviction. At any rate, Innis felt, and still does feel, that the Unitary School Model is a very effective approach, irrespective of the
fact that it hasn't gained acceptance in the court system of our country or in legislative branches of government.

The sixth question was: What evidence exists which would support the contention that CORE's desegregation activities have been practiced through legally acceptable approaches?

Table 2 classifies CORE's major school desegregation efforts according to Stephen Crain's typology of Civil Rights activity. A careful study of those activities indicates that most fall into categories other than extralegal. The one great weakness with Crain's typology as reviewed by this researcher is that actions which Crain classified as extralegal, i.e., marches, rallies, demonstrations, boycotts, do not in every instance result in a breach of law. There is some evidence which indicates that early school desegregation efforts such as the Harlem project did result in activities which could definitely be classified as extralegal. For the most part, however, there is adequate evidence which indicates that since 1968, CORE's school desegregation efforts have been practiced within a legally acceptable framework.

The final question which guided this research was:

What are some possible implications of CORE's involvement in school desegregation actions upon future school district organization patterns?

Should CORE's Unitary School Model be implemented in any given area, several organizational implications are apparent. First, in most states, the legislature, since it is the body responsible for education, would have to enact permissive legislation which would allow existing school
district boundaries to be significantly altered. Secondly, school district boundaries would no longer necessarily correspond to municipal boundaries. Large urban school districts would be broken down into smaller entities which would be independent of each other and correspond, for the most part, with ethnic neighborhoods.

**Typology of Civil Rights Activity**

Stephen Crain contends that all civil rights activity can be classified into four major categories. (See Table 1) If the civil rights activities of CORE are placed in the appropriate categories, the organization's role in school desegregation actions can be put in the proper perspective. CORE's initial technique of utilizing non-violent direct action could be classified as falling under the category of extralegal action designed to publicize grievances using direct action techniques. In terms of civil rights activity dealing with the National Office's public school desegregation activity, direct action techniques were not utilized until the early 1960's. Even then, the National Office usually only provided the technical assistance necessary for local affiliates to organize marches, rallies; as a result, the national staff assumed the role of organizers.

During the early and middle sixties, CORE also utilized actions designed to inconvenience or embarrass the system, so that in addition to marches and rallies were added inconvenient street demonstrations, boycotts, and sit-ins. Perhaps the most striking example of these two types of civil rights actions as they relate to school desegregation, was the fight to obtain an independent school board for Harlem. Although the National Office did not assume control of that effort until Roy Innis took
control of the organization in 1968, its influence upon the local chapter was such that Harlem CORE utilized the CORE approach almost exclusively.

When the Harlem CORE project became the project of National CORE in 1968, it represented the first major effort of the National Office to directly assume a course of action which was to be directed by the staff of the National Office. During this period Roy Innis and his associates realized that the extralegal activities which the organization had been pursuing were no longer effective in achieving the goals of the organization. The extralegal activities were not abandoned, but CORE officials decided that more formalized actions needed to be utilized in their quest for obtaining an independent school board for Harlem. The organization chose to publicize its grievances through reports, speeches, giving testimony at various types of hearings.

Utilizing these more formal types of activities provided a new dimension to the organization's thrusts. This new dimension could be viewed by the country's power structure as a more acceptable means to accomplishing the organization's goals than were the more extralegal actions. Innis was convinced that the mood of the times was such as to favor working from within the system to effect change rather than working from outside the system. Innis felt that the mechanisms which effect change could be influenced by extralegal actions, but unless the organization could assume a more active role in determining what actual directions that change would take, the organization could not be assured that its influence could be put to the most effective use.

National CORE's thrust to obtain an independent school board for Harlem also marked the initial beginnings of a second more formalized approach, designed to compel schools to act by filing suits and petitions
with state and federal authorities. CORE began to place a greater degree of emphasis upon what Crain classified as the more formal channels of protest actions. From 1968 through 1973, CORE's efforts were almost totally confined to Crain's two types of formal protest activities. Crain notes that as an organization matures, the types of protest actions will progress from expressive-extralegal to sanctioning-extralegal to expressive-formal and finally to sanctioning-formal. CORE's protest action evolution progressed in this order in a relatively short span of time, and the organization's ability to adapt its actions depending upon dictates of the situation indicated an extraordinary degree of maturation in organizational development. The lack of success of the organization in obtaining one of its major goals during this period, establishment of independent school districts for black communities, is contrasted by the great degree of success the organization accomplished concerning a second goal, gaining recognition of CORE as a viable organization which represented the interests of certain black people throughout the United States.

Table 2 summarizes and classifies certain, specific CORE school desegregation activities according to Crain's Typology of Civil Rights Activities.

The most notable conclusion which can be drawn after considering Table 2, is that in terms of school desegregation activities, the contention that CORE is a militant and radical organization, prone to the use of lawless techniques to gain its objectives, is not accurate. CORE's philosophical base concerning school desegregation could perhaps be classified as being radical; however, the organization's actions have been expressed through what society considers to be appropriate channels.
TABLE 2
CORE'S SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ACTIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Protest</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Extralegal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of &quot;A proposal for an Independent Board of Education for Harlem&quot; (1967).</td>
<td>Moved to encourage locals to become involved in de facto segregation (1962).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Schools in Harlem--The Needs, the Cure (1969).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Attempt to implement Unitary Plan in Mobile (1969).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appearance at Congressional Black Caucus (1972).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appearance at Gary Black Political Convention (1972).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Involvement in Atlanta (1973).</td>
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</tbody>
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### TABLE 2

