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THE CONSTITUTION, DESEGREGATION, AND PUBLIC OPINION: SWANN V. CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION

JAMES L. HUNT*

The first three words of the preamble to the Constitution are “We the People.” Yet the vast majority of constitutional scholarship is limited to the opinions of judges, lawyers, law professors, and other political and economic elites. This article takes a different approach to constitutional understanding. It describes the legal thoughts of the citizens for whom the Constitution exists. It does so through an analysis of the public’s reaction to the federal court decisions in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, a desegregation case. The lead attorney for the Swann plaintiffs was Julius LeVonne Chambers, an alumnus and future chancellor of North Carolina Central University. The case culminated with a United States Supreme Court decision in April 1971, in which the Court unanimously affirmed the decision of District Judge James B. McMillan of Charlotte, North Carolina. Judge McMillan ordered the busing of students in order to achieve racial balance in the District’s more than one hundred schools. The Supreme Court ruling stood for the principle that federal district judges possessed extensive remedial powers to integrate Southern public school districts. More importantly, Swann existed in an intensely public context. This context included vastly different understandings of the constitutional grounds for desegregation and the meaning of a racially integrated society. Opponents of busing often relied on arguments that busing contradicted essential constitutional rights of freedom of association, democratic choice, liberty, and majority rule. Supporters of Judge McMillan, on the other hand, viewed the Constitution as encouraging a degree of moral and legal racial equality that could be accomplished through busing. During the litigation, citizens expressed their views directly to the Judge in personal letters. A constitutional debate over liberty and equality, in which persons of different races, ages, education, and economic status expressed their thoughts, divided the Charlotte community. This article takes the position that constitutional law should take account of public opinion and not be restricted to the ideas of elites. Only by studying the legal thoughts of the citizenry, “the People” at the center of constitutional purpose, can the Constitution and its evolution be more fully understood.

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In 1835, the French observer of American affairs, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) wrote glowingly about the authority of U.S. Supreme Court justices.\textsuperscript{1} "Without them," he claimed, "the Constitution would be a dead letter."\textsuperscript{2} Yet Tocqueville noted limitations on the Court’s influence.\textsuperscript{3} He believed its authority was "immense," but ultimately "a power of opinion."\textsuperscript{4} The judges are “all-powerful so long as people consent to obey the law, but when the people scoff at the law, they can do nothing.”\textsuperscript{5} Further, “the power of opinion is the most difficult kind of power to use, because it is impossible to say exactly where its limits lie.”\textsuperscript{6} "It is often as dangerous to underestimate it as to overestimate it."\textsuperscript{7}

Recent constitutional history provides many examples of public opinion’s force, including abortion, affirmative action, and criminal procedure. Few areas in constitutional history, however, have generated more reaction than the federal courts’ attempts to desegregate public schools.\textsuperscript{8} The dialogue commenced in earnest after the U.S. Supreme Court’s May 17, 1954 ruling in \textit{Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka}.\textsuperscript{9} The \textit{Brown} Court recognized that “education is perhaps the most important function of state and local government.”\textsuperscript{10} It then struck down school segregation because it deprived “the children of the minority group of equal education opportunities."\textsuperscript{11} Famously, however, the Court refused to articulate specific standards as to how exactly desegregation would unfold in the hundreds of school districts in which segregation prevailed.\textsuperscript{12} On May 31, 1955, the Court ambiguously directed district courts to implement the revolutionary new principle with “such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed.”\textsuperscript{13} The Court’s ruling produced an outpouring of litigation and public debate that lasted for the remainder of the century and beyond.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} See generally ALEXIS DE TOQUEVILLE, DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA Volume I 169–70 (Arthur Goldhammer trans., Literary Classics of the United States, Inc. 2004) (1835).
\item \textsuperscript{2} Id. at 170.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Id. at 169–70.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Id. at 169.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{8} See generally Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Id. at 493.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{12} See generally id.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Id.
\end{itemize}
I. SWANN V. CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Among the most important judicial proceedings involving how precisely to achieve desegregation was Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. Darius and Vera Swann initiated the case on behalf of their children, James and Edith Swann, in Charlotte, North Carolina, federal district court in January 1965. A little more than six years later, their suit produced an important Supreme Court decision involving remedial powers under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1971, the Supreme Court in Swann affirmed the use of busing to achieve desegregation, which sought to achieve similar target ratios of black (29 percent) and white (71 percent) students in each of the system's more than one hundred schools. District Judge James B. McMillan (1916–1995) ordered the desegregation policy and its means, busing. For liberals, Swann represented the high water mark of aggressive judicial remedies for desegregating schools. It meant federal courts could order taxpayer-funded measures to achieve numeric balance in individual schools in urban districts with tens of thousands of students. Subsequent Supreme Court decisions, including Milliken v. Bradley, decided in July 1974, signaled a different direction and limited the power of district judges to craft desegregation remedies. The issue of racial equality in Charlotte schools persisted, and in various forms litigation continued into the early twenty-first century.

There is a large secondary literature on Swann. Excellent book-length accounts describe Swann's key legal and political aspects. A variety of other publications analyze policy and legal issues related to Charlotte's experi-

17. See generally Swann, 402 U.S. 1.
18. Id. at 32.
21. Id.
23. See generally id.
ence with desegregation and its schools since the 1950s. Contemporary academic scholarship describes, and usually criticizes, decline in the extensive school desegregation ordered by Judge McMillan. The key question in this research is why the decline has occurred, and the shift is most frequently explained as a function of a rising political conservatism or lack of will, particularly among judges and political leadership. These explanations tend to focus on the behavior of community elites and formal legal processes.

But explanations of “resegregation” require caution. Even one factor, the vast demographic and educational changes in Mecklenburg County during the past forty years, suggests the difficulty of linking the past and the present. These changes include a tripling of the county’s population, to about one million, as well as enormous growth in suburban populations outside the county. In 2013-2014, 142,000 students attended Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s public schools, compared to about 84,000 in the Swann era. Approximately 41 percent of the students in 2013-2014 were Afri-


28. See, e.g., SCHOOL RESEGREGATION: MUST THE SOUTH TURN BACK? 24 (John Charles Boger and Gary Orfield eds., 2005) (“We have not put any real effort into desegregation in several decades. Our political and educational leaders are generally silent, the federal government has done nothing for a long time, and the courts have been leading the backward trend toward segregation.”).


30. See Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Quick Facts, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, supra note 29.

31. See Memorandum from Scott McCully to the Executive Staff of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, supra note 29.
can-American, in contrast to less than 30 percent forty years ago.\textsuperscript{32} Moreover, roughly 25 percent of current Charlotte students are American-Indian, Asian, Hispanic, or of mixed races.\textsuperscript{33} These groups were so small that they were not considered part of the desegregation effort in the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{34} In 2013–2014, the school district classified just under 31 percent of the students as “non-Hispanic white,” but when Judge McMillan ordered busing, the district was approximately 71 percent white.\textsuperscript{35} Moreover, since Swann, private education has grown exponentially.\textsuperscript{36} In 2013, the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce reported that private and charter schools enrolled more than 26,000 students.\textsuperscript{37} A 2014 state study found an additional 7,300 students attended homeschools.\textsuperscript{38} Altogether, forty years after Swann, almost 20 percent of the county’s children receive their education outside the public system, a rate about twice that of the state average.\textsuperscript{39}

This study attempts to understand Swann and its enduring consequences by drawing heavily on Tocqueville’s insight that the authority of courts in constitutional matters derives in large part from public acceptance. Swann is an ideal case to test the relationship between judicial power and public opinion because it affected the lives of practically every citizen in Mecklenburg County. It directly challenged Charlotte’s political and cultural legacy of white supremacy and discrimination. It impacted the county’s children, a group entitled to special protection under emotional, moral, and legal considerations. A grassroots perspective offers an opportunity to look at constitutional thought, race relations, and history from the “bottom up.” Instead of focusing on political leaders, lawyers, and judges, the aim here is to explore the legal ideas of the public — the people directly affected by court decisions.

Research strategies to measure the constitutional ideas of non-elites confront significant barriers. Newspapers, for example, publish letters to the editor. But given their lack of privacy, they can only capture the thoughts of those willing to reveal themselves to neighbors and employers. Public opinion polls can be useful, but they are limited in terms of their ability to measure and record complex legal arguments. Thanks to Judge McMillan, however, there is a unique resource for discerning public reactions to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} See 2013–14 Grade/Race/Sex Report School Month 3, CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHS., supra note 29.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{36} See CHARLOTTE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, Education, supra note 29.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{38} See STATE of N.C. DEP’T. of ADMIN., 2014 North Carolina Home School Statistical Survey, supra note 29.
\item \textsuperscript{39} T. Keung Hui, Home Schooling Accelerates in North Carolina, supra note 29.
\end{itemize}
Swann. Before his death in 1995, the Judge left an extensive set of personal papers to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Southern Historical Collection, including several boxes relating to Swann. Within these boxes are hundreds of letters sent to the Judge during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, McMillan was hearing evidence and issuing orders, and the national media heavily reported Swann’s judicial proceedings. The large volume of letters demonstrates that the public was well-aware of who would be making the critical decisions. More importantly, the letters show that Charlotte citizens believed constitutional law also belonged to them and not just to those with formal legal or political power.

Judge James Bryan McMillan grew up in rural eastern North Carolina and attended St. Andrews Junior College and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, graduating from the latter in 1937. After three years at Harvard Law School, he returned to North Carolina as a state government attorney in Raleigh. McMillan served in the Navy during World War II and then moved to Charlotte and built a private law practice. McMillan established a reputation as an effective trial and business lawyer and eventually won appointment, in 1968, as a federal district judge during President Lyndon Johnson’s administration. Swann, which began three years earlier, waited for him when he assumed office. McMillan knew Charlotte well, having lived in Mecklenburg County for more than twenty years. He understood the human consequences and potential impact of his rulings. His correspondence files show that rather than simply receiving and filing incoming letters from citizens, even hostile ones, he frequently responded, sometimes attaching copies of his decisions. The Judge also made it a point to cultivate positive relationships with the Charlotte media. In short, McMillan believed that although he had the formal judicial say on what the Constitution required, in Swann, public goodwill was necessary for the re-

40. See generally James B. McMillan Papers #4676 (on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
41. Id.
42. See id.
43. Resolution and Memorial in Honor of James Bryan McMillan by Mark R. Bernstein, Vice-President of the Mecklenburg County Bar, Francis I. Parker, Chairman of the Memorials Committee of the Mecklenburg County Bar, & Edwin Osborne Ayscue, Jr., Speaker on this Occasion for the Mecklenburg County Bar (May 11, 1995) (on file with the Clerk of the Superior Court of Mecklenburg County, N.C.), available at http://www.meckbar.org/newsevents/McMillan,JamesBryan_5.11.1995.pdf.
44. Id.
45. Id. at 1–2.
46. Id. at 2–3.
47. Id. at 6.
48. Id.
49. See generally James B. McMillan Papers #4676, supra note 40.
50. See id.
sults to have their intended effect. But his public statements suggested that he also viewed his job as interpreting the Constitution despite popular opposition. This balance between democracy, public support, and constitutional interpretation remains among the longer-lasting issues raised by Swann.

The letters to Judge McMillan can be grouped into several categories. The most obvious distinction among them is between letters clearly supporting the Judge’s decision and those opposing it. More than 80 percent of the letters attacked Judge McMillan’s orders implementing busing. Perhaps most significantly for this study, the critics usually told the Judge that he did not understand the Constitution. There were four types of negative letters: (1) from radicals, occasionally threatening McMillan’s life; (2) from ideological or political opponents of busing; (3) from children affected by busing; and (4) from parents opposed to busing; each were typically rooted in legal and constitutional principles. Predictably, letters from parents were most numerous, followed by letters from ideologues opposed to busing according to constitutional, political and social values. As far as can be determined, white citizens wrote all of the critical letters.

