“The Vanguard for Solving the Nation’s Problems in Schools”:

A Historical Case Study of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*

Dominique Q. Lester

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Abstract

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This historical case study critically examines the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* as both a symbol of Black agency and a site of contention, where competing interests shaped the educational landscape of Atlanta Public Schools (APS). While Atlanta was positioned as a national model for school reform, the lived experiences of those involved reveal a more complex reality—one that underscores the ongoing struggle for quality education, social mobility, political power, and self-determination within Black communities.

Crafted behind closed doors by Atlanta's power brokers, the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* placed the politics of education under intense scrutiny, exposing how Black children were used as bargaining tools to reimagine the Black middle class and secure high-ranking positions for Black educators. These negotiations unfolded in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education,* as the lingering effects of desegregation complicated efforts toward meaningful progress. While the *Compromise* produced both positive and negative outcomes—depending on one's perspective—it ultimately created an opportunity for Black leaders, educators, and community partners to navigate the challenges of establishing greater control over Black children's education.

With the appointment of Atlanta's first Black superintendent and a mandate that 50% of Atlanta Public Schools' senior administrative roles be filled by Black educators, the city became a battleground for community control strategies, political maneuvering, and competing visions for the future of Black education. As Atlanta, often described as "the city too busy to hate," grappled with these tensions, it became evident that the lines between love and hate, right and wrong, segregation and desegregation, Black and white, and the privileged and the marginalized were far thinner than many had imagined.

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Acknowledgements

I began writing my acknowledgements as I was reading the Papers of Howard Thurman Vol. 1 “My People Need Me” and “Mediations of the Heart.” I was convicted by Thurman’s commitment to beloved community, meditation, and theological imagination to describe how people engage and interact with the world around them. Howard Thurman’s, “A prayer of Thanksgiving” swaddled me and despite many attempts to move away from the peculiar text, it would not let me go nor would it allow me to ponder on alternative ways to express my gratitude. With Thurman on my mind and my personal journal full with reflections, I pause here to make my sacrament of Thanksgiving. I begin with the simple things of my day.

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In service not in scorn.
There goes a man whose majesty,

Shines like a May time morn."

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"I pass before me the mainsprings of my heritage: The fruits of the labors of countless generations who lived before me, without whom my own life would have no meaning: For all these, I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!" (Thurman, 1999)

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For all these, I make an act of Thanksgiving this day! (Thurman, 1999)

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"I finger one by one the messages of hope that awaited me at the crossroads: The smile of approval from those hold in their hands the reins of my security
For all these, I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!(Thurman, 1999)

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To my city, Atlanta, Georgia, Zone 6 to be exact. Somewhere between J. R. Crickets' 10 piece hot lemon pepper sprinkle, the Civil Rights Movement, and Trap Music. Somewhere between my grandmother's front porch and the corridors of Candler Road and Glenwood with South Dekalb mall in the near distance. Somewhere between skate night at Golden Glide and football games at Panthersville stadium as Redan High School squared off against Douglass High School. Somewhere between friends being murdered or recruited by the streets and worship

service at the Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church. Somewhere between the poles of trouble and grace, I found my voice. My voice as a scholar, activist, community organizer, preacher and friend emerged from the depths of a city where one could see the neighborhood drug dealer as the philanthropist and the local Black doctor, Black educator, and Black business person as that which we hope to be and possess the life we aspire to have. I'm grateful for it all, as I hold close to the words of a preacher whooping and celebrating, "Be not dismayed, whatever be 'tide, God will take care of you!" I am a witness…

"The pilgrims who set their sails for lands beyond all horizons, whose courage made paths into new roads and far-off places. I bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that I have known.
For all these, I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!" (Thurman, 1999)

Dedication

To Black Boys who dream new dreams…

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The purpose of this historical case study was to use archival research and document analysis to undertake an in-depth exploration to better understand the events leading up to the *Atlanta Compromise of 1973* in the Atlanta Public School District. Nearly a decade following the landmark desegregation event known as the Atlanta Nine between 1960 and1961—the initiation of the desegregation of Atlanta Public Schools (APS), it became evident that remnants of segregation persisted throughout the city of Atlanta, Georgia. In response to this ongoing 13-year challenge, a concerted effort emerged, uniting local business leaders, educators, parents, and activists around community control and quality of education in APS. This collaborative endeavor culminated in the formulation of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*, designed to address the sluggish progress toward quality education and full desegregation within APS.

The *Compromise Agreement of 1973* outlined key provisions, notably appointing an African American superintendent for APS and mandating that 50% of APS administrators, including those in higher-level administrative positions, would be African American. In 1973, Alonzo Crim assumed the role of APS's inaugural African American superintendent, embarking on a 15-year tenure from 1973 to 1988, marked by both accomplishments and setbacks. His leadership set a precedent in the realm of Black education within urban centers.

While the idea of an all-Black municipality was a paradigm shift, the road to this Black education laboratory of sorts was fraught with many challenges, dissenters, misunderstandings, assumptions, and mismanaged goodwill. Ultimately, Black children were still left on the fringes as the political agendas of Black leaders engulfed ambitious hopes for those dedicated to Black education, social mobility, quality education, and community control. While Atlanta was

reported to be the vanguard for solving the nation's problems in schools with the *Compromise*, the people in Atlanta tell a different story of Black agency and the battles that existed as individuals on all sides of the *Compromise* fought for their children, their jobs, and their political agendas.

The *Atlanta Compromise Agreement* was intended to be the remedy for the implementation of the desegregation policy in APS (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The *Agreement* had three components: student desegregation, staff desegregation, and administration desegregation. Community control and quality education were the chief aims, as expressed by both proponents and protractors of the plan; however, the plan marginalized poor Black students and reinvigorated the Black middle class with the restoration of high-paying jobs in the district for Black educators (Hornsby, 2016). While the *Atlanta Compromise* helped to reimagine Black control in the city, the pathway to the *Compromise* was filled with disagreements among power-broking organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and local activists such as Lonnie King (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 2016). Moreover, the *Compromise* left many in the wake of perceived progress and much to be desired as ordinary Black Atlantans struggled to reconcile whether this *Compromise* actually made education better for the city's most vulnerable Black students and families (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 2016).

1.1.1 Introduction to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*

The *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* consists of three major sections: student desegregation, staff desegregation, and administration desegregation (Research Atlanta, 1973). The plan essentially raised the cachet of Black Atlantans and their ability to advocate for themselves. The plan provided access to political resources available for Black communities and

offered ways to present the demands made by Black leaders on the public school system and the strategies employed by Black leaders to improve educational opportunities for Black children (Plank & Turner, 1987). The central feature of the *Compromise* was that it required that the Board of Education appoint a Black superintendent for the APS district, and it reserved 50% of all administrative posts in the system for Blacks. In effect, the *Compromise* sacrificed further integration in the public school system (which might have proved illusory in any case) in exchange for Black administrative control (Hornsby, 1991). With white flight and the APS school system becoming overwhelmingly Black, integration was no longer the goal; rather, improvement upon the quality of the education was the chief aim for Black leaders and parents. With local control opposed to federal power in the hands of Black leadership, Atlanta took up its place as a city committed to providing a unique education experience for its students (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

The *Atlanta Compromise of 1973* represented an eerily hopeful ethos in the city of Atlanta. While the *Compromise* seemingly represented a failure for integration aspirations, the city's elected officials experienced significant achievements (Hornsby, 1991). The progressive nature of the city emerged as both Black men and Black women were elected to the school board, along with the re-election of President Benjamin Mays to the Board as he received massive support throughout the city and from professional organizations (Brown-Nagin, 2012). After 1973, the schools became predominantly all-Black, with a majority Black municipality to govern schools. Black leaders had a fair share of challenges to contend with. White citizens were opposed to Black leaders asserting the liberties and decision making bestowed upon them. Similarly, Black folks encountered serious critiques as well (Hornsby, 2016). As Dr. Alonzo A. Crim experienced many successes and failures as superintendent during his 15-year tenure from

1973-1988, he set a paradigm for Black education in urban cities (Hillarygmeister, 2022). His ideas for the community of believers emphasized critical engagement with community partners, families, and business to ensure students were well rounded and prepared for global citizenship.

The *New York Times* reported that the *Atlanta Compromise of 1973* had accepted the minimum desegregation of students for the maximum integration of administrators (Hornsby, 2016). Dr. Crim and other Black leaders in Atlanta had high expectations for the school district and thought it would conquer the anger of his opponents and bring APS student achievement up to the national average by 1985. However, the impact of the *Compromise* remains to be discovered. The commitment of Dr. Crim and APS was to provide quality education and bolster the creation of conditions in which Black students could thrive socially and academically in the city of Atlanta (Plank & Turner, 1987).

1.1.2 Community Control and Quality Education in Atlanta, Georgia

Community control is not a new concept for Blacks seeking education possibilities. In the 1950s and 1960s, school districts made efforts to decentralize the administration of large urban school systems in order to enhance innovation, accountability, and efficiency (Todd-Breland, 2015). For Blacks, community control proponents asserted a political agenda that linked Black liberation with Black educational achievement (Todd-Breland, 2015). Throughout the country, community control movements gained momentum, and Blacks were able to see their political power evoke change in their children's school. For example, Dionne Danns and Todd-Breland both spent time discussing community control efforts in Chicago school reform in the 1960s and 1970s and how the Civil Rights era and the Black Power era aided teachers, community members, and students to make conscious efforts for desegregation and community control (Danns et al., 2015). In New York City, historical battles of community control for Black and

Puerto Rican education were happening as conflicts between activists and educators stood at the forefront of this particular fight for equity in school settings (Dougherty, 2005). Similarly, community control battles were taking place in Milwaukee as local leaders fought to desegregate the schools (Dougherty, 2005). One of the most prominent episodes of community control took place in Brownsville, Brooklyn (New York). In 1968, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment with community control of schools descended into a power struggle between the largely white and Jewish leadership of the New York City teachers union and Black teachers, administrators, and community members (Todd-Breland, 2015). In essence, community control efforts brought to bear how racial alliances formed to bring some sort of public-facing change for liberal progressive movements. However, they were often met with tension as desegregation possibilities could have greater implications for reallocating power to historically marginalized communities and stripping it away from communities and leaders who dangerously wielded power with impunity.

By the late 1960s, many Black education reformers were turning away from integration and desegregation conversations to embrace community control (Todd-Breland, 2018). As time passed, Black folks in communities that longed for equal rights and better school opportunities for their children abandoned ideas of integration and looked to improve the schools Black students already attended. Unwilling to nurture the mythical trope of school integration (Horsford, 2011), community control was at once both a specific alternative to school desegregation and part of a broader Black political project for Black self-determination and liberation, of which education was just one—albeit a very important—piece (Todd-Breland, 2018). In places like Chicago and Brownsville, community control had distinct features that embodied leadership and strategic structures seeking changes from boards of education and

government officials, the bodies that they saw wielded power to transform schools' material conditions and resource allocation (Todd-Breland, 2018). By the 1970s, a growing number of Black Atlantans, including those in leadership, viewed the struggle for greater influence over their children's education as the central issue, prioritizing quality schooling over the question of integration. Parents remained steadfast in their desire to provide and seek quality education opportunities for their students; however, these same parents were not interested in placing their children in environments where being connected to white kids served as the determining factor for success in school settings nor the moral ethical challenge to bear the weight of making integration work in Atlanta's schools (Fleishman, 2019).

Atlanta's view of community control was equally radical and thoughtful; however, some very special circumstances caused community control to take shape in a manner that was drastically different from what was seen in New York, Milwaukee, and Chicago. Atlanta's business community along with the activists and local asset-based communal movements argued, often correctly, that the Atlanta Board of Education and its administration had not done enough to promote desegregation. The begrudging manner by which they moved toward perceived desegregation was only theatre for the courts, as freedom of choice, attendance zones, and formal school boundaries could have increased biracial classes in the city (Hornsby, 1991). Segregated schools were continuously built, as opposed to creating learning centers and magnet schools to further perpetuate and promote desegregation. Thus, moving into the 1970s, and standing on the precipice of a changing city, community desire for quality education for its students, and a new political landscape, the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* provided a remedy for the desegregation issue in Atlanta. The remedy was not easy, nor was it achieved without a power struggle and philosophical dissention among Black leaders and activists. The goals of

community control were educational and political: to improve educational achievement by securing political power for the community to participate in school affairs and determine school policies (Todd-Breland, 2015).

African American educational history provides an opportunity for students to consider the enduring reality of unequal education in U.S. society and how those marginalized seek quality education (Purdy, 2015). Quality of education is often linked to teachers being well versed and knowledgeable about content, especially when it comes to Black and marginalized populations. In 2016, The Brookings Institute examined the idea of quality of education and explained how a group of interrelated systems works together to create disenfranchised education for Black students. The elements helping to make up this engine is segregation, with few and low-quality books, curriculum materials, laboratories, computers, less qualified and less experienced teachers, and lack of access to high-quality curricula (Darling-Harmmond, 2016). In a response to the Coleman Report in the 1960s, Edmund Gordon (2014) asserted, "The primary political struggles of public education today have to do with economic and ethnic desegregation as the prime vehicle for equalizing educational opportunity. Even the current demand for 'Black' schools and 'Black' control for 'Black' children is but an expression of this struggle" (p. 12).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The history of Black education in Atlanta is deeply rooted in a complex interplay of politics and aspirations for social mobility (Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016; Jackson, 1978). This historical narrative is marked by a troubling pattern of injustices, ranging from chronic underfunding of Black schools to constitutional barriers that prohibited integration, depriving Black children of access to a quality education (Todd-Breland, 2015). Although 1960 held the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, when nine Black students enrolled in predominantly

white schools on the northside of Atlanta, the vague mandate to "desegregate with all deliberate speed," as outlined in *Brown II*, hindered comprehensive system-wide integration (Wong, 1992). Consequently, in 1973, the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement* emerged as an attempt to reset the scales of equity and justice within APS (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The *Compromise* aimed to align the school district's leadership, teaching staff, and administration with the city's predominantly Black student population and Black teacher workforce. However, the journey toward achieving this *Compromise* was fraught with conflict and strife, as Black leaders, the NAACP, the APS Board, and parents all shared varying ideas of quality education and how this quality of education would be achieved (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Despite its significance, there is a gap in our understanding of the events and individuals who played a role in crafting the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* and were most impacted by it.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this historical case study was to document the sequence of events and the factors that precipitated the passing and implementation of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. Further, this research examined how community control and local politics engendered complex relationships among Black people charged with providing quality education for Black children.

1.4 Conceptual Framework: Black Education Through a Black Southern Epistemology

Education in America with attention to persons of African descent has been used to control, contain, and abuse (Douglass et al., 2022). Thus, a turn to the historical accomplishments, narratives, and efforts of Black persons cannot be static in the sociopolitical history of America's most oppressed. Even before Black education in America can be examined,

attention to early African civilization systems, philosophies, and models of education must be acknowledged and explored (King & Swartz, 2018). To define Black education, Carrol Lee (2005) contended that Black education consists of "systematic efforts to teach Black children," and that "the quality of education the African American community has historically organized itself around while considering issues of cultural responsibility and community political empowerment" (p. 46). In this manner, this definition points toward the Black radical imagination, as shared by Chezare Warren and Jarvis Givens. Mourning is a prerequisite to any sort of equity and excellence in Black education, and by "equity and excellence," there is posturing toward revolution and structural transformation (Warren, 2021). Therefore, Black education involves systemic efforts to teach Black children in a manner that emboldens the quality of education that the African American community has historically organized itself around while considering issues of cultural responsibility, community political empowerment, and structural transformation through human dignity, radical imagination, and an appreciation for collective memories.

Moreover, Black education moves beyond mere description and narratives of heroic struggle, and instead teases out central conflicts pertaining to questions of Black ontology and deeper meaning of education in Blacks' struggle for human goodness and flourishing—for a new world to be and new ways to be in the world (Givens, 2022). This stance not only embodies Sankofa (King & Swartz, 2018), but it is the hope for the ultimate concern, which is a theological term and concept that posit the situation or concern as that which calls us to be deeply invested or that to which we are called to commit our lives (Tillich, 1957). In this manner, the ultimate concern of Black education is wholeness, liberation, equity, expression, and pride; mourning has been a prerequisite to equity and excellence in Black education, and now equity and excellence

begets revolution and structural transformation (Warren, 2021). Black education and Sankofa are where I situate and anchor this historical case on the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*.

Beverly Gordon (1990) contended, "There is a struggle to employ social theorizing based on the epistemology generated with African American intellectual, artistic and literature cultural knowledge and social theorizing is an ideological and psychological struggle—a battle for the hearts and minds of African Americans" (p. 96). A Black southern epistemology is rooted in a hermeneutic of cultural specificity, dialect, and folklore (Du Bois, 1903; Hurston & Ellis, 2020). Zora Neal Hurston and W. E. B. Du Bois best captured this motif through their depictions of Black Southern life and their writings about the experiences of Black religiosity, education, and communities. Gordon Parks (2022) picked up this motif in his depictions of Southern Black life through images in his *Segregation Story*. Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996, 2009, 2020) shared this idea through her work on Black southern educational leaders, educators, activists, and educator networks of improving quality of education for Black students and educators. Similarly, theologian and educator Howard Thurman (1996, 2014) shared a similar hermeneutic in his exploration of Black education, faith, and segregation in his work, particularly in *Jesus and the Disinherited* and *Luminous Darkness*, where he examined themes of terror and hope for those Black and southern. Therefore, "there is an emergence of alternative and endogenous scientific and philosophical paradigms for systematically analyzing African American culture as an articulation of social theorizing and philosophical reasoning grounded in the life of African Americans, with examples found in history" (p. 98). The conceptual framework used to ground this study explored the intersection of Black education, political dynamics, and social mobility within the historical context of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. Using historical methodologies and artifact examination, this study brings to bear the roles and relationships

between Black activists, educators, and political leaders. Furthermore, it anchors on the theoretical insights of Beverly Gordon to frame Black education as both a community effort and a spiritual endeavor, embedding Black epistemological perspectives into the study.

1.4.1 Summary of Conceptual Framework

I employed several theoretical and conceptual considerations throughout this study. The first for consideration is Beverly Gordon's African American Knowledge Theory, which served as the foundation for this study. It applies five critical currents of thought:

- Service: Black educators and leaders operated in service to their communities, addressing educational disparities and building supportive environments (Gordon, p.456).
- Nationalism: Educational empowerment promoted Black self-identity and pride, fostering a sense of collective nationalistic strength (Gordon, p.456).
- Self-help: Black communities acted with agency, seeking solutions to educational inequalities through their own efforts (Gordon, p.456).
- Economic Autonomy: Education was viewed as a pathway toward economic independence for Black individuals and communities (Gordon, p.456).
- Political Power: Black leaders utilized their political networks to influence educational policies, ensuring Black voices were central to decision-making processes (Gordon, p.456)

Similarly, Thurman's work of head and heart is also instrumental, portraying Black education as an intellectual and emotional endeavor. Thurman's work called for individuals to acknowledge self and requires a deep personal commitment not just to what they do but to how they do it, thereby highlighting the integral role of Black educators and their relationship to the divine. Hurston's influence further shaped the study, reflecting the researcher's connection to Black southern identity. Like Hurston, the researcher emphasizes the importance of personal experiences and storytelling in understanding Black culture across various geographic and social contexts.

The second aspect of my conceptual framework is historical context: The *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. The political dynamics of the *Compromise* highlight tensions between elite and poorer Black communities. Aspects of this study examined the varying perspectives on the *Compromise*'s effectiveness in advancing educational and social equity. While elite Black members believed the *Compromise* pushed too far, poorer communities argued that it did not go far enough in addressing their concerns.

The *Compromise* had a significant impact on economic and social mobility for Black educators. It revealed complex relationships between Black educational leaders and political entities such as the APS Board, the Superintendent's Office, and the Mayor's Office. However, the depth and long-term effects of these relationships require further exploration. The role of advocacy groups, particularly the Atlanta Branch of the NAACP, was pivotal in shaping the political landscape of APS. These organizations worked to ensure that Black communities retained control over their educational institutions, advocating for policies that benefited Black students and educators.

The third aspect is the epistemological standpoint is the Black Southern experience. The study's guard rails are secured by Black epistemology, drawing from the personal experiences of a Black Southern man. Using Thurman's "head and heart" approach, the study emphasized the importance of allowing community voices and lived realities to steer the narrative. Archives are central to this endeavor because they serve as repositories of collective memory and social history. I utilized artifacts from institutions such as Clark Atlanta University and the Auburn Avenue Research Library to better understand their political influence on Black education.

The fourth aspect of the conceptual framework is the interlocking narratives of the *Compromise.* The *Compromise* serves as a focal point for understanding the complex

relationships between political action, ideology, and Black education in Atlanta. This framework adopts a narrative form to capture the intersecting stories of how different factions—local activists, national organizations, and political bodies—negotiated their roles and interests in shaping the outcomes of Black education. As Dawson (1994) noted, Black politics are both communal and deeply tied to historical memory, yet this does not prevent conflict from surfacing within Black communities. Ideologies, as socially constructed and reconstructed phenomena, are shaped by specific social, economic, and political contexts, which, in turn, influence the motivations and actions of political actors (Dawson, 1994). In the case of the *Compromise*, these dynamics were critical in determining the varied responses to school desegregation efforts.

The fifth aspect of my conceptual framework is ideological frameworks in Black political discourse. Building on the work of Dawson and others, this framework explored the theoretical need for a deeper understanding of African American ideologies, which shape and inform political action (Skinner, 1988). Dawson's (1994) assertion that ideologies are determined by historical context and shaped within a "history within a history" is central to analyzing the *Compromise.* The political and educational history of Atlanta intertwines to highlight key moments, such as the construction of Booker T. Washington High School in 1925, which initially unified Black communities around a common goal but later revealed the fragile nature of those alliances. Similarly, the desegregation struggles of the 1970s showcased a range of Black political ideologies, from Black conservatism to radical egalitarianism, as different factions debated the best course of action.

The sixth piece of the conceptual framework is organizational perspectives of the *Compromise.* To understand the various divergent approaches to the *Compromise*, this framework maps three major organizational perspectives onto Dawson's Black political

framework. While the organizations and stakeholders would not position themselves nor name that these were the political frames they adopted, they did meet the descriptive criteria based on Dawson's scholarship. Without being anachronistic, it is worth noting these indicators are only intended to be descriptive markers for situating the organizations within their proper political camp. It cannot be determined that these organizations would lay claim to these affiliations, but they do align. These perspectives revealed the discontinuities in Black leadership and the broader sociopolitical agendas of Black communities as follows:

1. National NAACP: Representing a Black conservatism/integrationist approach, the National NAACP's stance on desegregation involved massive bussing and integration with white students. However, this top-down strategy often alienated local communities and failed to address the specific needs of Atlanta's Black population. This ideological clash highlighted the challenges of a national organization imposing solutions without fully engaging local stakeholders (Dawson, p.19)
2. NAACP Atlanta Branch: In contrast, the local NAACP adopted a radical egalitarian approach, advocating for a more localized, context-specific solution—dubbed "Atlanta Style" politics. Their resistance to bussing and integration as proposed by the national NAACP illustrated the tension between national strategies and local sensibilities, as well as the ideological rift within the Black community (Dawson, p.15).
3. Atlanta Board of Education: APS Board of education, which adopted a Black nationalist approach, sought to assert local control over the desegregation process, emphasizing the need for Atlanta's citizens to devise their own school plan. This

> perspective reflected specific aims and debates about race, class, and the role of Black educators in shaping the future of Atlanta's public schools (Dawson, p.21).