**CORE'S SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ACTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Protest</th>
<th>Testimony before New York State's Constitutional Convention (1967).</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harlem CORE Project assumed by National CORE (1968).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support of Proposition 1226-A (1967).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Testimony before House Judiciary Subcommittee on school busing (1972).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimony before Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on school busing (1972).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motion to file Amicus brief in Richmond Case (1972).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filing of Amicus brief in Richmond Case (1972).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief filed in Atlanta Case (1973).</td>
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</table>

Thus, it is appropriate to assume that CORE's reputation as a radical organization is based upon either conjecture which results from a lack of understanding the thrust of the organization or upon the organization's early actions to desegregate public accommodations. Perhaps both of the above explanations contribute to the distorted view of CORE as an organization. At any rate, this researcher found very little evidence which would indicate that CORE's school desegregation activities were not consistent with legally acceptable means of protest and redress.
Core's School Desegregation Activities Since 1968
Evaluated by McKissic and Farmer

When Roy Innis became National Director of CORE in 1968, he held a very firm belief that separate school systems for black children was the only possible means whereby those children could obtain equal educational opportunity. In an effort to make the CORE plan more feasible, politically, Innis modified his position by advocating the integration of schools in areas where it was still possible to integrate without forced busing over extremely long distances. He contended that the CORE Unitary Plan could most appropriately be utilized in large urban areas where integration could not possibly be achieved without the forced busing of white and black children over tremendous distances. James Farmer noted this change in position by stating:

Actually, Roy's (Innis) position has changed. It has undergone some change in the past year, (1972-73) and that's good. There's nothing wrong with that. Roy Wilkins (NAACP) position has likewise undergone some change and this means that CORE and the NAACP are coming closer together.¹

It is interesting to note the opinions of the two National Directors who preceded Innis, concerning CORE's Unitary School Plan and the organization's general approach to school desegregation since 1968. For example, when James Farmer was asked if he thought CORE's present school desegregation policy was viable, he responded:

No, I don't think so. One reason being, it makes all the wrong friends. It has some bad supporters and it's an awful embarrassment to look at them to see what their positions are. George Wallace agreed with the CORE plan. I think that in itself

¹Farmer, James; Private interview recorded at his residence in Washington, D.C. in April, 1973.
is one of its grave limitations. Another thing, it
is naive to think that there can be black school
districts run by blacks, in a majority white society. 2

Concerning whether or not black children need to be in the presence
of white children in order to learn, Farmer noted:

...there is nothing wrong with black kids going
to school together. I think black kids can learn
how to spell, read, and most other things just as
well if the teaching is the same. What they cannot
learn and what white kids cannot learn in an all
white school is how to get along with each other;
how to work together. Sometimes you put the kids
together and they fight. The point is that you
cannot possibly eliminate the hostility without
bringing them together. 3

James Farmer had been an advocate of community control in all
areas whether they be predominately white or black. However, he never
would support a plan such as Innis's Unitary School Plan which would
establish, by law, community control because this, he feared, would lead
to forced separation of the races.

I would fight for community control, which is what
we at CORE did. Community control, for example, in
Harlem would in effect result in a district that
is black, but you wouldn't have frozen it so by
statute. To do so, by statute, would freeze it
into separation. I still harbor Dr. King's dream,
to some extent, that the day will come when the
nation can become color blind. I don't want to
do anything to prevent that day from coming. 4

Floyd McKissic had been a strong advocate of CORE concentrating its
efforts in the ghettos of the U.S. He had fought with Harlem CORE to
achieve an independent school system for Harlem and had been involved
in the initial planning of CORE's Unitary School Plan. However, at the

2 Ibid., Farmer interview.
3 Ibid., Farmer interview.
4 Ibid., Farmer interview.
present time he does not support the implementation of CORE's Unitary Plan in all instances:

I basically think that there has to be an analysis of how a school system in any given area functions, in order to make a decision as to whether the CORE plan should or should not be implemented. In some communities the destruction of the black school means no education. In other communities, it means the exact opposite.\(^5\)

It has been noted earlier, that McKissic was National Director during a period of time when the pressure on the organization to assume a "black power" stance was at its height. McKissic advocated "black power," but in somewhat different terms than would be expected.

...my concept of black power is to really develop power among the masses to continue the struggle for integration. The final struggle in this fight is the cracking of the economic barrier.\(^6\)

When asked if he supported the basic philosophies of CORE as they were being espoused in 1973, McKissic responded:

I don't agree with many of the philosophies that CORE now holds.\(^7\)

Both Farmer and McKissic view the present policies of CORE concerning school desegregation very skeptically. They fear that the separation of children in school by race would ultimately lead to the separation of the races nationally. Both favor integration as the ultimate solution to obtaining equal rights for blacks and feel strongly that a separatist philosophy would only lead to failure for blacks. It is their contention that the white power structure would continually find the means

\(^5\)McKissic, Floyd; Interview conducted by telephone, April, 1973.
\(^6\)Ibid., McKissic interview.
\(^7\)Ibid., McKissic interview.
to keep blacks separated. So it is that two, highly respected, black leaders hold reservations concerning the school desegregation philosophies now being espoused by the organization they once headed.

The CORE - NAACP Relationship

There was a great deal of cooperation between CORE and the NAACP from the time CORE was first established, until the mid 1960's. This cooperation, for the most part, centered around maintaining joint lines of communication between both organizations. There were very few instances when the organizations would combine forces to attack an alleged area of segregation. James Farmer noted:

When I said that there was cooperation between CORE and the NAACP, I didn't mean that there wasn't rivalry also. There certainly was rivalry. The NAACP unquestionably felt threatened by CORE, but they were ambivalent. They felt threatened, but they knew CORE was helpful to them as well.8

There was general agreement between CORE and the NAACP concerning the goals and objectives of the civil rights movement during this period of time when there was a spirit of both rivalry and cooperation. Major disagreements seemed to center upon the proper tactics which should be utilized in attaining the goals and objectives. The legal orientation of the NAACP, for example, caused its leaders to view CORE's strategy of going to jail and remaining there, with a jaundiced eye.