There were also letters supporting Judge McMillan. A small number came from self-identified African-Americans, but most derived from whites. Among the latter were political and constitutional liberals. More common were letters from persons who for religious or moral reasons believed in increased integration as a matter of human and social justice. There were also letters motivated primarily by past or present personal friendship with McMillan. Finally, a small number of individuals connected

51. See id.
52. SCHWARTZ, supra note 25, at 21–22 (“I cannot cope with public opinion in dealing with the rights of man under the Constitution. I cannot go by a vote of the neighbors or the electorate at large. . . . To yield to public clamor, however, is to corrupt the judicial process and to turn the effective operation of courts over to political activism and to the temporary local opinion makers.”).
53. James B. McMillan Papers #4676 (on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
54. See id.
55. See id. An important component of the project was an extensive effort to identify senders, both supporters and opponents, contact the senders if still living, and ask their current thoughts about Swann. The results, as well as information about any schools mentioned in letters, the writers’ neighborhoods, employment, and education are summarized in the notes. The aim was to achieve a memory dimension to the research, extend further the constitutional history into the more recent past, and keep attention centered on the citizens engaged with McMillan in constitutional debate.
56. See id. All of the opponents who identified their race described themselves as white or assumed the Judge would believe they were white. No opponent described himself or herself as black. This conclusion is based on the author’s extensive review of the entire collection of the McMillan Papers.
57. See infra notes 346–449.
to the schools wrote offering praise based on their belief that children’s education would benefit from greater racial equality.

Out of the large collection of letters a few samples from each group demonstrate citizens’ approaches to the constitutional law of school desegregation. These letters show clearly the human consequences of the case as well as perceptions about the relationship between law and race. They offer constitutional arguments about the past, present, and future of American race relations. As a result, the letters reflect a complex “Citizens’ Law,” a manifest articulation of “We the People,” that either endorsed or opposed the constitutional basis for the busing orders issued by Judge McMillan. Given the constitutional values of the white majority, the letters provide reasons for the subsequent history and decline of school desegregation in Charlotte since the early 1970s.

II. CRITICS

A. Radicals and Anger

One category of letters reflected a radical approach that frankly rejected Brown and busing, and stood steadfastly for racism and segregation. By the late 1960s, this group’s perspective existed against the majority understanding of constitutional requirements and had limited political prospects. Consequently, members of this group tended to express rage and hatred toward the federal government and Judge McMillan. In their isolation, the writers offered threats of violence, smoldering resentment, and a sense of betrayal. Their letters sometimes rejected entirely the idea of law, and most were sent to the Judge anonymously. According to one from August 1970:

I AM AN OLD MAN — 78 YEARS OLD AND I HAVE FATHERED AND RAISED EIGHT THEY ARE ALL MARRIED EXCEPT ONE FOUR ARE LIVING IN THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT I HAVE AN INCURABLE SICKNESS I HAVE LESS THEN 1 YEAR TO LIVE I HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING TO BE REMEMBERED FOR SOMEONE HAS TO DO SOMETHING TO STOP THESE STUPID ORDERS BY SOMEONE LIKE YOU I HAVE MY LEFT HAND ON MY BIBLE AS I WRITE THIS IF ANY ONE OF MY GRANDCHILDREN IS BUSSED INTO A NEGRO SCHOOL AND I CANT GE THEM OUT, I SHALL KILL YOU . . . IT HAS COME TO THE POINT THAT KILLING IS NOT A SIN, SO I DO NOT FEAR FOR THIS CAUSE.58

"Young White America," an individual who, in August 1970, revealingly defined himself by generation, race, and nationality, told the Judge that he "predicted both Kennedy’s and Martin Luther King’s deaths. I will predict another assassination. This time it will be you Judge McMillan. Now is it worth it?" The writer vowed to “never integrate with Negros, we had rather destroy the entire Neger race, and that is what will happen. We will defy the federal government." Voicing sentiment for an unlimited form of democratic power, he claimed, “Millions of us cant be wrong. We mean to put the neger in their place or graves. We mean business. Hell we are not kidding. There is no law. We will do as we please and we will kill neggers and enjoy it." A year later, a letter from another nameless writer looked forward to a race war, stating that blacks would never be accepted in white schools or society: “We are so mad and so insulted to think our government is that stupid We rather see Washington D.C. and those that are forcing those dogs on us blown to hell.”

A variation on this approach omitted direct threats of violence, but offered racism, anticommunism, and class resentment, along with personal attacks. For these writers, the only just Constitution was one that advanced white supremacy. As a consequence, this group advocated that a judge’s proper work was to protect segregationist values. One claimed former regard for federal judges, “BUT TODAY WITH COMMUNIST LIKE YOU WITH A WARPED MIND AS OUR $$40,000. PER YEAR LAW MAKER I HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE FEDERAL COURTS . . . WE THE TAXPAYERS PAYING YOUR SALARY TO DESTROY WE THE PEOPLE.” The writer advised McMillan to go among the “COLORED OR MOVE TO CHINA OR RUSSIA.” The same person wrote the Judge several times in the fall of 1970, complaining about the violence and sexuality he associated with integration:

NEGRO BOYS CARRYING KNIVES CUTTING WHITE GIRLS . . . .
PARENTS GO TO SCHOOL TO TALK WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS

the writers’ beliefs, motivations, emotions, and arguments, the author has retained the original spelling, capitalization, grammar, and formatting when quoting citizen letters.

60. Id.
61. Id.
64. Id.
HAVE TO TALK TO A NEGRO WHO TELLS THEM THAT IT WAS THE FAULT OF THE WHITES THAT CAUSED THE TROUBLE. . . . I DROVE BEHIND A SCHOOL BUS FOR TEN MINUTES TODAY AND OBSERVED A BLACK BOY IN THE BACK OF THE BUS TRYING TO UNBUTTON THE DRESS OF A BLACK GIRL FOR TEN MINUTES.65

Similarly, another writer hoped all of McMillan's grandchildren would be "little Black Boys & Girls," but for unknown reasons refrained from spelling out a full condemnation, calling the Judge a "d----- s-- o- a -----."66

V.C. Lowery of New Martinsville, West Virginia, described McMillan as a "Communist trash petting rat," and sent him a copy of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover's criticisms of liberal judges.67 Lowery blamed federal courts for increased crime, because "anytime 1 Negro gangster or dope pusher comes before our supreme court they have nothing to worry about."68 According to Lowery, the overreach of judges like McMillan as well as integrationist Christian ministers meant conditions would only get worse, because "three Fourths of the judges and preachers across the country have turned communist."69 Ernest Huggins, Jr., of Jonesboro, Georgia, offered McMillan advice about how to improve black-white relations.70 In January 1970, he argued "[r]acial integration is no Law of God, more racial segregation was." He proposed "[n]atural grouping, something less than integration and something less than segregation," as "a reasonable solution."71 It was "the work of the Devil to jumble everything up."72 There should be a "free school system, not an integrated one. You
might call it ‘pooling.’” A subsequent letter advised the Judge — “You people,” as he expressed it — need to stay out of the schools.

An organization based in Davidson, North Carolina, called the “U.S. Constitutional Restoration Association,” sent McMillan several dramatic legal proposals. The proposals combined tax and currency ideas (repeal of the Federal Reserve Act, for example), with a plan to create a “U.S. Department of Repatriation, Migration, and Homesteading,” charged with assisting ten million black people to move to Africa. One document proclaimed, “We will have more friends in Africa by this wise and helpful action!” More to the school desegregation issue, the group argued that the Fourteenth Amendment was illegally ratified in 1868 and was thus “null and void.” Instead, a new constitutional Amendment should be adopted to give states “THE SOLE AND EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS.” The organization offered this “IN A SPIRIT OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP, FREEDOM, AND FAIR PLAY.”

B. Ideology and Politics

Radicals exposed deeply-felt bigotry and fears, but the Judge actually received few letters from legal extremists. Much more common were ideological criticisms based on white mainstream political and constitutional beliefs. These typically rejected Jim Crow laws, but articulated an understand-
ing of equality, liberty, democracy, and the Fourteenth Amendment that gave constitutional priority to individual choice. Ideologues usually argued that their opposition to busing was not a rejection of integration, for racism, or based on hostility to black people. Instead, Swann erred because it meant liberalism in the flesh, big government, and overpaid unelected judges telling hard-working and patriotic white men and their families how to act and think. Swann therefore threatened constitutional freedom. After all, the arguments were that regular citizens, not civil rights complainers or militants, paid taxes and fought the nation’s wars, including the current one in Vietnam. The ideologues proudly distinguished themselves from communists, hippies, drug users, and criminals. In their minds, McMillan’s judicial robe and life as a Presbyterian business lawyer amounted to a façade. The Judge actually intended to turn the country into a Soviet-style satellite in which citizens’ individual liberty disappeared. Busing to achieve desegregation represented not racial equality, but a freedom-destroying liberal-socialist agenda. Legally, the ideologues believed in a constitution that included the liberty to choose where to live, with whom one’s children would attend a public school, and what moral values those children would learn.

Alienation toward government represented a common theme among the ideologues. One man, “[a] former satisfied citizen who plans to support those who use good sense instead of those who appear to be vindictive such as newspapers and... other liberals,” quantified the critique. His “good fortune” in the previous year included $18,500 in earnings, of which $5,187.26 was “extracted” by the government in income, property, sales, and Social Security taxes, leaving (after donations to charity) $12,767.74. But, thanks to McMillan, the hard earned cash paid in taxes would be spent to buy buses. The writer believed liberals “feel that the middle class should sit tight and let the ‘Servants of the People’ continue to jab us in the

83. Id.
84. Id.
85. Id.
86. See, e.g., Letter from Edward J.F. Maslanka to James B. McMillan (June 11, 1971), supra note 81.
87. Id.
88. Id.
back and continue to ask for more, more, more.”89 Another “U.S. Citizen” referred the Judge to the Tenth Amendment, which reserves non-delegated federal powers to the states or the people, and argued that the Court lacked the power to force busing.90 Moreover, this unnamed citizen thought modern courts grabbed powers properly placed in other branches.91 To this writer, “[t]he only power granted the Courts by the Constitution is to make decisions — not enforce them!”92

Others linked broader political, personal, and social failures to the woes of desegregation. Edward J. Burns, a Carthage, North Carolina, lawyer, former mayor, and school board member, assumed that black people “have enough pride not to favor the close mixing of their children” with the “sorry ‘white trash’” and “do not favor desegregation.”93 Burns argued that current “racial troubles” had “resulted largely from that ruling of the [Brown] Court, and disrespect, more crime and general moral letdown are rampant in this nation.”94 John E. Roberts (d. 2005), a manufacturing agent who lived in an upper middle class suburb in southeast Charlotte, described McMillan as a “despicable character” who “would send small children into a situation where their very lives would be in danger.”95 Although Roberts’

89. Id.
91. Id.
92. Id.
93. Letter from Edward J. Burns to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (July 20, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Burns, a Duke University graduate (1929), was the son of the former mayor of Carthage, North Carolina and had served on a local public school board. Class of 1929, DUKE U. ALUMNI REG. XXIII (Duke Univ. Gen. Alumni Ass’n, Durham, N.C.) Apr. 1937, at 105–06, available at https://archive.org/details/dukeuniversityal01 duke; DIRECTORY OF MOORE COUNTY 5–6 (A. Selders ed., 1925), available at https://archive.org/stream/directoryofmoore1925seld/#page/n10/mode/2up. Eight years earlier, Burns wrote James Meredith, who was integrating the University of Mississippi, asking him to “go back to your own sort, the good Negro race. Never force yourself into the company of those who neither appreciate you or want your fellowship.” White people disliked Meredith because “he was out of place in a white university.” Burns’ main fear was “intermarriage of the races by lower classes of both races,” and he desired “both races to retain their distinct and different racial characteristics of which each can be justly proud.” Letter from Edward J. Burns to James H. Meredith (Oct. 12, 1962) (in the the James Howard Meredith Collection, on file with the University of Mississippi Libraries, Digital Collections), available at http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/clio/cook/compoundobject/collection/jm_con/id/1792/rec/1.
95. Letter from John Everett Roberts to Charles M. Lowe (Aug. 2, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). John Everett Roberts wrote Lowe, a member of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, partly to praise Lowe’s opposition to busing. Several writers disliked Nixon because they believed, despite campaign promises, that the President had not done enough to stop McMillan. Roberts lived on Maryland Avenue. Deaths, MYERS PARK BAPTIST CHURCH NEWSL. (Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.) July 2005, available at https://
children never attended public schools, he was interested "in all children, and our freedom." Along with McMillan, Roberts blamed the faulty "leadership" of the media and Richard Nixon.