The final piece of my conceptual framework is the role of conflict and coalition-building. Conflict was a central feature of the *Compromise,* as local and national leaders disagreed on both the means and the ends of desegregation efforts. Letters and archival materials revealed the extent of the discord, with figures such as Lonnie King, Roy Wilkins, and Maynard Jackson representing opposing sides of the debate. This key point of departure illustrated a broader issue within Black political discourse: the challenge of fostering sustainable coalitions in the face of divergent goals and competing interests. As Dawson (1994) suggested, political ideologies in Black communities are fluid and subject to change over time, reflecting shifting social and political conditions. In the context of the *Compromise,* these ideological shifts played a critical role in shaping the outcomes of desegregation efforts.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What were the events that led up to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973?*

RQ2. In what ways, if any, did the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* influence Black education in Atlanta Public Schools?

RQ3. How was the quality of education impacted under the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* in Atlanta Public schools?

1.6 Researcher's Perspective

I often credit my grandmother as being my first homiletics professor. She told stories with such imagery, accuracy, and passion. Many of the stories she told me while sitting in her rocking chair on the front porch would be about her primary school experiences and the

segregation she experienced as a Black student growing up in Atlanta during the 1940s and 1950s. For her, activism was not a choice but a way of life. Experiences of old textbooks with torn-out pages and stories of walking to school in cold weather while white kids rode nice school buses and threw rocks at her and her friends added to the mystic of being Black in the South. What stood out the most were stories about being recruited as high school students to protest with local activist and civic organizations, and sharing the trauma and terrorism they endured as young people at sit-ins and marches. As a Black man, the historical nature of Black education in Atlanta is of importance to me because it offers a perspective and worldview that can be countercultural and offer a counter-narrative for the ways education is seen in the South, especially when led and curated by Black leaders, educators, and parents. I believe my educational experiences were greatly shaped by my upbringing as an Atlanta native, with grandparents who attended valued segregated schools in Atlanta and a mother and uncles who not only integrated an all-white high school but were stand-out athletes in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

My entire K-12 experience has been rich with Black teachers and principals, and my high school experience was unique in the sense that all of my teachers attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and were members of Greek letter fraternities and sororities as well as prominent social clubs. Many of my teachers, principals, and coaches had their K-12 educational experiences in APS and metro Atlanta school districts such as DeKalb County and Fulton County. I have only known Black educators and school leaders, and can only recall having five white teachers from kindergarten through undergraduate. My kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Finch, looked like me. She spoke like one of my aunts and attended church nearby. She called and spoke with my mother about my progress and challenges and shared how she would

push me to the next level. My first schoolteacher created conditions for me to thrive, be challenged, and grow in new ways. This trend continued from kindergarten until my final days of undergraduate studies at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, with Mr. Johnson who was my professor of education and is still my mentor to this day. Mr. Johnson took me in as his own child and was a caring demander (Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). More than anything, Mr. Johnson had high expectations for me and pushed me to grow—teaching me about what it took to be a good educator, a stellar school leader, an activist, and a man of integrity. I highlight this portion of my social location to bring to bear that my educational experiences were not only quality, but they were not in comparison to, adjacent to, in competition with, or inferior to whiteness or white ideologies of what education ought to be. Rather, my educational experiences were the standard of what education, and a community of reliable others ought to be for Black students (Tillman, 2002).

My home life along with my P-20 experience has played a major role in my desire to investigate this area of study. As I learn more about the school systems that shaped my family and my teachers, I consequently learn more about how I was shaped educationally and culturally. My identity and social location as an educator, a historian, and a theologian also had implications for the content, style, and structure of this study. It is my hope that as I engage archival material of this complex city and the matter of Black education, I somehow "hit a straight lick with a crooked stick" (Hurston & Ellis, 2020, p. xvi) and do the work my soul must have (Cannon et al., 2011).

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the sociopolitical context of Atlanta and its importance for understanding Black education in the United States. While Atlanta is a city of the

haves and have-nots (Hobson, 2019), it is also a city where key officials in top-ranking roles such as the mayor, school superintendent, and president/chair of the school board have been Black and have governed over the educational system in the city (Hornsby, 2016) since 1973. Historically, Black municipalities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Atlanta have had Black leadership and educators work through possibilities of education for Black students via community control and its intersection with politics, civil rights, and social histories (Todd-Breland, 2015). Therefore, when Du Bois (1935) asked, "Does the Negro need separate schools?" Atlanta provides a laboratory of discovery for testing what happens when Black leaders and educators set the pace through community control on the quest for quality education. From reconstruction through the post-Civil Rights era of American history, Atlanta and specifically APS has been a site for Black education exploration through activism, innovation, marginal gains, and partially fulfilled promises (Battle-Baptist et al., 2018; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Du Bois, 1903; Hornsby, 2016).

1.8 Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this historical case study was to document the sequence of events and factors that precipitated the passing and implementation of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973.* The methodology for this study is separated into two parts. In part one, the research design section, I explain the research decisions that laid the foundation for setting up and carrying out this historical case study. In part two, the data collection and analysis section, I discuss the archival exploration and fundamental processes necessary for conducting this study.

1.8.1 Organization of the Study

This study has five chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction, provided an overview of Georgia's and Atlanta's political, social, economic, and educational landscape prior to 1973. This

discussion was inclusive of the segregation motifs that existed within schools and in the city. Moreover, this chapter provided context for the ways in which desegregation cases were covered in Atlanta. I argued in this chapter that Atlanta's political, social, economic, and educational dynamics have always been structured in such a way that the "city too busy to hate" is essentially a city of the haves and have-nots creating a showdown between its middle and elite and poor and working-class, under the guise of race as a unifying factor, progressive politics, and equality in education.

Chapter 2, *The Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*: A Review of the Literature, examines the contours of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* through the lenses of Black southern epistemology. An expansive history explores themes of Black activism and community control for quality education in APS. Special attention is paid to the ongoing strife between the national NAACP and the local NAACP and activists on achieving desegregation in APS. I argue here that interest convergence (Bell, 2006) and the departure from the traditional NAACP strategies emboldened community control, demonstrated the power of local politics, and reinforced the history of Atlanta's practices of elite Blacks and white businessmen to settle their own problems (Bown-Nagin, 2016; Hornsby, 1991, 2016; Jackson, 1978).

Chapter 3, Methodology and Research Design, describes my procedure for conducting this historical case study on the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. As part of the methodological framing of this project, I examined primary sources and secondary sources to build a narrative chronicling the events leading up to the *Compromise.* Archives and document analysis were the anchor of my research project.

Chapter 4, Findings, is geared toward identifying findings from the project and examines key findings, themes, and perspectives from the archival research and document analysis.

Chapter 5, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions, summarizes the study and provides a response and critique to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. Furthermore, this chapter offers a response to the primary research questions of how the *Compromise in*fluenced Black education. Therefore, I offer policy implications for future research whereby community control takes up the mantle of improving local school districts.

1.9 Definitions

African American: For the purpose of this study, the term *African American* is synonymous and used interchangeably with the term *Black* for ethnic groups; it is affixed to a person or group of African descent or those who share cultural norms within Black traditions (Encylcopedia.com, 2021).

Black Education: "Systemic efforts to teach Black children" and the quality of education the African American community has historically organized itself around while considering issues of cultural responsibility and community political empowerment" (Lee, 2005, p. 46).

Community Control: "A specific alternative to school desegregation and asserts a political agenda that links Black liberation with Black educational achievement" (Todd-Breland, 2015, p. 258).

Desegregation: Physical re-assignment of children and staff to change the existing racial composition in schools (Horsford, 2011, p. 4).

Integration: A quality of education and interpersonal interaction based on the positive acceptance of individual and group differences as well as similarities (Horsford, 2011, p. 4).

Post-Civil Rights: An era in America history whereby the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination the basis of race,

color, religion, sex, or national origin; it is considered one of the crown legislative achievements of the Civil Rights movement (History.com, 2022).

Race: "A code for histories of color: legacies of conquest, enslavement, and non-national status that disturb the national peace, whose narratives must thus be silenced within public culture, or hived off from the national story into a separate rate world of their own" (Singh, 2005, p. 42).

Quality Education: "Black education reformers developed a number of strategies, legal, and extra-legal, that can be categorized broadly under the umbrella of quality education. Quality education looks toward a renewed focus and efforts to create equitable education opportunities for Black students" (Todd-Breland, 2015, p. 257).

Segregation: According to Horsford (2011):

> Physical distance, not social distance—physical separation of people for reasons of race. Its opposition is not necessarily "integration" as the word is currently used, nor "equality". Nor does the absence of segregation necessarily simply the absence of other types of injustice or the lack of a case structure of society…. Since segregation is subject to the whim of individuals and the custom of localities it could and did crop up in all periods of and in numerous manifestations. (p. 23)

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 The History of Black Education in Georgia

The origins of Black education efforts in Georgia is aligned with James Anderson's (1988) analysis which submits that the structure and ideology of Black educational institutions are not fundamentally different from those of other American educational institutions. However, they highlight how Black Americans have persistently struggle to fashion a system of formal education that prefigured their liberation from peasantry (Anderson, 1988). As the Civil War came to an end in the spring of 1865, General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army suffered loss at the hands of General Ulysses S. Grant and the Union. The old South was thrown into chaos as whites lost their land, status, and way of life. Formerly enslaved people found unprecedented freedom in the Americas without conditions. While free from the embrace of slavery's cold clutch, many newly freed slaves were unable to read; they remained poor, improvident, and totally helpless. As Wright (1894) explained, "the freeman was well-nigh friendless" or received very little support (p. 16). The negro essentially had to navigate a new world with practical skills yet remained foreign to this world's customs of citizenship (Du Bois, 1935). Emancipation brought great responsibility which seemed insurmountable. Determined and hopeful, however, the Negro began to create and craft a hermeneutic in this new world buttressed by faith, the quest for education, and political power.

General William T. Sherman, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, and a coalition of leading colored ministers gathered in Savannah, Georgia, at the site of the first colored school in the state in December 1864 to chart a path for colored youth (Wright, 1894). The colored men in the coalition were of high stature in Georgia and could achieve an audience with any assembly to express their views on Negro education and social mobility (Du Bois, 1935). While a Black

school existed in Savannah from 1833 to 1865, and unknown to slaves, the first public and free schools opened to all children in Georgia in 1872 (Wright, 1894). As a result of these early convenings on education for Blacks, cities such as Savannah, Atlanta, Augusta, and Macon opened the first schools for Black children in Georgia. Savannah's progressive leaders started a school with two white and two Black teachers, with low enrollment and a modest physical plant. Augusta's Ware High School was founded in 1880 and graduated Blacks who went on to be in high demand as teachers in Black schools in the surrounding areas. Wright (1894) in his sketch of Negro Education in Georgia contended, "Teachers instilled principles of labor, of moral deportment, of good citizenship into these pupils, and teach students to read, spell, cipher and to me there can be no question of the advantages to the race that these acquirements bring" (p. 36).

As the first public schools for Black children were established in Georgia, colleges and universities subsequently emerged. The Georgia State Industrial College, the oldest public higher education institution for Black students in the state, was founded in 1890 because of the Second Morrill Land Grant Act (Savannah State University, 2023). The institution became what is known now as Savannah State University. Similarly, missionary and denominational institutions were established during the late 1800s. While many of the institutions offer collegiate degrees now, at their inception, they operated as grammar or high schools. However, Atlanta University, Clark College, and Gammon School of Theology were endowed by their state charters with the full rights and privileges to which any college is entitled (Wright, 1894, p. 40). The Baptist Seminary (Morehouse College in 1868) and Spelman Seminary (Spelman College) were the Baptist institutions. The African Methodists Episcopal Church began Morris Brown College in Atlanta, while in Augusta, the Presbyterians and Colored Methodists Episcopal Churches created Haines Normal and Industrial School and Paine Institute (Paine College in 1882). Each of these

institutions held long commitments to engaging Black men and Black women, many of whom were trained to be teachers and preachers. Moreover, Georgia produced several additional Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as a result of the Second Morrill Land Grand Act of 1890. While grateful for the philanthropy and support from northern philanthropic agencies, many Georgians preferred to control their schools with Black teachers and leaders. As a result, Blacks were able to create, finance, open, and sustain almost 80% of their schools (Anderson, 1988, p. 11). The Freedmen's education effort in Georgia was limited and the effects of racial discrimination so pervasive that the teachers could derive hope only from increments—day-to-day triumphs in the classroom or the impressive achievements of the few students who attended colleges and normal schools (Jones, 1992).

2.2 The History of Black Education in Atlanta, Georgia

In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois submitted these words:

> How heavy a journey for weary feet! What wings must Atlanta have to filt over all this hollow and hill, though sour-wood and sullen water, and by the red waste of sunbaked clay! How fleet must Atlanta be if she will not be tempted by gold to profane the sanctuary. (p. 79)

This was ultimately a critique of Atlanta's growing popularity of bustling industry at the beginning of the 20th century, which would ultimately make Atlanta the crowning jewel of the South. Du Bois's lament, despite its vestiges of praise, served as a prophetic warning of what could happen when a city starts over: The oppressed discover their freedom, the savvy engage capitalism, and the bold grab the reigns of their political future (Du Bois, 1903). Ultimately, Du Bois went on to contend that Black students engaged in Black education and praxis in Atlanta will shine like stars that think for truth, not fame; produce great handiwork; and weave a system of education that is of great quality and importance for the common good (Du Bois, 1903). The context which Du Bois offered, "Of Wings of Atlanta" in *the Souls of Black Folk*, is during the

early 1900s while he served as a professor at Atlanta University, along with John Hope as his friend and college president from 1897-1909. During this time in the history of Black education in Atlanta, links to political and socioeconomic motifs can be directly correlated to the experiences, opportunities, and white rage that persisted for Blacks during reconstruction (Davis, 2019). The decision rendered in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 and the lynchings of Blacks in Atlanta widened the racial gulf to elicit more social and legal rationalizations for segregation (Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016; Tuck, 2003). After the Atlanta riots of 1906, African Americans seemed more determined than before to work alone on creating their own institutions and solving what they defined as their own social problems (Davis, 2019, p. 180).

Du Bois (2022) used Georgia's diverse and growing Black population as a case study to demonstrate the progress made by African Americans since the Civil War and shed light on the Black South's place within and claim to global modernity. As Du Bois described the new Atlanta, he did so within geopolitical and sociopolitical contours that helped shape the socioeconomic landscape of the New South. The Atlanta race riots of 1906 served as a pivotal moment in Atlanta history. As if the devastating loss of the American Civil War had not been enough, the era of Reconstruction ushered in a new way of life for Blacks and whites, especially in the South (Anderson, 1988). Whites were now forced to rebuild, burdened with an ongoing quest to reestablish their perceived superiority, while Blacks were confronted with a dangerous freedom that forced them to make sense of perceived equality in a world that still saw them as unequal (Anderson, 1988). Blacks were making their way through political avenues that produced Black senators; established themselves as landowners; and anchored institutions such as Black schools, churches, and neighborhoods (Frazier, 1964).

To the chagrin of local whites in Atlanta, the fall of 1906 became an important time of reckoning as tensions came to a head in the city (Bauerlein, 2002; Burns, 2009; Davis, 2019). Frustrated by the progress of Blacks, the local newspaper fabricated stories of Black criminality to incite frenzy among white citizens (Davis, 2019). As a result of this agitation, many Blacks were assaulted, shot, beaten, and hanged by white mobs. The 3-day riot from September 22-24 resulted in the death of nearly 25 Black Atlantans. Blacks scrambled to protect each other and their institutions, homes, and businesses. Among those fighting to preserve Black institutions was John Hope, the president of Atlanta Baptist College (now known as Morehouse), and his friend and colleague, W. E. B. Du Bois. Armed with shotguns, the school leaders and other college presidents, educators, and ministers patrolled the campus and churches to ensure no harm was done to students and congregants (Davis, 2019). The Atlanta University Center buildings were opened to local residents as a refuge from the rioters. In the interim, local policemen and white men collaborated to arrest local residents, some of whom were Atlanta University students and faculty (Davis, 2019). At this time, many perceived radical Black leaders and educators were run out of town, fearing for their lives. In the aftermath of the riots, local conservative Black leaders took the position that poor Blacks, and certain Blacks in general, were responsible for the lawlessness, thus easing the blow of further confrontation (Bauerlein, 2001). As the newspapers printed articles expressing Blacks as the cause of such turmoil in the city, they neglected to share how Blacks were targeted and killed and how their homes and businesses were destroyed by white mobs. From this, prominent leaders in the city agreed that they did not want Atlanta to experience such turmoil and violence again. White leaders apologized for the widespread devastation, set up funds to assist victims, promised progressive reforms, and established racial committees (Davis, 2019).

White leaders set up racial committees with Black leaders who were influential but not too radical (Davis, 2019). The tradition of Booker T. Washington was in direct conflict with the radical tradition of Du Bois. Leaders like Du Bois and Hope were not invited to participate in the committees because they were thought to be too radical in their views on citizens' rights, especially those that should be afforded to Black people. Successful businessmen usually headed the list, but exemplars of the city's New South image, and well-established and respected African American ministers, businessmen, and other leading conservatives took the position that African Americans were partially responsible for the riots. They became the faces of Black leadership and communities, chosen to ensure that some form of peaceful coexistence could exist among the races (Davis, 2019). It was hoped that this alliance would serve as the precursor to the Atlanta style of politics that would shape race relations in the city. The race riots of 1906 set the tone for a culture of conservative Blacks and liberal whites to work together (Goldshalk, 2005). This uniquely tapestry was the launching pad for the politics that inevitably shape Atlanta's political backdrop, featuring influential Blacks at the center and poor Blacks on the fringes. Elite Blacks with sophistication and a cosmopolitan demeanor were disarming to whites and were helping to create the Atlanta style of politics (Jackson, 1978).

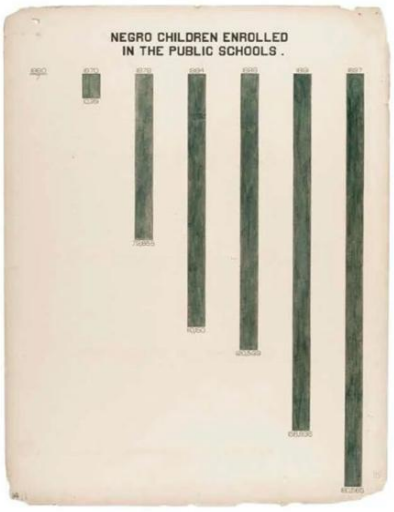
The post-riot environment no doubt contributed to an increased nationalist spirit in Black Atlanta that emphasized racial self-help and solidarity and eventually developed into a full expansion of Black Atlanta (Davis, 2019). The decision rendered in *Plessy v. Ferguson in* 1896, followed by the lynchings during the Atlanta riots of 1906, widened the racial gulf and elicited more social and legal rationalizations for segregation. Due to the historical landscape of racial politics in the South prior to the post-Civil Rights era, it is important to share and discuss issues of educational policy through the perspectives of Black educational and political leaders. While

Atlanta has deep roots within the Civil Rights Movement, the post-Civil Rights era ushered in a new band of political power and social influence that emphasized racial consciousness (Goldshalk, 2005). Moreover, this new band of leadership called for Black political and cultural institutions to nurture and promote Black collective interests, advance Black values, and secure Black autonomy (Hobson, 2019).

At the outset of public education in Atlanta, Black schools were operated by Negro teachers and were liberal to Black populations (Hobson, 2019). According to Du Bois's study of Blacks in Georgia, the enrollment of Negro children in public schools increased drastically from 7 in 1860 to180 and 565 by 1897 (see Figure 1). The growth of teachers was not as rapid as the student population; from 1886 to 1897, the Negro teacher population grew from 2, 512 to 3,316 (see Figure 2). Like most African Americans emerging from bondage after the Civil War, Black Atlantans recognized the necessity of obtaining book learning (Driskell, 2019). Hence, their leaders quickly made education a top priority in their racial agenda.

Figure 1

Enrollment of Black Students in Georgia from 1860-1897

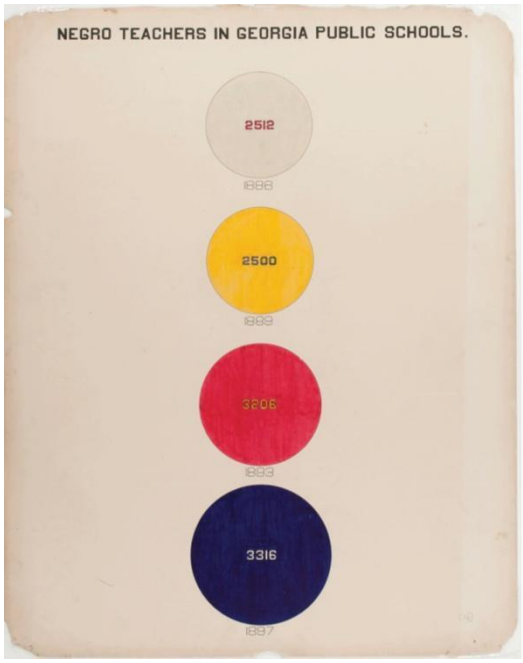


Note: The bars indicate the increasing enrollment of Black students in Georgia during the years 1860 to 1897.

Source: W. E.B. Du Bois Georgia Study

Figure 2

Number of Black Teachers in Georgia Public Schools from 1886-1897



The circles indicate the year that the data were measured; the number inside the circle represents the number of Black teachers in Georgia public schools from 1886-1897 (Du Bois et al., 2022, p. 15)
Source: W. E. B. Du Bois Georgia Study

The first two schools for Black children in Atlanta provided more of a privatized educational experience. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* declared Summer Hill to be the oldest Negro school in Atlanta with a founding date of 1867 (Ecke, 1972). The Storrs School and Summer Hill School were established by the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association prior to 1872, and both schools were accepted into the Atlanta Public School (APS) system under conditions specified by the Atlanta Board of Education in February of 1872 (Wong, 1992). The Storrs School was located in a two-story building originally built and occupied by the Confederate army; and later given to the Freedmen's Bureau following a

crushing defeat by the Union army (Ecke, 1972). The unique nature of the Storrs School was its founding in the historic First Congregational Church in downtown Atlanta by the American Missionary Association as a private school for ex-slaves post-Civil War in 1865 (Ecke, 1972). First Congregational Church stood as a space of innovation for early Black education praxis as northern missionaries taught worship and literacy and offered various social services (Ecke, 1972). The school would be purchased in1877 by the Atlanta Board of Education; however, white citizens in the community protested and rejected the school as part of the Atlanta school district. While little known is about Summer Hill and Storrs, evidence suggested that these two schools operated in plain sight with fugitive pedagogy (Givens, 2022). features. The schools were overcrowded, lacked plumbing, and were severely underfunded as missionaries shifted their finances and attention away from these endeavors, leaving a longing for more schools and funding that addressed the needs of Atlanta's Black citizens (Driskell, 2019).