...we had debates on tactics, but generally the objective we sought was the same. I don't think there was an iota of difference during that period between the kind of society that the

8 Farmer, James; Private interview conducted at his residence in Washington, D.C., April, 1973.
NAACP would liked to have seen and the kind of society that CORE would liked to have seen.9

The CORE - NAACP rivalry ultimately resulted in both organizations' modifying their positions concerning the use of tactics. The National Office of the NAACP endorsed the direct action techniques of CORE and began utilizing those techniques in limited situations. For example, Roy Wilkins, National Director of the NAACP, went to jail in Jackson, Mississippi on one occasion, in order to make a point. CORE, on the other hand, began to view legal and legislative action as possible techniques which could strengthen the organization's arsenal of tactics.

From 1962 to 1965, the leaders of the major civil rights organizations in the U.S. met frequently, once a month, to discuss their efforts to bring equality to blacks. The organization they formed was termed the United Civil Rights Leadership Organization. The members who attended these meetings did not always agree upon particular strategies or tactics, but to the extent they could agree, they did present a limited united front. These meetings ceased in 1966 because as Farmer notes:

What happened was that the NAACP-Urban League faction excluded CORE from the meetings because of the hostility over the black power slogan and its meaning. There was no longer any agreement between the NAACP and CORE concerning the approach the civil rights movement should assume. There was no point in getting together if they didn't agree on where they were going and how they would get there. There is, at this time, (1973) no communication between Wilkins and Innis. No communication! Roy (Innis) sent a letter to Wilkins suggesting a summit meeting and Wilkins acknowledged the letter and said that it would be possible to have a summit meeting, however, that summit would not include separationists.10

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9Ibid., Farmer interview.

10Ibid., Farmer interview.
The NAACP and CORE are at this point in time advocating opposite positions concerning the desegregation of public schools. The NAACP maintains that integration is the best means whereby black students can obtain a quality education and CORE maintains that Unitary school systems would be the best possible means. However, each organization has effected some degree of change in the other's position. Farmer illustrated this mutual effect:

Wilkin's position on the school desegregation effort in Atlanta, a statement he issued for the first time, stated that integration is a far too simplistic objective. He stated that the emphasis should be on the quality of education and learning children receive. Sometimes that's best achieved through integration and sometimes it isn't. And Innis is doing the same thing, saying that CORE is not opposed to integrating schools in some areas. He certainly would not have said that two or three years ago.\(^{11}\)

The leaders and membership of CORE and the NAACP will, in all practicality, never totally agree upon a united approach toward public school desegregation. The NAACP and CORE presently, appeal to different segments of the black population of this country. In order for agreement to occur, it would be necessary for the blacks they represent to achieve unanimity in terms of their expectations of what an organization which represents their interests should attempt to accomplish. This unanimity would seem to be as impossible to achieve as any unanimity of positions among whites. However, it is quite probably that the two organizations will continue to cause each other to somewhat modify their positions and this modification should prove to be healthy for the total civil rights movement.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., Farmer interview.
Research Conclusions

Several points have emerged as a result of the research and appear important:

First, the long-range goal of CORE has continued to be the improvement of educational opportunity for blacks in the United States. Initially, it was felt by the organization's leadership that this goal could best be accomplished through integration. In the mid-sixties, under new leadership, it was determined that separatism would be the best possible avenue by which the long-range goal could be achieved. The long-range goal of the organization has remained unchanged; only the strategies and tactics changed, significantly.

Secondly, CORE embarked upon a major effort in the early seventies, to seek to reverse the prevailing opinion of the courts concerning the interpretation of the mandate expressed by the Supreme Court in Brown. For the first time, an organization representing the interests of blacks advocated the establishment of separate but equal schools for black children. Other organizations such as the NAACP had fought for years to disestablish the separate but equal doctrine. The courts have not given any concrete evidence that there will be a shift in the prevailing opinion and precedent that separate but equal educational facilities for black children are constitutionally prohibited. CORE's Unitary School Model probably will not gain acceptance among jurists from some time to come. It would seem that the most CORE officials could anticipate would be the possible acceptance of their plan by some educators and politicians on a trial basis. There is some evidence that the CORE plan might gain legislative approval in a few states, especially states in the deep South.
It would not be too surprising, then, to see the possible implementation of a plan similar to CORE's in a few selected areas. Such an occurrence would surely lead to suits by other organizations or individuals testing the legality of such a plan. Up until this point in time, such a test has not been pursued.

Third, CORE has been quite effective in establishing its credibility in terms of representing the interests of a large segment of the black population of the United States. For the first time, an organization has challenged the right of the NAACP to represent the interests of all black Americans. CORE's contention was that there was a sizable segment of the black population who would support an organization which espoused their views. It is difficult to determine exactly how many members of the NAACP actually defected to CORE, but it can be concluded that there was a sizable number of blacks who had never belonged to any civil rights organization who felt that CORE was an organization to which they could belong.