The ironically-named Charlotte resident Ulysses S. Grant offered a broad assault on recent interpretations of constitutional law. He feared nothing less than the loss of republican government: "When one woman can kick the bible out of all our public schools, and one sexual pervert can make the worst pornographic literature and have same OK'd by the U.S. Supreme Court it's high time someone was sounding off." Grant saw in busing a slippery slope to socialism and unlimited federal power. He sent McMillan a local minister's opinion that liberty would be crushed when, in order to sustain racial ratios in schools, families would be ordered to live in particular neighborhoods. Quoting Abraham Lincoln and Charles Evans Hughes on the desirability of limited government, Grant told McMillan, "Germany took care of everyone from cradle to grave we are heading fast in that direction under the blanket of civil rights." Under the circumstances, it seemed state and local governments should be abolished because they no longer mattered. In fact, "[W]hy not pass a law forcing all whites to marrying all blacks: hence, no more problems."

Most letters in the ideological and political category viewed the Judge's efforts to equalize races in Charlotte's schools as constitutional error. Harry E. Leminger of State Line, Pennsylvania, wondered if McMillan was not so "stupid" to "think that this kind of practice is Constitutional:" "Show..."
me any place in the Constitution where it states that the public schools must have racial balance, ‘Mixed Vegetables Yes,’ ‘Children no.’ Voluntary Integration yes, Compulsory Integration ‘never.’”\footnote{107} Leminger believed integration should mean a student could attend any public school, “[p]roviding that said student resided in the school district.”\footnote{108} Leminger also argued that the Supreme Court “has no legal authority to try any national problem” because that responsibility belonged to Congress, not the “nine old goats” on the Court.\footnote{109} Courts should resolve only “personal problems between two parties.”\footnote{110} He condemned the Supreme Court and McMillan for destroying the Constitution.\footnote{111}

Many others rejected the legal basis of busing to achieve a target ratio (71:29) of white to black students in the district’s more than one hundred individual schools.\footnote{112} George Alvin Tucker (1899–1986) a Charlotte real estate agency owner, read several of McMillan’s orders.\footnote{113} He distinguished the Supreme Court’s more recent case, \textit{Green v. School Board of New Kent County,}\footnote{114} from \textit{Swann.}\footnote{115} There, according to Tucker, the Court ordered

\begin{footnotes}
\item[108] Id.
\item[109] Id.
\item[110] Id.
\item[111] Id.
\item[114] See generally \textit{Green v. Sch. Bd. of New Kent Cnty.}, 391 U.S. 430 (1968) (New Kent, a rural Virginia county, operated two high schools, one all-black, the other overwhelmingly white. The Supreme Court ruled the county’s “freedom of choice” plan for the two schools was unconstitutional. Greater racial balance was required. The decision, by altering the legal meaning of desegregation, had a profound effect on \textit{Swann}. “Freedom of Choice,” the prior strategy of the Charlotte school board, was
\end{footnotes}
full integration on the ground that New Kent was a rural system with only two schools. Tucker was "quite aware that the Integration thing is LAW," but objected to "a thorough blend of color in the schools NOW." There was simply too much contrary history and too much complexity in the Charlotte system for that kind of change. Instead, "common sense" should prevail. Tucker added that he knew all about the Constitution before McMillan was born and, although he felt an obligation to follow laws he did not like, "I do not swallow every word or opinion of every U.S. District Judge that makes them."

A young minister of education at Midwood Baptist Church in east Charlotte, Larry Sledge (b. 1936), also criticized busing. In July 1970, Sledge argued for "the neighborhood school concept of public education." His work with young people convinced him of the "frustration and confusion which already has permeated our educational system." Sledge assured the Judge he was "opposed to segregation, [but] I cannot with any stretch of the imagination see where a certain ratio has to be established in order to call a system integrated." Foreseeing the county's more complicated racial future, Sledge asked "[i]f this is necessary for the blacks, then why isn't it necessary for the Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Indians, etc.?” Like many others, Sledge suggested using the money expended on transportation for buildings, teachers, and supplies. He wanted "a stable situation where everyone regardless of race or color is welcome in any school he chooses to attend." Like many others, Sledge viewed his position in constitutional terms: "This is my interpretation of our Constitution and anything else is no longer sufficient. This put the legal question of the proper remedy squarely in Judge McMillan's court.

116. Id.
117. Id.
118. Id.
119. Id.
120. Id.
121. Letter from Larry Sledge to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (July 13, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). The author sent Reverend Sledge a copy of his letter in January 2014. Reverend Sledge replied that he holds the same views now, "after seeing the results of what I still think was a bad decision." Reverend Sledge believes it would have been better to train teachers and build new schools than spend money on transportation and legal costs. This "would have helped ALL students' education far more than meeting a ratio based on skin color!" Letter from Larry D. Sledge to author (Jan. 23, 2014) (on file with author).
122. Letter from Larry Sledge to James B. McMillan, supra note 121.
123. Id.
124. Id.
125. Id.
126. Id.
127. Id.
hurting our educational system as well as infringing on the rights of some-

With the exception of Army combat service in World War II, Andrew Jones Calcote (1907–1987) lived his whole life in DeRidder, a small town in central Louisiana. Calcote grew up on a farm, received a ninth-grade education, and did maintenance work at Fort Polk, an Army installation. Calcote wrote McMillan because he feared for the state of the nation and wanted the Judge to do something about it. Calcote had many “colored friends,” but integration, in his view, tended to encourage racial hatred. He saw links between recent turmoil: Little Rock; race riots; hippies (especially at the 1968 Democratic National Convention); Rap Brown; and even “Cacaus Clay.” It was “a shame a pure shame to know how things are going on in our own country.” He believed in “good education for everybody,” but opposed the cost of busing “children from one side of town to the other just to say we are getting integrated.” Going slowly would be better. The only way Calcote could make sense of these problems was to conclude that it was “nothing but a Communist set up.” “Sabotage... paid by the Communist,” and promoted by Leftist leaders like the late Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. caused it. After all, Communists welcomed all violence and unrest, seeing it as political opportunity.

Edward J. F. Maslanka (1918–2010) offered perhaps the most wide-ranging and persistent ideological discussion. Maslanka, a Massachusetts native, graduated from the Lowell Textile Institute and served in the Pacific during World War II. He moved to Charlotte and worked as a technical salesman for the National Starch and Chemical Corporation for thirty-five years. Maslanka, a member of Myers Park Presbyterian Church, lived in

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128. Id.
130. Letter from Andrew J. Calcote to James B. McMillan, supra note 82.
131. Id. at 5.
132. Id. at 2.
133. Id. at 2, 4, 8–9.
134. Id. at 5.
135. Id. at 6.
136. Id. at 11.
137. Id. at 7.
138. Id. at 8, 12.
139. Id. at 8.
140. LOWELL TEXTILE INSTITUTE, THE PICKOUT 22 (1940); HILL'S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1963, supra note 95, at 638; Edward John Felix Maslanka, CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, Feb. 16, 2010.
141. See HILL'S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1963, supra note 95, at 638; see also Edward John Felix Maslanka, CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, Feb. 16, 2010.
a wealthier area of southeast Charlotte. In December 1969, he claimed that “forced integration” through busing violated constitutional law. He contrasted McMillan’s acceptable support for racial “desegregation” with “mandatory integration.” Maslanka and his wife wrote to the Judge that they were “disturbed and frustrated by the trend of some members of the Judiciary, you for an example, to tamper with our Constitutional rights in choosing the social environment of our child.” By interfering with this “free choice of parents,” the Judge’s actions illegally “make marriage obsolete” by turning child-rearing over to the government. Maslanka denounced the 71:29 target, noting that although he was raised in racially liberal New England, he did not recall any busing to achieve integration. Altogether, “[f]orced integration interferes with our ‘pursuit of Happiness’ as stated in the Declaration of Independence.”

In January 1970, Maslanka wrote a broader critique of the lack of “practical” solutions in the Judge’s busing orders. He repeated the need to follow first the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, tracing these essential goals back to the “Greek philosophers,” Martin Luther’s “free will,” and the Founding Fathers’ support for a maximized “freedom of choice.” Maslanka also maintained that McMillan’s busing order contradicted the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Section 407(a)(2) of the Act provided nothing herein shall empower any official or court of the United States to issue any order seeking to achieve a racial balance in any school by requiring the transportation of pupils or students from one school to another or one school district to another in order to achieve such racial balance, or otherwise enlarge the existing power of the court to insure compliance with constitutional standards.

Thus, according to Maslanka, our constitutional democracy had already rejected the 71:29 ratio: “When were the people permitted to voice their opinion on racially mixing schools in any ratio whatsoever?” Finally,
there was a “freedom of choice” for parents in choosing schools implied in the First Amendment and demonstrated by the long-standing acceptance of private schools.\footnote{Id.}

Later, after it became clear that busing would stand, Maslanka grounded his legal arguments to the Judge on cultural differences.\footnote{Letter from Edward J.F. Maslanka to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Aug. 8, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).} He thought black students would have a harder time “comprehending the white man’s language,” because blacks were “not relating to the Soul of the white man’s history [including] Sumer and Egypt and passing through the Greeks and many Indo-European tribes from which most white Americans descend.”\footnote{Id.} In fact, correct constitutional knowledge itself seemed greater among long-term residents, as compared with recent immigrants.\footnote{Id.} Given the diversity in the American population, “[o]pressive laws of forced uniformity,” such as busing, would produce chaos.\footnote{Id.} This “new society means the destruction of the old, the one established upon Anglo-Saxon Spirit and philosophy that emanates from Western Culture.”\footnote{Id.} Whites naturally oppose this but “do not understand why or how to express this instinct properly due to the paradox of the Christian religion.”\footnote{Id.} Maslanka predicted societal decline in this “age of Politics and the money economy.”\footnote{Id.}

By June 1971, two months after the Supreme Court’s Swann decision, Maslanka understood his various attempts at persuasion had failed.\footnote{Letter from Edward J.F. Maslanka to James B. McMillan (June 11, 1971), supra note 81.} At this time, McMillan’s orders reflected a Supreme Court-approved plan that Maslanka saw as manipulating the future by divorcing children from parental values, a strategy with historical precedents among Communists and “Ottoman Turks.”\footnote{Id.} To his dismay, “[u]nscrupulous politicians, irrational courts, and the ignorant and gullible communication media” led the way to this “New Democracy.”\footnote{Id.} “[D]ifferent races, religions, and cultural backgrounds” had, in fact, altered the Constitution’s purpose.\footnote{Id.} Maslanka accused McMillan of shifting his views on integration since his days as a law student, stated that after World War II McMillan “was very keen on the one world government concept,” complained that he was vulgar and arrogant...
when teaching Sunday School, that fellow Charlotte Country Club members hated him, that he was groveling for public support, and that he represented an elite clique trying to control and misshape society contrary to fundamental law. 165 Maslanka most resented McMillan’s interference with his attempts to raise his son on “cultural values, traditions, and the morals and ethics” derived from “blood kinsmen” and the “Fathers of Western Culture.” 166 He despised “being forced to become a member of some new mongrel society.” 167

Altogether, the ideological arguments expressed specific constitutional and legal traditions. Key principles were a right to privacy and the freedom to associate, partly drawn from the First Amendment, which was understood to include the right to maintain an ethnic identity and parental control. Such values trumped any alternative notions of racial equality under the Fourteenth Amendment, to which they were implicitly compared. Frequently, the ideological writers offered a property rights or class-based justification, as well as democratic distrust of federal judges, for their legal arguments. Many expressed personal pride in achieving middle-class status through hard work, including military service in World War II or Korea. 168

They were not willing to concede those hard-fought victories because of the constitutional errors of an unelected and possibly socialist judge. 169 This group believed that the middle class earned the right to send their children to better public schools than poor people. At the same time, some expressed class resentment against the rich, including McMillan. 170 A surprising number pointed out that he earned the princely salary of $40,000 a year, while the median household income in North Carolina in 1969 was $7,000. These writers assumed that the Judge was out of touch with their financial reality, and they knew the wealthiest Charlotteans could put their children in private schools and avoid busing, integration, and the white and black bottom rungs of the economic ladder. 171 Finally, the ideological writers resented the fact that they were being asked to give up an important aspect of their un-

165. Id.
166. Id.
167. Id. A different view was the Letter from James W. Markel, Florida Attorney to William Waggoner, Attorney, Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board (May 7, 1971) (in the William Waggoner Papers, on file with the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte) (“Since the middle and upper economic classes have traditionally imparted education to their offspring through cultural practices and speech patterns, the only losers in this political power play are the poor and downtrodden.”).
168. See, e.g., Letter from A Servant of [Servants of the People] to Various “Servants” of the People (Jan. 29, 1970), supra note 86.
171. Id.
derstanding of American democracy, the right to choose elected officials who would draw school district boundaries according to neighborhood boundaries.\(^{172}\)

C. Youth

The outcry expressed by some white students is important in understanding the public reaction to *Swann*. This was the younger generation, born between the mid-1950s and early 1960s, which may have had a lesser stake in segregation. Yet they were deeply affected by their parents' beliefs and behaviors, and they often experienced racial tension and violence in Charlotte's schools. From a constitutional standpoint, these student writers believed they had a legal right to attend the nearest school, and that freedom of association and privacy had been lost because of McMillan's actions. The young white students who wrote McMillan condemning his decisions focused on the disruption that busing and integration caused, but they also sensed important constitutional issues.\(^{173}\)

Loss of freedom was a common characteristic of these children's letters, as it was with the adults. One anonymous female student, "speaking for alots more other kids that feel like I do," believed McMillan did not "know what [he was] doing to us."\(^{174}\) Devastated at reassignment and no longer being a "lettergirl" at her old school, she cried constantly, would not leave the house, and planned on "quitting school" despite being a senior.\(^{175}\) Her prayers asked God why McMillan "took my dreams away from me: I've never hated anyone like I hate you"\(^{176}\)

An equally "mad sixth grader," Lisa Jones, opposed "this bussing stuff you have started."\(^{177}\) Jones lived on Windham Place, a middle-class neighborhood in east Charlotte.\(^{178}\) She attended Merry Oaks Elementary School,

\(^{172}\) See, e.g., Letter from Ulysses S. Grant to James B. McMillan (Sept. 22, 1970), *supra* note 98.