The Black teachers, school officials, and secular and religious leaders who formed the vanguard of the postwar common school movement insisted that the ex-slaves must educate themselves, gather experience, and acquire a responsible awareness of the duties incumbent upon them as citizens and as male voters in the new social order (Anderson, 1988). Education remained a top priority, yet securing political influence held equal significance. By 1924, driven by the collective strength of Atlanta's Black electorate, the city was ultimately compelled to construct four new elementary or commonly referred to as grammar schools for Black students and establish the publicly funded Booker T. Washington High School on Atlanta's westside just minutes from the Atlanta University Center (Driskell, 2019). The creation of these new schools did not stem from the benevolence of white political leaders and citizens; rather, it came from the coordinated efforts of early Black leaders who positioned themselves to gain political power in

the city. The NAACP and their door-to-door campaign made it easy for Atlanta's Black political leadership to describe taxes as a means to disenfranchise poor and African American voters rather than as a tool to improve the quality of the electorate (Driskell, 2019). While it was true that respectability politics divided Black voters, Black voters were united on the fight for equality, regardless of their social station in life. The veil of respectability politics was lifted for the common goal of getting a school built. The building of Booker T. Washington High School on the west side of the city, just down the street from the Atlanta University Center, was a small win compared to the decades of battles Black citizens would have to endure moving forward. Booker T. Washington was overcrowded with a poor physical plant and enrollment coming from Decatur, College Park, and East Point (Driskell, 2019). The joy of achievement was short-lived, but Booker T. Washington and the few other schools erected for Black students instilled a sense of pride and excellence in students with the few resources they had (Driskell, 2019).

In examining the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* and its political implications, it is crucial to acknowledge the diversity of Black political thought, a notion underscored by Dawson (2001). Black individuals, influenced by their life circumstances, have historically held varied political ideologies, affiliations, and interests on the state of community, education, economics, and other civic affairs. Dawson's theories on Black political thought, specifically conservatism, liberalism, and nationalism, helped situate the dilemma in the achievement or road to achievement for the *Compromise* and for other municipalities grappling with issues of race, economics, class, and political possibilities. The evolution of Black political thought is characterized by the clash of ideologies, typical of political debates among African Americans. Dawson's concept of a Black counterpublic sphere interacting with the broader American society

helps to understand the semi-autonomous development of Black political ideologies and their interaction with national political debates.

Dawson's (2001) ideas on Black political thought resonated with the political landscape of Atlanta, marked by divergent interests, political agendas, and economic discord among the Black population. These ideas also challenge the simplistic celebration of Black political thought exclusively within mainstream American liberalism. Dawson pointed out a tendency to overlook the full range of discourse within the Black counterpublic during specific periods. Attacks on the Black community are not always recognized as courageous expressions of creativity but sometimes as opportunistic threats (Dawson, 2001).

This perspective aligned with the critical discord present in Atlanta's political arena for this study, involving national and local activists, well-known leaders, and lesser-known figures. Such discord reflected Dawson's assertions about political theories pertinent to Black individuals, issues, and communities with specific implications for the competing interests in the fight for quality education in APS in the 1970s—certainly from the early 1900s through the 1960s. This background on Black political thought provides a type of grid for how challenges among Black activists and stakeholders in Atlanta are answering questions for and about APS around the racial distribution of labor, student population, and preferred leadership for the district—all while operating within the Atlanta style of politics.

2.3 The History of Black Education in Atlanta, 1925-1961:

The Road to *Brown* and Its Impact on Atlanta Public Schools

This section of the literature review documents and examines key events leading up to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. It chronicles the history of Black education in Atlanta from 1925 to 1961. The rationale for this cluster of time is to show chronologically the interplay

of education and policy in APS. By examining *Brown*'s impact on APS, this discussion can shed light on desegregation efforts in APS.

Educators, legal scholars, and historians have countered the narratives that portray the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 as the great equalizer in public education (Horsford, 2011; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Tillman, 2004a). To this end, the NAACP had created a national strategy that tackled school desegregation systematically (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). These strategies often identified race as the primary manner by which students were being disenfranchised and marginalized in their local school districts. While the national agenda was clear on how to achieve desegregation and integration in American cities, Atlanta presented two major challenges in the achievement of this goal (Hornsby, 2016). The first challenge was that the city's population was over 80% Black due to white flight, and white children became the minority, thus leaving few, if any, white children to integrate the schools. Simply put, there were not enough white kids to go around (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The second challenge was that the NAACP had a proven strategy, but that strategy would be ineffective in the city of Atlanta (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). While Atlanta's racial make-up consisted of a great number of Blacks, the socioeconomic disparity between middle-class and upper-class Blacks and poor and working-class Blacks created a chasm whereby the interests of both groups were different. Both groups desired quality of education for their students, but what that quality of education looked like paled by comparison (Hornsby, 2016).

By 1951, there were a total of 105 schools, with 29 of those schools identified as Black schools (Reynolds et al., 2007). At the time of the *Brown* decision, every school district in the state of Georgia operated a racially segregated school system (Hornsby, 1991, 2016). One hundred and nine school districts had been sued in federal court to eliminate racial segregation;

the other 71 districts had not been involved in school desegregation litigation and most of them had voluntary complaints agreements (441-b) with the U.S. Department of Education (Reynolds et al., 2007). This dual system remained intact until 1961, when efforts of desegregation began with the Atlanta Nine integrated schools on the north side of Atlanta. While the Atlanta Nine in many ways symbolized a paradigm shift in racial and school politics in Atlanta, it was very clear that this victory did little to quiet the racial tension and intense political norms that dominated the sensibilities of Southern segregationists (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 1991, 2016; Gong, 1992). Desegregation in APS had two predominant features: it was slow and exhausting (Hornsby, 2016). As it were, Georgia state law prohibited the desegregation of schools 7 years after *Brown* had been decided and set as a precedent in the United States (Gong, 1992).

The Georgia Constitution mandated separate schools for white and Black students and explicitly prohibited any teacher instructing both groups in the same school from receiving payment from the common school fund (Wong, 1992). Governor Herman Talmadge, a firm segregationist along with his contemporaries, opposed desegregation and worked to maintain the dual school system, stating that the *Brown* ruling was an abuse of power (Brown-Nagin, 2012). With many of the state's elected officials opposing desegregation and vowing to maintain the dual system; and after several failed petitions by several Black citizens to integrate, the Atlanta School Board was sued (Brown-Nagin, 2012). This bout of Atlanta's Black citizens with the desegregation policy took place in 1959 when the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) of the NAACP filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, on behalf of a group of Black parents and their children in the city. The case was known as *Calhoun v. Latimer* and later became known as *Calhoun v. Cook et al.*, Civil Action No. 6298 in 1959 (Hornsby, 1991). With the security of state legislation prohibiting race mixing in schools, defense attorneys

held close to the belief that dual systems of education in Atlanta were fair and should be upheld, despite the *Brown* decision. Moreover, defense attorneys argued that Blacks' second-class citizenship regarding where they attended school was their own choice (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). Despite their racially coded language and rhetoric, the court decided on June 16, 1959, that the schools were in fact segregated and needed to submit a plan for desegregation by December of 1959 (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016).

While, on one hand, the courts ordered that Georgia schools desegregate by 1959, on the other hand, the state held on to a bill from earlier that year in which the State Senate approved bills granting the Governor the authority to close integrated schools under the guise that Georgia wanted total segregation (Hornsby, 2016). On November 30, 1960, a plan was approved that would set desegregation in APS to start in Grade 12; then subsequently each year, the preceding grade would be desegregated. At this rate, full desegregation would not be achieved until 1972 (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Although a plan had been approved, Georgia officials were still upset that they were being forced to integrate schools. As a result of their rage and anger, they leaned on the Georgia State Constitution, which allowed the Governor the authority to sever funds to integrated schools and shut them down (Gong, 1992).

It was a seeming victory for white government officials and citizens to have the support of the Georgia State Constitution that would close schools that integrated (Crawford, 2019; Hornsby, 1991; Gong, 1992). However, it was also understood for public schools where white students attended that private schools were not an option, due to the financial commitment associated with private schools. For the first time, whites found themselves in a bind because they knew that if Black citizens gambled and forced the hand of the Governor to shut down schools where Black students enrolled, their children would essentially be left out of school due

to governmental closures (Gong, 1992). At the core, Black parents, activists, and stakeholders held close to the notion that if their children could not go to public schools, then no one's child would go to school. In this vein, white parents preferred to abolish segregation than be faced with the burden and uncertainty of sending their children to private school since their tax dollars fund public schools (Crawford, 2019; Hornsby, 1991; Gong, 1992). Thus, white fear of school closings encouraged local white PTA organizations to grin and bear forced segregation, which was already fortified by federal law. As a result, Georgia state law enforcing school closings if they were integrated was repealed, and the Atlanta Nine enrolled and started school in August of 1961 (Crawford, 2019).

On August 30, 1961, when nine Black children entered four previously all-white high schools, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that Atlanta police watched nervously, as did an entire city. However, at the end of the day, the first public school desegregation in Georgia below the college level had been achieved without violence (Crawford, 2019; Hornsby, 1991; Gong, 1992). According to Gong's (1992) study:

> Atlanta achieved peaceful school desegregation in 1961 not because the city was free from racial discrimination and conflicts, nor because its citizens had abandoned the centuries-old racial prejudice -white superiority and Black inferiority, but because the city's leaders and residents demonstrated much tolerance in regard to racial change. (p. 71)

While the Atlanta Nine broke down barriers in attending schools previously attended by all-white students, this was only a very small percentage of students who would attend previously all-white schools. The following year, 40 more Black students joined the movement. However, even with the perceived racially harmonious image of Atlanta, only 10 schools out of 149 were actually integrated (Fleishman, 2019). Black citizens were still dissatisfied with the "all deliberate speed" strategy expressed by the state and eventually filed two more lawsuits asking

for all grades to be integrated. Their requests were denied by District Court Judge Frank Hooper (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The saving grace for the Atlanta plaintiffs was the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which imposed stiffer penalties for local municipalities that denied American citizens all rights and privileges granted by the U.S, Constitution. Judge Hooper eventually complied and requested that APS make provisions to their desegregation plan to reflect full desegregation by 1968, and APS did this by 1965 (Gong, 1992).

2.4 *The Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*: 1962-1973

This section of the literature review documents and examines key events leading up to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. This section chronicles the crafting of the *Compromise* from 1962 to 1973. The rationale for this cluster of time was to show chronologically how the unfulfilled promise of *Brown* sparked the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. While the Atlanta Nine integrated schools on the north side, widespread integration was slow and, in some cases, not enforced or implemented. Furthermore, this section examines the tensions between the local and national NAACP over strategies for achieving desegregation in APS.

The peaceful desegregation of Atlanta's schools marked a turning point in the normal yearly tension-filled and ambiguous attempt to eliminate dual education systems in the South (Brown-Nagin, 2012). However, desegregation policy was not championed by the Atlanta Board of Education and was a yearly conundrum as the old vanguard and new ideas of local politics collided (Hornsby, 2016). The school board's plan required at least a decade to achieve full desegregation. On April 20, 1971, in the case of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.*, the Court ordered the use of "any technique of pupil assignment necessary" to desegregate the schools and remedy any "continuing effects" of previous discrimination (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Similarly, in July of that same year, over the objections of attorneys for the NAACP, U.S.

District Court judges Sydney Smith and Albert Henderson in Atlanta declared that the APS system was a "unitary" one, i.e., one that had been succinctly desegregated, and ordered the 12-year-old case dismissed (Gong, 1992).

The final battle of school desegregation en route to the *Compromise* came under the guise and context of the Nixon Administration. The case *Alexander V. Holmes County Board of Education* in 1969 ultimately stated that *Brown II*'s key language of "with all deliberate speed" was unconstitutional, and all schools must integrate immediately (Brown-Nagin, 2012). With this mandate, school districts were to submit plans, with the courts sharing how they would be compliant with ending dual school systems and converting to a unitary system. While *Alexander V. Holmes County Board of Education* was a major victory, Atlanta still had challenges with their local school board. As the battle of influence and ideologies continued between the NAACP and local activists, working-class and poor Blacks still suffered throughout the litigation and negotiations process (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). While Lonnie King, the latest actor in the Atlanta desegregation saga, cast his lot as the newest hero in the negotiation process, he, too, had conflicting commitments (Brown-Nagin, 2012). While King served as a mouthpiece for what Black Atlantans wanted, he also was in direct conflict with the ideologies and strategies of the NAACP (Tuck, 2003). With more dissention in the NAACP ranks, it was evident that Blacks in Atlanta were complicated and layered, with competing interests. There was no one Black agenda, nor was the issue in Atlanta simply predicated by race, but elements of class crept into the conversation (Hornsby, 1991, 2016). King's negotiation tactics infuriated his NAACP partners and gave hope to local Atlantans. While King was an agent of the NAACP, he was also a Morehouse College graduate and familiar with local politics in Atlanta as a student organizer (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

King's negotiation of the *Compromise* had greater implications than just solving the issue of school desegregation in Atlanta (Tuck, 2003). It represented a new wave of community and local control in school desegregation causes (Tuck, 2003). Faculty and pupil desegregation was the main point of contention. Pupil ratios were not stipulated, but faculty ratios were. In other words, the teacher racial make-up had to match the pupil demographic in schools, which carried with it the potential of teachers being moved to new schools. To this end, Tillman (2004) quoted Ethridge (1979), who made an argument when addressing the hiring and/or disparity of Blacks as a result of *Brown* conflating the issue as a causality of war (p. 287). Moreover, Tillman contended, "the wholesale firing of Black educators threatened the economic, social and cultural structure of the Black community, and ultimately the social, emotional and academic success of Black children" (p. 280). Thus, the implications of *Brown* juxtaposed with the *Compromise* reset the scales of Black teacher and educator employment in the South and provided jobs and opportunities for Black educators to reestablish themselves in the education workforce (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 2016; Mays, 2003). As indicated in Table 1, *Brown* disrupted this Black economic engine, particularly from pre-*Brown* to 1989 (Fenwick, 2022; Hornsby, 2016).

In the case of Atlanta, advocates may have viewed the *Compromise* as a victory in the grand scheme of their efforts, and given the past history of desegregation litigation in the city, the *Compromise* was essentially just that—a compromise (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Historically, Black educators were dismissed and disenfranchised because of desegregation policy, but the *Compromise* possessed a redeeming quality that ultimately provided Black school leaders with high-ranking roles within the district (Hornsby, 2016). However, in this *Compromise*, the students and their families may have been the casualties. Lonnie King went forward with the

Compromise, knowing and understanding that he could not and would not achieve everything they desired but settled for what they could live with (Hornsby, 2009).

Table 1

Impact of Brown v. Board of Education *on the Employment of Black Educators*

Date	Impact
Pre-1954	Approximately 82,000 Black teachers taught 2 million Black children who attended mostly segregated schools.
1954	On May 17, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case *Oliver L. Brown v. the Topeka (KS) Board of Education*.
1954-1965	More than 38,000 Black educators in 17 southern and border states were dismissed from their positions.
1975-1985	The number of Black students who chose teacher education as a major declined by 66%.
1984-1989	New teacher certification requirements and teacher education program admission requirements resulted in the displacement of 21,515 Black teachers.
2001	African American teachers represented 6% of the public school teaching force, whereas African American students represented 17.1% of the public school student population.

Source: Tillman, 2004; p. 286

The history of *Brown* clearly denotes the ways that Black educators were subject to termination and demotion (Fenwick, 2022). The *Compromise* prioritized Black school leadership over pupils (Hornsby, 2016). It was clear that either pupil desegregation or jobs for Black teachers would be achieved, but not both (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Moreover, the implementation of *Brown* and *Brown II's* "with all deliberate speed" slowed down the process of achieving some sort of desegregation. Atlanta school desegregation litigation also highlighted racial motivations, but it complicated the conventional narrative about community control of schools by analyzing how class dynamics influenced African Americans' educational choices (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

The unintended consequences of *Brown* was that many Black educators lost their jobs. The *Compromise* returned jobs to Black educators in Atlanta. The portion of the plan that called for the desegregation of staff by 1973 recorded that the Black staff was 62.1% of total teachers in the district (Jackson, 1978). While Dr. Alonzo Crim assumed the role as the first Black Superintendent, as mandated by the *Compromise*, two new roles were created—namely, the Associate Superintendent. Each appointment was held by a white educator and a Black educator. Dr. Edward Cook was white and familiar with the APS because his father had served on the board. Dr. John Minor was a Black educator from California who, at one point, served as a superintendent (Jackson, 1978). The two Associate Superintendents were responsible for the instructional design and development. In addition to the Associate Superintendents, there was the creation of area superintendents, which were headed by five Black educators and five white educators. The Assistant Superintendent of Community Relations was created to be the postsecondary arm of the district, and governmental liaison was created to build relationships with the state legislature. These roles were held by a white woman and a Black woman, respectively. Additional roles held by Blacks were the Comptroller and Director of Personnel (Jackson, 1978).

2.4.1 Events Leading up to the *Compromise* of 1973

As Atlanta's reputation as "the city too busy to hate" grew, this sentiment was not only a false realization; it was a façade (Hornsby, 2009). Prior to 1972, Atlanta was perceived as another unyielding bastion of Southern intolerance (Fleishman, 2019). Lonnie King, the prominent civil rights activist and key broker and architect of the *Compromise* of 1973, worked to create a solution for APS that was equitable and shifted its focus to reflect the community of the students it served (Brown-Nagin, 2012). A major component of Atlanta's Black leadership

structure was built on paternalistic leadership models, whereby Negro leaders were handpicked, enshrined, and dubbed the voice of Black citizens of Atlanta (Morehouse College, 2017). In this structure, Black middle-class and elite leaders took the reins of civic concerns and spoke on behalf of the community. Political and social change with respect to Black citizens occurred in Atlanta with backroom conversations between Black and white leaders, often without the oversight of government officials (Tuck, 2003). The Atlanta integration and desegregation challenge in the 1970s was no exception. The Atlanta Action Forum consisting of Mills Lane, Chairman of Atlanta's largest Citizens and Southern Bank, and the preeminent white establishment leader, organized and met periodically to discuss race, economic, and political concerns with clergy and other businessmen in the city (Fleishman, 2019). At this point, the desegregation policy was out of the hands of the school board and put in the hands of a few to create a policy that would evoke change (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

As the 1972 school year approached, superintendent Latimer died, leaving his post, policy, and decision-making responsibilities to John Letson (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). Prominent Black and white business leaders and some education leaders connected and shifted their views from desegregation and integration. They regarded their schools as a symbol of their community, the center of social and recreational activity, and a place to teach them (Fleishman, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). After several rounds of meeting, the biracial leadership of Atlanta charged with drafting an integration plan had to consider the shifting paradigms in the city among Black and even white citizens (Brown-Nagin, 2012). In a chain reaction, Superintendent John Letson lost influence, white folks moved to the suburbs, Black folks heavily concentrated in Atlanta proper, and private school enrollment boosted significantly. There was a swelling sense of common interests, of Black pride, and ultimately of confidence subordinating

the goal of integration; from that emerged the quest for quality education and an attachment that many Black parents had to their community schools (Fleishman, 2019).

The leaders chosen to craft the new plan were William Van Landingham, Lydon Wade, and Lonnie King. Landingham was heavily connected to the school board, while Wade was a member of the Urban League and served as the chair of the district court special advisory committee on Atlanta's school desegregation problems. As noted, Lonnie King was a longtime civil rights activist and one who built racial reconciliation in the city among businessmen (Hornsby, 1991, 2016). After several meetings and negotiations, King put forth that schools must desegregate their administration. If Black administrators were in control of the system, Black parents could be certain of equality in the distribution of resources among the schools (Fleishman, 2019).

As round three of negotiations took place in December of 1972 and issues within the national NAACP and local members in Atlanta transpired, it was evident that Atlanta was departing from national strategies and agendas to achieve an integration of sorts, or some resemblance of school change that made sense for Black children (Hornsby, 1991, 2016). King claimed that the NAACP won its 1954 *Brown* Supreme Court decision because they found that hundreds of thousands of Black kids were being bused past all-white schools to Black shacks, while white kids were being bused past the shacks to their all-white schools; somewhere between busing and no busing, there had to be some common ground, and they were trying to find it (Fleishman, 2019). Many local Black PTAs and other professional organizations opposed busing and believed the school board was spending too much time on lawsuits instead of educating the students they currently had enrolled in their schools (Fleishman, 2019).

While there were differences in how to tackle the busing and integration issues, white parents began to create false residences in suburban areas so they would not have to engage in integration efforts and relieve their children of attending school with Black children (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Thus, the issue of student integration still presented as a challenge. What was clear from all of the negotiations were the issues between national and local organizations of the NAACP and LDF. While the national NAACP had been successful and earned a special voice for the struggle of Black Americans around issues of equity and civil rights; it was clear that national strategies and tactics did not match the local context by which these actions were being enacted (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Atlanta's problem was that it was a city with an 80% Black population, incapable of being desegregated by the same methods that had been effective in school systems in other cities that were only 20-40% Black (Brown-Nagin, 2012). While busing was a legitimate option, it was not necessarily helpful for a city with Black students in the majority and white parents moving to the suburbs in droves (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

Insider/outsider positionality was essential in the negotiations for desegregation in APS (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The results of the *Compromise* were crafted and mediated by someone not in the lawsuit but someone of the community. This insider/outsider status allowed for enough proximity to be passionate about the issue but enough distance to concede points that could be tolerated (Brown-Nagin, 2012). The LDF took a maximalist approach that included 50% student desegregation, with busing as a strategy to achieve desegregation; the more flexible negotiators took a minimalist approach that included 10% desegregation (Fleishman, 2019).

The *Compromise* had three objectives, all of which were achieved. The first objective was student desegregation. The plan would increase the number of students in desegregated schools in Atlanta from 27,939 to 38,718 (Fleishman, 2019). In this vein, almost 60,000 all-

Black students would remain in segregated schools (Fleishman, 2019; Wong, 1992). Under this plan, desegregated schools would rise from 47 to 64. Prior to the *Compromise*, more than 90% of schools were segregated Black, totaling 83, and 90% of schools were segregated white, totaling about 20 (Brown-Nagin, 2012). This plan also meant that nine schools would close, and three new schools would be opened. Busing would also be voluntary via the Majority to Minority program (M and M). At this time, 2,000 students were already participating, and the plan expected a little over 700 students to join the program (Gong, 1992).

The second objective was to achieve administrative desegregation. There were 37 administrative positions at the six highest levels of the systems administration, including the superintendent, which were to be specified by race (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Under the *Compromise*, the superintendent would be Black, approved and appointed by the Board of Education. Moreover, while no one would be terminated to achieve this end, 50% of administrative staff would be Black. This part of the proposal was not court-mandated, but staff desegregation was (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

The third objective was to achieve staff desegregation. Principals, assistant principals. Teachers, and teacher aides were the intended personnel in the *Compromise* (Brown-Nagin, 2012). There were 220 staff persons and 27 schools with the goals of eliminating racial imbalances among staff and faculty within APS. The *Compromise* sought a racial balance at each school—around 10% of the system-wide composition. Unlike the administrative desegregation portion of the *Compromise* which was not court-mandated, the staff desegregation component was mandatory since there was no compliance in 1970 when the school system was told to desegregate its staff (Fleishman, 2019). The *Compromise* brought about a great turn in city politics for Atlanta (Hornsby, 2016). White flight ushered in an unusual and unintended

opportunity for Black citizens in Atlanta to make decisions regarding their children's education (Hein, 1972). With limited white folks in the city of Atlanta, achieving remotely any sense of integration would be insurmountable, especially since the agreement between Black and white business leaders and civil rights leaders gave hope to quelling racial tensions (Hobson, 2019). Within this *Compromise*, provisions included that African Americans would make up half of APS administrators as well as the superintendent; redrawn attendance zones integrated 4,800 of APS's 92,000 students into suburban schools (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Fleishman, 2019; Wong, 1992).

2.5 A Closer Look at the NAACP and the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*

> According to legal scholars and critics, the legacy of *Brown* carries with it the promise of democracy, equality, and a symbol of hope, while to others it carries stains of unintended consequences and the constant reminder of America's inability to shed its unshakable relationship to white supremacy and Black inferiority. (Douglass Horsford, 2009, p. 59)

The NAACP led the charge in *Brown* and came up with a compelling strategy that was intended to be a plug and play throughout the country, dismantling segregated schools and integrating Black students into this American promise.