Fourth, CORE has made little headway in efforts to form alliances with professional educators. It is the feeling of CORE's leadership, that most educators view the organization as radical and, as a result, hold negative opinions concerning the CORE approach. In addition, there is very little evidence that educators view integrated schools as an important goal. For the most part, educators seek to place a higher priority upon the implementation of various educational organizational concepts rather than seeking ways by which blacks could be included in integrated situations.
Finally, there is little evidence to support the conclusion that people nationally are convinced by legal arguments and decisions that integration should be a goal and a task of the public schools. CORE's Unitary School Model could gain a greater degree of public acceptance should present public opinion toward desegregation continue to expand. Persistence on the part of CORE officials, could prove to provide them with some measure of success in achieving the organization's goals. Their Unitary School Model may never be implemented, but future times might be more conducive to educational changes, to some degree, affected by the CORE philosophy.
Chapter V

SUMMARY

When James Farmer founded CORE, in 1942, there was no doubt in his mind that the organization would espouse an integrationist philosophy designed to obtain equal opportunity for blacks. The major tactic utilized by CORE from the time of its inception, through the mid sixties was that of non-violent, direct action.

The early efforts of the organization were directed toward the desegregation of public accommodations. The organization's leaders did not feel it necessary to concern themselves with public school desegregation because the NAACP had been pursuing this area quite vigorously through the courts and CORE leaders knew that they could not attempt to equal the NAACP's legal expertise. CORE did not have the funds nor the personnel which were required, if the organization was to seek redress through the courts. Thus, they were quite content to organize marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, etc. in order to accomplish the goals of the organization.

During the 1950's and early 60's CORE appealed to those whites and blacks alike who wished to become physically active in the civil rights movement. The major reason for this appeal was that the types of tactics utilized by CORE seemed to allow members the opportunity to actively express their concerns. The excitement of being part of a march or a sit-in was appealing to those who wished to demonstrate their dedication to the cause of attaining equal rights for blacks. CORE seemed to be
"doing things," while the tactics of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations of the period were such that they did not provide opportunities for members to be so highly visible. Attempting to attain redress "in the streets" is a far more visible tactic than that of attaining redress through the use of the more conservative approaches of the NAACP.

The major goal of CORE during these early years was to make the organization visible to the point where blacks and whites would want to become members. An organization cannot exist without an active membership which supports it with financial contributions. Thus, the type of tactics which CORE had to utilize had to be those which would focus public attention upon the organization. Non-violent, direct action was the means whereby CORE could focus this public attention upon the organization. CORE had to convey the impression that it was an active organization, but not excessively aggressive because many blacks of this period felt that a civil rights organization should not be hostile toward white society. Non-violent, direct action seemed to be an approach which would allow CORE to maintain a short of "middle of the road" approach to fighting inequality.

In the 50's and early 60's, CORE was an organization attempting to establish itself as a spokesman for black interests. Farmer realized that the organization needed to increase its membership if it was to remain viable. In order to accomplish this task, CORE needed to be a highly visible organization and one which would appeal to not only blacks but to liberal whites as well. By the early 60's, it became apparent to CORE leaders that their thrust toward desegregating public accommodations was no longer stirring the interests of the organization's supporters.
The reason was that, for the most part, the desegregation of public accommodations had been accomplished. Blacks could frequent most restaurants, motels, theaters, and utilize public transportation on an equal basis with whites. Thus, CORE needed a new issue toward which to direct its attention and thus motivate blacks and whites to become active or at least contributing members of the organization. Without these members, CORE could not exist as a viable organization.

The desegregation of public schools was a highly emotional issue during this period of time. Federal courts were beginning to mandate that school systems comply with the Brown decision of 1954. The major thrust of the courts was the elimination of de facto segregation, which in most cases existed in the large urban areas of our country. What made de facto segregation a major issue of the times was that in most instances, in order to eradicate this type of segregation, the physical movement of pupils was necessary. Busing was the major means whereby this physical movement could be accomplished. CORE leaders assessed the situation and determined that becoming involved in public school desegregation actions would allow the organization to maintain a high degree of visibility.

The ability of CORE to remain highly visible was a factor which caused a great deal of turmoil within the organization during the mid sixties. Black militant leaders such as Stokley Charmichael and Malcolm X began to espouse a new philosophy for blacks; black power and/or black nationalism. As blacks became more and more militant, CORE, due to its earlier activism began to appeal to blacks who wanted to be part of a militant organization. The dilemma which faced James Farmer and other CORE leaders in the mid sixties, was how to maintain the support of
traditional CORE members and at the same time appeal to young, black activists. The traditionalists within the organization had always been committed to the concept of integration as a major goal of the organization, whereas the new more militant members were questioning the merits of integration.

James Farmer believed that he could provide the leadership which could appease those who advocated both of the positions concerning integration as a goal of the organization. Responding to the pressures of those who questioned integration as a major objective of the organization, Farmer, at the 1965 convention of the organization advocated the development of black political and economic power as new goals of the organization. Responding to the traditionalists, Farmer urged the organization's membership to reject any attempt to establish separatism as a major thrust of CORE. Farmer's efforts during this period were directed toward maintaining the organization's viability and financial solvency.

By the end of 1965, Farmer realized that his popularity as National Director was at an all time low. Neither the integrationists nor the separatists were satisfied with his "middle of the road" approach. It became evident to him that his chances of remaining as National Director after the 1966 convention would be slim. Thus, reluctantly, he made the decision not to seek another term as National Director.

Farmer, although not agreeing totally with those who advocated the adoption of a new philosophy for the organization, felt that such a change would strengthen CORE's appeal to the black masses. His major concern was that such a major shift in philosophy would result in a severe financial dilemma for the organization. If the organization could not overcome
this potential financial problem, it would surely be doomed to extinction, the possibility of which was difficult to accept for a man who had expended his total energies to the building of a viable civil rights organization. In the end, Farmer chose to support the position of those who advocated a new philosophy for the organization and he did so by urging the convention to select Floyd McKissic as his replacement as National Director over his old time friend and colleague, Alan Gartner. Farmer realized the consequences of his decision, but was confident that the decision was the correct one.

