

The Ongoing Struggle for Black Representation

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Individual Exhibit

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Student activism has always been a part of my life. This year, I was active in protests around gun violence, school budgets, and climate change. I'm interested in the history of protest, which was why the 1967 Philadelphia Black Student Walkouts drew my attention. In 1967, thousands of middle and high school students organized a series of walkouts and student demands to improve their education. They believed in their power to make change when faced with injustice. They were met with armed police officers and were beaten viciously in front of the School Board. As an activist myself, I was inspired by the resilience of these students. Their actions, their movement, and their power changed Philadelphia in 1967 and still matters today.

Social histories are challenging because they often involve conflicting narratives, especially when an institutional power like the police is at odds with young people. I found the most comprehensive history of the walkouts in Matthew Countryman's "*Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*" and Philadelphia City Council Resolution No. 170973, honoring the 50th anniversary of the student protests. Both centered student voices while providing historical context and emphasizing the significance of the walkouts to Philadelphia history and the local education justice movement. Temple University's Urban Archives, Blockson Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia offered original articles and photos from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, and *Evening Bulletin*. I attended the 2019 Philadelphia Black History Collaborative convention and interviewed people who marched in 1967. I also interviewed Dr. Greg Carr, chair of Afro-American Studies at Howard University, and Dr. Walter Palmer, one of the main 1967 organizers. Both answered questions I could not find from other sources.

In my exhibit, I centralized student activism as the foundation of this movement. Students were on the front lines, pushing for equality and bearing the brunt of the consequences. In the background, I laser cut the Board of Education and student protestors. The platform shows the

march down Broad Street as students poured out of their schools. Text, visuals, and primary sources are on colored foam board and cardstock.

The 1967 student walkouts embody this year's theme: "Triumph and Tragedy." Student activists organized for Black Power and educational justice to improve their schools and suffered unspeakable police violence. A controversial police commissioner who authorized their beatings became Mayor. Nevertheless, the students persisted. Many became civic leaders and elected the first African Americans into office. Thanks to them, my school district allowed the expression of black culture, hired more black teachers, and eventually became the first school system in the nation to mandate African American history. Their fight remains. Philadelphia public schools are among the poorest in Pennsylvania, where unfair funding hurts poor and low-income students. For years, students of all backgrounds have marched for better schools and a voice in our future. It is up to us, the new generation, to continue the legacy of student activism, changing the world one walkout at a time.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adams, Carolyn T. “Greater Philadelphia Movement.” *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, 2016, philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/greater-philadelphia-movement/#header-collections.

This source provided original photos of the Black Panther Party convening at Temple University. Although this source is not specifically about the 1967 walkout, it helps the reader understand that different organizations were politically moving at the time and influencing students and the broader public about civil rights and challenging political institutions.

Carr, Greg E. (9 Feb. 2019). Personal Interview.

Dr. Greg Carr is chair of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Howard University and was the keynote speaker at the 2019 Philadelphia Black History Collaborative convention, where I interviewed him. He was also once a Resident Scholar for the School District of Philadelphia’s African American Studies Department and helped write the curriculum frameworks for the African American Studies course. He reflected on the importance of the District’s African American Studies mandate and describes his thoughts on Black history and how essential Black history is to learning and understanding American history.

Corr, John P. “Police Blamed by Dilworth.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 Nov. 1967, pp. A1. Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

This news story quotes former Mayor and then-School Board President Richardson Dilworth reacting to Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo's violent attacks on student activists. Dilworth was horrified by the brutality of the beatings and condemned them. He wanted to make sure that everyone knew that the school district had no part in calling in armed police officers or the brutality that ensued.

Genovese, Holly. "Black Power." *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, 2017, philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/black-power/#29240.

This source provided original photos of Philadelphia's Black Power Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. The author focuses on Wilson Goode, who would become the first African American Mayor of the city as well as Black Power groups like the Black Panther Party.

Gewertz, Catherine. "Phila. Takeover Deadline Marked by Protests." *Education Week, Editorial Project in Education*, 5 Dec. 2001, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2001/12/05/14philly.h21.html.

In 2001, the Pennsylvania state legislature initiated a hostile takeover of the Philadelphia public schools, planning to turn them over to a for-profit company. Students walked out of their schools in protest and even took over the Board of Education building. The article is a reminder of the powerful role student organizers have played to bring greater justice to the Philadelphia public schools.

"Girard College." *National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives and Records Administration*, 2016, www.archives.gov/education/lessons/desegregation/philadelphia.html.

Around the same time of the walkout, students were trying to integrate Girard College, a private school which notoriously refused to integrate even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling a decade before. A year after the 1967 student walkouts,

Girard College finally integrated. This source holds original photos of the marches students held outside of the college. Although this source is not visually used on the board, it helps explain the importance of education justice to the civil rights movement and the growing power coming out of the black community in Philadelphia throughout the 1960s.