\(^{175}\) Id.

\(^{176}\) Id.


\(^{178}\) Id.
located a little more than one mile from her house. Jones complained that under McMillan’s orders she would no longer be able to attend the school. McMillan as a result, was “stupid” and “stubborn.” According to Jones, her family’s purpose in moving to the area was for her to attend that school. Although puerile, the argument had a constitutional dimension. It was “not fair for one man to run everybody else’s life,” and it was “not right for us to move out of our school so some negroes can move in. Same way with them.” Jones even offered a juvenile version of the slippery slope: “Next thing you’ll be telling us what to say, where to live, what friends to make, and how to make them.”

An eleven-year-old student, Philip Anatonio Hairrios, told McMillan he had a right to complain because he was going to be bused and could not choose his school. This denied him “freedom.” Hairrios, attempting parody, described himself as “a fellow communist” and further elaborated by describing the Judge as “stupid,” a Nazi, and a Communist. The young writer announced that he did not see “how this country can be called free when the almighty judges tell the people what to do.”

David C. Dillenbeck, a student at J. Mason Smith Jr. High School, expressed dismay at the negative effects of busing, an indirect variety of the adults’ contention that it infringed on constitutional rights. In an articulate and neatly typed letter, Dillenbeck maintained, “[b]oys and girls don’t

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182. *Id.*

183. *Id.*

184. Letter from Philip Anatonio Hairrios to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Based on the author’s research, it is unlikely that “Hairrios” was the boy’s real name.

185. *Id.* (addressing the letter as “Judge McMillan, Heil Hitler” and providing a salutation of “a few names of people who are with me: Adolph Hitler, Mr. Mussolini, Ho Chi Men” in the signature).

186. *Id.*

187. *Id.*

188. Letter from David C. Dillenbeck to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Jan. 17, 1971) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). According to the letter’s return address, Dillenbeck lived on Wedgewood Avenue, a middle class area in south Charlotte close to Smith Junior High.
even want to go to the school they are assigned." Busing required them to leave home early and return late. Dillenbeck argued black students were worse off under busing. Based on his conversations, he concluded there were less “disturbances” at “the black school they went to last year.” At Smith Junior High School, the black kids set off firecrackers in the hall, “molested” white girls, cut classes, stole things from the gym, and broke in line in the cafeteria. The only students who came late to class were “the blacks from shuffling around in the hall. They don’t care!” Dillenbeck guessed “nine out of ten black students [did] not do any sort of work[,]” The teachers failed to enforce discipline “because of sheer fright.” He asked McMillan, “Can you please tell me if their education has been improved since they have been transferred as you ordered?”

D. Parents

Frustrated parents, often mothers, sent numerous letters to the Judge. They expressed personal upheaval, fear of busing’s effects, and the threat of lost status. No longer were their children safe within middle-class neighborhoods, and these families lacked an ability to pay for the escape offered by private schools. Predictably, political, social, and economic perceptions bred resentment. But most importantly, parents viewed the crisis in constitutional terms. Like other critics, they believed busing illegally caused a loss of fundamental freedom, which included the right to choose a neighborhood school. Racism manifested itself in a few letters, but not most. More broadly, as for the ideologues, busing and the target ratios represented big government taking another chunk out of personal and parental sovereignty. Many wondered why they had to give up an assumed constitutional right of choice and control when they had done nothing wrong, especially when they supported at least a limited version of integration and racial equality.

Some parents focused less on integration and more on the means by which it was being achieved. Robert T. Snyder blamed McMillan for at-

189. Id.
190. Id.
191. Id.
192. Id.
193. Id.
194. Id.
195. Id.
196. Id.
197. Id.
tempting to "overcome hundreds of years of injustice in the wink of an eye." He believed the black man is a man and I respect him for that. He loves his family as I love mine, and his problems of earning a livelihood, living in his community, believing in his God, are the same as mine. His blood is as red as mine and his hopes and dreams are not affected by the color of his skin.

Snyder also thought "the black man deserves every opportunity to have what I have had and more, and I support his right to have it." He understood these rights to include

[the right to do without today so that I can have more tomorrow and the right to be proud of what I have because I worked and sweated to earn it. The right to raise my children to be intelligent, hard-working, compassionate adults who believe more strongly in a God that most surely exists that does their weak and selfish father.

Snyder, whose child was bused, offered multiple criticisms of the experience. Buses were crowded and unsafe for blacks and whites. In his opinion, McMillan degraded black students by "making [them] the minority in virtually every school in the county." Snyder favored equal education, including black teachers in white schools, but he thought the target ratio actually threatened educational equality. More precisely, he believed his rights under the Constitution included "the right to choose where I live and work and with whom I associate; the right to attend the church of my choice; and to do almost anything I want as long as it does not interfere with the rights of another." The busing decision violated those rights because of its manifest unreasonableness: It "attacked the basic philosophy of life guaranteed by our Constitution."

199. Id. at 1.
200. Id.
201. Id. at 2.
202. Id.
203. Id. at 3.
204. Id.
205. Id.
206. Id. at 4.
207. Id.
208. Id. at 5. Several Charlotte lawyers made similar points. Louis A. Bledsoe (b. 1927), a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and its law school, expressed dislike for the ratio and the use of children as "pawns" to be distributed around the county. Whiteford Blakeney (1906–1991), a Duke University and Harvard Law School alumnus, believed Swann "sanctioned a basic denial of individual liberty to American citizens, white and black alike," because school attendance could be "prescribed solely according to race and color." Ironically, he thought, the old state racial compulsion was now replaced by federal racial compulsion. But all racial quotas were offensive, and it was "most distressing to note the continuing inroads on individual freedom and the provincialism of Washington." Letter from Louis A. Bledsoe to William Waggoner (Oct. 13, 1970); Letters from Whiteford Blakeney to William Waggoner (Apr. 22, 1971, Apr. 27, 1971) (on file in the William Waggoner Papers, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte); Resolution and Memorial in Honor of
B.L. Martin (1926-2013) considered himself a “loyal American who has tried to uphold the law and bring up my children to respect it[].” But the prospect of busing threatened his family. His children were “scared to death” of attending school “in a neighborhood that is rampant with crime.” His twelve-year-old son asked to carry a knife for protection. Martin believed “[i]ntegration has been good for both the black and the white people,” and he desired excellent public education for his children. But busing, given its coercive nature, was tyrannical. Its only goal was to achieve racial balance, not improve education. In addition, the remedy only affected the less well-off. Rich people, like the Judge, could buy the “freedom to choose” private schools for their children. In contrast, “I do not have this freedom because I am only one who does his part to support you and others and simply cannot afford to do so.” As a result, the Judge’s actions violated Martin’s constitutional rights and restricted his freedom. Martin repeated others’ argument that the 1964 Civil Rights Act specifically stated that school desegregation “shall not be done solely to achieve racial balance.” Martin reminded the Judge that, “[t]his country was founded by those who opposed tyranny and were willing to fight for freedom. If this is not tyranny I feel that it certainly borders on it.”


211. Id.

212. Id.

213. Id.

214. Id.

215. Id.

216. Id.

217. Id.

218. Id.

219. Id. (referencing the 1964 Civil Rights Act).

220. Id.
In February 1971, Mrs. Frank C. Sullivan, (1933-2006) a mother of four, told the Judge how she felt “about our country and our constitution.”

Like many others, she wrote in response to a statement the newspapers reported McMillan had made about public opinion and the Constitution. According to Sullivan, the newspaper stated, “[t]he Judge said he realized that the U.S. Constitution was not held in very high esteem in Mecklenburg County.” As a Charlotte native, Sullivan replied that, to the contrary, she believed “in the constitution and in America with all my heart.” She interpreted the fundamental law to mean “freedom to say what you feel, to worship the way you want and to raise your child in the way you see fit.”

She assumed democratic choice determined these rules, but was disturbed to read that McMillan was quoted as saying he “didn’t care to hear what the people liked or disliked,” and that it “didn’t matter that our children would be upset or that their education would suffer.” She “pray[ed] to God” that “our constitution doesn’t mean this.” Sullivan had always “been proud of my country and everything she stands for,” and asked McMillan to explain how the law could be changed to allow authoritarianism. She did not “want my children to defy any law of this land,” but hoped they would “love this country and to be proud to say I am an American.”

In December 1969, Mrs. Clifford Hartis (b. 1922) expressed similar concerns. She described herself as a “moderate,” who believed in “equal rights for all U.S. citizens,” integration, and “that we have treated minority races badly in past years.” She had “no objection to living next door to


223. Id.

224. Id. at 2.

225. Id.

226. Id.

227. Id. at 3.

228. Id.

229. Id. at 4.


any race or even going to church with them."232 On the other hand, "sending children to a school in a community other than the one they live in is taking the rights of the majority to appease the rights of a minority."233 Hartis thought "[e]very American under the Constitution should have the right to live, go to school and church where he so chooses."234 In addition, she concluded, "[a] person has a right to be proud of his community school and be able to support the school his children attend."235 She argued the county should allow students the freedom to attend any school.236 However, Hartis did not believe "the constitution can be interpreted to read that children must be sent to another community in order to equalize percentage of races in each school."237 Instead, Hartis advocated that the focus should be on improving the quality of teachers for all races.238 Although she assumed "most of our [white] people are willing to abide by integration and equality," there was "restlessness among our white race lately that I have not observed before."239 Active in the Parent Teachers Association (P.T.A.) for about twenty years, Hartis told the Judge "this is the first time I have felt that our people might rebel against a situation."240 She hoped McMillan's "interpretation of the Constitution will not be the straw to break the camel's back."241

Mrs. Eugene A. Bibeau (1933–2011) wrote with a similar purpose and tone.242 She sympathized with the Judge.243 Like Joyce Sullivan, Bibeau was worried by the newspaper reporting that the Judge said, "the People of 'Mecklenburg County did not hold the United States Constitution in very high esteem.'"244 Bibeau viewed the remark as evidence that McMillan

232. Id.
233. Id.
234. Id.
235. Id.
236. Id.
237. Id.
238. Id.
239. Id.
240. Id.
241. Id.
244. Id.
looked at ordinary citizens disdainfully.\textsuperscript{245} For her part, she followed the law and taught her three children to do the same, “because the law is for their protection.”\textsuperscript{246} Although she “believed in integration,” she disagreed with busing to achieve it.\textsuperscript{247} She thought the Judge’s remark seemed to dismiss the human costs of complying with the busing order.\textsuperscript{248} Bibeau wanted to “believe that you as well as everyone else who has a part in this issue cares and really cares about what this can mean to people.”\textsuperscript{249}

