

# Boston's Busing Crisis: Joe Moakley, Judge Garrity and the people of Massachusetts



## **Background on the Garrity Decision and Forced Busing in Boston**



Boston's busing crisis was sparked by Judge Arthur Garrity's 1974 ruling in the case of *Tallulah Morgan et al. v. James Hennigan et al* that the Boston School Committee had "intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation" in the Boston Public Schools and must implement a plan to bus students to different neighborhoods to create racial balance in the schools.

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court's landmark decision in case of *Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.* ([347 U.S. 483](#)) asserted that separate educational facilities for black and white students were inherently unequal and that school districts must integrate their public schools.

For over twenty years, African American parents in Boston fought unsuccessfully to have access to public education that equaled the quality that was available to white children. In 1970, a group of black parents sued the Boston School Committee, then led by James W. Hennigan, in the case of *Tallulah Morgan et al. v. James Hennigan et al.* (379 F. Supp. 410), claiming that the Boston Public Schools were deliberately segregated.

By 1974, with no school desegregation plan in place, Judge Arthur W. Garrity stepped in to rule that the Boston School Committee had indeed "intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation" in the Boston Public Schools. To achieve racial balance, he established a plan that mandated busing Boston Public School students between Boston neighborhoods. Prior to the implementation of Garrity's busing plan, there was much controversy surrounding the issue. As word spread that a plan requiring forced busing was being developed, many residents, especially in South Boston, were outraged at the idea that their children may no longer be able to attend local "neighborhood" schools and instead would be bused to unfamiliar areas of Boston. Racial tensions flared, resulting in violence and protest throughout Boston.

### **Moakley's Early Campaigns**

When John Joseph Moakley first ran for Congress in 1970, he lost to South Boston Democrat Louise Day Hicks, in part because Hicks was an outspoken critic of busing. She appealed to South Boston residents' hope that she would be able to stop busing from happening. While Moakley did express his dissatisfaction with the idea of forced busing, his stance was not as firm, in the eyes of South Boston residents, as they would have liked. Residents of South Boston were particularly upset about the prospect of busing because the plans were to be implemented heavily in their neighborhood. They felt strongly that their children should be able to attend the neighborhood schools closest to their homes and not be bused to other parts



## Boston's Busing Crisis Study Guide

Moakley Archive and Institute

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of the city. Despite this, Moakley was able to win the 1972 congressional election by running as an Independent and therefore bypassing the need to beat Hicks in a Democratic primary. He switched back to the Democratic Party after he was elected. Over the next few years the prospect of busing and the plan that was ultimately implemented as a result of the Garrity decision became important issues that Moakley had to address as a representative of South Boston.

### Guiding Questions on Busing:

1. How does Louise Day Hicks feel about busing? Give an example.
2. How did Moakley's constituents feel about busing? What was their point of view? Use examples to illustrate this.
3. According to the news clipping and the "Busing Clash Looms in Washington" press release what was Moakley's stand on busing? Are there any other sources to support this?

Read the following excerpt from Moakley's oral history interview, what conclusions can be drawn from it?

"Oh, it split people up and many well-intentioned people, some of them are really not able to articulate properly...were labeled as "bigots"... It was the worst political time that I have ever gone through in my life. Some days, I just didn't want to get up in the morning and put my shoes on. ...One young lady I went to the prom with ...she just spat as I walked by one day."

## **Joe Moakley and the Garrity Decision Resource List**

### **From MS100 Congressman Moakley Papers:**

1. Constituent correspondence and bumper sticker, 12/1975
2. Press release- "Busing clash looms in Washington", 1970s
3. News clipping- Moakley's stand on busing, 1970s
4. Memo from Jack Dooling to Moakley on busing voting record, 11/1/1974
5. Correspondence between Moakley and Louise Day Hicks, 12/1975

**Want to learn more about Congressman Moakley and the Garrity Decision? Consult the following resources:**

- MS100 Congressman Moakley Papers
- John Joseph Moakley Oral History Project

## **Interested in Doing Archival Research?**

### **Types of Projects:**

- Research papers
- Internships
- Honors thesis

## **Resources at the Moakley Archive and Institute:**

(more info at: [www.suffolk.edu/moakley](http://www.suffolk.edu/moakley))