Ingram, George. "20 Hurt in Melee as Roving Bands Terrorize Midcity." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 18 November 1967, pp. 1. Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

This news article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reinforces the mainstream narrative that students were somehow wrong and even posed a danger to the public when many students and participants in the march claimed the protest was peaceful. It provides a rough timeline of the events which escalated the confrontation in front of the School District.

Janofsky, Michael. "Philadelphia Mandates Black History for Graduation." *The New York Times*, 25 June 2005, p. A7, www.nytimes.com/2005/06/25/education/philadelphia-mandates-black-history-for-graduation.html.

Philadelphia's decision to mandate African American history as a graduation requirement made national news. The *New York Times* article showed how controversial race is when it comes to education. The reporter interviewed elected officials, parents and students who complained about the course, saying that it was racially polarizing. This article was used to show the long-term effects of the 1967 walkout, which resulted in the 2005 mandated African American Studies course as well as the continuing need for cross-racial dialogue.

Kabungo, Elijah Joy. “Student Leaps From Window To Join Melee.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 Nov. 1967, pp. 1. Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

When I interviewed former Black student activists who were now adults, there was a lot of anger and resentment to this day that the mainstream media was biased against the students and put the police force in a positive light. This news article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* seems to reinforce that idea, indicating that students provoked the police into the beatings. But it also quotes student activists and describes the events that occurred before the brutality including the student demands. It helps one to understand why these students were fighting, what their demands were, and why it was so important for them to take action.

Lattanzio, Vince. “Thousands of Students Walkout, Protest Budget Cuts.” *NBC 10*

***Philadelphia*, NBC 10 Philadelphia, 18 May 2013,**

www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Philly-Teachers-Protest-Budget-Cuts-Student-Walkouts-207850051.html.

I included this source because it describes student walkouts in 2013 when students all across Philadelphia walked out of their schools to prevent the “Doomsday Budget” cuts. Because of underfunding from the state, the School District closed two dozen public schools, eliminated 4,000 staff, including most of the nurses and counselors, and cut almost all extracurriculars. Class sizes went to 70 and higher. I was only ten years old but I remembered joining these protests too. This article shows how youth-led walkouts have continued to influence the Philadelphia School District.

Lear, Len. “Beating of Condents [sic] Condemned.” *Philadelphia Tribune (1912-2001)*; Nov 21, 1967; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Philadelphia Tribune.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/532489844?accountid=70954>.

The Philadelphia Tribune was established as the oldest black newspaper in America, devoted to coverage of the Black community by the Black community. It shows a much different perspective on the march than the more mainstream media. The news article quotes onlookers, victims, and Black elected officials who were horrified and outraged by police violence against young people. Many parents, teachers, and school board members saw Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo's actions as disqualifying, and this sentiment would continue throughout his career as a divisive figure in Philadelphia politics.

“Mrs. Nettie Hunt, Sitting on Steps of Supreme Court, Holding Newspaper, Explaining to Her Daughter Nikie the Meaning of the Supreme Court's Decision Banning School Segregation.” *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-brown.html#obj97.

This is the famous photo taken in 1954, right after the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation is illegal. It shows a black woman with her daughter holding up a newspaper that says “Supreme Court Bans Segregation...” This photo reinforces how public education played a central role in the Civil Rights Movement in that time.

Murray, George J. “Rizzo ‘Proud’ of His Men.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 Nov. 1967, pp. 1. Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* gives space for Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo to defend his actions at the student protest. The reporter presents the police commissioner as unashamed and unapologetic, even demanding that the school board president (who was also a former mayor) back down from criticizing him.

Palmer, Walter. (5 June 2019). Personal Interview.

Walter Palmer is a central figure in Philadelphia's black history and the Black Power movement in Philadelphia. He created the Black People's Unity Movement and organized students for several years which culminated in the 1967 walkouts. He emphasized that student activists were filled with joy, energy and power - and that that was how he remembered them. He also said it was critical that organizing within the Black Power movement at its beginning had to be intergenerational. Students could never achieve as much as they did all by themselves, he believed, and that's why he remains committed to student activism today. The interview was very insightful and gave a lot of information that one would not find in newspapers.

Philadelphia City Council. *Councilwoman Gym Commemorates the 1967 Citywide Black Student Walkout 11-16-2017*. City of Philadelphia, 17 Nov. 2017,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKMNIcQseGE.

This is a video of the Philadelphia City Council session which featured a full reading of Resolution No. 170903, honoring the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Black student walkouts. Many former student marchers were in the audience and received copies of the resolution. Speakers like Walter Palmer and Karen Asper-Jordan provided remarks and reflections on the 50th anniversary. Each speech was very powerful; Karen Asper-Jordan's speech was used in the project as a media piece.