The 1966 convention not only elected Floyd McKissic as National Director, but redefined the qualifications for membership. The new qualifications indicated that all full members of the organization had to be of African ancestry. These two decisions marked the first major shift in philosophy of the organization since its creation in 1942. No longer would CORE espouse integration as the only major means whereby blacks could obtain equality.

McKissic was faced with two major problems as he became National Director, making the organization financially solvent in the wake of mass defections of white financial contributors as a result of the shift in the organization's philosophy and developing an action program which would maintain the organization's appeal to the black masses while the organization overcame its financial problems. McKissic felt that if an action program could be developed, the financial solvency problem could be overcome. His attempts to develop this action program were hampered, in that the organization had always maintained a position that local chapter autonomy was desirable and as a result the organization never
attempted to adopt a program at the national level which would be implemented by the various locals. This lack of a national direction was the major reason why the National Office of CORE had not been directly involved with any school desegregation actions, other than those in which they were invited to become involved in by local chapters.

By the end of 1966, McKissic realized that his efforts to rebuild the organization had failed. Membership and contributions were at all time lows, and he would have to act fast if he was to remain as the organization's National Director. It was for this reason, that he chose to make Roy Innis Associate National Director. Innis was the Director of Harlem CORE which was the Nation's largest affiliate and he had gained widespread publicity in his attempts to establish an independent board of education for the Harlem ghetto of New York City. McKissic felt that this would appeal to the militants in the organization and could prove to produce the action program he had been seeking. As a result of this move on McKissic's part, he was able to survive the 1967 convention and remained National Director for another year.

During 1966 and 1967, two new characteristics of CORE were evident: the organization became more ghetto oriented, and there was a greater centralization of power in the National Office. These trends were indicators of CORE's new directions and 1966 and 1967 were benchmark years in this regard.

During the mid 60's, CORE had had little time or resources to direct toward public school desegregation activities, but with the realizations that some type of national action program needed to be developed, and due to the involvement of Roy Innis in Harlem's educational problems, it
became apparent that CORE could possibly capitalize upon public school desegregation as an issue. A great deal of effort would not need be expended upon researching the issue, since Innis had been concentrating his efforts on the subject and Harlem's close proximity to the National's Offices would eliminate large expenditures of funds to carry out the project. This rationale prompted McKissic and Innis to pursue the attainment of an independent school board for Harlem as a project of National CORE.

In 1968, there was a growing dissatisfaction with McKissic's leadership. The financial crisis which plagued the organization had worsened and the split between integrationists and separatists had widened. McKissic had further alienated the traditionalists in CORE by his overtures to and his support for other black separatist organizations who opposed the Viet Nam War, and it became apparent that he could not maintain the necessary support to remain as National Director. As a result, Roy Innis, was elected to the position during the 1968 convention.

Innis's election marked the entrance of CORE into the fight for the desegregation of public schools. His election, more than any other factor, influenced the role CORE would play in public school desegregation issues over the next five years. His influence over the organization's philosophy, goals, objectives, and tactics equaled that of James Farmer during his term of office. Innis's Harlem CORE project was to become a project of National CORE and from it developed CORE's philosophy toward public school desegregation.

With the change in philosophy of CORE came a corresponding change in tactics. Non-violent direct action had served CORE well in its efforts
to desegregate public accommodations. Boycotts, sit-ins, picketing, etc. had been utilized to cause financial losses for the owners and operators of businesses that depended on public usage in order to be profitable ventures. When faced with financial losses, most of these owners would ultimately capitulate to demands to desegregate their facilities. As CORE shifted its emphasis away from public accommodations and toward public elementary and secondary educational institutions, it was evident that the organization's tactics would have to be altered. Public schools were not profit-making institutions and thus the most that non-violent direct action could accomplish would be to focus public attention on various issues concerning the public schools.

Roy Innis and his associates, as noted earlier, had long been involved with efforts to achieve community control of Harlem's schools and the direct action tactics had not produced meaningful results beyond obtaining the involvement of many residents of Harlem in the organization's quest. Obtaining this involvement had been quite important, but CORE leaders realized that something more was needed to produce the kinds of changes in the educational governance structure which they sought.

Roy Innis realized that the governance of public education was dependent upon varying political factors. It was his contention that in order to achieve meaningful change of the magnitude proposed by CORE, that the organization needed to utilize tactics designed to effect change through political processes. It was this realization which resulted in political action's becoming a new tactic of the organization.

Roy Innis and his Associate Director of Harlem CORE, Victor Soloman, had first utilized political action in 1967 when they testified before
the New York State Constitutional Convention Education Committee for changes which would, if they had been enacted, have produced an independent board of education for Harlem. Their efforts proved unsuccessful due to a number of factors, but as was noted earlier, primarily because of Kenneth Clark's opposition to their plan. When both Innis and Soloman became leaders in National CORE they renewed their efforts to receive approval for their concept through various political and legislative actions. CORE achieved very little success through the use of new tactics, primarily because they lacked the expertise which would have enabled them to be successful. Also, the organization was vying with the NAACP as the spokesman for black interests and the NAACP's reputation and legislative skills far outclasses those of CORE. CORE's early experiences with political action and legislative lobbying would prove to be invaluable, however, during the early seventies. Harlem and New York State proved to be a training ground for CORE to develop the expertise necessary to effect meaningful gains in their quest to establish independent school systems for blacks in segregated urban areas.