Ken Welborn (1926–2013) tried a different approach.\textsuperscript{250} He wrote a letter to his seven and eleven year old sons and sent a copy to the Judge.\textsuperscript{251} Welborn, a veteran, former teacher, and graduate of the University of Tennessee and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was president of the Hidden Valley P.T.A. and lived in a middle-class area of homes built in the 1960s north of downtown and east of Sugar Creek Road.\textsuperscript{252} Welborn described America as a “great nation” and North Carolina as “a fine state.”\textsuperscript{253} He praised “Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Eisenhower.”\textsuperscript{254} Welborn thought it was now “time to stand up and be counted because a constitutional imbalance had arisen.”\textsuperscript{255} Although the Constitution created a system of three branches, which were “on equal footing and serve as checks on the others,” the Supreme Court had “assumed authority of another [branch] and has gotten away with it.”\textsuperscript{256} Welborn supported the 1954 Brown decision and concluded it “would in time probably do away with segregated schools.”\textsuperscript{257} But Brown did not “desegregate the schools as

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\textsuperscript{245} Id.
\textsuperscript{246} Id.
\textsuperscript{247} Id.
\textsuperscript{248} Id.
\textsuperscript{249} Id.
\textsuperscript{250} Letter from Ken Welborn to David and Barry Welborn (Jan. 29, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). The author sent a copy of this letter to David and Barry Welborn in January 2014. Barry Welborn, in an email to the author on Jan. 22, 2014, responded that neither brother knew the letter existed, but they were not surprised their father wrote it, and “we did live it.” Barry explained that Ken Welborn died in July 2013, and “one of the last lucid conversations we had was concerning Swann.” Barry Welborn stated his father objected to busing, not integration. The family’s response to Swann was to move to Bessemer City, just west of Charlotte in Gaston County. Author’s Telephone Interview with Barry Welborn (Jan. 29, 2014); Kenneth Edgar Welborn, FIND A GRAVE, http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=113658174 (last visited Mar. 26, 2015).
\textsuperscript{251} Letter from Ken Welborn to David and Barry Welborn (Jan. 29, 1970), supra note 250.
\textsuperscript{253} Letter from Ken Welborn to David and Barry Welborn, supra note 250.
\textsuperscript{254} Id.
\textsuperscript{255} Id.
\textsuperscript{256} Id.
\textsuperscript{257} Id.; see also Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954) (ruling that the “segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and
fast as some would like," so courts had recently ruled schools must be integrated regardless "of the wishes of both Black and White parents, and of the educational consequences."258 Because "segregated housing patterns still remain in our community," a judge chose busing to achieve integration.259 This meant that "although the courts [in Brown] said that governing bodies could not assign you to a school on the basis of your race, a Federal Judge is now going to assign and bus you to a particular school because of your race."260 To Welborn, this paradox and absurdity meant the Constitution no longer had any fixed meaning.261 It caused him to lose the "great belief and trust I had in our governmental structure."262 He told his sons he supported desegregation, but based on his "rights as an American Citizen" they would not be bused.263

A large number of letters from parents communicated profound anger at what they understood as the deeper constitutional threats posed by busing. Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Robinson announced they would not bus their children: "The color of our skin should make no bearing on where we go to school or upon our education; let us choose where we wish to attend or have our children attend."264 The couple believed their constitutional freedom was at issue, "along with our freedoms to work, pray, and pay taxes," and asked that the federal government get out of the local schools and submit busing to a democratic vote.265 Mrs. Eugene Reed wrote the Judge that "[m]ost of us like to feel we're taking an active part in our Government, about the problems that concern us all."266 In losing power to judges she

other 'tangible' factors may be equal, [did] deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities([?)].

258. Letter from Ken Welborn to David and Barry Welborn, supra note 250. See also Brown, 347 U.S. at 493.
259. Letter from Ken Welborn to David and Barry Welborn, supra note 250.
260. Id.
261. Id.
262. Id.
263. Id.
266. Letter from Mrs. Eugene Reed to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Mar. 11, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Reed lived in northwest Charlotte in a lower middle-class neighborhood built in the late 1960s. Her children attended Tuckasegee Elementary but were to be bused to Oaklawn Elementary. In 2013–2014, 14 percent of the students at Tuckasegee were white; at Oaklawn, 2 percent were white. 2013–14 Grade/Race/Sex Report School Month 3, CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHS., supra note 29.
feared “Communism is back of this school bussing instead of desegregation[.]”267 She also thought young people already had enough pressure to “grow up” too soon and should not have to face busing: “No wonder they turn to drugs and other forms of violence.”268 Although her two elementary-aged children already attended a desegregated school, they were scheduled to be bused elsewhere.269 She, however, “will rot in jail first, before I do something that I don’t believe in and in my heart know that Communism is creeping in faster every day.”270

Some, like Peggy Croxton, a mother of two, harshly described “forced busing” as a remedy that violated “God given” legal rights.271 She thought that people had reached the limits of how far they could be pushed by government.272 Others, like Mrs. J. F. Clontz, regarded busing as “[going] against everything my country stands for.”273 She contended McMillan was “not concerned about our civil rights, or our freedom of choice, and I wonder if you realize what you are trying to destroy in order to implement your desegregation by ratio.”274 Clontz believed that McMillan disregarded the Civil Rights Act, was a dictator, a tyrant, and a “bigoted idiot” for “even considering such an asinine, freedom revoking, not to mention unconstitutional plan of desegregation.”275 Parents, and not a wrong-headed judge “herding them about like so many black and white sheep,” should “enjoy the privilege of choosing where they will live, work, play, and send their children to school.”276

Similar legal arguments characterized other letters. A “Concerned Parent” from Winterfield Elementary concluded that the real issue was finding “the best education for all both black and white.”277 Busing would “degrade

267. Letter from Mrs. Eugene Reed to James B. McMillan (Mar. 11, 1970), supra note 266.
268. Id.
269. Id.
270. Id.
272. Id.
273. Letter from Mrs. J.F. Clontz to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Feb. 8, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Shirley Clontz and her husband, Jay Franklin Clontz, lived on Roscrocst Drive, just east of South Boulevard and south of Archdale Road in south Charlotte. Their home was located in a middle-class suburban neighborhood built in the early 1960s. In 1971, Clontz’s husband was manager of Confection Storage. HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1971, supra note 98, at 184.
275. Id.
276. Id.

https://archives.law.nccu.edu/ncclr/vol37/iss2/3
the schools we now have." 278 McMillan’s job required he ensure “the blacks have equal facilities, schools, and teachers but let this happen in their own neighborhoods and let our neighborhood schools that we white people work for alone!!” 279 Whites sacrificed to buy homes to “send our children to the best neighborhood schools we can afford.” 280 Far from being a mere parenting strategy, this was “our Constitutional right! There is nothing fair or Constitutional about busing!” 281 The writer saw McMillan’s actions as a craven response to black civil rights leaders, but whites could demand civil rights as well, which meant community schools. 282 A young father, Terence Richard McNamee (1934–1980), told the Judge his ancestors fought to overcome British tyranny in 1776, defended the Union in 1861, and served in many wars since then, including Vietnam. 283 “McMillan the First,” represented the new enemy, and McNamee held him in “profound contempt.” 284 McNamee said he was not a racist, and in fact in the late 1950s nearly lost his job in Virginia because he opposed that State’s school closing policy of “Massive Resistance.” 285 He moved to Charlotte and bought a “better home than any of my family ever owned,” so “my children could walk to Cotswold School.” 286 He did not care if his children “have classes, or teachers, who are white, black, yellow, brown, red, or polka dotted.” 287 McNamee attacked the notion of “racial balance” as socialistic: “Do you also order a racial balance in federal judgeships, in salesman, in computer operators, in

279. Id.
280. Id.
281. Id.
282. Id.
283. Letter from Terence Richard McNamee to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Feb. 6, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). In 1971, McNamee was an oil heat manager at Pure Oil Company. He lived on Linda Lane in an above-average middle-class neighborhood in southeast Charlotte, with newer houses that were built in the mid-1960s. The McNamee home was about one mile from both Cotswold Elementary School and Randolph Junior High School. In 2013–2014, about 58 percent of Cotswold’s students were white, while at Randolph Middle School, about 35 percent were white. McNamee was born in Pennsylvania and graduated in 1952 from Cristobal High School in the Panama Canal Zone. HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1971, supra note 98, at 622; 1952 CARIBBEAN 17, available at http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00093680/00038/21x ; Deaths, 14 CANAL REC. 47 (June 1980), available at http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010871/00119/49j; 2013-14 Grade/Race/Sex Report School Month 3, CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHS., supra note 29.
285. Id.
286. Id.
287. Id.
Also, he “was under the impression our Constitution said that revenue bills would have to be initiated in the House,” yet busing would obviously require additional tax revenues.289

Several parents emphasized the contrast between busing and their understanding of American constitutional law. An anonymous writer, “Had it up to here,” served in World War II and Korea, where he fought “for my freedom and my country and kids.”290 This now seemed in vain, when a “Tyrant” like McMillan “is going to tell me where my kids can and have to go to school!”291 The writer favored integration, but he refused to allow his children to be bused.292 Daniel R. (“Doc”) Martin (1927–2001), a 1949 graduate of Appalachian State University, former high school baseball and football coach, and chairman of the Charlotte Park and Recreation Commission, requested a transfer for his son from Hawthorne Junior High to Eastway Junior High.293 Martin believed his son had a “right as an individual to receive an education at his neighborhood school.”294 Because the young man must follow the law, “it should also be his right to be exposed to an education in an atmosphere that is conducive to good learning.”295

In a letter to President Nixon, copied to McMillan, John H. Sellers sarcastically told the President he did not expect a response because “your administration is only interested in how to squeeze another tax dollar out of the middle class white citizens and for them to continue to be the so-called silent majority which lately does not have any voice in anything.”296 He

288. Id.
289. Id.
291. Id.
292. Id.
295. Id.
once "thought that the Constitution guaranteed equal opportunity for all, but now I discover that this same Constitution is being interpreted to mean that a Federal Judge can force anyone to do anything that he wants them to do, regardless of the rights of anyone else."\textsuperscript{297} He asked Nixon to tell him "how the Constitution can guarantee equality for all and at the same time force everyone to bus their children all over the county to achieve a white to black balance that the Constitution says absolutely nothing about."\textsuperscript{298} Sellers believed American life was inherently "segregated": "I am not equal to you. I can hardly pay my expenses and secure a living for my family; therefore, I am segregated from the affluent. . . . Is busing a black unemployed laborer’s child going to permit him to attend a $50.00 per plate dinner?"\textsuperscript{299} Sellers also asked Nixon why children outside the South had not been compelled "to attend the schools that the courts have chosen for them?"\textsuperscript{300}

Several parents saw threats to their understanding of democracy under the Constitution. Mrs. John S. Davis, Jr., who lived in northeast Charlotte, believed we “are losing our freedoms and becoming Communist . . . . BLACK AND WHITE are not the ENSLAVED CITIZENS of a DICTATOR GOVERNMENT.”\textsuperscript{301} It was the essence of freedom and desirable that blacks could vote and “attend movies and schools with whites.”\textsuperscript{302} But when government required a ratio of white to black, telling children

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\textsuperscript{297} Letter from John H. Sellers to President Richard M. Nixon (Aug. 13, 1970), supra note 296.
\textsuperscript{298} Id. at 2.
\textsuperscript{299} Id. at 2.
\textsuperscript{300} Id.

\textsuperscript{302} Id. at 2.
where to go to school and “under what conditions you will be allowed to MOVE,” it was “teaching people to HATE.”

Constitutional equality meant “the freedom to pursue our own interests and talents, using our own initiatives and abilities.” As for schools, they depended on freedom of choice. They needed pride “in their establishments.” Davis believed that equality could mean all white, all black, and some schools with “mixed” races, “but at least the curriculum would be the same and the choice of neighborhood and school left solely to the individual.”

Similarly, Aubry Keith Montague (1929–1997) argued McMillan’s decision insulted all races, categorizing them “by numbers like apples and oranges.” This destroyed the constitutional system and democracy. American courts handed down confusing opinions, Nixon failed to keep his campaign promises on neighborhood schools, and federal bureaucrats told the majority how to behave. Montague argued busing actually avoided the issue of racial equality and that black people lost rights because of it: “It has actually made me more sympathetic toward them,” because excessive government power now crushed both races. For his part, he illegally kept his children at home to “peacefully defy what we consider to be unconstitutional,” while others moved out of the county or into private schools. For Montague, busing reflected the tip of an expanding government iceberg. Below its surface lurked other issues, including housing, religion, employment, and income distribution.