Philadelphia City Council. "Resolution No. 170903: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the November 17, 1967, Citywide Black Student Walkout, and Honoring the Continuing Tradition of Youth Organizing and Activism around Education Equity and Racial Justice in the City of Philadelphia." *City of Philadelphia*, Nov. 2, 2017,

phila.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3202344&GUID=543C65A3-7112-41C8-9515-E2D087CC715A&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=170973&FullText=1.

On the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Black student walkouts, Philadelphia City Council passed a resolution honoring the students' courage and resilience. Later that month, the City Council held a formal reading of the resolution with dozens of former student marchers. The resolution and a video of the City Council presentation is part of the exhibit to show how 1967 and still resonate for Philadelphians today.

Piette, Betsey. "Philadelphia Students Walk out over Budget Cuts." *Workers World*, 17 May 2013, www.workers.org/2013/05/17/philadelphia-students-walk-out-over-budget-cuts/.

I used a photo from this source to show a photo of a group of students marching in the 2013 walkouts to protest a "Doomsday Budget." This source is a socialist blog which described the budget cuts the students and schools had experienced before the walkout.

"Rizzo is Praised, Criticized." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 18 November 1967, pp. 6.

Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

Another article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* showing how many institutional players rallied around the police commissioner. The reporter quotes the Mayor, veterans groups and the police union defending Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo while the school board president and superintendent of schools condemned him. The police union even calls upon the Superintendent and the School Board president to resign for criticizing Rizzo. This is part of the tragedy aspect of the theme because it shows how police brutality and racism is defended and rewarded by some of the most powerful people in the city at the time. The focus on Frank Rizzo would eventually launch his run for Mayor in 1971.

SCRC 170, Riots--1964. George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs.

Temple University Libraries, Temple Digital Collections. 7 Mar, 2019.

<https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p15037coll3/search/searchterm/1964%20riots>.

This is a folder of images from the Columbia Avenue Riot of 1964. Although none of these photos are used on the board, the Columbia Avenue riot demonstrated how serious the racial divide was between Black Philadelphians and a police force under Frank Rizzo which was becoming notorious for its surveillance and brutality toward African Americans. These photos showed the conditions of Philadelphia's African American community in the years before the 1967 walkouts. It helped expand my personal knowledge about why the students were treated the way they were.

SCRC 170, Riots--1967. George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs.

Temple University Libraries, Temple Digital Collections. 17 Feb, 2019.

<https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p15037coll3/search/searchterm/riots%201967>.

This was a collection of several photos from the 1967 walkouts. Many of them depict police officers beating or manhandling Black students. Many of these photos are used on the exhibit to give a visual representation of the walkout.

“Tate Rebukes School Board.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 19 November 1967, pp. 1.

Retrieved From: The Free Library of Philadelphia.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* front page story is about the Mayor criticizing the school board for criticizing Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo. It also quotes the NAACP and the Fraternal Order of Police. These were all very influential organizations at the time and their response to Rizzo was very powerful. This article shows how institutional power supported Rizzo.

Secondary Sources

Blumgart, Jake. “The Brutal Legacy of Frank Rizzo, the Most Notorious Cop in Philadelphia History.” *Vice*, 22 Oct. 2015,

www.vice.com/en_us/article/kwxp3m/remembering-frank-rizzo-the-most-notorious-cop-in-philadelphia-history-1022.

This article looks at Frank Rizzo’s racial legacy of police intimidation and brutality, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and a 2015 Department of Justice report that the Philadelphia police force is one of the most brutal in the nation, deploying deadly force more often than any other city and with 80 percent of victims being Black. The author is very clear that Rizzo’s history is a shameful and complicated one for the city and is still divisive even today. I found it very helpful in looking at his actions as police commissioner and Mayor - when he ran on a “vote White” platform - as very informative into why he behaved the way he did toward students exercising their right to speech and demonstration.

Cersonsky, James. “What You Should Know About the Philly Student Walkout.” *The Nation*, 29 June 2015, www.thenation.com/article/what-you-should-know-about-philly-student-walkout.

This source describes the 2013 student walkouts against the budget cuts. The source describes specific details the others do not. It shows that walkouts have continuously brought hope and change to the educational community and puts students in a leadership role in organizing them.

Countryman, Matthew. *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, pp. 223-257, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

This was an extremely valuable source. Professor Countryman thoroughly details the events before, during, and after the 1967 student walkouts and places them in the context of Philadelphia history and Black history. I found Countryman's book to give the most comprehensive overview of the student protests, why they were happening, where they originated, and their aftermath.

National Archives, "Brown v. Board of Education (1954)." *Our Documents - Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-board>.

Brown v. Board of Education was a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case declaring that segregation was no longer constitutional in public facilities, including schools. This file provided an overview of the case and linked to many original documents that explained the significance of *Brown* to American history and Black history in particular.