Roy Innis realized by late 1969 that further efforts to establish an independent school system for Harlem would be futile. In addition, he also realized that the organization's financial position could only be permanently overcome if the organization took on a more national appeal. It was for these reasons that the CORE national staff developed a plan to establish community school districts. The proposal entitled, **A True Alternative: A Proposal For Community School Districts** was readied by February of 1970. The proposal was an attempt to conceptualize CORE's position on public school desegregation, as well as a means to educate blacks and whites alike concerning a new philosophy of desegregation.
This attempt to focus national attention upon the new thrust of CORE could only be successful if the organization were to achieve some national victories in obtaining recognition for the viability of this new thrust. The old tactic of non-violent direct action could, to some extent, be utilized as well as the organization's newly-developed tactics of political action and legislative lobbying to produce the desired results. But, CORE leaders realized that a new tactic would have to be added to the organization's arsenal if it was to have any degree of success in accomplishing the establishment of community school districts. That new tactic involved the use of legal action. It was apparent that federal courts were becoming more and more concerned with public school desegregation and therefore it became imperative that CORE be prepared to argue its cause through the country's legal system.

CORE leaders felt that if they could implement their proposal for community school districts in an urban area before they had to have their position legally tested before the courts, they could establish precedents which would insure some degree of success for this plan. It was for this reason that they sought out a southern city where they thought whites would be receptive to their concept. The city of Mobile was chosen and they began efforts to gain the support of white segregationists for the CORE plan. Both CORE and various white segregationists were quite willing to establish alliances which they hoped would produce separate school systems for blacks and whites. Each was willing to "be used" by the other, although publicly neither would admit to the true nature of its alliance.

CORE's efforts to establish a community school system in Mobile would have probably met with more success if they would have been
successful in gaining the support of even a minimal number of blacks in Mobile. CORE was hindered in its efforts because of a lack of time due to the fact that the Supreme Court of the U.S. agreed to hear the Davis case sooner than anticipated, but also because most southern blacks did not feel the same resentment toward segregation as many northern blacks felt who were involved in the nationalist organization. Thus, CORE leaders once again met with failure, but were determined to continue their fight.

The Mobile case marked the first instance where CORE utilized the filing of an Amicus Curiae brief as a means whereby they would have an opportunity to present their cause before various courts. It also marked the first instance where two proponents of equal rights for blacks, CORE and the NAACP, were presenting diametrically opposed positions to a court. Thus, it can be said that the Mobile case represented the point where CORE began its active challenge of the NAACP's position as uncontested spokesman for black interests. The outcome of the Mobile case did not in any way detract from the NAACP's image. The Mobile experience, did however, provide CORE with needed experience in preparing for court challenges. CORE continued to gain legal experience by the filing of briefs in Norwalk, Carter, Northcross and Swann.

CORE's strategy was clear in the early seventies; choose test cases that, if lost, and it was anticipated that most would be, would provide CORE staff members with needed experience before courts and at the same time provide precedents which could be utilized in later cases. Each Amicus brief developed allowed CORE to further synthesize, clarify, and modify its basic positions. This was necessary, if the organization
would ever be able to present a concise conceptualization of its positions and gain some degree of acceptance among jurists.

Although CORE did not win any major victories in its early court encounters, it was successful in developing a national image for the organization. As an increased number of black activists became disenchanted with the NAACP's integration efforts, they began to seriously consider becoming members of CORE. CORE's membership began to increase and with that increase came a corresponding decrease in the severity of the financial crisis which had plagued the organization since the mid sixties.

Roy Innis also made a great deal of headway in his efforts to strengthen the control of the National Office over local chapters. He felt that a united effort was necessary and that unanimity could not be achieved by allowing locals to remain autonomous. Local chapters began to feel confident that the National Office could provide the direction, expertise, and support which would be necessary to solve local problems. Thus, local chapters began to seek intervention by members of the national's staff. This allowed National CORE to develop an organizational structure which was built from the top down, rather than vice versa and thus strengthened the entire structure. Decision-making was centralized, and the organization's governance structure began to foster a greater degree of involvement by members in establishing national policy for the organization. The move to centralization tended to provide a greater degree of consistency in relating decisions to organization policy.

In the early seventies, Innis made another decision which was crucial to establishing CORE as a viable organization; the organization
was to assume a more active role in attempts to unite blacks in America regardless of their organizational affiliation. Innis realized that this was imperative if CORE was to challenge the NAACP as the major spokesman for blacks. The NAACP had to be discredited in this regard if CORE was to establish its credibility before the courts. Thus, CORE assumed a major role in the Gary conference and the National Black Congressional Caucus, both of which occurred in early 1972.

Roy Innis continued to enhance CORE's national image by his decision to have CORE officials testify before the Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Busing. This served as a major propaganda victory for the organization in its efforts to become a recognized spokesman for the interests of blacks.

The events of the early 1970's indicated that CORE was seeking to utilize as many different tactics as the staff, under the direction of Roy Innis, deemed necessary to advance the organization's goals. For the most part, the entire thrust of the organization from Innis's election as National Director in 1968 was directed toward the implementation of its public school desegregation plan.

Although CORE in the early 70's was not achieving success in its attempts to implement what was now termed its Unitary School Plan, it was making strides toward gaining acceptance of the organization by blacks. CORE was appealing, because it did not seem to represent as militant a faction as did some other black nationalist organizations, nor was it perceived as being as conservative as the NAACP. CORE's image among blacks had been planned by Innis and his associates. Each venture entered into by the organization was, for the most part, designed to
enhance the image of CORE in the hopes of ultimately developing an organization which could and would challenge the NAACP's right to remain as the only recognized spokesman for blacks.