303. Id.
304. Id.
305. Id.
306. Id.
307. Id.
310. Id. at 1–2.
311. Id. at 2.
312. Id. at 2–3.
313. Id. at 3.
314. Id.
Mrs. G. C. Baker experienced a crisis which she blamed on the Judge’s constitutional mistakes. Her home “has been and still is being slowly and surely tore apart by your ruling allowing forced busing.” She noted the wealthier areas of Charlotte were not affected by busing and wondered how this could be just. As a result, “when my sons reach draft age they will be encouraged to leave this great country with my blessings.” For her part, she was simply a “middle class citizen,” unable to move, put her children in private schools, benefit from Head Start kindergarten, send her children to free summer camps, qualify for free school lunches, or receive money to pay rent. “We only pay taxes.” She told her ten-year-old son that this country could not force him to go to a school that was not his own. She asked him if he wanted to go to her sister’s home in West Virginia, but he would have to leave his other three siblings and miss family holidays and birthdays. McMillan “made me break my son’s heart and I will never forgive you. May God have mercy on me for saying this as I do not think I have ever felt so strongly about anything but I sincerely hate you.” A minority of parents expressed racist opposition to busing. They believed the Constitution allowed a gentler form of segregation that was consistent with modern American freedom. Mrs. Marshall Parrott wrote Judge McMillan that “she prayed daily for you, that somehow God would speak to your heart and thereby your decision would be changed.” Parrott re-
ported that thus far, God had not answered, but God never made a mistake and "He is still bigger than any court in this land."324 She most feared the loss of freedom, especially from judges who now seemed to rule America.325 Parrott, a parent of two elementary school boys, believed "God never planned for races to mix."326 As she told her children, "[t]he bluejays never mate with a parrot, the dogs never mate with cats. So why should human beings mix?"327 She worked for a large company, with many black employees.328 Parrott explained that the two races were friendly and spoke to each other, "[b]ut bet your life, when lunch time comes, the whites are together and the blacks are together — in two separate groups. They want to be with their own kind." 329 In fact, "[a]ll of the colored people I have talked to, feel they don’t have as much freedom now as they did ten years ago."330 When Parrott visited her child’s school, Villa Heights, she noticed the children voluntarily segregated themselves.331 On the other hand, she did not object to black children who lived in her neighborhood going to the local elementary school.332 To Parrot, busing seemed illogical and incapable of giving all children a better education.333

Other parents thought inherent racial differences doomed the sort of full integration envisioned by busing, and therefore assumed the Constitution would not require something so obviously futile.334 An anonymous writer complained that the recent school year “brought more ill-feelings and hatred between the races than has EVER existed.”335 Schools existed for education, not integration, and “children SHOULD have some fun and social activities at school!”336 In the past year there had been “very little homework, [and] so many discipline problems the teachers could not teach.”337
This writer implied that black students threatened his daughter with a knife and frequently stole her lunch money.\(^{338}\)

Mrs. Katherine Carroll (1906–1998), who had grandchildren in the school system, asked the Judge how he would feel if his children came home cursing, “taking God’s name in vain,” with “V.D.,” “handling the sex language in a very ugly manner,” “under the influence of Dope,” or cut from a “terribly long switchblade or razor.”\(^{339}\) She believed that bused children would be negatively influenced by association with the wrong people, persons who did not appreciate “[h]ygiene, cleanliness[, and] moral living.”\(^{340}\) According to Carroll, the Judge, dealing only with blacks of the “higher class,” did not understand that racial interaction in the schools would not be so positive.\(^{341}\) Carroll doubted the ability of black people to avoid violence.\(^{342}\) Although she was “not against the black,” because “[h]e has a soul and Jesus loved him and died for him too,” she concluded “[t]here will always be segregation,” even in heaven.\(^{343}\) She endorsed racial “loving, helping, yes even mixing in school — But not forcing mothers and children to do what man wants.”\(^{344}\) In any case, “this blood will be upon your hands — You and you alone will have to give account to God.”\(^{345}\)

\(^{338}\) Id. Another anonymous writer, apparently a parent, communicated intense stresses produced by busing. She prayed to God daily about the case, and argued that the Judge had harmed the county’s children and caused hatred between the races. She was physically and mentally ill, and “under the care of my physician, for how long I don’t know. I’m not sure I will ever get over this.” Letter from Anonymous to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Sept. 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Julias Chambers received analogous sentiments: “Please encourage black children to behave. A teacher cannot teach when children are misbehaving — and everyone suffers. White children have feelings and fear isn’t a pleasant one.” Letter from Anonymous to Julius Chambers (Sept. 1971) (in the Julius L. Chambers Papers, on file with the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte).


\(^{340}\) Id.

\(^{341}\) Id.

\(^{342}\) Id.

\(^{343}\) Id.

\(^{344}\) Id.

\(^{345}\) Id. Carroll was an unusual example of a grandparent who wrote the Judge. She lived on Marsh Avenue, in a 1940s neighborhood less than two miles south of uptown Charlotte. HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1971, supra note 98, at 153; Katherine Carroll (1906–1998), MOCAVO.COM, http://www.mocavo.com/Katherine-Carroll-1906-1998-Social-Security-Death-Index/03095420253407357685 (last visited Aug. 23, 2014). Many parents expressed fears about safety. Mrs. Rhumel Williams (1937–2003) wrote the Judge from Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, with an enclosed newspaper story about a girl killed there in August 1970 in a bus accident. She argued for desegregation (“the children in my thoughts have no color”) but believed no parent “was willing to sacrifice his sons and daughters to achieve so called integration.” Letter from Mrs. Rhumel Williams to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (Sept. 3, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Rhumel Jane Daniels Williams, DAILY HERALD (Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, 1970).
Altogether, constitutional arguments dominated parents' negative reactions to McMillan's orders. The Constitution did not require busing. The Constitution could not require a child to be taken out of her home district. The white majority believed black people, as a matter of law, deserved equal schools, but if they wanted better schools, they should improve their own schools or work harder so they could move into neighborhoods with better schools. The United States was supposed to be a democracy, and clearly a majority of voters in Charlotte opposed busing, so how could a judge not elected by anyone decide where their children should go to school? The matter involved a forced use of their tax dollars in a way they disapproved. McMillan's order failed legally because desegregation did not require mandatory ratios of black and white; the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in fact, expressly prevented this. More broadly, the orders contradicted basic constitutional rights to freedom of association, privacy, and movement. They ignored the principles of choice and liberty that formed the core of American constitutional law and even defined national purpose. Liberty meant freedom to choose; equality did not mean racial ratios. How, parents reasoned, could Swann possibly be consistent with the Constitution?

III. SUPPORTERS

Like McMillan's opponents, his supporters offered different perspectives. Some tended to focus on the historic inequality between black and white schools. From this, they agreed with McMillan that a target ratio of whites and blacks in individual schools with busing was a reasonable manner to address the constitutional legacy of segregation. Some welcomed McMillan's stand against what they perceived as the hypocrisy and foot-dragging of the white-dominated school board, which seemed to want only token desegregation. A few argued the former system had led to cultural and economic backwardness. Why could not Charlotte, like booming Atlanta, see that there was money to be made in integration? But most let-
ters favoring McMillan grounded themselves in morality, not constitutional law or economic efficiency. Unlike the Judge’s opponents, who leaned on legal or constitutional doctrine, these writers regretted the unethical treatment of fellow human beings. They wanted something done about the ugly scar of bigotry, and busing seemed to be a logical approach, even if it meant making sacrifices. They compromised parental choice because of their understanding of racial equality. To these writers, the moral priority most often derived not from Brown, or the Fourteenth Amendment, or a secular Constitution, but from Jewish or Christian ethics concerning the brotherhood of man. Most importantly, supporters used moral arguments to provide a glimpse of an evolving Constitution, one that included busing and defined racial equality in a dramatic new way.

The supportive letters can be placed into categories. The largest group came from friends or political liberals. Another type tended to focus on religious arguments, and a very small number were written by persons connected to the school system or by black Charlotteans. Parents overwhelmingly wrote to condemn the Judge, not to praise him.

The Judge received a few letters from fellow lawyers, most of whom appeared to have some previous professional connection. George Fitzgerald (1926–2011), a Charlotte attorney, appreciated McMillan’s patience, intelligence and courage and the way you have stood up like a country church against the combined onslaughts of a vicious newspaper editor, some doctors whose children are too good to go to school except with other doctor’s children, some local attorneys, politicians, and judges seeking political and economic gains while a cowardly administration in Washington provides anarchy for the price of a few southern votes.
Law professors at Cleveland State University, led by David Goshien (1937-2010), wrote in March 1970 to convey their support. Goshien believed the Judge had taken “a position of leadership,” and hoped that “shortly the propriety of your action will be demonstrated in a final decision and you and the Queen City will earn just distinction.” After the Supreme Court ruling in April 1971, Daniel H. Pollitt (1921-2010), a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill law professor, told McMillan, “there are those of us who really are excited and pleased at your vindication by a unanimous court with a decision by Burger, no less.” Special praise came from Erwin Griswold (1904-1994), Solicitor General of the United States, who also wrote just after the Supreme Court decision. Griswold conceded his letter “may be a little irregular,” given that he and his office had just argued in the Supreme Court against McMillan’s ruling on behalf of the Nixon Administration, but he did not see any conflict in a pending matter, and communicated “on the basis of our long acquaintance and professional involvement.” Griswold thought McMillan “acted courageously [and] your every action has been wholly professional and in the highest traditions of our calling.” We “can be grateful that we have such fine and able people on the
bench as you.” Griswold described the Supreme Court’s decision as “remarkable,” “thoroughly statesmanlike, and fully up to the caliber of the Brown case itself,” especially in its guidance to lower federal courts. He feared the problems of desegregation would “never end,” but hoped “the solutions are taking shape and we all owe much to you for your staunch and essential part in helping to bring that about.” Griswold wanted McMillan to “have an inner feeling that you have contributed mightily to [addressing] one of our country’s greatest problems.”

A small number of liberals, who apparently did not know the Judge, voiced their approval. R.M. Robb of Middletown, Delaware, saluted McMillan for empathy, intellect, judgment, courage, and strength. He believed “you would live comfortably with your decision even if no-one stood with you.” According to Robb, “Blacks are people, and men such as you are gradually awakening us (whites and blacks) to that fact.” He hoped McMillan could rule, some day, “on whether our children are being denied their right to learn.” Monroe T. Gilmour, Jr. (b. 1946), a young Peace Corps Volunteer in India who had attended high school in Charlotte, thought it was “unfortunate that many of those in such [anti-busing] organizations as ‘Concerned Parents’ do not recognize the tremendous historical implications and excitement which should (and do) surround the implementation of true integration.” He was proud the nation was finally address-

361. Id.
362. Id.
363. Id.
364. Id. Griswold graduated from Oberlin College and Harvard Law School. He began teaching at Harvard in 1934 and served as the law school’s Dean from 1946–1967. President Lyndon Johnson appointed Griswold Solicitor General; he held the position into the Nixon administration, until 1973. In Swann, following the instructions of the President, he argued to the Supreme Court that the Charlotte system was not required to achieve any particular racial balance or ratios and that the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit had been correct in remanding McMillan’s decision requiring busing of elementary school students. Dennis Hevesi, Erwin Griswold is Dead at 90: Served as Solicitor General, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 21, 1994, available at http://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/21/obituaries/erwin-griswold-is-dead-at-90-served-as-a-solicitor-general.html; Brief for the United States as Amicus Curiae, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Educ., 402 U.S. 1 (1971) (Nos. 281, 349, 436), 1970 WL 122661. McMillan responded to Griswold with thanks, agreeing the Supreme Court opinion “faced the facts head-on, has decided everything that could be decided in the context of this case, and has indicated or reaffirmed some broad principles which will suffice to decide future school cases. The Court’s decision reflected principle, rather than politics: The system works.” Letter from James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct., to Erwin Griswold, Solicitor Gen., U.S. Dep’t of Justice (May 12, 1971) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill).
366. Id.
367. Id.
368. Id. Robb appears to have been a physician.
369. Letter from Monroe T. Gilmour, Jr. to James B. McMillan, Judge, U.S. Dist. Ct. (May 9, 1971) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Gilmour, the son of a
ing the issue and wrote that McMillan’s “decisions and strength have pro-
vided a real inspiration for me.”\textsuperscript{370} Anne Beidler (b. 1935) sympathe-
ized with the Judge’s endurance of the “whirlwind of ire and passion.”\textsuperscript{371} Her
“own experiences with dissent have made me no stranger to those feelings of
discomfort and disharmony — even self-doubt and bitterness — which
one can be driven to.”\textsuperscript{372} She reminded McMillan that a democratic major-
ty could be wrong.\textsuperscript{373} In “these times of social upheaval, when many archaic
practices and institutions must be changed, it seems that courts — and their
hoped-for objectivity — are one of our best hopes. Thank God you are un-
yielding to the current mores.”\textsuperscript{374}