> The chief architect of the strategy was Charles Hamilton Houston, Dean of the Howard University Law School and the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court. The NAACP brought many cases that considered segregation in transportation, housing, and lawsuits to equalize salaries of Black teachers to their white colleagues. (Balkin, 2002, p. 29)

Essentially, the work of Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall emphasized theories from *Plessy v. Ferguson*, specifically the doctrine of "separate but equal," to argue cases. With success achieved at the higher education level, the NAACP began tackling cases in local communities (such as *Briggs v. Elliot*) in South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia, and Kansas (Brown-Nagin, 2012). While headway was being made throughout the Midwest and portions of

the South, in the years following the victory of *Brown*, APS still had not resolved to desegregate schools. It appeared that "with all deliberate speed" was, in fact, the order of the day. As it were, Blacks in Atlanta were insistent on being able to see the full manifestation of victory in Atlanta, just as integration cases were being won elsewhere in the country (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

"While the national NAACP and LDF viewed Atlanta branch members as natural allies in the struggle to implement *Brown*, local residents offered little support for the school desegregation campaign" (Balkin, 2002, p. 335). This tension served as a zeitgeist moment in the legacy of the NAACP in Atlanta. It was no secret that many Blacks, particularly Black educators, were in an ethical dilemma (Driskell, 2019). While many opposed desegregation because they knew overwhelmingly it would lead to the loss of jobs, they also did not want to speak out against the NAACP and the progress that had been made up to that point. As time went on, Atlantans became more emboldened and encouraged to take the reins of their rights and seek best possibilities for their experiences in Atlanta by organizing on their own, apart from the NAACP (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Membership to the local branch was declining, despite the breadth of organizing and collegian population in the city. Moreover, the local branch lacked leadership, and Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley removed local NAACP leaders who offered pushback to the national NAACP program of aggressive desegregation (Brown-Nagin, 2012). What Marshall and Motley did not take into consideration was the growing discontentment of the Black middle class to participate with the NAACP as well as the NAACP's growing arrogance to not consult and collaborate with local grassroots organizations and organizers (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Driskell, 2019). Unbeknownst to them, local ordinary citizens were ready and willing to fight for their causes but were often overlooked (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Moreover, the NAACP and LDF were having their own legal issues and had to

split, thus widening the separation of cohesive messaging and strategy from the top (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Driskell 2019). What had been a well-oiled machine with dedication to the people they were sent to serve became nothing more than self-appointed attorneys taking up fights to enlarge their profile (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

The NAACP attorneys played a major role in the fight for justice and desegregation efforts. However, there was still a disconnect as the attorneys' views of their roles and community roles were not aligned. NAACP attorneys like Motley believed "lawyers led activists" (Brown-Nagin, 2012, p. 338) and continued to file petitions without the full support of Black communities. The LDF's campaign for school desegregation might have been a success for the NAACP, but their plans, strategies, and inability to galvanize socially and politically strong organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were detrimental to their agenda (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Driskell, 2019; Hornsby, 1991, 2016). Black citizens in Atlanta and the NAACP wanted the same goal—equality and quality education—but what that meant to both groups varied (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 2016). For Black Atlantans, jobs, not pupil desegregation, was the priority, while for the NAACP, the formula was to achieve pupil desegregation. Ultimately, the *Compromise* provided administrative and leadership roles for Black school leaders to preserve and create job security, while pupil desegregation and student interests were secondary (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Introduction and Overview

For this dissertation, I used a historical case study approach to document and examine the events and players who helped to craft the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. The methodology for this study is separated into two parts. In part one, the research design section, I explain the research decisions that laid the foundation for setting up and carrying out this historical case study. In part two, the data collection and analysis section, I discuss the archival exploration and fundamental processes necessary for conducting this study.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

A case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) allows for a more accurate and narrow account of how this particular city (Atlanta) engaged in the Black education project while contending with national policies and local organizational strategies for desegregation and integration. The interconnection between community control and policy highlighted this particular motif; thus, taking the approach of focusing on a city allowed me to examine and interpret what Black education looked like in Atlanta Public Schools (APS), as opposed to focusing on a national study. A concentrated focus at the local level further provided an opportunity to observe and study the local educators, students, activists, and stakeholders who not only participated in the crafting of the *Compromise* but also those who were impacted by it. While this dissertation was a historical case study dedicated to understanding how the *Compromise* emerged and helped to shape the Black education project in Atlanta, it further brought to the bear voices from below or on the margins, whose stories may have become lost in organizational squabbles for power and personal political agendas.

By using a case study, I am obliged—as is the reader—to lean into the historical dimensions of the Black education project and consider how national and local organizations can have competing interests about desegregation strategies, while students and their experiences are seemingly not a priority or chief aim. By examining the *Compromise* and the players who crafted it; considering all that happened during those years; and placing the history in conversation with Atlanta's social, economic, and political factors, I was able to understand more fully what happens when Black leaders have control of their education system. As related in Chapter 2, the 1970s ushered in a new wave of thought for Black citizens and leaders, and an understanding of the quality of education in Atlanta seemed suspended between two poles: one pole being Black progressive politics, the other pole being Black children's education as a vehicle for driving economic engines for labor in the district (Hobson, 2019).

I collected, gathered, and studied sources by visiting physical archives and searching digital archive collections. Several archives contained relevant materials for this project. The APS Archives holds many artifacts such as yearbooks; school board meeting minutes; and writings from politicians, educators, and students. Together, these documents provided information on thoughts from students, faculty, administrators, families, and local politicians on such issues as racism, segregation, curriculum, voting rights, and policies affecting students and the overall community. I gleaned insights from the school board meeting minutes specifically during the 1970-1973 school years to understand the discourse leading up to and following the implementation of the *Compromise*.

Local newspapers such as *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Atlanta Daily World* provided viewpoints on the public's perspectives and responses to the *Agreement* as well as the desegregation discourse in the city of Atlanta. In addition, articles on the desegregation

agreement and local court cases were published in national newspapers such as the *New York Times*. These publications helped to form a clearer picture of how APS, its romanticized collaboration to bring about desegregation, and its importance to the national discourse on schools and desegregation policy were portrayed to and viewed by the general public. Additional materials were located at the Georgia Archives, the Clark Atlanta University Archives, the Emory University Archives, and the Atlanta History Center Archives. The Georgia Archives hold original, official copies of the states' laws, county boundaries, boundary disputes, and zoning demographics. The Clark Atlanta University Archives located at Robert W. Woodruff Library hold the Benjamin E. Mays Papers, named after the APS school board president, and the Atlanta Community Relations Commission Collection, which was part of negotiations for the *Compromise*. The Clark Atlanta University Archives also hold a collection on Alonzo Crim, Superintendent of APS (1973-1975). The Emory University Archives and Special Collections hold materials on African American History and Culture along with Southern Historical Collections. The Atlanta Historical Center contains materials on school desegregation and Atlanta's social history.

Understanding the value of my research and how Atlanta is the cradle of the Civil Rights movement, icons, and institutions, I recognized the vastness of people and materials as sources of inquiry. As I connected with archivists and engaged with digital archives, I paid close attention to who curated the archives, to what end these materials are being preserved, what was and was not included, and what the purpose of these archives. Moreover, as I built my archival tool kit, learning the names of specific individuals, organizations, and institutions served as an added benefit to unearthing pivotal information and resources on the topic. With these pivotal questions and tools, I could determine the biases of the archives and view the archives through

objective lenses while also recognizing my insider/outsider status. This study had an anticipated timeline of 7 months (January 2024 to July 2024) to examine archives, documents, and oral histories within the archives.

3.3 Historical Case Study Methodology

I chose a historical case study because it brings to bear chronological history with government documents, archived materials, memoirs, oral history, and autobiographies (Danto, 2008). Thick descriptions and a close examination of the *Compromise* from a historical perspective served as the bedrock of my analysis and synthesis. By providing thick descriptions and a meticulous examination of chronological events, including pivotal meetings between the NAACP and local activists as well as correspondences between the Mayor's office and the APS board, I endeavored to encapsulate the intricate narrative of school desegregation and integration in APS through a historical lens. The adoption of a historical case study methodology presented an invaluable opportunity to delve into the multifaceted historical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural dimensions that surrounded the process of desegregation in APS. Given the temporal distance of over 50 years since these events transpired, my use of primary and secondary sources emerged as the most fitting method for cataloging and scrutinizing diverse perspectives concerning the *Compromise*. The reliance on primary sources not only augmented the scholarly rigor of this study but also underscored the necessity of acknowledging potential omissions—specifically, the voices, individuals, and groups left unmentioned, owing to the biases of archivists and authors who determine perceived significance within the narrative. Consequently, the omission of such voices posed a potential limitation to the study, hindering its capacity to elucidate fully and present a comprehensive account of the *Compromise* (Danto, 2008).

Historical research is a way to construct a nuanced narrative of past events and moments to create a rich tableau from a multitude of perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The voices and experiences encapsulated within archival materials, including oral histories, writings, and various cultural artifacts, are pivotal to informing and shaping the research design. The meticulous integration of these primary sources served to strengthen the rationale for adopting a historical case study approach to examine the events and perspectives surrounding the *Compromise*. Through a historical analysis, I methodically documented the sequence of events involving the NAACP, local activists, community organizers, and the school board, all working towards the realization of quality education and community control within the APS district. With this approach, I scrutinized legal cases, correspondences, school board meetings, and interviews to derive a comprehensive understanding of local community contexts, unfolding events, and key actors that coalesced in the culmination of the *Compromise*. Ultimately, this study was anchored in a chronological analysis of historical facts which will serve as a guiding resource for readers to facilitate more comprehension of the contextual underpinnings of each event, the assumptions underscoring them, and their enduring impact on the institutional landscape and participants involved (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

In historical research, a deliberate conflation of data collection and analysis arises from a researcher's intrinsic appreciation for the significance of meticulous data gathering from the outset. Consequently, the analysis becomes an inherent component of the collection process itself (Danto, 2008). During the phase of data organization, a researcher undertakes a comprehensive review of all data, with the explicit objective of addressing the research questions at hand. Each research question delineates a distinct taxonomy within the domain, strategically employed by the researcher to facilitate a nuanced "storytelling" process (Danto, 2008). I used the data

collected during this research to yield insight into the historical, political, and social arenas of Black education in APS and determine how the aforementioned dynamics impacted Black students, leaders, educators, and families. Considering how the *Compromise* brought about a new paradigm with Black leadership at the helm of education in Atlanta, this work may shed light on the efficacy of the Black education project in APS.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), "data analysis" is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass amounts of collected data. Moreover, Marshall and Rossman offered an analytical process that falls into five phases which serve as an organizing tool for analyzing data. To organize my data, I engaged the following five phases: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; (d) searching for alternative explanations of the data; and (e) writing the report (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). After organizing the data, I triangulated the data. By utilizing the "looping method" as an analytical strategy, I examined the archival and secondary sources to fill in gaps and create a more full and comprehensive story (Siddle Walker, 2020).

3.4 The Archive and Its Contents

Archives constitute arenas where competing truth claims undergo scrutiny, and credibility teeters in the balance within the archival grain (Stoler, 2009). Archivists, in their initial observations, emphasize that a profound understanding of an archive necessitates an appreciation of the institution it served (Stoler, 2009). Reading and examining the archive as a Black man from the South, Lawson (2017) submitted, "In examining the archive, we find violent abstraction, subtraction, in the sciences, classrooms, and the courts" (p. 32). Toni Morrison (1993) emphasizes the need to scrutinize the manipulation of the Africanist narrative, seeing it as a crucial form of mediation in understanding one's humanity. She contended that such analysis

reveals how this narrative constructs a history and context for whites while often omitting the historical and contextual richness of the Black experience (Lawson, 2017). Thus, as I engaged the archive, I did so with the understanding that writers and curators of the archive made decisions about the value of the artifacts based on their conventional and philosophical views of Black philosophical and ontological experiences.

As I dove into the archives, particularly examining contents encompassing school board minutes and newspaper clippings from *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, I took care to remain cognizant that these materials were products of state machinery (Stoler, 2009). Historical ethnography asserts that no singular answer suffices, and archives illuminate the processes of production, revealing the power relations in which archives are created, secluded, and rearranged (Stoler, 2009). The archive does not carry the weight of tradition, nor does it constitute the library of libraries existing outside time and place; rather, it discloses the rules of practices, with its threshold of existence established by the disjunction separating us from what we can no longer articulate (Foucault & Sheridan, 1992).

Epistemic formations offer insights into the possible, the thinkable, and the constellations of concepts under question—what people assume to know about their worlds and the disagreements that arise (Stoler, 2009). Archival documents, in this context, have participated in emotional economy through various channels: the measured tone of official texts, the pointed critique found in marginalia, and the footnotes accompanying official reports where moral assessments of cultural practices often found a place and local knowledge was archived (Stoler, 2009). Consequently, archives housing materials related to the Black education project in Atlanta and the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* functioned as crucibles of legal knowledge and official repositories for policies, correspondences, letters, and articles. They served as critical

reservoirs of historical information that reflect the complex interplay of power dynamics, emotions, and the multifaceted nature of knowledge construction within a sociopolitical context.

Various cultural artifacts were found in archives from physical pieces, seemingly insignificant memorabilia, and even recorded and documented conversations and interviews. Oral history has played a significant role in researching and understanding the history of Black education in the post-World War II era (Danns, 2015). Moreover, historians can use oral history as a methodology to supplement their studies by conducting a few interviews as part of their sources, or as a project where groups of people are interviewed to understand the events or history of a community (Danns, 2015). Exploring the archives, particularly oral histories within an archive, can be critical material within data collection and analysis because, while interviews with members of social and political elites have been included in existing documentary sources, the most distinctive contribution of oral history is including within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise be 'hidden from history' (Perks & Thomson, 2009). Because Black education in Atlanta has been understudied (Crawford, 2019), crafting a study that highlights the voices of non-mainstream voices is instrumental in understanding the impact of the *Compromise*. In this study, oral histories served as a key cultural artifact and provided a way to hear the stories of ordinary people whose voices are not typically captured in existing records. Participants' stories from the archives provide an avenue for creating meaning for both the reader and the historian (Danns, 2015).

To capture the experiences of Black school leaders and Black students in historical studies, researchers have engaged participants by using oral history practices and techniques as a method of unearthing deep and rich data. In her study, Douglass (2011) engaged retired superintendents who attended and served in the same school districts they attended. Similarly,

Siddle Walker (1996) engaged members of a community in Caswell County, North Carolina, about value-segregated schools and the asset-based experiences this school community, as cultivated with principals, students, teachers, and families. Similarly, Kelly (2012) used oral history to understand how African Americans benefited from segregated school spaces. Todd Breland (2018) conducted a similar study in Chicago around community control, in which she used oral histories to capture the nuances and experiences of local community activists concerned with improving student experiences in local schools through radical political and education reform. Danns (2015) used oral histories to study Chicago graduates of desegregated high schools and their experiences in segregated and desegregated contexts. K'Meyer (2017) and Garland (2013) utilized oral history to provide a rich and intricate first-hand analysis of how desegregation took shape, the movements organized for and against it, and the various ways oral histories can be central to study. Crawford (2019) used oral history as a method to capture the experiences of the nine students in Atlanta, Georgia, who integrated schools during the 1961 school year. This study by Crawford exposed a gap in Atlanta's Black education history because the researcher shared the importance of Atlanta's political and educational dilemma to the national conversation around school desegregation.

I mention these crucial studies because oral histories in the archive provide various pathways to truth-finding for the researcher (Danns, 2018). Another example of the utility of oral history was demonstrated by Celcelski (2014), who used oral history to show how Black communities invoked and implemented community control within their schools. Moreover, oral histories in desegregation studies exist with the intent to understand what school desegregation meant to those who participated (Danns, 2015). Researchers can use oral histories to reveal histories based on their research questions. The literature on the history of Black education,

especially about segregation and desegregation, hinges on the researcher's understanding of the value of participant voice. Researchers must be aware of the limitations that exist when calling on participants to recall memories and perceptions from past events and moments. However, engaging oral history as a method in concert with other sources brings to bear an important aspect of historical research (Danns, 2015) when exploring questions about Black education and experiences within Black communities.

3.5 Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations and delimitations of this study lay in its methodology. Many of the major players who were involved in the *Compromise* are either deceased or do not remember much about the negotiations from preliminary investigations and inquiries. Furthermore, archives are limited and subjective. Who crafts the archives and what they deem to be worth archiving may or may not lead to full stories or voices from below. Voices from below refer to ordinary people who may not have prestige or pedigree to meet some idea of epistemic authority or value. However, in this case, when documents and archives are viewed through the lenses of a Black epistemology, materials in the archives can be examined in the raw, and multiple stories can be mined. Tillman (2002) called this level of investment in the pure and raw experiences of African Americans a commitment to the mutual invitation, respect, and value of one's story culturally sensitive research approaches.

The delimitations of this study are found in the types of archives I chose to review. I intentionally chose archives at the Auburn Avenue Library and the Woodruff Library at Clark Atlanta University because, while the archivist may have made certain decisions on what enters the archive, I was still able to sift through materials curated through the Black gaze and perspective. Furthermore, as I examined legal documents at the APS archive and newspaper

articles from *Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* I could curate a narrative that was honest and accurate in placing stories from below in conversation with narratives that overwhelmingly related stories about Black people, without compromising cultural currency or pure intentions. During this study, I did not delve into the nuances of issues with the *Compromise* at each school in APS. However, reviewing documents responsibly and leaning into the archives provided enough detail to understand the *Compromise* and craft a narrative that fills the void of not speaking to living individuals.

To verify if the study and the findings were accurate, I employed safeguards described as validity and reliability. Using multiple validity procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) assisted in checking for validity. Internal validity threats are always a risk when conducting research. Historical effects and maturation are two plausible main threats. Creswell and Creswell suggested utilizing one or more strategies to check validity. My study employed three validity strategies to align my research with my research questions and methodological approaches. This study required good documentation of data collection as well as protocols for coding and documenting notes from artifacts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The parameters of this study were intentionally delimited to the confines of APS within the temporal boundaries of 1960 and 1975. This specific timeframe was selected due to its historical significance, notably marked by the integration efforts initiated by the Atlanta Nine in 1960, which initiated the gradual process of desegregation across the district. While this early endeavor sowed the seeds of change, it was not until well over 13 years later, culminating in the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973,* that substantial progress in desegregation was realized. Consequently, the years 1960-1975 offer a small but comprehensive vantage point for me to scrutinize the genesis of desegregation within APS and meticulously trace the trajectory of the

Compromise. The immediate aftermath of its implementation during the last 2 years served as a crucial window for examining the repercussions of the *Compromise* once all of its components were adopted and operationalized. While I initially stayed within the confines of my designated dates, moving beyond 1975 into the 1980s provided the greatest depth from a longitudinal perspective.

The scope of this investigation inherently confined me to rely on existing archival resources, namely school board documents, oral histories, and newspaper articles pertinent to the *Compromise*. These materials served as primary sources for extracting insights into the deliberations and discussions surrounding desegregation policy, tensions between the national NAACP and local activists, and clandestine meetings recorded in the minutes of the school board, held in secret to discuss the intricacies of the *Compromise.*

Chapter 4: Findings

> Atlanta citizens will be equally happy and proud if their city sets the pace for the entire nation in developing a metropolis where Blacks and whites live harmonious together and where even the poorest citizen has adequate housing, good jobs, and quality education- a city where every man, woman, and child can stand straight and tall, a city where everyone is born free and walk on the moon! (Benjamin Mays, 2003, p 299)

From January 2024 to July 2024, I visited four different archives located in Atlanta, Georgia, and San Francisco, California. These archives and holdings contained vital elements for my study of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. These archives held personal papers, artifacts, newspaper articles, photo albums, and official records. Key archives visited were at the Auburn Avenue Research Library, the Woodruff Library at Clark Atlanta University, and the Atlanta Public Schools Museum and Archive. Additionally, the Hoover Archives at Stanford University proved to be a vital site for study. I reviewed over 30 collections, and of those 30 collections, 10 collections helped provide insight into my research questions. Those 10 collections were:

- Dr. Alton Hornsby Collection (Auburn Avenue Research Library),
- NAACP, Atlanta Branch Records (Auburn Avenue Research Library),
- Benjamin E. Mays Papers (Woodruff Atlanta University Center),
- Wiley S. Bolden Papers (Woodruff Atlanta University Center),
- Atlanta Urban League Papers (Woodruff Atlanta University Center),
- Grace Towns Hamilton Papers (Woodruff Atlanta University Center),
- Maynard Jackson Administration Records Series C (Woodruff Atlanta University Center),
- Alonzo Crim Papers (Hoover Archive at Stanford University),

- Atlanta Public Schools Museum and Archive (Atlanta Public Schools), and
- Atlanta Urban League (Woodruff Atlanta University Center).

These 10 collections together helped me tell the story of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. From these collections, I examined the documents and the *Compromise* through analytical lenses, particularly Black political thought lenses. What this examination did not accomplish, however, was to help me explore all six components of Dawson's (1994) Black political thought framework. The three aspects of the framework through which I viewed these documents were Black nationalism, Black conservatism, and radical egalitarianism. While these three frames are not exhaustive of the various viewpoints displayed throughout and embedded in the road to, during, and after the *Compromise*, these frames did offer a cursory glance at the different parties who had a stake in the quality of education, the process of equitable education in Atlanta, and the overall efficacy of Black education for Black children and stakeholders.

4.1 On Black Elected Officials

To understand the depth of the *Compromise* in Atlanta, school desegregation, and local politics, an exegetical exercise must be considered. Racial politics in Atlanta, historically, was intrinsically woven into every democratic appeal for social progress. Many Black elected officials became incorporated into the new ruling regime of race relations management, which functioned as a regulatory buffer dedicated to incremental changes in race relations and even small improvements in the economic plight of the poor (Hill, 1994; Reed, 1999). Therefore, Dawson provided a vista for considering how various political ideologies map onto the plight of African Americans who employ various political affiliations and tropes. A common misnomer is to think of Blacks from a particular social location as a monolith. The misnomer is that all Blacks think the same about politics, education, and culture, whether they are wealthy, middle-class,

working-class, or poor (Hobson, 2019). Atlanta's history revealed that although Blacks and whites may fight on opposite sides of political issues, Blacks are not always aligned on those issues and hold various ideas on how progress ought to be achieved. Dawson (1994) submitted, "A common feature of all these critiques of ideology is their assertion that a single, universal ideology dominates society" (p. 50). Some Blacks are wedded to policies and actions that preserve the privileges they actively hold in the same ways that racist whites attempt to wield and maintain racial power. To be clear, there is not one fundamental way to approach politics for Black communities. Dawson further posited, "There are several fundamental problems with the uncompleted, if comforting, celebration of the location of Black political thought solidly within the mainstream of American liberalism" (p. 29). In other words, Blacks in America are not a monolith, and everyone's social location not only colors their political perspective but also buttresses how they see community, economics, culture, and individual and collective values. Furthermore, according to Dawson, "All black ideologies provide visions of triumph, but each has a substantially different vision of a triumphant future" (p. 54).

