

The Keys to the Kingdom (1974-1980)

MARY FRANCES BERRY: When Brown against the Board of Education was decided in 1954, I happened to be downtown in Nashville, Tennessee, with my high school teacher. And we were buying some materials for the senior class play, I was graduating that year. And I saw the headline on the case, and I said to my teacher, "You know, this means that next year all the kids will be going to school together. You know, they won't have to be going to separate schools." And she said, "It's not going to happen quite that fast. Not next year."

NARRATOR: Ten years after the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unlawful, the fight for black progress had moved north to Boston, Massachusetts.

RUTH BATSON: When we fight about education, we're fighting for our lives. We're fighting for what that education will give us, we're fighting for a job, we're fighting to eat, we're fighting to pay our medical bills, we're fighting for a lot of things. So this is a total fight with us.

NARRATOR: By the 1960's, a small but growing number of parents and teachers were complaining about conditions of the schools.

JEAN MCGUIRE: Here I was a brand new teacher coming into my first teaching experience, and I walked into this old building built in 1842 named after a wonderful New England writer, Louisa May Alcott, and I had 42 students, 36 seats. We didn't have new crayons, we had a box of old, nubby crayons. Pencils had to be collected at the end of the day so you would have enough for the children for the next day. There wasn't enough white paper.

NARRATOR: Books were often in short supply, and sometimes contained lessons that damaged.

JEAN MCGUIRE: And here was this book I found which had um -- It had the word niggers in it, ten little niggers sitting on a fence, nine little niggers playing in a line, and it was just like ten little Indians, nine little Indians, and it was very offensive.

LOUISE DAY HICKS: Many of the Negro parents believe that predominantly Negro schools is inferior, per se. But we here in Boston do not believe that premise.

NARRATOR: Louise Day Hicks said that the schools were fine the way they were. The city's top vote getter in the mid-'60s, Hicks chaired the Boston School Committee. In 1965, one in four students was black. Only one in 200 teachers was black, and there was not one black principal. The NAACP brought parents concerns to the school committee.

TOM ATKINS: We just want them to say yes there is segregation in the schools, and we wanted them to acknowledge that the problem exists and to commit themselves to do something about it.

MRS. JOHNSON: I feel that at this time, any school that is predominantly Negro is an inadequate school and I --

MRS. HICKS: I didn't hear what you said, Mrs. Johnson.

MRS. JOHNSON: I said that any school that is predominantly Negro in Boston is an inadequate school.

MRS. HICKS: Mrs. Johnson, the Superintendent of Schools has stated as his policy that a racially imbalanced school is not educationally harmful.

MRS. JOHNSON: Mrs. Hicks, Madame Chairman, may I say this. Superintendent Ohrenberger and yourself and other committee members do not have children in a racially imbalanced school, so you do not know what the effect is on our children.

RUTH BATSON: The statement that we made to the school committee said that where there were a majority of black students, there was not concern for how these kids learned, that there were crowded classrooms, temporary teachers, not enough books and supplies were low and all of that kind of thing. Even physical conditions were poor.

NARRATOR: Community activists could not force the school committee to acknowledge a problem. Parents responded with a variety of strategies throughout the mid-'60s. They organized one day school boycotts and freedom schools. But short-term protest was not enough. They ran candidates for the school committee, but they lost. They pushed through a state law outlawing racially imbalanced schools, but the school committee refused to enforce it. Not yet 15 percent of the city, blacks were a minority too small to strongly influence elections or elected officials. So parents took matters into their own hands. Some set up voluntary programs that moved children to empty seats in white schools.

RUTH BATSON: We decided that where there were a large number of white students, that's where the care went, that's where the books went, that's where the money went. So therefore, our theory was move our kids into those schools where they're putting all of the resources so they can get a better education.

NARRATOR: Other parents took a different approach. Instead of working to integrate white schools, they established their own parent-run, independent schools.

TEACHER: Does anybody have any questions?

CHILDREN: No.

TEACHER: Go to work.