Friends, most of whom began their letters with “Dear Jim,” also attempt-
ed to encourage McMillan. Louise Smith (1904–1992) of Greensboro pro-
claimed “Hooray! God Bless You!” after the Supreme Court ruling.\textsuperscript{375} In

Charlotte physician, grew up in a wealthy neighborhood on Granville Road in southeast Charlotte. He
graduated from Myers Park High School in 1964 and Davidson College in 1968. He served in the Peace
Corps in India from 1968–1972. His father was McMillan’s friend and the men socialized at the Char-
lotte Country Club. Gilmour developed a life-long interest in social justice and became a leader in the
Western North Carolina Citizens for an End to Institutional Bigotry. Author’s Telephone Interview with
Monroe T. Gilmour Jr. (Jan. 23, 2014); HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY
DIRECTORY 1969, supra note 221, at 412; W. N.C. CITIZENS FOR AN END TO INSTITUTIONALIZED


the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round
Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Beidler, a 1957 Duke
University graduate and mother of three, was the widow of Norman R. Morrison. Morrison immolated
himself outside Secretary Robert McNamara’s office at the Pentagon in 1965 to protest the escalating
Vietnam War. In 1967 Anne Morrison married William Beidler, a philosophy professor at Charlotte’s
Queens College. At the time of her letter they lived in a modest-sized house on an upper middle-class
street in southeast Charlotte (Hampton Avenue). HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.)
DIRECTORY 1969, supra note 221, at 77; John-Paul Flintoff, I Told Them to Be Brave, GUARDIAN
(London), Oct. 16, 2010; ANNE MORRISON WELSH WITH JOYCE HOLLYDAY, HELD IN THE LIGHT:
NORMAN MORRISON’S SACRIFICE FOR PEACE AND HIS FAMILY’S JOURNEY FOR HEALING (Orbis Books
2008); Eric Larson, Surviving an Act of Conscience, 87 DUKE MAG., Jan.–Feb. 2001, at 31. She wrote to
provide strength to the Judge because of the criticism he experienced: “What he did required a lot of
courage, probably well beyond his comfort zone.” At the time of Norman Morrison’s death she received
support from “many friends and strangers” which gave her courage to go on and also “to uphold Nor-
man’s witness against the war.” As for Swann, “no matter what happened subsequently in the efforts to
achieve school integration, I believe he did the right thing. I still admire him greatly.” Letter from Anne
Morrison Welsh to author (Jan. 18, 2014) (on file with author).


373. Id.

374. Id.

the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round
Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). Smith taught high school
in the Greensboro public schools. A 1927 graduate of the Women’s College of the University of North
Carolina and later a civil rights leader, she actively supported desegregation. Interview by Louise Smith
early 1969, Charlotte’s Harry Golden (originally Goldhirsch, 1902–1981), a well-known Jewish author and publisher, wrote to McMillan that he did “not envy you your forthcoming decision in the integration cases.” Yet Golden explained that “Freedom of Choice,” the current policy of the school board, “is not freedom at all, and neither is it a choice. It is all calculated to maintain a segregated society.” Atlanta provided a good role model. Instead of protecting Jim Crow laws, “they are selling insurance and building high rise office buildings and the money is rolling in.” Charlotte needed to understand “the tremendous wealth that would accrue to the city once this insufficiency is ended.” For Golden, busing was the only practical answer. After Brown, Southern whites made many false threats about closing schools, and he believed in time busing would be accepted as well. Denying black children the ability to go to school with whites was “a crime,” because black children lost the benefits of diversity. He compared the situation to discrimination against Jews. When the worst forms of anti-Semitism ended, there was an exchange of ideas which produced “Heinrich Heine and Mendelsson and Disraeli and Einstein and Jonas Salk and millions of others who have enriched this world.” The interchange of ideas with others is the answer to all the problems of man.

Several individuals wrote simply to provide personal support. Glyn Thomas, a former Charlotte businessman living in Rocky Mount, understood the enormous pressures confronting the Judge. But he believed McMillan would “keep a strong hand on the ‘tiller.'” In response to a

376. Letter from Harry Golden to James B. McMillan (Feb. 12, 1969), supra note 349. Golden was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and emigrated with his family to Canada and later New York City. He graduated from high school in New York and attended City College. In the 1920s Golden worked as a stockbroker, but after the 1929 crash his firm failed and he was convicted of mail fraud. He served several years in Atlanta’s federal prison (and was later pardoned by President Richard Nixon). In 1941, Golden changed his last name and moved to Charlotte. He published the Carolina Israelite from the early 1940s to the late 1960s and wrote a widely-read collection of essays, ONLY IN AMERICA (1958), along with many other books. Golden, a member of the NAACP, was a tireless opponent of racial and ethnic discrimination. The Harry Golden Papers, CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG STORY, available at www.cmstory.org/people/papersGolden.pdf (last visited Aug. 6, 2014).
378. Id.
379. Id.
380. Id.
381. Id.
382. Id.
383. Id.
384. Id.
385. Id.
387. Id.
constituent survey by Congressman Charles Jonas (1904-1988), Thomas recommended McMillan for the Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{388} Although others were “making a mockery of a pretty serious matter,” Thomas wrote, “James B. McMillan is a man of principle and ability.”\textsuperscript{389} Joan Repetti, an elementary school student in Short Hills, New Jersey, who followed \textit{Swann} in \textit{The New York Times}, “was very impressed with your courageous decisions.”\textsuperscript{390} At one time she wanted to become President of the United States, but thanks to the Judge’s inspiration (and a school project on desegregation) her present ambition was to be a United States District Court judge.\textsuperscript{391} John Austin “Jack” Tate (d. 2008), a bank president in Davidson, called McMillan’s decisions “clear and to the point, logical and forthright.”\textsuperscript{392} He thanked McMillan for giving reviewing courts “no alternative morally or legally other than to agree with you or compromise completely their previous stand on the issues.”\textsuperscript{393} Although Tate himself had “little personally at stake,” he knew the Judge had much to lose and not much to gain by his decisions.\textsuperscript{394} Yet McMillan “demonstrated strong character, great moral integrity, and
extreme personal courage.”

Charles H. Crutchfield (1912–1998), president of the Jefferson Standard Broadcasting Company, thought it interesting to “see how people who are outside of legal circles interpret the Supreme Court [decisions on desegregation] from an entirely different point of view.” In March 1970, Crutchfield wrote a hopeful letter, stating he was telling acquaintances McMillan reached his “decision after long and careful consideration, and that you honestly and sincerely believe that this decision is correct.”

Compared to the flood of letters from angry parents, McMillan received very few friendly letters from persons directly affected by busing. But Jeanne Bohn (1928–2013), whose thirteen-year-old daughter was bused to a formerly all-black junior high school, applauded McMillan’s “wisdom, intelligence and good judgement.” She looked forward to a “positive reaction,” and believed that if “the more viscous elements of our city and the cleverer race baiters are not given too much publicity our buses will roll on schedule.” As for her daughter, she prayed “her teachers suddenly

395. Id.
become wise, her principal suddenly become noble, and may those boys and girls who arrive with her, from near and far, make that better tomorrow I have been waiting half my life to see! Lila G. Bellar (1928–2005), an attorney and mother of four, offered a legal and religious perspective. Despite her education, she left the specifics of desegregation to “wiser and better informed minds.” Bellar intended to cooperate fully with any decision, “as every law abiding citizen of our community should be doing.” During her rabbi’s sermon the previous Friday, the rabbi “begged the congregation not to make [McMillan] a scapegoat,” and blamed the situation on the lethargy of the school board and the community. Bellar realized that “[r]eform is never painless, comfortable or convenient.” She and her children’s generation simply had to confront the present “upheaval” and make the most of it. Bellar thought what McMillan “was helping to bring about must surely come one way or another,” and she hoped the Judge would be “blessed with continued strength, good health and inspiration during these trying times.” Beth Daniel (1916–2005), a “white resident of southeast Charlotte,” was “very proud” of the Judge and “very ashamed of some of my neighbors.” Despite her “despairing for this community so
often, you have restored my faith in our judicial system.\textsuperscript{409} A social worker for the school system, Daniel experienced a "time that tries the soul," but McMillan’s leadership "makes it possible for me to keep trying."\textsuperscript{410}

A few others inside the schools thanked McMillan. Mary J. Powell taught at Harding High School, "which was made nearly half black" after the former Second Ward High School closed.\textsuperscript{411} She learned "all-black schools (at least as they exist now) are not equal to all — or nearly — white ones."\textsuperscript{412} The black students "were so poorly prepared that they could not begin to keep up with their white classmates," and "our standards of behavior apparently did not coincide with those at their previous schools."\textsuperscript{413} It was necessary to train "these people in the rudiments of decency and courtesy."\textsuperscript{414} Despite the challenge, Powell appreciated the "lesson I learned — that integration is necessary and that the responsibility for integration must be shared equally by all schools."\textsuperscript{415} If this meant busing, "then that is what should be done."\textsuperscript{416} However, she disliked the idea that wealthier portions of the county could escape the burden.\textsuperscript{417} Parents in less well-off sections of the city "love [their children] just as much and want just as many opportunities for them as the wealthier families do for theirs."\textsuperscript{418} Without McMillan and busing, black schools would persist, and "no armchair liberal in the southeast half would lift a voice to help them."\textsuperscript{419} Powell asked McMillan in uptown Charlotte. Beth Daniel graduated from Chapel Hill in 1937 (the same year as McMillan, although her letter does not suggest she was aware of this) and began her career as a social worker with Charlotte's welfare department in 1940. \textsuperscript{420}

\textsuperscript{409} Letter from Beth Daniel to James McMillan (Feb. 8, 1970), supra note 408.

\textsuperscript{410} Id.

\textsuperscript{411} Letter from Mary J. Powell to James B. McMillan (Aug. 3, 1970), supra note 346. Powell apparently taught at Harding High School through the 1970s. She lived on Lynnwood Drive, in southeast Charlotte, in attached housing built about 1950. In 2013–2014, Harding’s enrollment was about 3 percent white. \textsuperscript{421}

\textsuperscript{412} Letter from Mary J. Powell to James B. McMillan (Aug. 3, 1970), supra note 346.

\textsuperscript{413} Id.

\textsuperscript{414} Id.

\textsuperscript{415} Id.

\textsuperscript{416} Id.

\textsuperscript{417} Id.

\textsuperscript{418} Id.