4.2 Atlanta's Political Landscape in the 1960s and Early 1970s

Atlanta's Black communities—spanning the elite, middle, working, and poor classes—hold varied historical narratives, each shaping distinct viewpoints on politics, education, employment, economics, and housing, ultimately setting the stage for a political shift in the city (Hobson, 2019). As it were, during the decade of the 1960s, Blacks had flexed their political muscle by electing a young Jewish mayor Sam Massell and a young Black vice mayor Maynard Jackson along with a biracial city council. However, Black power had not taken over Atlanta (Hornsby, 2016). The end of the 1960s marked a pivotal point in the history of Atlanta and America as a whole. On the heels of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Vice

President Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the presidency and, with the help of Congress, passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Despite this progress, Atlanta's drum major for justice, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was also assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. The Poor People's Campaign had been one of King's latest projects, which called upon the federal government to reform labor and housing discrimination for America's marginalized populations. Against the backdrop of American calamity emerged the promise of new leadership, new possibilities, and a new America moving toward the 1970s, with Black power and identity politics dominating the national discourse.

The influence of the Black vote in Atlanta and elsewhere in Georgia was enhanced by a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1962 (*Gary v. Sanders*) that declared Georgia's county unit system unconstitutional (Hornsby, 2016). Politics, particularly voting in Atlanta, is heavily influenced by Atlanta-style politics—meaning that coalitions are created to ensure political regimes and cabinets are agreed upon in advance behind closed doors. With these agreements in tow, mutual benefits are perceived and outcomes are premeditated so that Blacks and whites can live with them. While the 1960s held the promise of a city with legitimate racial harmony and progress due to the successful proximal school desegregation in 1961, challenges persisted in the city. Restaurants, the police department, the Fox Theater, and neighborhoods in general remained segregated and faced a significant degree of segregation. As with many civil rights movements, students led the charge. In Atlanta, while garbage truck workers were protesting their low salaries, the students at the Atlanta University Center were expressing their disdain for unjust policies in restaurants and housing that simultaneously upset the status quo and established a leadership structure. Student protests posed a threat to the ability of elected officials to maintain

their control. In the tradition of the "Atlanta Style" of handling racial crises, then Mayor Ivan Allen, who was elected by the Black and white coalition, called in the old Black leadership to deal with residential redlining and industrial land acquisition for Black people (Hobson, 2019).

To squelch the emerging racial tensions throughout the city, Mayor Allen in 1964 created a biracial committee of fair employment and reported in July of that year that 908 Blacks had been hired by the city government during the first of the year (Hornsby, 2016). A. T. Walden, a prolific attorney, power broker, and member of the Black Atlanta leadership conglomerate, was essential to the progress of the Black Atlantans and the privileges that some enjoyed. However, his cosmopolitan sensibilities did not always align with those of the poor, working class, or even college student population in Atlanta. The *Atlanta Inquirer* called Walden "a modern-day Moses who led the people to the promised land" (Alton Hornsby Papers). Others, like student protesters, grew weary with Walden and the Black leadership vanguard. Their perception of the vanguard was that they were too disconnected from the realities of common Black Atlantans.

As the old vanguard of Black leadership was dying, especially with the passing of Colonel A. T. Walden, the Atlanta Negro Voters League—the organizational structure under which a handful or two of Black aristocrats spoke for Black Atlanta in political and civil rights matters for two decades—could not survive the death of Attorney Walden (Hornsby, 2016). The City of Atlanta was in a good mood in the fall of 1965, with so much economic progress. There was a new stadium for the South's first major league baseball team, and Blacks were making their way through state legislators (Hornsby, 2016). Many Blacks and whites later would signal the beginning of a new era in the city, one in which Black policymakers both in and out of office would have a large, if not decisive, voice in the area of local government (Hornsby, 2016). As it were, on the few occasions when grassroots activists threatened demonstrations against school

board policies, they were ultimately outmaneuvered by Black establishment leaders (Brown-Nagin, 355). The influence of Black political kingmakers on city politics at the expense of the Black masses made the city ripe for a new Black political machine to emerge and seize the day by taking advantage of the votes of the Black masses (Hobson, 2019).

The power of the Black vote was shown further in the election of four additional African Americans to the Board of Alderman and two Blacks to the school board (Hornsby, 2012). This was the result of a newfound sense of political vigor and belonging regarding community affairs as well as the emerging trends of whites disengaging the political process in Atlanta. There were small victories along the way, and the keys to their victories were the heavy Black voter turnout, the smaller percentage of white voters who cast ballots, and the number of whites who did not vote in the aldermanic races (Hornsby, 2012).

4.3 Situated in the Archives

The findings of this next section focus on documents and perspectives that took on narrative form to capture interlocking stories of how the *Compromise* shaped out in the years preceding and after its implementation. Moreover, I brought to bear the various ways different camps approached political decision making regarding Black education in Atlanta Public Schools (APS). What the documents and artifacts revealed was that neither the communal nature of Black politics nor the strong sense of the memory of Blacks prevented political conflict from raging with Black communities (Dawson, 2019). Similarly, ideologies were socially constructed and reconstructed within particular social, economic, and political contexts (Dawson, 2019) to bring meaning to motivations and interests.

There is a theoretical need for a better understanding of African American ideologies since ideologies shape, or at least inform, political action (Skinner, 1988). Dawson (2019)

contended ideologies shape political action and are often determined by historical context, as are the meanings of the concepts and principles themselves, which are shaped within a history. In the case of Atlanta, this history-within-a-history essentially crafts the motivation of the *Compromise* and the public figures who helped shape it. The political history intertwined with the education history in Atlanta point readers toward a sort of crescendo in 1973. The 1925 expansion of education to Blacks in Atlanta with the erection of the Booker T. Washington High School on the west side proved that not only Blacks could galvanize around some political and social agendas; it also proved that those alliances were not sustainable given the conflicting dynamics of relationships and goals beyond the current funding and building project. As shared in Chapter 2 earlier, tensions ensued between the local Black activists and the National NAACP officers, and the relationship never fully recovered after Washington High School was constructed. Therefore, "increasing our understanding of African-American political discourse requires us to understand how concepts that reappear in Black political debate change over time or are interpreted differently within a given period" (Dawson, 2019, p. 5). The education and political landscape in Atlanta during the 1970s displayed an array of Black political ideologies as negotiations emanated en route to the *Compromise*.

4.4 The *Compromise* in Context

The archives revealed what the literature to date shares about the reception of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement o 1973*. The *Compromise* was met with a significant amount of scrutiny and praise (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). As Blacks worked to come up with a solution to the Atlanta school desegregation problem, various ideologies, strategies, and political maneuverings dominated the narrative. As it were, the tales within the archives revealed once again that Blacks were no monolith, and not all Blacks agreed

on the means and priorities of school desegregation. Moreover, no one solution satisfied everyone. Dawson (2019) reminded readers of this truth by submitting, "The dismantling of the formal barriers of segregation combined with the aspiration of economic devices with the Black community also problematized Black political discourse" (p. 39). In other words, although everyone recognized there were significant problems, the challenge was to identify the appropriate solution from each camp and the problem that mattered the most to them. Thus, in this section, I analyze the *Compromise* from three organizational perspectives and map those onto Dawson's Black political framework.

The three frames and organization are as follows. The National NAACP employs the Black conservatism/integrationist approach, and the NAACP Atlanta Branch employs the radical egalitarian approach. These two frames in conversation not only represent the discontinuity among Black leadership and organizations but also provide a glimpse into the sociopolitical agendas of Blacks across communities. Third, the Atlanta Board of Education employs the Black Nationalism frame. While additional frames and a plethora of data were mined from the archives, the scope of this study focused on the aforementioned organizations and frames as a means of honing and examining the ways in which Black politics were at play and influenced the outcome of the *Compromise*. More importantly, this examination illuminates the discord among Black leaders and the coalitions that existed, and how those relationships fostered a deeper sense of division among Black citizens in Atlanta. The opportunity costs of the *Compromise* may have been too much for everyone involved because, while much was gained in the form of a Black middle class operating in upper-echelon roles in the district, there was much loss in the realm of community trust and coalition building. The question of quality education remained after negotiations and implementation of the *Compromise*.

4.4.1 Black Conservatism/Integrationists and Radical Egalitarianism (National NAACP vs. NAACP-Atlanta Branch)

The NAACP fought many cases for school desegregation, with Thurgood Marshall and a team of qualified attorneys at the helm (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). Their strategies were clear and methodical. However, they were not always contextual and fully involved with the people they were seeking to help. This idea is brought to bear when examining the NAACP's involvement in Atlanta's first Black public school in the mid-1920s and how it worked to have this new building erected. However, after the building was erected, the NAACP and local activists parted ways over disputes of local values and community strivings. The re-emergence of the relationship between the national NAACP and local activism in Atlanta with the *Compromise* yielded similar results.

The dispute between the national NAACP and the local NAACP has been well documented (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). While the national organization was in favor of integrating and utilizing white students and busing to achieve desired integration, the local NAACP bumped up against this notion by dismissing those claims and taking a route of collaborating and employing the "Atlanta Style" of politics. Several letters supported these claims. On March 1, 1973, Charles Stephens wrote a letter stating that the city of Atlanta "owes Lonnie King a debt of gratitude on the case and is a signal of goodwill among human relations" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Similarly, on March 17, 1973, Victor Solomon, the national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, penned a letter offering congratulations to Lonnie King for courageous leadership in the Atlanta desegregation case and went as far as to offer him a role on the CORE committee (NAACP

Atlanta Branch Records). Perhaps one of the most stunning letters of support came from Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson, to Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP, on March 5, 1973, whereby the Vice Mayor stated, "His office offers support of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement* and urged the national NAACP to support the plan" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). However, just a day before the Vice Mayor sent this letter to the offices of the NAACP in New York City, Roy Wilkins and Bishop Spicewood penned a letter on March 4, 1973, rebuking the *Compromise* and the Atlanta Branch of the NAACP and their position on school desegregation (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). From this, a series of letters would come, relieving Lonnie King and other officers of their duties at an Atlanta Branch of the NAACP (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). There was stark criticism of organizational continuity and national leaders for being detached from the branch, its people, and their problems (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

4.4.2 Atlanta Board of Education and a Black Nationalist Approach

The national lawyers for the NAACP alienated local people who might have supported their unbending positions and inflamed those who posed it, which led to their inability to cultivate meaningful relationships with local stakeholders (Brown-Nagin, 2012). On February 14, 1973, an article entitled "The School Plan" stated, "What is at issue is Atlanta wants a school plan evolved by her citizens who are members of the Board of Education or would Atlanta prefer to live with a plan evolved by federal courts. Those are the two choices: we think Atlanta would prefer the board to evolve the plan" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). The local branch of the NAACP with Lonnie King and the APS Board with Benjamin Mays and Lyndon Wade created an opportunity to build a coalition and come to the *Compromise* (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016).

Perceived attacks on the Black community are not seen as the result of a courageous and creative talent, but as rank opportunism that perils a community under siege (Dawson, 2019). The challenge of the NAACP's plan, which included massive busing, would further disrupt the community and the Black educators who were already affected by *Brown*, displacement, and low salaries (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). This was additional evidence that the National NAACP was not aware of the Atlanta situation. Again, organizational continuity and national leaders were sharply criticized for being detached from the branch, its people, and their problems (Brown-Nagin, 2012). This was evident during negotiations of the initial plan which was not agreed upon. On March 17, 1972, a memorandum was sent out to all NAACP branches, youth councils, college chapters, state conferences, members of the national board of directors, and the staff by Roy Wilkins stating, "Last night President Nixon made it clear that his administration will do all in its power to overturn the supreme court's 1954 school segregation decision. This was on the matter of achieving racial imbalance by bussing" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Papers). The *Atlanta Daily World* reported 11 months later a story citing esteemed educator Dr. Horace Tate: "Tate Joins Ranks of Forced Bussing Opponents" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Papers). While he was of the opinion that "the best school integration plan is no plan at all," he definitely opposed massive busing which was the position of local NAACP and school board (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Lonnie King and others are recorded as stating that Black children should not have to travel across town to achieve desegregation and racial parity while white children get to stay in their communities. In an article entitled "Let the Blacks Have It," a parent is on record as stating, "There are a few things people forget: 1. Black kids before they and their parents were thought of as humans, were

bussed all over the counties and past white schools to get to Black schools"' (NAACP Atlanta Branch Papers).

As a result, whites went to great lengths not to be truly desegregated. Some even resulted in what the *Atlanta Journal* Education Editor, Junie Brown, wrote as "racial fraud" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Brown submitted:

> Affidavits on Address eyed to adversity "Racial Fraud" here. Some white Atlanta parents, trying to escape the desegregation troubles of the city schools, are renting apartments in Sandy Springs to use as addresses they can enroll their children in Fulton County schools while still living in the city, county school districts say. (Alton Hornsby Papers)

It was believed that "they want first-class education for their children and the chance for a quality life with that kind of education. This is referring to a Black school setting" (Alton Hornsby Papers). This was ultimately a discussion of race and class and its correlation to quality education. "The so-called *Atlanta Compromise*" captured this with the words of Lyndon Wade, an executive director of the Atlanta Urban League and Chairman of the court-appointed Biracial Advisory Committee. Wade went on record to state, "The *Compromise* was an agreement between the local office of the NAACP and the school system was a big trade-off" (Alton Hornsby Papers).

As rumblings of the specifics of the *Compromis*e were made public, many Atlanta citizens flooded the office of Benjamin Mays with their appeals not to close their schools, not to bus, and not to merge or pair their children's local schools with Black schools. However, the comfort of white parents was not of priority to the President of APS and the local NAACP. It cannot be fully accepted that student desegregation was the priority of either the board or the local NAACP. However, what can be corroborated is that quality education was paramount. What quality education meant and looked like in Atlanta looked different from what the national

NAACP imagined and strategized for. While the NAACP endeavored for a school district that prioritized integration with whites, the other two entities in Atlanta were prioritizing Black people. This prioritization included Black educators and Black students. The *Compromise* forced Black leaders in the city to choose a path, which was the humanity and economic well-being of Black educators and the hopeful futures of Black students under Black political control. The dispute between all parties revealed that "the basic concern for the Atlanta student population is an old one: The poor—almost entirely composed of minorities—must receive quality education. First give us the system, academic progress, career prep and placement" (Crim Papers).

4.4.3 The Results of *the Compromise*

In 1973, a new regime was forming in Atlanta. The new APS Superintendent Dr. Alonzo Crim and Mayor Maynard Jackson were beginning their journey in new leadership roles, while Dr. Benjamin Mays was coming to the end of an illustrious career in education and religion. In 1968, Mays eulogized his former student and mentee, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and subsequently began a new journey on the Atlanta Board of Education in 1970. Similarly, prior to 1973, Crim's and Jackson's stock was rising, and they were gaining notoriety locally, regionally, and nationally. Jackson was running a successful law firm dedicated to serving poor and common people in Atlanta prior to becoming the Vice Mayor of Atlanta, while Crim was serving as a Superintendent in Compton, California. These three leaders, in some ways, represented the image of the New American South—an American South that was unapologetically Black and a new American South where white opposition to desegregation created opportunities for local Blacks to redefine the contours of education, politics, and representation for themselves.

4.4.4 Maynard Jackson and His Rise to the Mayor's Office

In the late 1960s, Atlanta had its fair share of challenges. Several rebellions and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were stains on the city's progressive reputation. However, the good news in Atlanta was Blacks and their pathway to voting. By the late 1960s, Black voters made up over 45% of the voting population. With Black politicians gaining momentum and Black voters' voices emerging from the margins, white politicians had to acquiesce and listen to the ideas, challenges, and requests of Black voters (Hobson, 2019). The first of its kind in Black politics in the American South, Maynard Jackson's emergence in Atlanta politics marked the pinnacle of the Black elite and middle-class Atlanta's hopes and dreams (Hobson, 2019). While it was seemingly a new phenomenon with a Black politician receiving support from constituents, this was not further from the truth. Black voting in Atlanta has always challenged traditional norms and patterns of whites holding all the keys to political freedom and process. Black Atlantans since the early 1900s built racial solidarity across class lines and sustained the unity of power voting blocs (Driskell, 2014). The first evidence was Atlanta's Black citizens using their voting power to demand public funds to build the first Black public high school in Atlanta in 1924 (Driskell, 2014).

Maynard Jackson was born in 1938 in Dallas, Texas, and came from a prominent family. His father pastored the historic Friendship Baptist church in Atlanta, and his mother excelled in academics as well, earning a doctorate in French from the University of Toulouse in France. Jackson came from a long lineage of what was considered Atlanta royalty, and a major person in the lineage was John Wesley Dobbs, who founded the Atlanta Negro Voter League (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). Inevitably, Jackson began to craft his legacy by matriculating and graduating from Morehouse College and North Carolina Central University

Law School, holding many legal roles where he advocated for poor Atlantans and developed a keen interest in housing issues (Hobson, 2019).

Atlanta's history of "Atlanta style politics of bi-racial negotiations" (Driskell, 2014, p. 51) cost Jackson the U.S. Senate race. He lost to Herman Talmadge who benefited from backroom negotiations, which was the custom of Atlanta politics between influential Blacks and whites (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). While the Black vanguard was able to deliver voting blocs to their candidate of choice, which usually consisted of a large portion of elite Blacks in the city, the working-class and poor Blacks were untapped; this was where Jackson would plant his flag as a politician and native son. On March 7, 1969, Jackson made a bold move and announced that he would be running for Vice Mayor of Atlanta. His announcement to run embarrassed Atlanta's kingmakers, particularly Black Atlanta's leadership and powerbrokers, who often chose their political leaders in private. It was believed that the

> promotion of the Black elite and middle class men as leaders at the behest of the white business elite suggested that from the 1940's, Black political leadership was increasingly the creature of white businesses and capitalism, as Black politics was effectively white business in blackface. (Hobson, 2019, p. 57)

On January 5, 1970, Jackson took his oath as Vice Mayor and carried votes from Black and white constituents. The victory lap did not last long because the day after Jackson took oath, city employees decided to strike since their request for pay raises had been denied (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) referendum and Atlanta's public school desegregation saga served as a catalyst for progressive Black politics from beneath or centered on marginalized populations in Atlanta (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). While the old style of negotiating with Black elites and white businessmen was still in

effect, the scales of influence and support tilted toward Jackson leading in the 1973 mayoral race. The Black elite decided that Sam Massel would make way for a Black mayoral candidate in 1977, and while the Black kingmakers agreed, Jackson usurped this decision. While Massel had the blessing of the kingmakers, Jackson had the ear and heart of the people. Jackson's presence was a stark reminder that Black puppetry and mastery were vulnerable due to diverse Black communities with varied and sometimes competing interests (Hobson, 2019).

An avid student of politics and trends, Jackson understood the people in the city of Atlanta. "The city's reputation as a Black Mecca of opportunity attracted young, ambitious, and educated Blacks. With white flight at an all-time high nationwide, Atlanta's Black population grew from 38 percent in 1960, to 45 percent in 1968 and 54% in 1973" (Hobson, 2019, p. 63). While the kingmakers were reluctant to stamp Jackson, he took matters into his own hands. "Maynard Jackson declared Atlanta to be the best city in America for Black people to live in as he was fully aware that the Black voting strength in the city had reached 48 percent and was still rising" (Pomerantz, 1996, p. 400). Demonstrating his strong following and ability to galvanize the city's elites, local college students, and alumni along with working-class citizens, the Black kingmakers had to reconsider their initial bid not to support Jackson. Jesse Hill, one of the prime kingmakers and well-respected members of the old guard in Atlanta, served as a key broker between the Black elites and white businessmen from companies like Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). Once it was revealed through various mock polls that Jackson stood head and shoulders above the other candidates, Jesse Hill had to support Jackson and bring with him his band of support. On October 16, 1973, with 59.8% of the vote, Maynard Jackson at the age of 35 became the first Black mayor of Atlanta and of any major southern city (Hobson, 2019).

Jackson's success hinged on his ability to exert power while reckoning with race and agendas set by previous mayoral administrations (Hobson, 2019). While Jackson had many challenges during his administration—housing re-segregation, and poverty being a few of them—the crown jewel of his administration was the midfield expansion at Hartsfield International Airport (Hobson, 2019). The building of new runways and terminals came at a hefty price tag of $400 million. The unique nature of the airport expansion paved a new economic pathway for Black firms and contractors. In July of 1975, 25% of the airport contracts were designated and earmarked for Black-owned architectural firms. This meant that well over $100 million would be injected into Atlanta's economic pipeline and simultaneously embolden the image of the Black Mecca (Hobson, 2019).

Economic development, fiscal stability, job creation, improved delivery of city services, effective public safety, and construction of the modern Atlanta airport were the result (Hobson, 2019). Jackson held close to an ethic that included historically marginalized populations. Jackson made city government accessible to Atlanta's citizens, which included women and minorities, and ensured that 30% of city contracts went to minority and female-owned businesses (Hobson, 2019). Jackson created a new ethos in Atlanta that slated the city to achieve international prestige and serve as a model for up-and-coming cities. While these aspects of the Jackson era were essential to boosting "the city too busy to hate," it did, however, create a tale of two cities. The quest to be a social, political, and economic juggernaut came at a huge cost—the cost of the people who helped get Jackson elected as Vice Mayor in 1969 and Mayor in 1973.

The "Atlanta Child Murders" were a blot on Jackson's tenure, as Black youth were murdered and amounted to some of the most horrific crimes committed against Black children in American history (Hobson, 2019). The murders of 30 Black youths from some of the poorest

areas of the city created tension within Black communities and the mystery of white terror on Black bodies. While various local organizations and official committees were launched to combat such heinous crimes by Jackson's administration, it did little to quell the rumblings throughout the city, so that the Atlanta Child Murders had become one of the greatest tragedies and darkest moments in Atlanta's history. There were bright spots, but, ultimately, Jackson's tenure served as an ode to the old vanguard and business as usual. The elites enjoyed the spoils of Jackson's tenure, while the working and poor classes were left wondering where the man who pledged to be the voice of the people had gone; his voice seemed to resound loud and clear for the elites but whisper for everyone else. This point re-emphasizes that issues in Atlanta were not based on race alone but also on class. As a result, the country and the world were forced to question Atlanta's aspirations to be viewed as the new, highly touted Black Mecca, a land that represented the highest educational, political, and economic aspirations for Black Americans (Hobson, 2019).

4.4.5 Dr. Alonzo Crim and the Atlanta Years

The pathway to the superintendency, historically, has been wrapped up in the networks of sponsorship (Moody, 1973). Moreover, Black superintendents are faced with the tall tasks of meeting grand sociopolitical expectations and ensuring Black students have a better opportunity to achieve success while under their leadership. Black superintendents often inherit school districts that need improved student academic achievement, reorganization of the system, expanded community participation, staff development, board-superintendent relations, educational accountability, and insufficient funds (Scott, 1980). In addition to race impacting leadership experiences, the literature revealed that gender and historical narratives play a significant role in decision making, educational philosophies, and engagement with public policy

for Black superintendents (Douglass Horsford & McKenzie, 2008). Before formal Black superintendents were able to operate in their roles, Jeanes supervisors proved to be an intricate network of Black educators that operated under the guise of white male superintendent leadership within counties and districts. Jeanes supervisors raised funds; served as cultural brokers to the white power structures, particularly local government officials/; reviewed curriculum; and managed crises within their community. The Jeanes supervisors were fundamentally superintendents deputized to serve Black rural communities under the guise of white school officials (Alston, 2005).

Jeanes supervisors possessed an unyielding faith and sense of spirituality that enabled them always to strive toward excellence (Alston, 2005). Theological reflection, in part, has been used by some Black superintendents to make meaning of their role as school leaders and how they carry out their duties. Many Black superintendents, particularly female superintendents, are tempered radicals who embody self-will and determination, spiritual connection and awareness, and a strong work ethic and historical foundation (Alston, 2005). Most Jeanes teachers unofficially served as the county superintendent for African American schools as white superintendents directed most of their energy toward schools for whites. Jeanes teachers encouraged mainly local African Americans and whites to give money and time to Black education. While working with principals and teachers to implement curriculum changes, they served as liaisons between Black schools and white county and state school administrators. As bridges between Black schools and state and local government agencies, they fostered relationships with federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Like modern-day superintendents, the Jeanes supervisor served as a negotiator, crisis handler, resource allocation specialist, disseminator of information, staff developer, and personnel specialist (Cuban, 1988).