It is interesting to note the public relations consciousness of CORE's leaders from 1968 through 1973 through the organization's desegregation plans, legal briefs, and public presentations. The initial position of the organization was one of almost total separation of the races. This position was tempered, until in 1973 it became one of proposing separate school systems for blacks in those areas where integration was no longer possible without great sacrifices due to time and distances required to bus children. The move to change terminology concerning CORE's desegregation plan from Community School Districts to Unitary School Districts resulted from a feeling that the experience in New York City had left most people feeling that community schools meant separate schools. Thus, Innis realized the importance of a sound public relations program to the success of the organization. CORE's image among both blacks and whites had to be changed. It could no longer be viewed as it was during the Farmer era nor could it be viewed as it had been during the McKissic period. It was necessary to show CORE as a more "middle-of-the-road" organization.

The decision to become involved in the Richmond, Virginia, desegregation problems was viewed by CORE leaders as essential. They felt that this was the one case which they had awaited because the final disposition of the case by the Supreme Court of the U.S. could establish or disestablish integration as the only means to desegregate public schools. CORE felt that if the Supreme Court could be persuaded to keep
from mandating integration through busing, that they would have the only remaining viable alternative and thus their chances of establishing unitary school districts would be increased. If, however, the Supreme Court would mandate busing to achieve desegregation, then CORE's Unitary School Plan would be, for all practical purposes, rendered useless. It was with great care that CORE's brief was prepared, utilizing the expertise that had been gained over the past several years.

Although CORE had abandoned the use of the term community control and community schools, its positions presented for court consideration in its Richmond brief were based entirely upon those concepts. The arguments presented by CORE were designed to achieve black control of the schools which served black students in Richmond, Virginia. In order to accomplish this goal, it was necessary to attempt to persuade the Justices that total integration of the student population of the districts concerned was not necessary in order to provide black students in those districts with equal protection of the law.

CORE's arguments for the establishment of unitary school districts in Richmond were based on the premise that each newly-established district would be controlled by elected representatives from the area served by each district. In addition, per pupil expenditures would be equalized between the newly-established districts. CORE's major arguments were understandable, but the major drawback to their proposal was the opinion which was held by many blacks and whites alike; that there was something insidious about whites and blacks attending separate schools. It was this feeling that was unable to be overcome with any CORE arguments. Many people believed that racial tolerance could never be achieved if
the white and black youth of the country were to be separated, whether
that separation was voluntary or enforced by law.

CORE officials never really anticipated the approval of any court
for their concept of school desegregation. It was their hope that the
publicity which their plan would receive would ultimately spur certain
school officials and government leaders to consider implementing CORE's
plan. It was their contention that a conservative mood was developing
in the country and thus the CORE plan would appeal to those who possessed
such a mood. Thus, CORE leaders felt that the Appeals Court's reversal
Judge Mehring's decision was a victory for CORE. They felt so confident
that the Supreme Court of the U.S. would uphold the appeals court deci-
sion that they didn't wish to expend any further energies on developing
a brief to present to the court.

CORE's success in Atlanta was due more to luck than to any specific
strategy. Initially, CORE's involvement in Atlanta was designed to provide
the organization with publicity rather than to gain any specific legal
victory for the organization's desegregation philosophy. The fact that the
local and national NAACP units came into conflict provided a perfect
opportunity for CORE to challenge the NAACP as the only spokesman for the
interests of blacks. Not only did CORE receive a great deal of publicity,
but the organization was able to establish some measure of credibility
with the justices on the Federal District Court involved. Later publi-
cizing this fact alone would provide CORE's plan with a certain degree
of respectability.
Suggestions for Further Study

The research in this dissertation suggests several areas where further study would be warranted. First, the concept of Unitary School systems as advocated by CORE, would necessitate significant changes in the governance structure at both state and local levels. This would suggest that a study which would examine the relationship between a concept such as that advocated by CORE and the governance structure of any state would be quite meaningful.

Secondly, research which would explore the various legal implications of the CORE concept of school desegregation could yield valuable information. Those who oppose the implementation of the CORE desegregation model do so on the grounds that such a plan would lead to segregation which is illegal as a result of the Brown decision. The major question which needs to be explored is: Does the CORE model meet the requirements established in the Brown decision? If not, what course of action would be necessary in order for the CORE plan to be legal?

The CORE plan has several sociological implications which should be explored through research. For example, a study which would explore community reaction to the implementation of such a concept could produce meaningful data. What implications would the plan hold in terms of social change within a given community? Could such a concept improve ghetto life by stimulating intellectual development or provide the impetus for a greater degree of involvement of inhabitants in the social life of the community?
A fourth area where further research could be conducted concerns the various political and psychological implications of the CORE plan. Could the implementation of the CORE plan adversely affect the degree of political power which the black community would be able to effect? Would such a plan minimize the degree of antagonism and conflict between whites and blacks? What steps would be necessary in order to create a favorable political climate which would permit the implementation of such a concept as that advocated by CORE? These are questions which would need to be explored before the CORE plan could be implemented.

The CORE model holds a number of implications concerning various educational concerns. Research into what effect the model could have upon the internal organization structure of school systems could prove beneficial. In addition, research should center upon how curriculum and materials would be chosen; how the board of education members would be selected; how teachers would be selected and trained or retrained to be integrated into the new school system; and how much control the local community would have over the administration and operation of the schools.