JUANITA WADE: Parents saw that public education was not offering young people not only the strong education they needed, but the social relationships or recognition of who they were as African-Americans, just wasn't happening in the Boston public school system. So there was a real move, community-wide, to develop institutions that would meet both of those needs.

NARRATOR: The black community could not afford to transport all its students to white schools, nor to run its own school system. The battle for quality education would have to be fought in the public schools. That struggle had been going on for a decade. Black parents were not going to give up. The school committee was not going to give in, and most other city leaders did not want to get involved.

ROBERT KILEY: I think it's not unfair to say that the business community, the financial community and I would say the religious community took a walk in the early 1970's, leaving really only the politicians and the parents as the people who cared about the issue. And in a certain sense, the parents got pitted against one another, white neighborhoods against black neighborhoods in a way that no one had ever bargained for.

NARRATOR: In 1972, under NAACP leadership, black parents filed a class action suit against the school committee in federal district court. A confrontation was looming that would change the city in ways never expected.

THOMAS ATKINS: We filed a lawsuit in the federal court because there was no other place for us to go. It was literally the court of last resort.

NARRATOR: In a city where neighborhoods were divided by race, desegregating the schools would mean busing children from one neighborhood to another.

WHITE WOMAN: I wouldn't care if they were green or purple, it's the idea of putting my kid on a bus when I have a school right across the street from where they should go. I don't care what color they are.

NARRATOR: On June 21st, 1974, federal district court judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled that the Boston School Committee was guilty of consciously maintaining two separate school systems, one black, one white. He ordered an immediate remedy, city-wide busing to start in September. Less than a mile separated two of Boston's poorer neighborhoods. Roxbury was the heart of the black community; South Boston was Louise Day Hicks' home and the center of white resistance. Students were to be bused between the two neighborhoods.

RUTH BATSON: When Garrity's decision came down in June of 1974, we were sunk when we heard some of the remedies, the one of busing to South Boston because those of us who had lived in Boston all of our lives knew that this was going to be a very, very difficult thing to pull off.

NARRATOR: With the opening of school only 12 weeks away, political differences among blacks gave way to shared concern for the safety of the children. Freedom House, a Roxbury Community Center, coordinated black preparations for busing.

WOMAN: One of the objectives during that period over the summer was to assure that it would be a peaceful transition and that we would commit ourselves to do that.

ELLEN JACKSON: We stand united at this critical time to provide leadership and resource to the parents and children who are residents in our community, and those children with their parents who will be attending public schools in this community. We call on other sections in the city to assume the same kind of responsibilities that we are assuming.

AL LUPO: Boston is a very hidebound, distrustful, turf conscious, class conscious, parochial city full of people who did not make much progress over the years. I'm talking about white folks. They were not middle income people. They were poor folk, and they were running hardscrabble operations. And they were scared. By the time busing came around, these people were ripe for revolution.

WHITE WOMAN: It's tearing them apart. People. As a community, it's tearing them apart. They may say this is helping, it's tearing them apart. I'm not bothered, I don't care. My one will not go to school, but it's tearing them apart!

KEVIN WHITE: Well, I'm the mayor and the first recognition is that it's a court order, it has to be enforced by the city, but it's a final decision, that it's irrevocable and that I'm going to be responsible at a minimum for public safety and at a maximum for the social health. In a way it's a little exaggerated, but the morals of the town, it's a moral question as well as a political question. What I did was respond politically.

NARRATOR: In a series of coffee hours set up in homes throughout the city, the mayor met with white parents opposed to busing.

KEVIN WHITE: All right, but it's not behind us yet. It'll be a painful process going through it because the salt didn't just slide through it, it tore them apart as it'll help to tear us apart.

ELLEN JACKSON: The mood was one of confusion, concern, and fear because the elected officials during that summer of 1974 after the order had been given by Judge Garrity were very often making statements that this would not happen.

JOHN KERRIGAN: Now, how can we beat the federal court? By getting some strong anti-busing legislation from Washington. So I suggest to you if we're going to win, if you're going to keep your children in their neighborhood schools, that you join with the rest of the city on September the 9th in a grand march before the federal building.