\textsuperscript{419} Id.
to keep the letter confidential, because she did not want to “lose favor” with her employer.420 Isabella White, after working as a summer intern at Dilworth Elementary School, assured McMillan that many people supported “you and your decision all the way.”421 Her students at Dilworth included black children bused to Sharon Elementary in southeast Charlotte.422 She believed busing was “a small price to pay to help them out of the inner city, and dullness of their lives.”423 The black children assumed “they do not amount to anything,” but White showed them “they were capable and I liked them.”424 She prayed “this community will rise above racism — for busing is not the real issue — and get on with educating the children in our society” for the benefit of all.425

Among the greater ironies of the letters was that although Swann was about integration, almost all of McMillan’s correspondence came from whites. But there were exceptions, and these letters also reflected constitutional values. In February 1970, the “Baptist Minister’s Conference #1” sent McMillan a formal resolution commending his “momentous deci-

420. Id.
421. Letter from Isabella White to James B. McMillan (July 17, 1970) (in the James B. McMillan Papers #4676, on file with the Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). White and her husband were teachers. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Isabella worked at Hidden Valley Elementary School, while Charles taught music in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system. They lived on Neal Road in northeast Charlotte. In 2013–2014, Dilworth Elementary, located in a now gentrified area near uptown, was almost 72 percent white. Northern suburban Hidden Valley was less than 2 percent white, while southeastern suburban Sharon Elementary was more than 72 percent white. HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1971, supra note 98, at 980; 2013-14 Grade/Race/Sex Report School Month 3, CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHS., supra note 29.
422. Letter from Isabella White to James B. McMillan (July 17, 1970), supra note 421.
423. Id.
424. Id.
425. Id. Another letter-writer, Bill Kuenzli, viewed desegregation as religious duty. He sent the Judge copy of his letter to the Charlotte Observer, in which he described McMillan as “an active member and officer in another well-known liberal group called the C.H.U.R.C.” The leader of this organization was “crucified for teaching such revolutionary and distressing ideas as that ‘You should do unto others as you would have them do to you.’” McMillan should be praised for believing in a “Constitution that was drawn up by a bunch of ‘young radicals’” (Thomas Jefferson, for example) who stood for the proposition that “all men are created equal and have equal rights under the law.” Letter from W.D. Kuenzli to Editor, Charlotte Observer (July 6, 1969), supra note 351. Wilbur David Kuenzli (1910–1986) was an associate pastor at Plaza Presbyterian Church, where McMillan once led Sunday school lessons. An Ohio native and World War II veteran, Kuenzli graduated from Wittenberg University in 1937. He lived in east Charlotte on Erskine Drive. HILL’S CHARLOTTE (MECKLENBURG COUNTY, N.C.) CITY DIRECTORY 1971, supra note 98, at 528; Class Notes, 1920–1950, 1 WITTENBERG MAG. ONLINE 1 (Winter 1999), available at http://www4.wittenberg.edu/administration/university_communications/magazine/volume1/issue2/3050.html; Wilbur David Kuenzli, 1910-1986, Minutes of the Annual Session of the Synod of North Carolina, Presbyterian Church, available at http://www.mocavo.com/Minutes-of-the-Annual-Session-of-the-Synod-of-North-Carolina-Presbyterian-Church-1985/657646/402/401 (last visited Aug. 23, 2014).
sion.” McMillan interpreted “the law in line with the constitution of the United States so that justice may be applied to all citizens alike,” and they hoped God would grant the Judge wisdom. Based on their reading of his decisions, they understood he relied on the Constitution, “which is the only stay line for justice in our system of government.” They also believed there was a higher source for governance: “May God be praised for a man of your courage.”

Odis Rousseau III (1924-1990) offered an exceptionally powerful perspective. Rousseau attended the Agricultural & Technical College of

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427. Letter from The Baptist Minister’s Conference to James B. McMillan, supra note 426.

428. Id.

429. Id.

430. Id. Spiritual faith motivated many others who favored busing. Two writers, for example, told Julius Chambers, “Our times demand that we take all account to rectify tradition where it failed to provide for the underprivileged, or disenfranchised among us; so as to provide equitably to all citizens of this grand and glorious land of ours under God as expressed by the lonely Nazarene, the prophets, the philosophers, and all sages that yet live emblazoned on this heritage of ours.” Letter from Robert A. Meachem and Carrie G. Burton to Julius Chambers (Feb. 16, 1970) (in the Julius L. Chambers Papers, on file with the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte).

North Carolina in Greensboro between 1940 and 1946, a period interrupted by military service. The Statesville native trained in history, then taught in the segregated Columbia, South Carolina, schools during the 1940s and 1950s. By the early 1960s, he was a world history teacher at West Charlotte High School. Rousseau lived on Burbank Drive, in a modest middle class black neighborhood built in the early 1960s northwest of uptown. His wife, Sadie, was a teacher at Druid Hills Elementary School, located near St. Luke’s Missionary Baptist Church, while his daughter, Yvonne, taught at Merry Oaks Elementary in east Charlotte. Rousseau’s son, Alan, graduated from West Charlotte in 1970, while his other daughter taught in the Greensboro public schools. Not only did Rousseau and his family have daily contact with Charlotte’s schools, Rousseau took a personal interest in Swann’s proceedings. He attended the Court’s sessions during the summers of 1969 and 1970, when the plan was under intense discussion.

Rousseau told the Judge he wanted to “express the admiration of many people of this community.” He admitted his perspective was affected “by the fact that I am black and a school teacher.” He saw in McMillan “tolerance, fairness, restraint, [and a] sense of justice and legal excellence.” It was with “shame, discouragement and apprehension that I must observe so many in our community who have allowed racism, ignorance, vested


433. Id.

434. Id.

435. Id.

436. Id.

437. Id.


439. Id.

440. Id. Julius Chambers also received intensely-felt praise. One couple wrote, “You cannot imagine how many black hearts swell with joy to see you perform in court,” and there “are those of us who are unable to express our thanks and thoughts, you can bet that our hearts are proud, our smiles are loud and your name is a household word.” Letter from Brumit and Edith De Lane to Julius Chambers (June 29, 1969) (in the Julius L. Chambers Papers, on file with the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte).

441. Letter from Odis Rousseau III to James B. McMillan, supra note 431.

442. Id.
interest and emotionalism to keep themselves from seeing and understanding the true issues involved." Rousseau referred to his years in South Carolina, when federal Judge Waties Waring (1880-1968) of Charleston had been ostracized and effectively exiled for recognizing black rights. It might help McMillan to avoid a similar fate to "know that there are many, many, many in the black community who would like for the world to know how much we, as citizens, understand, admire, appreciate, and thank God that a gentleman, humanist, wise and learned judge" was able to conduct the kind of deliberations "so vital to the establishment of the true, constitutional, democratic ideal of Americanism." Suggesting the reason McMillan received so few letters from blacks, Rousseau stated it was difficult to convey this message "because past experiences make us know that this could be and would be used to make all situations more difficult for you." Like many others, Rousseau observed the Constitution from a religious perspective. He believed "Divine Guidance" shaped "the drafting of the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Brown Decision [and was present] at so many more events that have liberated and elevated mankind." Surely this force directed McMillan also and Rousseau prayed for the Judge's continued "courage and wisdom."

IV. CONCLUSION

The letters to Judge McMillan allow several conclusions. First, the public was well-informed about Swann and took great interest in the case. Second, Judge McMillan received a large number of hostile letters about his opinions and relatively few supporting ones. Third, some opponents of his orders represented a radical and racist fringe, but most were parents, students, and ideologues who, in some fashion, looked to the Constitution for answers and inspiration. The radicals' understanding stood partly on constitutional grounds, albeit a Constitution rooted in Jim Crow and white supremacy. For the majority of the Judge's white opponents, a different kind of legalism prevailed. Their constitutional arguments focused on the threat from busing to other rights, such as the rights of property, freedom of association, freedom of movement, taxation based on consent of the governed, local control of school matters, and democratic limitations on the power of unelected officials. McMillan's opponents offered a legal defense of free-
dom, against coercion, and a constitutional preference for their understanding of liberty over what they viewed as forced equality. The opponents tended to be white middle-class men and women, especially parents of school-age children, in the northern, southern, or eastern suburbs, and they most often lived in newer neighborhoods constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. They likely did not graduate from elite universities, even if several clearly had high incomes. Fourth, and in contrast to the more legalistic constitutionalism of his opponents, Judge McMillan's supporters generally relied on moral reasons for busing and school integration. Their dominant constitutional value was racial equality, derived primarily from religious and ethical sources. This ideal apparently trumped man-made legal rights, which in the past sanctioned discrimination. None expressly argued that Brown or the Fourteenth Amendment required busing. They viewed the Constitution as an evolving document that should reflect new standards of equality, especially on racial matters. Supporters' letters disproportionately came from well-educated men and women, many of whom possessed advanced degrees from universities outside of North Carolina, lived in the wealthier areas of the county, and belonged to the professional class.

Finally, the letters to Judge McMillan suggest the correctness of Tocqueville's observation about the relationship between the Constitution, the courts, and public opinion. As the Judge understood, his decision rejected the moderately integrationist constitutional values of most white people in Mecklenburg County. This was both a risk and an opportunity. In the white

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450. The formal legal argument for the School Board in the Supreme Court was fundamentally the same as that articulated by most of McMillan's citizen critics, especially on the themes of its lack of respect for democracy and financial cost. Thus, as the lawyers put it, "[t]he School Board's duty to determine whether the dollars allocated to it by other elective officials (the Board of County Commissioners for Mecklenburg County) for the education of our children shall be spent for books or buses. It is for the Board to determine whether the existing transportation system shall be expanded or contracted, whether it is educationally good or bad to stagger the opening and closing of schools at any particular grade level, whether after school activities will suffer, whether inconveniences and disruption to children and parents are justifiable, whether overloaded buses are acceptable or safe, whether the time of children in transit is justifiable and how the host of other value judgments and policies shall be made to administer effectively a large complex metropolitan school system charged with awesome responsibility of providing 84,500 school children in 103 schools with a quality education." Moreover, "[a] court mandate that edicts racial balancing and forced bussing supplants the value judgments of the elected school board and the educators on its administrative staff. An overdose of judicial paternalism and control will ultimately sign the death warrant for public education." Brief of Respondents at 91–92, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Educ., 402 U.S. 1 (1971) (No. 281), 1970 WL 122646.

451. In its essence, without the detail or reference to legal precedent, this was the same argument for McMillan's order put forward by the Plaintiffs-Petitioners in the Supreme Court: "Good schools, as well as the moral imperatives of a pluralistic society, demands desegregation of the schools. What method can circumvent the hard fact that segregated neighborhoods foster segregated neighborhood schools? One tried and tested means is the transportation of children out of their immediate neighborhoods by school bus." Brief for Petitioners at 78, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Educ., 402 U.S. 1 (1971) (No. 281), 1970 WL 136776.
majority’s mind, busing represented a contest between potentially conflicting constitutional principles of liberty and equality. For a range of reasons, which in complex fashion included both racism and opposition to racism, the majority preferred a particular kind of liberty to what it viewed as the coerced kind of equality present in busing. They tended not to consider the inherently coercive effects of racial inequality. By contrast, McMillan’s supporters generally discounted the coercive quality of busing, its impact on liberty, and the ethical implication of this coercion. To the supporters, a new constitutional future under a more challenging and morally demanding version of racial equality was worth busing’s price. This contest between freedom, equality, and their moral and legal meanings is as ancient as the American republic. More importantly, letters to the Judge show that its translation into a contest over judicial power continued into the community, just as Tocqueville would have predicted. The subsequent legal and political history of desegregation, meaning the demise of busing and the partial resegregation of Charlotte’s schools, reflects this reality. The school data presented show that whites, now fifty years after Swann began, have a scant presence in many Charlotte schools, just as they did in the mid-1960s, before Judge McMillan’s orders. As a result, it is easy to see the longer-term political, ethical, and legal successes of one version of liberty over a contrary understanding of equality in Charlotte schools since the 1970s. The letters to Judge McMillan powerfully demonstrate the practical meaning of “We the People” in the context of race, the Constitution, and public opinion.

452. See SCHOOL RESEGREGATION: MUST THE SOUTH TURN BACK?, supra note 28, at 307–08. An excellent discussion of this theme is John Charles Boger’s observation that for school desegregation there is an ongoing “struggle to mediate” between liberty and equality: “Americans in every generation must prioritize these two venerable values, weighing their desire for individual freedom against their commitment to equal opportunity and collective responsibility.” Boger argues that in the early twenty-first century, many “have opted for liberty—some beguiling amalgam of individualism, libertarianism, and market theory. Whites who live in the South and West appear especially likely to have cherished liberty over equality.” In the school arena, this means a “greater demand for ‘freedom of choice’ in selecting their children’s schools.” The evidence presented here suggests an emphasis and priority on liberty over equality regarding school choice was already well-established as a constitutional principle among middle class whites in Mecklenburg County by the late 1960s. Two recent studies that capture the complexity of white responses to the civil rights movement across a range of issues are JASON SOKOL, THERE GOES MY EVERYTHING: WHITE SOUTHERNERS IN THE AGE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, 1945-1975 (2006), and JOSEPH CRESPI NO, IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER COUNTRY: MISSISSIPPI AND THE CONSERVATIVE COUNTERREVOLUTION (2007).
Ms. Elizabeth Kendrick’s first-grade class, Eastover Elementary School, 1965–1966. Edith Swann is seated on the second row, second from the right. A younger version of the author is on the first row, third from the left.