Finally, research into how best to finance the new school district created from the CORE model, would be a major consideration. How would state and federal resources be allocated and what restraints would be placed upon their use? What new sources of money, if any, should be explored in order to insure the proper operation of schools in these new districts?

**Problems Encountered**

This dissertation was developed utilizing the historical research approach. The researcher encountered several major problems during the
course of the study, which should be mentioned in order to provide guidance for another researcher who might consider conducting a similar study.

First, CORE, until recently, did not maintain an adequate system of retaining important documents concerning the organization's past endeavors. What documents were maintained were done so on the basis of what several individuals in leadership positions considered to be important. Thus, the information which did exist had to be examined and evaluated carefully to insure that the information represented an unbiased representation of CORE's history.

Second, the lack of written accounts concerning the historical development of CORE's school desegregation activities necessitated the utilization of both focused and unfocused interviews with individuals who had maintained leadership positions in CORE during the time period covered by the dissertation. These interviews provided, for the most part, the basis upon which the dissertation was developed. The major problem encountered with regard to these interviews concerned determining the authenticity of the information which was obtained. CORE, during the mid-sixties, went through a very difficult period, during which time very severe philosophical differences existed between CORE leaders. It was quite difficult to judge the objectivity of some of the information obtained during several of the interviews. The focused or structured interview was a valuable tool which allowed the researcher to compare the responses of the interviewees to the same questions. In addition, the unstructured portion of each interview provided the opportunity for the interviewees to explore areas in the historical development of CORE's school desegregation activities which could have remained unnoticed. From these
unfocused interviews, the researcher obtained valuable leads, which oftentimes produced significant information concerning the organization's school desegregation activities.

It often proved helpful to make several contacts with the major interviewees. This provided the interviewees an opportunity to reflect on the historical development of the organization and, as a result, make mention of significant aspects which would have otherwise gone unnoticed by the researcher. It is helpful to provide the interviewees with transcripts of previous interviews before the follow-up contacts are made.

Finally, the historical research must be both willing and prepared to sort through huge amounts of information in order to obtain an unbiased view of the historical development which took place. This is a very time-consuming task and cannot be accomplished without a great deal of persistence and determination. The historical research process should not be considered by a researcher who wishes to produce meaningful research in a relatively short period of time.
APPENDIX A

List of Major Interviewees

Mr. James Farmer  National Director of CORE from 1942-1965.
Mr. Floyd McKissic  National Director of CORE from 1966-1968.
Mr. Roy Innis  National Director of CORE from 1968-Present (1973).
Mr. Victor Solomon  Associate National Director of CORE, 1968-Present (1973).
Mr. Edward Brown  Director of Political Affairs for CORE, 1968-Present (1973).
Mrs. Roy Innis  Director of CORE Publications.
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

The following questions were mailed to each interviewee two weeks before the actual interviews took place. Each interviewee was informed that these questions would be the basic questions covered during the interview, but that certain other questions would also be asked.

1. What has been the extent and scope of CORE's involvement in public school desegregation actions from 1954-1973?

2. What precise goals and objectives were established for this involvement?

3. What specific strategies were utilized in order to achieve the organization's goals and objectives?

4. What shifts in the organization's policy, philosophy and/or strategies have occurred from 1968-1973?

5. What evidence exists that would tend to indicate the degree of success of CORE's approach from 1954-1973?

Certain other focused questions were asked of each of two previous National Directors and the present National Director.

Questions Asked of James Farmer

1. What specifically does the term self-separatism mean?

2. Has the doctrine of self-separatism taken the direction you had warned against?
3. The Unitary School Model is in direct opposition to the NAACP's Metropolitan Desegregation Plan and as a result CORE and the NAACP have been at odds with each other in several recent Federal Court cases. Is there any indication that CORE has forced the NAACP to make any concessions or modifications concerning its desegregation approach?

Questions Asked of Floyd McKissic

1. What factors accounted for the decline in emphasis upon non-violent direct action techniques to achieve integrated school facilities?

2. CORE is thought by many to be an organization that advocates separation of the races. When did this change take place and why do you think it did?

Questions Asked of Roy Innis

1. What, specifically, is CORE's Unitary Model designed to achieve?

2. What implications will this plan have for future school district organization patterns?

In addition, responses by the interviewees brought opportunities to pursue other questions designed to allow them to amplify upon what seemed to be major points.
APPENDIX C

The CORE Unitary School Plan

Diagram 1

ILLEGAL

SEGREGATION

Board of Education (White)

Superintendent (White)

Black Students
Black School

No Freedom of Choice

White Students
White School

DUAL SYSTEM

Diagram 2

DESEGREGATION BY BRANCH

INTEGRATION

Board of Education (White)

Superintendent (White)

Black and White Students Racial Balance

UNITARY SYSTEM

Diagram 3

DESEGREGATION BY ROOT AND BRANCH

COMMUNITY

District Board of Education (Black Majority)

Superintendent

Majority Black Minority White

True Freedom of Choice

UNITARY SYSTEM

District Board of Education (White Majority)

Superintendent

Majority White Minority Black

UNITARY SYSTEM

1. Diagram one represents segregation whether it be defacto or dejure. It has been ruled unconstitutional by the Brown decision.

2. Diagram two represents integration. It is one "legal" way of desegregating schools but not the exclusive or most desirable way.

3. Diagram three represents desegregation via the CORE Plan. It deals with the two critical elements of segregation: white power monopoly and racial exclusivity.

It allows for Black communities to control their schools by constituting state school districts.

It guarantees an equitable share of all educational funds on a per capita formula.

The plan is consistent with the Brown decision and would be an expansion of the Fourteenth Amendment.
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