JANET PALMARIELLO: Just because I'm white doesn't mean that the 14th Amendment doesn't refer to me, either. I am white and I want my rights.

NARRATOR: Demonstrators had come to the federal building to protest Senator Edward Kennedy's support of desegregation. His family had always been the pride of Boston's Irish community, but now the crowd turned on Kennedy.

MAN: Those people out there don't care to listen to you.

NARRATOR: The crowd pursued Kennedy to the doors of the federal building. School was due to start in three days. September 12th, 1974, under court order against school committee wishes, the integration of Boston schools began. It was a quiet first day of school in Roxbury, as it was in most of the city. A committee of black parents waited inside to greet the few white students who came to Roxbury High School. But across town, crowds of whites had been gathering outside South Boston High School since early morning. The school's headmaster had been at South Boston High for nine years.

HEADMASTER REID: Let's go, gentlemen, come on.

WOMAN: If you tell us to leave, then we can tell kids not to go to school.

HEADMASTER REID: Come on, let's go, go to school or go home. Let's go. Go to school or go home, let's go.

NARRATOR: Inside, things were quiet with most white students absent. At the end of the school day, more trouble waited outside. On the evening news, Bostonians saw school buses being attacked as they left South Boston.

BLACK GIRL: And they were throwing eggs at the windows and trying to hit people with them and they called us black niggers.

BETTY JOHNSON: My little boy got back safe but the only reason I don't think why they should bus all the kids across the -- They get all hurt when they can't defend themselves. I feel like they should go over here to our school over here. Instead of busing them way across because they can't defend themselves, they can't fight, they can't do nothing.

NARRATOR: Racial violence in the city known as the Cradle of Liberty made headlines across the country and around the world. The black community was apprehensive but hopeful.

BLACK COP: Every day -- yesterday the first day -- every day go by, there's going to be more improvement. You know, like yesterday the first day, today's the second, you have more improvement today than you had yesterday.

MAN: Gotta be.

BLACK COP: Yeah, you know, and it's going to continue that way till it gets better. It's going to take a while you can't do it all in one day.

BLACK MOTHER: They're not going until they get some black cops and some black drivers. They did not pick my kid up at school, they left her over there.

WOMAN: Left her in South Boston?

BLACK MOTHER: They left her in South Boston. They left over there, all those people out there are Irish. They left her out there and they refused to go get her.

NARRATOR: Whites staged a city-wide school boycott, a tactic borrowed from the civil rights movement. At the boycott's peak, more than 50 percent of all white students stayed home.

JANE DUWORS: Well, the boycott was that if there were no children in school, they couldn't implement the plan. So we decided to - and it came from another thing, it came from the Freedom Schools in Roxbury in the '60s. We had a community meeting, asked the parents, explained what we thought and asked the parents if they would go along with the boycott. The majority of people did.

TRACY AMALFITANO: I did not support the boycott and I sent my son to school from the very first day. And for a long period of time, he rode the bus by himself.

FIRST WOMAN: I know who you are, and you're a sellout, too, lady.

SECOND WOMAN: Oh no. People have their rights to --

THIRD WOMAN: We wouldn't even bring them up. We fear for their safety.

FIRST WOMAN: For one lousy day, they couldn't have boycotted? One day. One day. That they couldn't do that. My kids are out and they're not going.

TRACY AMALFITANO: It was very difficult for us. It was almost like getting up every morning and going to war. And many days, I would come home and I would think about all the liberals that got on the buses and went South for sit-ins and boycotts in the South. I really would come home and wonder, you know, where were they now?

NARRATOR: The message was clear, whites opposed to change in the school system were not going to back down. Most schools were calm, but some were battlegrounds.

PHYLLIS ELLISON: When we started up the hill, you could hear people saying, "Niggers, go home." There were signs of -- They had made a sign saying, "Black people stay out, we don't want any niggers in our schools." And there were people on the corners holding bananas like we were apes.