As Black superintendents have been viewed historically as the "messiah or scapegoat" for a school district (Scott, 1980), servant leadership has become their calling as a part of their philosophical and practical fiber (Arnold et al., 2014). Black superintendents embody a moral imperative that brings to bear multiple angles of one's ontology and extends well beyond the contours of traditional norms of what the superintendence ought to be. This was, in fact, the case in the administration of Dr. Alonzo Crim, who was the first Black Superintendent in Atlanta and the first to lead a major school district in the southeast (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014). Like many other Black superintendents, Crim inherited a school district in turmoil with seemingly insurmountable challenges in the APS district which were far more intricate than just ensuring Black students could compete academically. The challenge before Crim carried the mystery of an experiment, encompassing a great many possibilities with uncertain outcomes and futures as he took office in 1973-1974.

Upon his arrival, Crim's reception was mixed (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). While many welcomed the new leader, others were not entirely sold on his ability to lead the school district. Crim experienced success during his tenure as superintendent in Compton, California, before coming to Atlanta. Known as a political leader, Crim saw the community as an integral part of ensuring success in schools for students and educators. However, challenges such as student drug use, violence, poor reading and math scores, and the fact that only 15% of students went on to pursue postsecondary college academic training were major stains during Crim's tenure. Crim urged the community to pay as close attention to the successes of the district as they did to the failures. Receiving criticism from Blacks, whites, and organizations, Crim was forced to address an array of concerns about his leadership style and agenda for the school district. A 1974 issue of the *Atlanta Journal-*

Constitution highlighted the onslaught of criticism by publishing an article expressing that Crim did little to hire more white teachers (Jackson, 1978). In a 1974 interview, Crim addressed the criticism from NAACP leaders and local agitators who questioned his ability to empower and hire Black leaders in prominent positions. Crim responded to his critics by stating, "If you look at the *Agreement,* you will see that it is split, and many top supervisors are Black and in some places, they have second-line supervisor roles" (Alonzo Crim Papers).

Despite criticism from leaders and stakeholders around the city, some of Crim's successes included improved scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the creation of a reading center to train faculties, a grant to establish reading and math centers in 19 schools, a curriculum revision project, a monthly newspaper to facilitate communication, and the development of a parent handbook and an APS facts brochure (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014). In addition to Crim's educational and community improvements, his political savvy enhanced his image and gave him leverage when local leaders criticized his leadership. He began interviewing for the superintendency role in his hometown of Chicago, and when APS officials caught wind that their leader may leave, he was immediately and unanimously voted to return to Atlanta. From 1976 to 1983, as Crim settled into the city, he was recognized by the Georgia House of Representatives, invited to serve on a National Task Force on Urban Education, served as a delegate on behalf of the United States to tour their schools overseas, and offered a response to *The Nation at Risk* report using Atlanta and his own strategies for school improvement as the basis for his commentary (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014).

4.4.6 Mays to Crim: The Schoolmaster's Final Class

By 1945, Mays had been a fixture in the Atlanta education and racial politics community, making his presence known through his international acclaim and unique administrative style.

Throughout Mays's tenure at Morehouse College, the city of Atlanta dealt with many racial challenges, particularly with desegregation efforts, housing, and labor. As Mays was making his mark on the collegiate scene, he was simultaneously becoming more involved in local activism in Atlanta. Following a history of inequitable pay, Black educators were being consolidated and eliminated from Atlanta's workforce. While much of Mays's work up to this point had been shaping the minds of young men at Morehouse, his work as the President of the Atlanta School Board shifted to a more political perspective, which was wrapped up in the preservation of the Black middle class and progressive hiring practices with Black educators as the chief aim. Mays expressed concern for the inequitable treatment of Black teachers and disproportionate pay. Some Black teachers in the 1940s were reluctant to file suit for pay disputes, while others collaborated with the NAACP and produced evidence at trial that revealed that the APS district systemically underpaid Black teachers. While the NAACP and Black teachers experienced a win as the district court ruled that disparate pay was unconstitutional, they soon succumbed to a judgment reversal in the fifth district, leaving Black teachers with a minimal increase compared to their white counterparts (Brown-Nagin, 2012). This ruling sullied the faith of Black teachers in Atlanta to receive equity and fairness through legal discourse. However, this experience in the 1940s would not only be remembered but seemingly serve as a precursor and motivation for the inclusion of staff restructures and guarantees for Black educators in the *Compromise.*

In the 1960s, Mays was still unnerved by the housing and employment situation in Atlanta. Certain areas of the city were of ill repute, and many of the citizens who lived in those areas were often neglected and shunned. As the national pedigree of Atlanta began to take shape for their work as a southern city with the ability to get Blacks and whites to work together, the casual surveyor of politics would contend that Atlanta still had a race problem, like much of

America. While race was still a challenge, the addition of keen classism created a more complex challenge. Atlanta, in fact, had a class problem dictated and kept intact by respectability politics (Driskell, 2014). This problem of class was not a new discovery; rather, it was the tapestry of Atlanta, woven into the social, political and economic fabric of the city since reconstruction.

Benjamin Mays notes, "the study on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that in the City of Atlanta, where one out of every three employees of the city is Negro, there is no negro at the managerial level and only 18 at the professional level, and what is more, Negroes hold 87% of the laborer roles in the city" (Mays, 2003, p.297). This problem of employment and housing would also be what shaped Jackson's tenure and cause many of the poorer Blacks to believe he abandoned them for international stardom and acclaim. In some ways, this analysis of Jackson was not far off. In later years, as Atlanta won the bid for the 1996 Olympics, a massive campaign began to reshape eye-sore communities and displace others to camouflage Atlanta as the progressive utopia it aspired to be.

Although Crim was new to the "Atlanta Style of politics," he had a safety net and a soft place to land throughout his tenure. This safety net was directly correlated to Benjamin Mays's early years in Atlanta and disputes around Black labor. Benjamin Mays—a pastor, higher education administrator, and professor—knew how to inspire others to see their potential. Mays is credited with ushering in the "Morehouse Mystique," which fostered a mindset instilled in young Black collegiate males who are what Du Bois (1903) called the Talented Tenth. As a surveyor and critic of Black institutions and the plight of Black people, Mays often spoke of injustices in education and labor that plagued Black communities and aided in constant disenfranchisement. Mays recalled in his autobiography how education in Atlanta was not only limited due to physical space but also to Black students' access to materials and resources that

were torn and dated. Quality of education for Black students in Atlanta was stifled, as Anderson (1988) revealed, and how Blacks would be double-taxed as they paid for schools their children could not attend and raised funds to build schools of their own. Mays (2003) spoke highly of Atlanta and its high concentration of educated persons with pedigree and status, despite its fair share of segregation and marginalization. An essential aspect of this education and its connection to labor points toward the teacher population. Negroes comprised fewer than 5% of the white-collar jobs and 50% of the service worker jobs (Mays, 2003, p. 298). Black teachers were paid significantly less than white teachers. Mays's knowledge of this history of inequitable pay would be essential not only to seeking a leader like Crim to head the district but ultimately to intentionally deciding to trade pupil desegregation for Black educator employment, as seen in the *Compromise*. The politics of education at play here provided a grand opportunity to shift the narrative of education in Atlanta. It would take representation and influence at the highest levels to create and achieve the type of school district that Black parents, educators, and stakeholders fought for and believed they deserved.

The parallel of labor to educational control is on brand for the season in which Atlanta found itself. Horace Tate, a trusted educator, agitator, and organizer for the rights of teacher unions, continued to be active in expressing the inequities that existed within the labor portion of Atlanta's Black education narrative. As the *Compromise* was being crafted and negotiated, opponents of desegregation vigorously argued that Atlanta's school district was unitary, while Tate and others argued that the district was not unitary if the teaching force was not representative of the population being taught (Alton Hornsby Papers). Behind closed doors, choices on the perception of Atlanta's future were in the balance, and pupil desegregation and jobs for Black educators were a point of contention. Lonnie King and other Black leaders were

faced with an ethical dilemma that either pupil desegregation or jobs for Black teachers would be achieved, but not both (Brown-Nagin, 2012). With a newly engineered school board and Mays as its President, it was believed that Black administrative control could ultimately improve the quality of education in the district. The *Compromise* came with stipulations that emphasized Black control from the top down. While the schools ultimately remained segregated, the re-emergence of the Black middle-class workforce through Black educators and administrators was one of the main results. Alonzo Crim was hired, began his first of four terms as superintendent in 1973, and served for 15 years.

4.4.7 Crim and Mays: The Dynamic Duo

With Mays at the helm of the Atlanta Board of Education, Crim found a confidant, thought partner, ally, and fellow University of Chicago graduate. While Mays was a formally trained theologian and pastor, Crim saw his work as a school leader through the lenses of ministry. Mays served as a mentor of sorts and was influential in bringing Crim to Atlanta. As a former college president and a race man, Mays held strong convictions about Black education in Atlanta. These convictions would play a major role in the successes and failures of Crim's tenure. Mays's privilege as part of the old Black Atlanta vanguard gave him insight into the city's back-office politics and a keen understanding of how elite Blacks in the city pandered toward white elites when it came to education endeavors, student experience**,** and employment for Black educators. As a result of Mays's and Crim's connection, school board members along with the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* accused the two leaders of running the Board of Education on their own without input from others. In other words, the board meetings were simply formalities and theater after the decisions were already made. Due to Crim's and Mays's success during their time together, the *Compromise* seemed to be beneficial, bringing to bear new and

counter-cultural ideas for achieving educational excellence in the district. Crim relied on his expertise in engaging community and stakeholders to bridge the gap between school and local business—big and small—while Mays relied on his caché and ability to navigate both Black and white elites who have, since the early 1900s, dictated the political trajectory of the city.

Crim's proven leadership and temperament allowed him to enjoy a 15-year tenure as APS's superintendent before retiring and becoming a professor of Education at Georgia State University. These two men saw their faith as a way of addressing the ultimate concern of Black education for students in APS (Tillich, 1957). A 1978 issue of *The Southern Illinoisan* shared the ways that Crim's deep faith influenced his work as an educational leader. Crim claimed that his faith gave him strength for his secular ministry (Alonzo Crim Papers). The Rev. Robert E. Lee, the pastor of his home church in Chicago, remarked on Crim's disposition and commitment to the people he led and served. Pastor Lee told the *Illinoisan*:

> Lon is an unusually gifted man with a sensitive and deep understanding of people. I've seen him under fire simultaneously from extremists in both white and Black communities on issues relating to busing, relocation**,** and closings of schools. But he remains calm, objective**,** and gentle with a firm determination to do what is community and education. (Alonzo Crim Papers)

As it were, the relationship between Crim and Mays provided some reassurance of this theological reflection perspective toward education and children when Crim wrote about his views and philosophy on education in one of his later papers toward the end of his career: "Through discussion with Dr. Mays and by studying his life and the lives of others who succeed in the spirit of great odds, I came to believe that all God's children can learn" (Alonzo Crim Papers). From this simple principle**,** I developed the concept of the "Community of Believers."

Why does this relationship and network matter? The relationship between the school superintendent and the Board of Education matters because the history of Black education

reveals many challenges of access to quality education, funding**,** and representation. Quality education for Black students was often tied to the racial politics that persisted in Atlanta and throughout the country. Horace Tate contended that Black control was more important than pupil integration since integration was less about leveling the playing field and more about controlling and exploiting Black people for means that upheld white economic power. Moreover, the *Compromise* promised something that the U.S. Constitution and federal law did not and could not—immediate Black administrative power (Brown-Nagin, 2012). As Atlanta moved toward international stardom and a symbol for race relations, the struggle to maintain commitments to local communities persisted. Black control of the Mayor's office started off with good intentions, as did the educational sector. This examination of the intersection between politics and education revealed that while intentions were good, the machine that was Black control had an opportunity cost. Jackson transformed Atlanta into an international juggernaut, Crim experienced an unprecedented run as a Black superintendent, and Mays impacted public education and labor relations just as he did throughout the first two-thirds of his career. However, as a result of this progress, the city's most marginalized populations suffered as the Atlanta Style of politics prevailed and housing inequities, school resegregation**,** and unskilled labor persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019).

4.12 The *Compromise* and The Quality of Education in APS

With the implementation of the *Compromise*, Black leadership controlled the education of Black students in the city (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). Scholars of urban education tend to agree that the Atlanta school system under Black control faced problems similar to those of inner-city schools across the nation (Hornsby, 2016). This aligns with national trends of Black superintendents inheriting struggling school

districts, such was the case in Atlanta. In the 1973-1974 academic school year, which was also Dr. Crim's first year, it was reported that 10 of the academically lowest-ranked high schools in the state were in Atlanta; the following year, the situation was not much better (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014). It was reported that 15 of the worst schools in the state were in the Atlanta School district, with low SAT scores as the primary reasons for these low rankings.

By 1977, student enrollment had reached about 90% Black. Similarly, as student enrollment increased, white faculty decreased to roughly 20%. Crim had very ambitious goals for boosting student achievement and experiences. One of his lofty goals was to improve student literacy by 25% in his first year of office (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014). Conflicting challenges were surfacing at this time as well. Crim, along with the district, was facing their fair share of criticism and rebuke from white administrators, Black teachers, Black PTA groups, affluent Black Atlantans, and whites (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). The quality of education for Black students in APS was the point of contention. Low morale, student and parental apathy, academic failures, inadequate pay, and indifference and indecision on the part of school administrators and the school board led the way as complaints rushed in (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Grievances over poor physical plants, insufficient equipment, and overcrowded buildings were the main themes of complaints. However, the challenge at this point was bigger than what parents and stakeholders could fathom. There was not enough money to build new schools in the district, and Black parents did not want to bus their children across town either (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). This left Black parents and educators at the behest of their leadership to make the necessary changes to improve the education experience for everyone in the district.

A significant question for consideration for the APS stakeholders was to define what exactly measured up to a quality education. As his critics scolded him, Crim argued that test scores were, in fact, rising, violence had decreased, student attendance was on the rise, vandalism had decreased, and the issue of desegregation had been virtually solved in the district (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014). While Crim was more diplomatic on the matter of quality of education, Mays was a firmer and more matter-of-fact, arguing that the quality of education in the APS system was no worse than it was before the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown* decision, or in 1961 when schools were integrated by the Atlanta Nine (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Mays went on to share that the quality of education should not only be measured by test scores, but that violence in schools be seen as the result of white racism and faux integration.

Crim saw a great opportunity to shift the quality of education in APS by first shifting the culture of training educators (Alonzo Crim Papers). While opponents of the Crim administration insisted on shining a light on racist and elitist tropes that had persisted throughout the district in recent history, Mays insisted that even in an all-Black school system, children could receive a quality education if they had decent teachers and adequate equipment (Brown-Nagin, 2012). Teacher training programs and strategic partnerships with local businesses continued to be some of the ways Crim sought to improve the quality of education in the district (Alonzo Crim Papers). Additionally, jobs created that focused on research, learning, and development along with community relations roles also created new opportunities to enhance educational experiences for students (Alonzo Crim Papers).

Benjamin Mays died in 1984, leaving a void in Atlanta's race and education politics. However, his mentorship and support of Crim in his early years proved invaluable. Mays served as a conduit between the Board and Crim's office and often stood in the gap and appealed to the

board to support the superintendent and not vote against the initiatives and policies he was putting up for a vote. Mays wanted to ensure that the first Black superintendent was able to complete his job successfully (Hornsby, 2016). Mays's shot of confidence in Crim and his appeals to the board to support him served as a great asset for Crim over the following years. Crim's stature and authority grew by leaps and bounds, and his recommendations were often supported by the board.

For better or for worse, Blacks wanted to see the new school board and administration be successful. The lack of persistent criticism of school board decision making after 1973 reflected this hope. While during Crim's tenure, there were many successes via rising test scores and new roles created for and held by Black educators and leaders, failures were also very much a part of the journey. Crim faced criticism from Blacks, whites, and teachers about his decision making, poor facilities, and inadequate equipment (Alonzo Crim Papers). However, the Crim, Mays, and Jackson administrations proved that in the face of white opposition to desegregation and their abandonment of the city—a city that is majority Black, Black elected officials possessed the ability to control the government and school system. On the surface, the effectiveness of the *Compromise* hinged on Atlanta's ability to demonstrate and achieve some level of quality of education for Black students. The undertone of the *Compromise* that linked the Board of Education, the Superintendent's office, and the Mayor's office was effectively to provide jobs and competitive pay for Black educators. Under Jackson's tenure, the percentage of Blacks employed by the city increased from 19% to 42% (Biles, 1992). Thus, while Jackson worked to free up funds to increase labor that provided Blacks and women with opportunities to thrive in an open marketplace, Crim worked on the education side to put Black educators in place to do the new jobs that were created. Finally, Mays's job was to use his influence and work subversively

to clear a path through powerbrokers for Crim to achieve the promise of the *Compromise.* As it were, a significant number of Blacks who favored separate schools worked as educators or administrators and considered their economic interests in preserving this state of affairs (Brown-Nagin, 2012).

4.5 Themes Gleaned from the Archives

The major sources of data for this research were derived from newspaper articles and artifacts from several archives regarding the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973.* A coding matrix was used to organize the codes into categories. The resulting categories were listed as the themes for this dissertation. Creswell (2014) contended that coding takes pictures, artifacts, and materials; and label them based on themes or banking mechanisms that share a common thread. Several themes surfaced from the archive excavations to align with literature and commentary from the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973.* New themes emerged regarding the *Compromise* that did not readily show up in the literature. These themes, called emergent themes, were paramount and unique to events and experiences revolving around the *Compromise*. Essentially, my task was to explore the archives and identify key elements, discussions, commentary, and events that could shed some light on the *Compromise,* further illuminating the effects and implications of the policy.

Three major themes emerged from the document analysis of materials found in the archives. This section explores each of these conceptual themes with evidence from newspaper articles, voice recordings, magazines, and photographs. The three themes that emerged from the depths of the archives are as follows: (a) Black Nationalism leads to victory, (b) Black education as quality education, and (c) Black education as soul work.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Illumination of Black Political Engagement and Community Influence

> "With the election of Maynard Jackson as Mayor that fall, the Black community was rapidly taking political control of Atlanta." (NAACP Atlanta Branch Papers)

A communal approach to politics continues to influence African American political life (Dawson, 1994). This notion of politics is true of Atlanta and its quest to end school segregation in the city. Even with the perception of students and the quality of education rendered at the forefront, politics still dominated public discourse. Crim was recorded in the *Atlanta Magazine* as stating, "Our product is children, not cars. We have to make sure we're going in the right direction when we make a move" (Alonzo Crim Papers). It was evident that backroom campaigns and deals still set the pace in Atlanta. A Black Nationalism approach prevailed, culminating in the crafting and implementation of the *Compromise.* The Black nationalism model enlisted all tenets as Dawson (1994) defined it. Moreover, the piece that provided Black educators with plush roles throughout the district appeared to be the point of contention among activists and opponents of the *Compromise.* However, to King, Mays, and others on the school board, this outcome was premier. To some, it could be perceived as revenge or reckoning from the 1940s salary suit that Black educators lost in Atlanta (Mays, 2003), or even a lesson learned from the 1920s Booker T. Washington High School opening and fractured relationship between local Atlantans and the National NAACP (Driskell, 2014). Upon Crim's arrival, he submitted that, "with the election of Maynard Jackson as Mayor, the Black community was rapidly taking political control of Atlanta" (Alton Hornsby Papers, unpublished paper).

From 1972 to 1973, various proponents and opponents of the Compromise expressed their positions in numerous ways. Opponents such as members of local PTA associations shared their disdain for the plan as early as December 8, 1972. "Members of the Grover Park Parent

Teacher Association wrote a letter to Benjamin Mays and the Atlanta Board of Education in agreement with the Atlanta PTA Council stating that desegregation should not mean the assignment of students to public school in order to overcome rational imbalance" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). On February 1, 1973, a letter was sent to the Atlanta School Board on behalf of the Mary Lin PTA, whereby they shared, "the NAACP goals of an integrable and school systems that retained quality of education for their students and does not considering any pairing, bussing or school closure" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Similarly, the parents of Rock Springs Elementary and Moreland School Children both sent letters to the NAACP local office and the Board of Education protesting their school closing via a petition and sharing their disgust for the plan (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). The parents of Moreland School Children punctuated their disgust by sending a letter to Dr. Mays and the members of the Board in opposition to the counter plan, stating, "For the past three years, Moreland has remained stably integrated with about 70% white students and 30% minority students. We have heard over and over that once a school starts going Black it soon goes all Black" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records).

To solidify disdain for the plan, parents from Morningside Elementary School sent a letter stating:

> "No other school was cut up the way Morningside was. Not only will this affect the quality of education at Morningside it will also affect our whole community. I know this issue is difficult for all concerned and I am willing to do my part to achieve quality education for all. But Morningside is being asked to do more than its share. I am willing to do my part to achieve quality for all and not opposed to bussing." (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records)

With this level of disenchantment and disapproval of the plan, a final statement of rebuke would come from the National NAACP office from the pen of the Executive Director. Roy Wilkins sent

a memorandum to all NAACP branches, encouraging them to write to their senators and vote against any anti-busing amendment (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records).

The media, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* specifically, sought to break through the long tradition of politics in Atlanta by sending a certified letter to the Atlanta Board of Education and the negotiating committee members and representatives of plaintiffs in *Calhoun v. Cook* to provide press access to the negotiating sessions (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Similarly, Ray Moore, on behalf of TV 5, on January 16, 1973, submitted:

> "More of the Same Won't Save Atlanta's School Problems. If more busing and more reassignment of teachers would lead to a more integrated and better quality of education in the Atlanta school system, then we would be for it. The idea of having more Black educators in administrative positions make sense and we support that." (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records)

What may be the biggest endorsement and a sign of coalesced efforts came on March 5, 1973. Maynard Jackson wrote a note to Roy Wilkins stating, "I think that the proposed Atlanta School Plan is a workable and good one. I support the efforts of the local citizen groups in Atlanta and the local NAACP who produced this plan and urge you to support it also" (NAACP Atlanta Branch Records). Proponents and opponents alike expressed their concerns and admiration based on their community, station, and political affiliations. The political arena in Atlanta showed that any and everyone could participate, but it also showed that some voices resounded louder than others.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Redefining Black Education Praxis and Quality Education

> "It seems that the positive images of the school system are often overshadowed by the bad. The good stories about Atlanta School are rarely told and easily forgotten." (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1982)

Black education and quality education are polarizing themes that overwhelmingly showed up in the archives and in the debate of school desegregation in Atlanta. Lonnie King

believed in the unique nature of Atlanta when it came to the nuances of politics and quality education. He was willing to go up against his own national branch of the NAACP (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016). In an article dated November 17, 1975, entitled "School: Attack on Schools Hit By NAACP," the Atlanta Branch of the NAACP critiqued and held nothing back as they cited false narratives and inferior education prior to the *Compromise,* and stated that "Black students have suffered more educationally and psychologically because of the white teacher bring their personal prejudices to the classroom" (NAACP Branch Records, 1975). The same fight Lonnie King was willing to have with Roy Wilkins and the national NAACP over the *Compromise* we also see in Alonzo Crim, Benjamin Mays, and the APS district officials to fortify the legitimacy of a Black educational municipality (Bohan & Bradshaw, 2014; Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016).