### **Collection Information**

- Congressman John Joseph Moakley Papers
- Moakley Oral History Project
- Jamaica Plain Committee on Central America Collection
- Frederick Wilkins Papers
- Margaret Collins Weitz Papers
- Enemies of War Collection
- Gleason L. Archer's Personal Papers
- Mary P. Burke U.N. Women's Conference Collection
- Harry Hom Dow Papers
- Suffolk University Oral History Project
- Records of Suffolk University

### **Research tools**

- Bibliographies and indices
- Finding aids: detailed guides to a collection with descriptions and folder lists.
- Research guides: highlight resources in our collections where you can find information on the following topics
- SMART Catalog: browse or search through our online catalog available at [www.suffolk.edu/moakley/smart](http://www.suffolk.edu/moakley/smart)

## Research Topics

### **Boston and Massachusetts Ninth Congressional District**

- Economic Development (Big Dig, Waterfront, Taunton Industrial Park, etc.)
- Fair Housing - Anti-snob Zoning
- Forced Busing/Boston Public Schools Desegregation
- Historic Preservation (Dorchester Heights, Old State House, Faneuil Hall, U.S.S. Constitution, Old South Meeting House, etc.)

### **Campaigns**

- Grassroots activism
- State Representative
- State Senate
- Boston City Council
- Congress

### **Congressman John Joseph Moakley**

- Congress, 1973-2001
- Massachusetts politics
- Constituent Services
- House of Representatives
- Leadership
- Rules Committee

### **Consumer Affairs/Health and Medical Research**

- Fire-safe Cigarettes
- Food Labeling Act
- Organ Donation

### **Drama and theatre studies**

- Eugene O'Neill Society
- Eugene O'Neill, 1883-1953

### **Environmental Issues**

- Boston Harbor Islands
- Boston Harbor Clean-up
- Hazardous Waste sites

### **Feminism, France**

### **Great Pond, Maine**

### **History of Radio**

### **History of Suffolk University**

### **Human Rights**

- Congresses
- France
- Moakley Commission on the Jesuit Murders in El Salvador
- U.S. Policy towards Cuba
- Immigration Issues
- Chinese Immigration
- Salvadoran Refugee Legislation

### **U.S. Foreign Policy**

- Military Aid to El Salvador
- U.S. Policy towards Cuba

### **War**

- Resistance movements
- World War, 1914-1918 – Women
- World War, 1939-1945 – France
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives, French
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Underground movements – France
- World War, 1939-1945 – Women

### **Women**

- Development
- France, bibliography
- French
- History, 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- International development
- World Conference on Women
- United Nations-- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

## What is an Archive?

- It's the place
- It's the stuff

## What are primary sources?

- Unique materials
- Necessary for original research
- First-hand account
- Un-interpreted data
- Correspondence, a memo or agenda
- Photographs, video or audio recordings

## What is archival research?

- A way to improve critical thinking skills
- An opportunity to add new knowledge to existing scholarship
- An important addition to a resume
- Researcher draws his own conclusions from what he sees

## What is different between archives and libraries?

### Archives

Unique materials  
Closed stacks  
Collections organized  
by creator  
Non-circulating  
materials  
Primary sources

### Libraries

Published materials  
Open stacks  
Collections organized by subject  
Circulating materials  
Secondary source

### Archival collections:

- Represent the point of view of one person or organization
- Have a hierarchical structure
- Are described by finding aids
- Contain a variety of records, such as, correspondence, news clippings, objects, artifacts, photographs and audio/visual materials

### How do I do Archival research?

- Do all secondary source research first; build a knowledge base about your topic
- Investigate what has been written about your topic
  - Use bibliographies
  - Consult a reference librarian
  - Search the Web
  - Use subject guides
- Call the Archives to set up a reference appointment
- Read a finding aid to learn more about a collection
- Search the SMART catalog ([www.suffolk.edu/moakley/smart](http://www.suffolk.edu/moakley/smart))
- Have an Archivist get you started on your research