RUTH BATSON: As we went up the hill and approached the school, our students got very, very quiet. Where they had been just like any other kid riding the bus, making noise, laughing, talking, suddenly as they approached this place, they got very, very quiet. And then they would have to stay there until the police came over, escorted them out the bus and in through the metal detectors into the schools. It was a -- I began for the first time to say, "Ruth, maybe you shouldn't have gotten involved. Maybe you shouldn't have urged this desegregation." It killed me to see our black students go through that procedure.

KATHY DOWNS: Pretty aggravating, actually, to go and be put all through this before you even started a day at school, you know? Kind of ridiculous for a 17 year old person to be treated this way.

PHYLLIS ELLISON: On a normal day, there would be anywhere between 10 and 15 fights per day.

KATHY DOWNS: The white kids felt intimidated that they had black kids in the school, the black kids are intimidated because they're in this white school and they did not want to be pushed around.

PHYLLIS ELLISON: You could walk down the corridor and a black person would bump into a white person and vice versa. That would be one fight, and they'd try to separate it. Because at that time, it was so -- It was so much tension in the school.

KATHY DOWNS: Just the slightest thing would set it off.

NARRATOR: The NAACP surveyed black students on problems at South Boston High.

TOM ATKINS: About a week later, I was sitting in my office one night, and I reached into my briefcase and here were these forms. So I took them out, and I began sort of absently to read through them. As I read through one after another of these forms, what I saw was that these kids couldn't spell. They could not write a simple declaratory sentence. And as I read these forms, none of which were grammatically correct or spelling proper, I just started to cry. It was impossible to explain the feeling of pain on the one hand, but on the other hand, I knew we were right.

NARRATOR: But the fight to correct years of mis-education was overshadowed by fear and violence. In October, a South Boston mob pulled a passing black motorist from his car. Policemen fired shots over the heads of the crowd and pulled the man to safety.

SANDY YOUNG: We don't teach our kids to hate anybody. All we want for our kids is to love and to get a decent education and to live decently as human beings. But we're not even distinguished as human beings as far as East Boston goes, or South Boston. We're niggers! And I would be damned if I had any child of mine exposed to anything like that. I wouldn't want my child to sit beside it, because see, I'm not going to teach it to hate. And that's what's happening. That's the lesson that those kids have been getting out there in South Boston. "Stand beside Mommy, sweetie, and throw a rock at the nigger."

NARRATOR: For the first time, the mob violence in South Boston was echoed in Roxbury. Groups of black students roamed the streets, pelting white passers-by with rocks.

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD: I deplore the violence that I've read about and seen on television. I think that's most unfortunate.

NARRATOR: Whites opposed to busing took heart from Gerald Ford's first press conference as President.

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD: I have consistently opposed forcing busing to achieve racial balance as a solution to quality education. And therefore, I respectfully disagree with the judge's order.

NARRATOR: Boston was left on its own. The city's neighborhoods grew even more isolated and hostile.

JEAN MCGUIRE: But this city should have been open to everyone and it wasn't. And it was that fear that if you stepped out of your place, you could be attacked. There was no leadership that said it's off limits.

RUTH BATSON: I never heard any public official on the state level or on the city level come out and say, "This is a good thing, we should all learn together, we should all live together." There was no encouragement from anybody. I call it complete, official neglect.

NARRATOR: South Boston, December 11th, 1974. A fight at the high school between a black and a white student got out of hand.

PHYLLIS ELLISON: I remember the day Michael Faith got stabbed vividly because I was in the principal's office and all of a sudden you heard a lot of commotion and you heard kids screaming and yelling saying, "He's dead, he's dead, that black nigger killed him, he's dead, he's dead."

KATHY DOWNS: Oh, gees, there was -- We were close enough that we saw there was blood, you know, on the hallway floor.

NARRATOR: White students left, rumors spread. South Boston residents and others surrounded the school. The black students were trapped inside. Louise Day Hicks appealed to the crowd.

LOUISE DAY HICKS: I want you to allow the black children to go back to Roxbury. There's only one way to get them back to Roxbury, and that's to have them go back by bus. Okay, I'm going to ask you, will you please move to the other side of the street so they can go back?

PHYLLIS ELLISON: I remember the police cars coming up the -- Or attempting to and turning over the police cars. I was amazed that they could do something like that. So they tried, the police tried to get horses up. They wouldn't let the horses get up, they stoned the horses, they stoned the cars and I thought that day we would never get out of South Boston High School.