Throughout the early years of Crim's tenure, there was much debate regarding the fidelity of the school district and Crim's ability not only to lead but to reconcile the particulars of the *Compromise.* Crim and the school district's commitment to changing the narrative about APS started early in Crim's tenure. He went on record as stating, "What is needed in every school, in every classroom is an atmosphere of free communication. The teacher, responding seriously and nonjudgmentally to student comments, can free students from their fears of censure or ridicule and induce search explorations of all points of view" (Alonzo Crim Papers). Dr. Mays followed this statement with a point of his own by submitting, "We are what we believe, we are what we do and certainly this has been the kind of spirit and direction that he has brought to the Atlanta public schools" (Alonzo Crim Papers).

By the 1980s, Crim had established himself as stalwart in education, locally, regionally, and nationally. Even still, opponents like Margie Haynes claimed, "education in Atlanta's

predominantly Black system was inferior; the quality of the institution, books and supplies, and other factors in the city were inferior to those in largely white schools of suburbia" (Crim, 1980). Crim's rebuttal to Haynes's comments were that "everywhere I looked there were meaningful and relevant learning activities being enjoyed by students and staff, furthermore, we have new funds. Teaching salaries are a high priority, and education is a much higher priority in the school than it has been" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1982, p 5). The stock of APS and the quality of education enacted only continued to grow. In March of 1982, APS received a visit from Harold L. Enarson, President Emeritus from The Ohio State University. During the visit, Enarson "admitted that it was a bit surprising to him to come upon a school superintendent who by dint of intellect, drive, and contagious enthusiasm is beginning to make a change in the aspirations of students, teachers, parents and community leaders" (Crim, 1982, p 5). In a separate newspaper article entitled "A Bow to Atlanta," Dick Williams wrote, "Dr. Harold Enarson considered Atlanta one of the most exciting urban school systems and summed up with praise for the goal approach to teaching, the degree of parental involvement, personal laurels for Crim and the way he has brought business into the system" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1982, p.5).

The community of believers philosophy modeled by Crim is, in fact, part and parcel a framework for quality education and Black education. The history of Black education lists numerous interconnected networks that coalesce around Black groups, children, and institutions. The Atlanta City Council produced a proclamation stating partnerships of business and education, including 181 businesses and 85 religious congregations representing churches, synagogues, and mosques. Additionally, PTA membership doubled, with daily attendance of 94.6 for the 1982-1983 academic year and staff attendance of 97.5%, which is considered superior for the school system of Atlanta's size. Atlanta's young people and environment have

a climate for learning in that city (Alonzo Crim Papers). In addition to strong community partnerships, "test scores are improving without excuses for cultural bias and other trendy tommyrot" (Alonzo Crim Papers). One can make the argument that APS were inferior or ill-equipped based on years of bad press (Crim, 1980). Others would argue that APS was trending in the correct direction, with improved scores and district morale. Regardless, the *Compromise* left many in a liminal space. Unfortunately, even with the strides and improvements made in the district, "it seems that the positive images of the school system are often overshadowed by the bad. The good stories about Atlanta School are rarely told and easily forgotten" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1982, p.5).

4.5.3 Theme 3: Black Education as Soul Work and Social Liberation

> "Public school people quite often must be evangelists in that they constantly seek to convince diverse audiences that the good news worth believing and supporting is getting all kidneys of people to grasp and retain all of the useful in that they can and then apply it in carving out productive lives for themselves." (Alonzo Crim Papers, Unpublished paper)

A hermeneutic of secular, sacred, and social action emerged from the archives. The lines of sacred and secular were constantly blurred as Crim, Mays, King, and others toed the line of prophetic witness, activism, and political maneuvering. Theologian and Black womanist scholar Katie Cannon (2013) often wrote that you must do the work their soul must have. This phrase speaks firmly to those who explored and worked through their sense of "call" or vocation. Crim and Mays specifically, and certainly others along the journey through the *Compromise*, embodied an approach to education that brought to bear head and heart, and did not attempt to draw hard lines on where one's convictions and values began and where their professional commitment ended.

One of the most peculiar themes of all was found in the archives regarding Alonzo Crim and his work as the first Black Superintendent in Atlanta, Georgia. While the aforementioned articles revealed how Crim's leadership shifted the narrative of achievement in Atlanta, there was an underlying motif precipitating the politics and agendas in APS. Crim possessed a theological perspective that directly correlated to how he viewed education and his role as superintendent. Crim called his "ministry secular" in a newspaper article written by Floranae Geiser, who stated, "The Atlanta Public schools have the largest percentage of poor kids in the state, and building hope-breaking the cycle of hopelessness is part of our job. My secular ministry is helping young people find themselves. We have to give a lot of attention to helping kids know their power and capability" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1978, p.1). There was evidence throughout

the archive asserting the notion that faith was embedded in how one thought about education philosophies and leadership. Crim cited his "community of believers' philosophy as "the gospel, the educational bible" (Alonzo Crim Papers). Lastly, this theme of Black education as soul work in school leadership was crystalized by several additional reflections Crim gave in July of 1984 when he stated:

> " I've been a Lutheran for almost 30 years. I got into the Lutheran Church because of its witness in the community. It was that church that was doing the most about desegregation in the community in which I lived in Chicago. Like most kids, I was raised a good Baptist. When we moved into our first house the neighborhood was in strife because of desegregation. And the pastor of the Salem Lutheran Church was leading the battle of maintaining a desegregated neighborhood. That's how I became a Lutheran, not so much in terms of the religious doctrine as much as they witnessed their religion." (Some Reflections from Alonzo Crim, AJC, July 28, 1984)

Crim used common language and vernacular found in theological and ecclesial spaces to convey his approach to education. Another way this idea was voiced was in Crim's writing on multicultural educational pedagogy and curriculum. Crim asserted, "We should learn when to

say Thank God and when to say Amen when it comes to inclusive education for our children in urban education contexts" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1985; p.1). As it were, the relationship between Crim and Mays provided some reassurance of this theological reflection perspective toward education and children when Crim wrote in one of his later papers toward the end of his career, when he was asked about his views and philosophy on education: "Through discussion with Dr. Mays and by studying his life and the lives of others who succeed in the spirit of great odds, I came to believe that all God's children can learn." From this simple principle, I developed the concept of the "Community of Believers" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1985, p.1).

Crim's "Community of Believers" philosophy was shared throughout most of his written speeches, media communication, and letter responses. This philosophy consists of the Greek term *Koinonia* (Greek dictionary), which is expressed in theological and ecclesial settings. *Koinonia* is a term used to convey community, joint participation, sharing of one's gifts, and deep intimacy. Dr. Crim cements this claim during his speech to administrators at George High School on August 14, 1984 when he submits, "we are going to education all of God's children and we are going to educate them well, and we are going to educate them for the world" (Alonzo Crim Papers,1984, p.2).

With a high regard for worship and religious spaces, Crim made it a point to connect and partner with various faith communities to engage his "community of believers" philosophy. The Protestant church was a major part of these philosophies: "If you want good folk, and you want people to model for kids, where better could you look than to the religious community?" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1988, p.1). In another instance, Crim shared, "my secular ministry is helping young people find themselves and to know their own power and capability" (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1978 p.4). Crim continued to use theological language and rhetorical devices to

bridge faith and education. In a speech to begin the 1986 academic year, Crim offered these words to students and educators: “We are not here to play, to dream, to drift. We have hard work to do and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle, ‘tis God’s gift” (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1985, p.3). He added: “Your job is your ministry. Your study is this school year, that is your ministry, that is your contribution to yourself, to your family, and your community” (Alonzo Crim Papers). He even referenced the desegregation issue in Atlanta and used it as a zeitgeist moment to bring to bear the necessity for his philosophy and the importance of everyone playing a role in the success of the district:

> “You all will recall that in 1973, *the Atlanta Compromis*e was developed in which the people in Atlanta stated that we wanted to overcome the burden of racism and segregation and that we want to on with the job of educating our children. Hallelujah! Let’s not ever allow our children to forget the struggle for truth and justice and liberty.” (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1986; p.6)

The soul work of Crim was also displayed in his speech at the beginning of the 1986 school year, the theme of which was “Don’t Just Keep the Faith, Pass it On” (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1986; p.6). This theme was a play on words made famous by Adam Clayton Powell, from his live recorded sermon in 1967 entitled “Keep the Faith, Baby” (Alonzo Crim Papers). Moreover, there was a poetic play on soul work and education when Crim closed his speech with a celebration in the same manner a preacher would during a sermon or worship service. Crim ended his speech with these words:

> Because of the “community of believer”
> I sought my soul, My soul I could not see.
> I sought my God,
> But my God eluded me.
> I sought my fellowman,
> And in finding him
> I found all three.
> (Alonzo Crim Papers, 1986; p.12)

Crim's call to action demonstrated a deep concern for children and a belief in the children of Atlanta. Crim contended, "If we do this for these special children, we will get evidence that all God's children can learn, especially Atlanta's children. Let's not just keep the faith, pass it on!" (Alonzo Crim Papers,1986, p.1). For Crim, "the common denominator for the community of believers is a concern and without the faith and support of the community of believers, public education all a chance of creating equality in society would be destroyed" (Alonzo Crim Papers). Crim's theological reflection and commitment to community exuded soul work and harkened readers to consider how Black education philosophies speak to notions of quality education for students, educators, families, and stakeholders.

The themes that emerged from the archives are a useful way to re-imagine the efficacy of the *Compromise.* All that was gleaned from the archives related to Black politics and influence, Black education praxis and quality of education, and Black education as soul work. Through careful examination, these themes help illustrate one of many stories in the history of Black education in Atlanta. These themes emerged and shared different perspectives on school leadership in Atlanta that are not often written about. Political histories within the scope of education, along with a cosmopolitan philosophy of education that brings to bear theology and social justice, help situate the failures and successes of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*.

4.6 Conclusion

As seen in all three frames for Black political discourse concerning the *Compromise*, there are an assertion and a belief that the perspective with which a group, an organization, or a leader aligns is the best path forward or the correct way to reach a goal. Dawson (1994) submitted, "A common feature of all these critiques of ideology is their assertion that a single,

universal ideology dominates society" (Dawson, 1994, p. 50). As such, from the literature and archival materials, it is possible to deduce that each camp truly believed in its agenda and, for better or for worse, had good intentions for solving the challenge of school desegregation in Atlanta. However, "what was also revealed was that societies, which are marked by racial apartheid, are not only likely to develop separate public spheres, but those spheres themselves become the bases for the articulation of divergent, often conflicting, group interests (p. 52). As a result, the networks that emerged during negotiations of the *Compromise* attempted to work within and around racial and class parameters that were long established in broader America and specifically in Atlanta.

In a diverse and multiracial society like the United States, various groups and communities, shaped by historical inclusion and exclusion based on social strata like race and class, contribute to the different ideologies and political affiliations found in the public arena (Dawson, 2004). This insider/outsider motif was not only prevalent in the negotiations, but it ultimately shaped which agenda prevailed. The National NAACP did not adjust its reputation to the community and local stakeholders whom they sought to save and, thus, their position was not taken seriously, while the Atlanta Branch of NAACP and the school board capitalized on a history of misguided superiority by the National NAACP and aligned with policy and the *Compromise*. This relationship and shared agenda allowed both camps to lay claim to successes that can be categorized as a trend toward political power, local control of how education would look as in the APS, and a spirit of Black affirmation in the city of Atlanta. Dawson (1994) affirmed this by claiming, "Blacks should be able to define their destiny, whether their orientation toward black nationalism is spiritual, cultural, economic or political" (p. 92). The coalition between the Atlanta NAACP Branch and the school board achieved this end with

national and local affirmation from various sources such as the mayor's office, numerous organizations, corporations, and, most importantly, the Fifth Circuit court in New Orleans, which deemed the *Compromise* workable and declared that Atlanta had finally achieved unitary status in the APS District (Bohan & Bradshaw, Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hornsby, 2016).

Chapter 5: Organized Noise: Implications and Recommendations

> "I'm saying…you wanna know about Atlanta…you gotta know where the best collard greens were, that let you know whether or not you're from here or not. When a person comes around and say we're going to go to such-and-such…we would be like…they aint from here…Lemme show yall…follow me…" – Rico Wade (Hobson, 2019, p.220)

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to share implications and recommendations informed by the historical research conducted on the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. The implications offer an opportunity to expound and provide commentary on what is at stake or can be gleaned as a result of the project. In other words, implications help to make clear the outcomes from the study. Recommendations provide opportunities for a researcher to share how the research that has been conducted can be useful—either theoretically or practically. In this case, recommendations give researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders an opportunity to take the research from the archives and make it live in the world in new ways for the sake of a reimagined way of thinking about and doing education for and with Black people. I offer these implications and recommendations as a testament to the scholarship, activism, and sweat equity of those who helped to craft the *Compromise* and provide a voice for those who may have felt silenced by the outcomes of the *Compromise*. As revealed in the findings, the *Compromise* proved that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work everywhere; however, the findings also revealed that context matters, and people are a variable that can tilt the scales of any policy.

5.2 Summary of the Study

Research on Black education with a focus on desegregation illuminates the challenges that Black educators and Black students faced after the *Brown* decision. In this vein, as the city of Atlanta weighed the pros and cons of maintaining a segregated society and implementing

desegregation policy, the will to desegregate schools prevailed with the economic viability and reputation of the city at stake. The purpose of this study was to document and explore the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* and how it impacted Black education in the city of Atlanta. This study focused on the negotiations between the local and national NAACP, coalition building between school leaders and stakeholders, designation for what counted as quality education, and the implementation and aftermath of the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973.*

The purpose of this historical case study was to use archival research and document analysis to undertake an in-depth exploration of the events leading up to the *Compromise* in the APS district. My chief aim was to contribute to the historical record, provide distinctions, and bring to the bear the subtleties that exist in the narrative of school desegregation in Atlanta, Georgia. It was essential to stamp and denote for readers and researchers the level of finesse, savvy, and even deception that was present in the *Compromise*. Moreover, bringing to bear the opportunity costs for the "city too busy to hate" set the table for a critical examination of just where Black children lie within the collective consciousness of what is moral, what is right, and what is just in terms of their education and well-being. The questions that guided this research were:

RQ1. What were the events that led up to the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973?*

RQ2. In what ways, if any, did the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* influence Black education in Atlanta Public Schools?

RQ3. How was the quality of education impacted under the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* in Atlanta Public schools?

This case study used historical research methodology to examine archives on the *Compromise.* Thick descriptions and the examination of the *Compromise* from a historical

perspective were the foundation of my analysis and synthesis. I collected data by visiting physical archives and searching digital archive collections that all centered around the history of Black education in Atlanta. Data collection and archival visits took place over a period of 18 months. Research questions and agendas were developed with the help of my dissertation committee chair after consultations, classes, independent studies, and reviewing previous literature.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The findings from my study shared the murky nature of Black education and politics in Atlanta during the post-Civil Rights era. An in-depth examination and deep dive into literature and artifacts revealed how power, passion, and politics dominated the narrative of education in Atlanta during the 1970s. In fact, power, passion, and politics had been baked into the fabric of Black education in Atlanta since the 1920s. With various political groups such as the National NAACP, NAACP-Atlanta Branch, local PTA groups, the school board, and powerbrokers from the political and business world, all had a perspective and an approach to raise the national profile of Atlanta as "a city too busy to hate" while also undergirding systems marginalization, exceptionalism, and stark lines between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

Three themes emerged from my study: Black politics and social capital influence Black education, Black education as quality education, and Black education as soul work. These three themes provided a view to some of the ways the *Compromise* influenced Black education in Atlanta and pointed toward some new understandings of the desegregation and integration discourse that ultimately contained liminal influence and interjections from white people. By contrast, Black powerbrokers, from educators like Benjamin Mays to local politicians like Lonnie King, were key architects of the *Compromise* and its implementation. Quality education

was a key factor in many of the debates regarding education in Atlanta on all sides during desegregation and integration efforts (Brown-Nagin, 2012; Hobson, 2019; Hornsby, 2016), Alonzo Crim's appointment as the first Black superintendent of a major city in the South ushered in a new era of school leadership. Crim's school leadership and philosophy on education was built on community coalitions and faithful service to and for children, educators, and communities. Thus, the *Compromise* made good on the promises of *Brown* from an educator perspective but suffered on the integration of Black and white students. Moreover, the re-segregation of Atlanta's schools made Black education a default setting, and strides were made to increase and redefine what quality education looked like. However, what was clear was that the *Compromise* missed an opportunity to illuminate voices from the margins and common Black folks of Atlanta; instead, voices from the Black power structure dominated the *Compromise* discourse and left more to be desired, despite gains for some Blacks in the city.

5.4 Importance of This Study

This study illuminated the complex and consequential history of Black education in Atlanta, sharing a distinctive and nuanced examination of the political dynamics among Black activists, leaders, and educators. I analyzed the implementation and repercussions of the *Compromise* using historical methods. As a result, this research accentuated how policy decisions influenced and reset the scales of economic and social mobility for Black educators in Atlanta. Consensus from some elite Blacks was that the *Compromise* went too far, and poorer Black communities contended that the *Compromise* was insufficient. This dichotomy underscored the varied perspectives on the effectiveness of the *Compromise* in advancing quality education and social equity within the school district.

5.5 Implications for Theory

Theorizing Black education is a soul and community endeavor. Working through the theory and application of Black education invokes what Howard Thurman (1981) called a work of head and heart. Studying Black people and Black experiences is often commodified, pillaged, and repackaged for public consumption. Now that the Project 2025 agenda by right-wing politicians has made its way to the top of the public sphere, it is imperative that historians and educators work to preserve the voices of Black scholarship so that they are not washed away. As part of this theoretical framework, I implore readers with Beverly Gordon's (1993) theory of African American knowledge that utilizes five currents of thought: service, nationalism, self-help, economic autonomy, and political power.

Gordon (1993) contended, "African American cultural knowledge—as expressed through the beliefs, values, perspectives and worldview—can be found in the endogenous cultural artifacts within the African American existential conditions" (p. 456). I relied on these modes as I conducted my study. My epistemological standpoint is greatly rooted in me as a Black Southern man. Therefore, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, invoking the various writings of Zora Neale Hurston rang true as I traveled from New York to California and from New York to Atlanta several times over 18 months to study Black education and the *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973*. A major aspect of studying archives is allowing the artifacts to tell the story. In this case, while I relied on the artifacts to tell the story, I also relied on the people in the archives, local areas, and around the archives to illuminate the stories within the historical record. For example, visiting Clark Atlanta University and Auburn Avenue Research library proved to be an archive within an archive. Therefore, simply paying attention to what was in file boxes would have been a disservice to the *Compromise* and Black education. However, of greater service are

paying attention to and being aware of the ways in which the actual holding place of the archives situates the contents into a broader narrative of failure, victory, community control, perseverance, and sociopolitical influence.

In the literature or archival material, we do not see much of how the network fully operated or connected between the APS Board, the Superintendent's office, and the mayoral office. Based on the artifacts discovered, conversations were indeed held, but the extent to which those conversations had major bearings on the functioning of APS is unknown. Therefore, while it is certain that Crim, Mays, and Jackson had a relationship because of their close proximity in the 1970s and the network of Black leaders involved, to what extent was it successful? This was, in fact, a gap in my ability to reconstruct a narrative from the archive. The relationship between Crim and Mays was clear and strong, while the coalition between the superintendent and the president of the school board was fortified. Moreover, through entities such as the school board and advocacy groups like the NAACP (both national and local), we can see how politics played a pivotal role in the quality of education and—most pointedly—community control in the APS District.

This historical case study orchestrated its premise on studying a Black school district within a Black city with a focus on Black education. The study revealed there were successes and failures with the *Compromise.* However, what may be most intriguing is the revelation that Black people in the South possessed the intellect, social capital, cultural retention, and political acumen to seek and provide responses to problems in their own community. "This knowledge demonstrates that people can engage in action to change societal structures in ways that result in the improvement of their lives" (Gordon, 1993, p. 457). This idea by Gordon further accentuated the notion that studying Black people as one's most authentic self and imploring embedded

knowledge as well as new knowledge is paramount to ensuring that African American retention is not only preserved but also ensures that the promise of liberation and freedom remains a possibility. As a result, theoretical implications for this historical study and its findings make room for other Black spaces and municipalities to aspire to and ensure that "information, facts, values, stories, legends, ideals, mythology and so forth, that are passed on generationally provide students with the worldview/context through which they learn history and society identity" (p. 457).

5.5.1 Section 1: Implications of the Research

This research utilized a critical political lens and a Black Southern hermeneutic to better understand the *Compromise/* As a result, Black political ideologies played a major role in examining the ways in which organizations, institutions, and leaders went about shaping the *Compromise* and implementing the policy. There is further need to examine and develop an affinity for historical paradigms that point researchers to models and ideas that already exist but may not be widely viewed as part of the canon of education leadership and Black education history. The research shared and documented social and political movements, community coalitions, Black experiences in the South, race relations, and philosophies on school leadership.

Practical Implications.

This historical study provided several implications for practice in the field of education and historical inquiry. Of the key ideas explored, the connection between education, labor, and politics is of supreme importance. For practice, this syncs the notion of quality education to the types of educators that are in schools, the types of resources that exist in schools, and the types of partnerships at the disposal of district and school leaders. The research provided several claims whereby coalitions were created and even existed for the purpose of leveraging relationships to

achieve an expected or a hopeful end. Furthermore, deep reflections on one's personal values, beliefs, and philosophies drive the ways in which educators and those invest some stake in education, whether for the greater good or for personal achievement or gain.

The social and cultural implications anchor in three areas. First, this study impacts social understandings of Black life in the 1970s in Atlanta with acute attention to Black political control and autonomy. Second, there is an influence on cultural narratives and collective memories due to the fact that although some considered the *Compromise* a success, others thought it was a dismal failure. In this vein, how people recall, remember, and make meaning of social and political reforms matters and informs the ways that history is internalized and shared. Third, there are implications for marginalized groups and communities and how these groups are included in research and action plans for improved quality of life.

5.5.2 Section 2: Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Improving how communities function and the level of participation to which Black citizens engage can have profound impacts on the quality of education Black children receive. Where and how students live have implications for the ways they perform in school. Improving educational outcomes for Black students calls for intentional and targeted policy interventions. This study led to three key policy recommendations that address systemic disparities, promote equity, and enhance the educational experiences of Black students.

Enhance Resource Allocation in Black School Districts Through Contextual Analysis.

The Black Education Research Collective (BERC) at Teachers College, Columbia University began this work under the direction of Professor Sonya Douglass in 2022. In 2022, BERC conducted a series of studies in several major cities such as New York, Las Vegas,

Washington, DC, and Atlanta to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism impacted Black education from the perspectives of Black parents, teachers, students, educators, and community leaders (Horsford et al., 2022). The policy briefs that the team conducted provided a solid framework for how local organizations, researchers, and universities can partner to address challenges in their communities. I see these collections of policy briefs as a crucial nexus and opportunity to bring multiple voices to the table. From the research conducted in the study of the *Compromise*, we can see pockets of the coalition building; however, we are also seeing the coalition building from a narrow view. Scholars such as Hornsby (2016) contended that many of Atlanta's poor class were left out of the conversation regarding school desegregation in Atlanta in 1973. Crafting policy briefs with the entire community in mind requires understanding that it takes all kinds of people to set a trajectory of transparency, collaboration, and fidelity.

Urban Renewal and Community Participation: Linking Community Engagement and Housing to Quality Education.