NARRATOR: Black community leaders and officials worked out a rescue plan. Volunteers rode decoy buses through the school.

ELLEN JACKSON: Frankly, we were scared. But we went up and when we got closer to the school, we could hear the noise and like a hollow feeling when you go up that hill.

PHYLLIS ELLISON: Finally, it must have been 2:30 or 3:00 that afternoon, all of a sudden all you heard was, "You're going out the back door, you're going out the back door." At that moment, we had to run to the buses.

NARRATOR: While the decoy buses distracted the mob at the front of the school, other buses pulled up to the back. The black students and leaders made it out of South Boston safely. Michael Faith did not die, but his stabbing and the ensuing riot further polarized the city. The school committee stiffened its resolve not to comply with the court order. In response, Judge Garrity placed three members in contempt of court.

JOHN MCDONOUGH: It seems to me that Judge Garrity is going to bring us this plan with the boot of official authority and the uniforms. In a certain sense, you can say that reconstruction has finally come to the North with a vengeance.

NARRATOR: In the face of school committee intransigence, the schools were run by the court. Judge Garrity's was the final word on curriculum, hiring and firing, and policy.

REPORTER: I mean, just time will change these people's minds in your opinion?

JUDGE GARRITY: No, I think not necessarily. I think that time will bring about an understanding on the part of most people that there's no alternative but to compliance with the principles set out by the Supreme Court of the United States.

NARRATOR: Over the next few years, resistance continued. In the first two years of desegregation, almost a third of the white students left the system. Over time, the court gradually forced changes in the Boston public schools, but the cost remained high.

REPORTER: What do you think's going to happen when you go to school?

LITTLE GIRL: When we go up there, we're going to be stoned. It's not fair to me because why is it the other way around, when they come up here? When they come up here, we won't mess with them, so why when we come up there, they mess with us?

REPORTER: What do you think about the people of South Boston, Joanne? If you had a message you'd like to tell them, what would it be?

LITTLE GIRL: I don't think it's fair, it's not fair to me.

NARRATOR: The greatest changes were not found in the schools. In 1977, Louise Day Hicks political career ended in defeat. And for the first time in the 20th century, a black candidate won election to the Boston School Committee.

JEAN MCGUIRE: I felt that what took place absolutely had to happen. It may not have had to happen that way, if there had been a different kind of leadership provided by the white Bostonians of all classes and all neighborhoods. However, when you're the anvil you bear and when you're the hammer, you will strike and we were striking, and there was no turning back.

NARRATOR: In Boston, blacks were a minority, forced to rely on the federal court in their fight for quality education. In Atlanta, blacks had just become a majority. Here, the fight for black progress focused on economic equity. In October, 1973, Atlanta made history. Maynard Jackson was elected the first black mayor of a large southern city.

MAYNARD JACKSON: Never, never, never. Never, never shall I let you down. Being the first black mayor is what you wish your enemy, okay? And I say that with tongue in cheek. Great pride to be mayor of Atlanta and every black mayor that's been the first black mayor I'm sure has felt the same thing. But it truly is part hell. First of all, start with exaggerated black expectations, that overnight Valhalla will be found, heaven will come on earth and it's all because the black mayor's been elected. And things just don't work that way. The obligation that I felt was to try with everything in my power and every legal and ethical way that I could to move things as quickly as possible in that direction.

We must see the other Atlanta, the one across the tracks, the inner city one, the Atlanta in the valleys and the shadows just beyond the first expressway exits one passes when leaving downtown.

ETHEL MAE MATHEWS: It really made a difference because that's the first black mayor we had. And that's what we was working hard for, to bring a black person in office, you know, that knew some of the pride of the poor peoples.

MAYNARD JACKSON: All of a sudden, I became a mayor, not just of Atlanta, but the black people in Georgia and even some neighboring states. Now equally important and equally difficult was what we found in the white community. Exaggerated anxiety,

that anxiety was, "Oh my God, what are we going to do? We got a black mayor. What does this mean? Is this the end of Atlanta?" We had just come from a runoff election where my opponent ran a campaign that said Atlanta is too young to die.