Throughout the literature on the *Compromise*, Hobson (2019), Brown-Nagin (2012), Crawford (2019), and Hornsby (2016) pointed to housing as a core piece that allowed Atlanta to become over 90% Black in the 1970s, but housing was also a key factor that facilitated poverty, redistricting, and inadequate resources. According to the Black Neighborhoods and the Creation of Black Atlanta exhibition at the Atlanta University Center (2024), historians contend, during the 1980s and 1990s, efforts to revitalize and redevelop Black neighborhoods took shape. While some communities saw a resurgence of prosperity, others faced deterioration, and many were dismantled as the city pursued its path of expansion. In the 1970s, Mayor Jackson championed urban renewal in areas that were dear to Atlanta's Black Mecca imagery, but he struggled to find

a solution for Atlanta's low-income citizens because public housing did not receive the same amount of attention as downtown development (Hobson, 2019). These sentiments would remain a continuing trend and a point of contention 25 years later when the City of Atlanta was set to host the 1996 Olympic Games. While the challenge of housing and poverty loomed over the city and displaced Atlanta's most vulnerable to its margins, it must be mentioned that measures were put in place to boost citizen voice beyond voting on matters of urban development.

In 1974, Mayor Maynard Jackson established the Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) system that divided Atlanta into 25 citizen advisory councils to make recommendations to the Atlanta City Hall on zoning, land use, and other planning units (Hobson, 2019). This program and branch of government were created with the intention of bringing citizens into the main offices where decisions on their well-being are being held and give them voice in that process. Citizens had the opportunity to offer suggestions, recommendations, and ideas on city plans and proposals, while supporting the city in developing strategies that best articulated the needs of their communities (Hobson, 2019). The findings from my study pointed toward this piece by bringing to bear Crim's community of believers philosophy and inviting governmental partners into the school community. By doing so, the assertion was that the gap between quality of living and quality of education decreased, and students benefited from the partnerships that existed at the local level; all fed back into the quality of education that students received in their local school districts.

In this vein, Atlanta citizens can take advantage of the city's community grant program, whereby they are able to provide input on beautification projects and spaces that are beneficial to the community. While the community grant program can be an asset to communities, there is an application process that may be overwhelming or even inaccessible to the citizens and

communities who would benefit the most. As part of the application process, applicants are required to comply with grant administration protocols, permit approvals, prepare budgets, scope of work, identify project managers, and get the support of the majority of the NPU. Therefore, utilizing the NPU-University would help low-income or low-educational-attainment residents in marginalized areas benefit from the program and resources the city has to offer. Tapping into these programs, the voices from below have the opportunity to close what the city of Atlanta called the "equitable growth housing gap" that currently exists. According to the City of Atlanta, this program looks like projects and activities that provide training and education on how citizens can effectively participate in city government at a grassroots and integral level (Atlanta City Government, 2024).

Nationwide Pay Increase for Teachers Commensurate with Cost of Living in Their Local State.

On June 4, 2024, the Atlanta School Board passed an 11% pay rate increase for all teachers in APS and a 3% to 5% cost of living increase (FOX 5 Atlanta, 2024). As noted in the literature of this story of the *Compromise,* embedded in the issues of desegregation disputes in Atlanta were labor, economics and self-worth—all key markers that contributed to the challenges leading to the *Compromise*. Two instances in my research highlighted this very specific challenge of teachers and pay schedule: (a) the timeframe of the 1940s, when Black educators lost their case on being paid on a par with their white colleagues; and (b) the indicators and implied premise for why Lonnie King and Benjamin Mays argued for pay increases and the redistribution of roles by race, as outlined in the *Compromise.*

Pay increases address several challenges and emboldens the economy and quality of life. Pay increases position educators to be homeowners, have better quality of life for their families,

and be motivated to provide quality education as they serve in their various stations throughout the education profession. One board member for APS offered, “Teachers and staff are recognized for their tireless efforts to ensure all students receive high-quality instruction and support” (FOX 5 Atlanta, 2024). Quality education goes both ways: It not only speaks to the type of education that is provided, but it also speaks to the quality of persons that provide it.

5.5.3 Section 3: Implications and Educational Recommendations

Advancing Black education is a multifaceted endeavor, requiring targeted policy recommendations. This study unearthed three critical findings that shape our understanding of Black education, not only as a philosophy, but also as a holistic and impactful practice: Black education as quality education, Black education as soul work, and Black politics as social capital. Based on these findings, I offer four policy recommendations aimed at creating systemic change within and for educational institutions and communities.

Build Bridges: Establish Leadership Pipelines for Black Educators from the Local School Districts.

The research clearly stated that *Brown* displaced many educators in school districts (Tillman, 2002, 2006). This study on the *Compromise* revealed the power of school districts re-distributing roles for Black educators and raising pay scales. With a tradition of Black colleges and universities as well as Black K-12 institutions in the city, I submit that a way to tap into some of the work and logic behind the original *Compromise* would be to create educator pipelines within the district. These may be of immense value to students taught in a school district who offer service back to their districts once they complete college or graduate school. Deep connections to the community and first-hand experience of Black educators may be

essential to the ways in which Black students develop and make meaning of their educational experience.

Here, I briefly turn to the example presented by Vanessa Siddle Walker (2015). While this particular work focused on professional development and principal preparation programs, I offer the story of Ulysses Byas as a paradigm worth examining for our consideration. Byas's professional development took shape in non-conventional ways. He was enculturated into the professor motif by an apprentice model of professional development, one that saw the value of his gifts, graces, and talents placed in rooms and situations where he could gain on-the-site training to accompany his many theoretical accoutrements acquired at Fort Valley and Teachers College. For the practice of education leadership, this concept would be ideal; however, it was seemingly not sustainable. The sustainability of an apprentice model seems antiquated unless required and buttressed by principal preparation programs. However, with this critique in mind, having educators who already have contextual awareness and allegiance to the school districts has the power to make a fundamental difference in the quality of education they offer and the social justice endeavors they enact in their local communities. All theory and no site training create an offset equilibrium by which formative knowledge on one end or the other will often be off balanced by one's inability to view the leadership project as a prism and turn multiple sides with multiple views to better sense what is or is not happening. This short caveat brings to bear what I believe is service to community, and educators who were once students of the district can receive incentives for returning to their local school districts to work. Not only can this boost the quality of education, but it can also inform community control and extend the community of believers motif.

Implement Diverse Black Education Philosophies.

As stated earlier in this research, Black people are not a monolith, nor are Black philosophies. The beauty of Black education philosophies are they cover a multitude of cultural expressions, ideas, motifs, and communal tropes that help create a genre of intersecting truths and values that build a lexicon of curriculums, language, practices, leadership and teaching styles, and modes knowing and sharing knowledge. Black people and include a wide and diverse understanding of Black experiences. Therefore, Black education models should reflect that variety. Various models such as African-centered schools, freedom school models, schools for social justice, schools anchored in culturally responsive school leadership, and Black Panther education all serve as possibilities for the ways Black education models
and philosophies can be invoked in a school building. I submit here an anchor in Black epistemologies that can help bolster Black education philosophies. The findings from this study shared that there are blurred lines between sacred and secular for this particular Black school leader (Crim), as demonstrated throughout his writings, speeches, and artifacts. While the U.S. Constitution makes a clear distinction between church and state, some Black school leaders hold tight to their faith to anchor and allow them to do their work with care, tenacity, fidelity, and a sense of hope. This was the case with Dr. Alonzo Crim, and these findings revealed this reality.

Prophetic School Leadership Philosophy.

Phillip Smith (2021), Michael Dantley (2003), Judy Alston (2005), and Noelle Witherspoon-Arnold (2014) spoke to this idea of prophetic school leadership. Crim couched much of his educational philosophy in theological reflection. This reflection not only served as a guidepost for his work in education but, according to the archives, it was also how he lived his life. Therefore, the mixing of sacred and secular was at play not only Crim but also for a host of

Black educators who see their work as a sense of "calling" or "moral obligation," intrinsically linked to the ways in which they live out their faith. These philosophies and models of Black education situate themselves broadly in the work of Khalifa et al.'s (2017) synthesis of the literature on culturally responsive school leadership and narrowly under the guise of a brand of prophetic school leadership as loosely defined by Dantley, Alston, Smith, and Witherspoon-Arnold with their various works on the intersection of education leadership and theology.

Where is the source of one's ability to lead, teach, or grow in a school site? Fite et al. (2011) contended that a growing number of scholars consider spirituality to be a critical component of effective teaching, teacher leadership, and dynamic organizational life" (p. 43). Consequently, in a case study on care and a Black principal, Witherspoon-Arnold (2014), asserted that the prevailing approach to understanding and integrating wisdom as discourse in education has been predominantly shaped by white, Eurocentric traditions, often dismissing intersectional identities and cultural perspectives in the practice of care. While these two articles addressed the growing need for practice and literature, they did not describe the theological ideas that buttress the call for this reform in educational leadership.

While literature is limited on the intersection of spirituality and education leadership, more literature speaks to the spirituality of teachers on certain outcomes of students, teacher embodiment, and leadership models. School leadership and its level of effectiveness are constantly being critiqued and evaluated. Scholars would contend that current practices in urban school leadership are mediocre and ineffective at best (Blanton, 2007; McCray et al., 2013). This calls for a new paradigm for integrating a model of leadership that enables school leaders and students to engage fully in the democratic process and to do so in a fearless environment. Similarly, critical spirituality explores the relations between one's spirituality and social justice

work (Boyd, 2012; Dantley, 2003, 2010). Critical spirituality is a Eurocentric paradigm that does not consider the African diasporic or African American ontology as a means of study to understand and embrace spirituality from an asset-based perspective. Frameworks that address Black ideologies often consider African American experiences from a deficit model. Black liberation theology acknowledges the humanity of African Americans and uses Black experiences, Black history, Black culture, revelation, and scripture (Cone, 1970) as a source for meaning making.

In African American school sites, many outside forces inform pedagogical practices. In this vein, Crim's philosophy of education and artifacts helped to better understand the role that faith and theological discourse play in the professional practices of teachers and educational leaders. It was in value-segregated schools that Black educators and leaders cared for Black students by offering them hope and teaching them virtues that would extend beyond the classroom (Siddle Walker, 1996). In a world that relegated Black students to second-class citizenship, Black educators held a deep commitment to ensuring students understood cultural nuances and assumed an appreciation for human difference. Spirituality, faith, and the hope of liberation in the face of systematized oppression were virtues that sustained Black persons during dark moments of American history. For Black educators, teaching and leading schools are equally sacred.

Create Professional Development Modules on Black Life and Community Engagement for Black Educators.

An example of creating professional development modules was inspired by the work of BERC and its Black Studies Curriculum in New York City public schools (Horsford et al., 2022)**.** In January of 2022, BERC launched Design Labs to pilot the Black Studies Curriculum

and professional development opportunities for educators and learners to be immersed in pedagogical and leadership practices steeped in Black epistemologies (BERC Pilot Lab, 2022). Similarly, more regional and district studies should be conducted in this vein to help local educators understand historical elements of Black studies, both universally and locally. This would foster community development through pedagogical praxis and honor the legacies of local movements with respect to the fight for Black education motifs. The intentional study of Black studies in local communities brings to bear an appreciation of collective memories and commitments to a new shared future where new histories are crafted and celebrated.

Professional development sessions or series connect to the findings because they intentionally provide a platform for Black education motifs and tropes to be on display in a major capacity. According to the Republican's Project 2025 Leadership Playbook (2024), there is a concentrated effort to eliminate curriculum, lessons, and texts that tell America's complicated history with race and class. Erasure of Black people and their contributions is at stake, and while notions of Jarvis Givens's (2022) Fugitive Pedagogy (2022) are at play in classrooms, federal legislation legitimizes the erasure of Black thought, Black epistemologies, and Black education, pointing instead toward a redefined second-class citizenship (Anderson, 1988).

Broaden the Perception of Quality Education to Be Inclusive of Public Health Initiatives.

At the core of this study, one of the essential questions revolved around the quality of education. Quality education was achieved in several ways, according to the *Compromise*: via racial balance, pay increases for educators, qualified Black educators in key leadership roles, rising test scores, intensive enrichment reading programs for students in APS, partnerships with corporate and community entities, and training for APS teachers. According to Crim and the

Board of Education, these were some of the gains made toward the ideal of quality of education. I offer here the idea to expand the notion of quality of education to include public health initiatives that partner with dentists, optometrists, mental health providers, and other healthcare professionals who provide services and meet students' needs.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2023), in 2021, 9% of students in APS did not have healthcare insurance. The report revealed that this 9% uninsured rate was higher than the state and national rates. Similarly, in a student survey conducted in 2022, the Georgia Department of Education (2024) reported that 50% of students enrolled in APS stated they experienced depression and anxiety. Thus, following the framework of Crim and his community of believers, partnering with healthcare institutions can expand the quality of life of students, thus improving the quality of education for APS students.

5.5.5 Section 4: Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Implications for future research serve as an enduring possibility for the work of Black scholars who choose to work for, about, and with Black people. This section of the recommendations and implications chapter was crafted to address, first of all, the archive as an educational site worth preserving; and second of all, the contents of the archives illuminating the future. These two ideas guide this section for three very specific reasons. First, Dr. Alonzo Crim served APS for 15 years and cemented himself as a stalwart presence in the education industry. However, the archives at Stanford holding his artifacts, while immaculately preserved, are not catalogued, organized, or labeled appropriately. While some researchers may not consider this worth a mention, my position as a researcher dedicated to the preservation of Black lives in the historical record finds this to pose a huge challenge over who claims and owns our work. While I mentioned earlier in this study in relation to the importance of archives and the politics of

archives, it is imperative to ensure that artifacts for us and about us be housed in places that recognize their intrinsic value and do not merely hold these artifacts as "things."

Second, the contents of the archives serve as a blueprint for future endeavors. The archives both in Atlanta and California were brimming with materials. The archives in Atlanta told a story not just about school desegregation in Atlanta but also about the multiple Black experiences situated within a broad context of school desegregation. Each newspaper clipping, essay, photograph, manuscript, and magazine spread points readers and researchers toward a collection of stories that can relate new insights into the past while providing hope for the future. In this context, the cultural consequences, then, of the archive call us to look at Atlanta as a legacy city with political, social, economic, educational, and labor power.

Third, interdisciplinary work is essential to furthering this research. Examining the intersection of Black education, history, and politics provides a keen opportunity to understand how systems aid or hinder the type of education that is rendered in Black communities and municipalities. Moreover, the intersection of politics and Black education opens the discussion to include economics, housing, and poverty, and how these various individual tropes feed into overall quests for quality education. Thus, examining the intersection of politics and Black education works to unravel the complicated web of challenges that exist within Black communities and force researchers, practitioners, educators, and politicians to coalesce and actually address those challenges. Based on the findings from my study, I offer these three recommendations for future research.

Expand the Community of Believers Paradigm and Connect with More Black-Owned Businesses and Entrepreneurs to Support Local Black School Districts.

The community of believers paradigm was Crim's bread and butter. Throughout the archives, almost every one of his speeches referred to the mission and vision that would bolster this community of believers. As many of his speeches raved about the work the community of believers were able to achieve and the deep investment they made in the students of APS, it is clear that the community of believers in 2024 may be an even wider net. According to a 2023 article by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, there are 8,663 Black-owned businesses in Atlanta—the largest number of Black-owned businesses in the United States (Donastorg, 2023). With 20% of Atlanta's businesses in the city being Black-owned and ranging from music labels, production companies, restaurants, clothing stores, to specialty shops and art/cultural centers, there is a grand opportunity to connect and expand Crim's initial work. Similarly, the companies that existed during the negotiations of the *Compromise* still have corporate offices in Atlanta, such as Delta Airlines, the Home Depot, and the Coca- Cola Company. Leveraging relationships of the past while fostering relationships of the future can possibly create an even stronger school district.

Empowering Local Community Boards: Engaging Collaboration with Official School Boards to Address Educational Inequities.

In a policy brief conducted on behalf of BERC in 2021, Parks and Lester wrote a policy brief examining the effects of COVID-19 on Black education in Atlanta. A hallmark of the findings in this policy brief was working with local educators and parents to think through and address the challenges faced in their local schools. Similarly, this study on the *Compromise* in its early days was intended to involve those in Atlanta who were deemed voiceless. However, one

of the downfalls of the negotiations of the *Compromise* was that Lonnie King and others such as Benjamin Mays retreated not only to dismissing common folk in Atlanta, but also seemingly to silence them while uplifting the middle- and upper-class Blacks in Atlanta. Some privileged Blacks benefited from the *Compromise* and, according to Hornsby (2016), federal courts, school board, and Black leaders all contributed to the failure of school desegregation in Atlanta. In the end, it may not have been the presence of hate, nor the absence of love, but it was certainly the persistence of white racism (Hornsby, 2016). Thus, poor Blacks found themselves yet again voiceless and, on the margins, as they watched their neighbors, cousins, and friends ascend their social ladder of middle-class living.

A community board can serve as checks and balances for the school board with the individual school communities in mind. As seen in the findings, many parents and many local PTAs sent letters begging not to disrupt or close their schools, but to no avail. While many of the parents who sent these letters did so under the guise of not wanting to attend school with Black students, it was still evident that power and influence prevailed. Atlanta's local NAACP Branch and the APS Board of Education proved that an outside entity and the school board can work together to effect significant change. This implication and recommendation suggests that while the Board of Education is an official entity, a Community Coordinating Committee (C3) organization at each school or a regional model for a cluster of schools in a particular zip code could be the entity that brings together multiple and marginalized voices to obtain a wider and more in-depth understanding of the needs of the families, educators, and students that the district serves.

The findings from my study also revealed how Dr. Alonzo Crim utilized community coalitions and relationships to build his community of believers philosophy. I turn here to Siddle

Walker and her work with Ulysses Byas. Siddle Walker wrote about valued segregated schools in the South and the unique teaching and leadership styles that showcased Black education as an asset as opposed to a deficit. Mr. Byas's culturally responsive school leadership grounding allowed him to lean into other strands of sound leadership practices such as social justice school leadership, democratic community school leadership, and principal community leadership. These concepts of moral leadership spill over one another and overlap in ways that are sometimes difficult to determine when practice ends and other begins. It is almost as if Byas were a juggler and tossed multiple numbered balls into the air; as the balls flew, it was easy to lose track of which ball was which. This is understandable because as a culturally responsive school leader embodying the aforementioned strands, one cannot truly be committed to community development and mobility if one is divorced from social justice. Similarly, one cannot be committed to social justice without having a keen democratic ideal by which to see and hear the voices of students, parents, and stakeholders. To be seen and heard is not enough; the democratic piece enters when folks see their thoughts and reflections acted upon in conjunction with a leader who can press the line and ensure those the leader serves operate with integrity. Byas did this when he helped a group of parents shift their focus from acquiring a truancy officer to "embracing a larger vision" (Siddle Walker, 2009, p. 33).

Moreover, Byas had harnessed the momentum of the community to create a single vision of the school's needs" (Siddle Walker, 2009, p. 43); as one local newspaper shared, "one of the five characteristics of an exemplary principal is the ability to stimulate the community to recognize its needs and organize it in ways that would help it meet its needs" (p. 33). Byas galvanized a group of folks, heard their voices, acted with them; as a result, they received funding and mutual trust. Siddle Walker contended that his type of leadership was accomplished

by blending a professional educational world with a local community world; this involved inviting parents to become co-participants in the language of Black uplift that dominated the agenda of the Black intellectual elite" (Siddle Walker, 2019, p. 10).

This short examination of Byas draws readers and researchers nearer to understanding that this model exists and can be replicated under optimal or proximal conditions. In a school district with an overwhelming Black majority, exemplars such as Byas and Crim help to crystallize the possibilities that exist within Black communities to address policy, cultural, social, economic, and educational concerns. Moreover, partnering with a variety of voices in the community builds the school's capacity to address the needs of the people mostly affected in the community and inspire even the most marginalized to be honored, heard, and contributing with fidelity to addressing the needs in their schools.

Consortium of Black School Districts Caucus.

This study revealed that coalitions with municipalities make a major difference in how local legislation is negotiated and implemented. While this study showed the ways in which Atlanta came under Black control politically, socially, and educationally, other cities in America have planted flags of Black progress and control. Historical Black municipalities such as Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Charlotte with storied pasts of Black activism and school desegregation can offer insights. For example, Danns (2015) wrote about how Chicago navigated school desegregation and politics during the Black Power movement in the 1970s. Brown-Nagin (2012) wrote about Atlanta and the various social movements that contributed to the city's legacy of civil rights, activism, and education reform. Just these two examples from the literature help color this recommendation. While these cities may be different geographically, they have similar populations and problems. The literature has shown that as these municipalities navigate

education reform and politics, they do so with Black leaders negotiating class, housing, and economic matters that affect the quality of education in those municipalities.

As a result, I offer the recommendation of creating Black school district consortiums. These consortiums would be designed to bring together Black school leaders, such as Black school superintendents, school board members, and community leaders who are concerned about the education of Black students and various policies that can improve conditions and the quality of education. These consortiums have the potential to serve as incubators and think tanks for innovative policies, curricula, and spaces to coalesce around critical issues. Exploring such partnerships can create national agendas and local initiatives to support Black students and educators. Furthermore, this can broaden the conversation for what is needed in Black communities from leaders and educators by utilizing research to better understand best practices.

School Board and Student Alliance (SBSA).

While the work of Black educators, leaders, politicians, and stakeholders is essential to what viable and sustainable school communities can be, I share this final implication and recommendation from my study. Writings from scholars such as Brown-Nagin (2012), Hornsby (2016), and Wong (1992) offered some ways the *Compromise* provided a remedy with mixed feelings for many Atlantans. What their writings did not offer are reflections from a student's perspective of their perception of the *Compromise*. While scholars contended that true integration was forfeited for jobs, it can be denoted that student voice was not only lost but was hardly considered a priority. Here, I offer a student version of the school board, which will serve as mentees and experts of their own experiences in their schools. One may think of this as an ongoing Youth Participatory Project (YPAR) Project where students are elected to participate, take notes and concerns from their various schools, and share them with their cohort. They

would mirror their local school board and be recommended and elected to serve for the life of the election cycles at their local board.

YPAR projects can provide valuable insights into policymakers, school leaders, and stakeholders in their local communities. Encouraging students to become civically involved in the life and concerns of their schools can inspire them to be future educators, politicians, and leaders committed to community matters. If not for any other reason, students will be learning, contributing to, and engaging the democratic process in a way that helps them learn the essence of advocating and making decisions about what school looks like for them.

5.6 Conclusion

The study unearthed three critical findings that shape our understanding of Black education as not only a philosophy but a holistic and impactful practice: Black education as quality education, Black education as soul work, and Black politics as social capital. As a result, this study produced several implications and recommendations for policy, education, and future research. Atlanta and the *Compromise* can be a paragon for Black education and studying historical policies and future implications. The implications and recommendations of this study emphasize the need for enhanced resource allocation in Black school districts, increased teacher pay, and new leadership pipelines for Black educators. Additionally, this study advocates for integrating diverse Black education philosophies and creating professional development modules that focus on the existential realities of Black people and community engagement. Lastly, I offer for future research that scholars consider expanding the community of believers paradigm, engage the local community boards, and form a consortium of Black school districts along with youth school boards to address educational inequities.

The *Atlanta Compromise Agreement of 1973* was not a perfect policy, but it was a courageous policy that disrupted decades of racism, inequitable power structures, and inadequate education in the city. Much can be learned from this Atlanta case; the learning that can be gleaned is that the agency of Black people generates pride, coalitions, leadership, change, and new ideas. As others consider this research, I hope they will be compelled to study other local municipalities and how they have shaped education and politics. Unearthing stories of Black successes, and even failures, within Black cities and school districts can provide blueprints for other cities to offer change in their local communities and improve quality of education.

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