DILLARD MUNFORD: I supported the white candidate, and as most white people did. We were very frightened because we had nothing to go on, no experience there. And we had no idea of what was going to happen.

WALTER HUNTLEY: I came to Atlanta in the summer of 1972, and I had read every magazine saying where it was a black Mecca and there were people saying that if you were black and had a college degree, this was the best place in the world to live.

ETHEL MAE MATTHEWS: It's an excellent place for some black peoples. It is. It's an excellent place for some black peoples, but not for all black peoples, it's not an excellent place to live. Because if it was an excellent place to live, they would get people some job.

NARRATOR: Atlanta was hard hit by a nationwide recession. Many Atlantans subsisted on unemployment benefits.

BLACK WOMAN: Well, \$37 a week is not much to live on. It won't even cover food for four kids and myself alone.

WHITE WOMAN: The thing about it is, it may seem like a nice vacation to some people, but it's really, really bad for the economy and people are really worried about it.

NARRATOR: Jackson moved into a public housing project for a weekend. The Thomases were selected to be his host family.

MAGGIE THOMAS: It was very strange. And the strangest thing to me was that they chose me to house him. Because when I got off of work, I came up to the edge of the apartment and I looked down in the court, and the court was just full of news medias, just full of people. I knew I couldn't go through that crowd. So I turned around and I went all the way down through the back, and I crawled up my back steps to get in my house to avoid the news medias. But when I got in the house, then I seen, you know, the mayor coming. I knew I had to open the door then. It was just a mob, really. Just a pure mob, just fell all in the doors, standing up all on my furniture.

MAYNARD JACKSON: We want to dramatize what are dramatically horrible conditions. So the people will understand when we begin to talk about dramatic changes and dramatic corrective actions that we're not just overreacting. The conditions here defy description.

NARRATOR: The mayor had limited impact on federally funded public housing. But Jackson did have the power to change the way the city operated. He hired more minorities and women. He moved against discriminatory business practices, affirmative action was already federal policy, Jackson made it city policy.

MAYNARD JACKSON: When I became mayor, zero point five percent of all the contracts in the city of Atlanta went to Afro-Americans in a city which at that time was 50/50.

NARRATOR: Many in the business community resisted Jackson's affirmative action policy.

MAYNARD JACKSON: This was a major -- manager of a major white corporation who got very upset with me about the policy on affirmative action. And said, "I don't see this to be necessary, we're going to do what's right, you can trust us," and so forth. And I said, "I have every confidence, but yeah I want to trust you, but I also want you to sign on the dotted line." Said, "Well look, I'm just not going to go out and hire the first Negro I see." I said, "I think that's a pretty sound personnel policy, I wouldn't either." [laughter]

NARRATOR: Jackson's support of black business pulled him into the ring with Muhammad Ali at a promotional event.

MAYNARD JACKSON: This is our ode to Ali. Dance like a butterfly, sting like a bee, my fists are so fast that they'll dazzle Ali. The champ may be strong, but he isn't all there if he thinks he can beat this dynamite man. But I'll tell you this, and you better know it, I may not be a fighter, but I'm darn sure poised. So come out and see the fight of the year, I'll face Ali's challenge with courage, not fear. Because he may be a fighter, but I'll throw out this dare, he wouldn't survive for a week being mayor.

NEWS ANNOUNCER: After the fight, Ali said it was the mayor's stalwart boxing trunks that saved him. One thing is for sure, Ali has learned that you cannot fight City Hall.

NARRATOR: The challenge to Jackson's affirmative action policy was about to escalate. The issue, airport expansion.

WALTER HUNTLEY: The construction of a new airport for the city of Atlanta was one of the major projects, if not the major project in the Jackson administration. There were a number of big construction projects between 1976 and 1979, or '80, but this was the crown jewel.

NARRATOR: Planning was already under way. But despite public criticism, Jackson announced that construction would not begin without full black participation. Emma Darnell, one of the first two women commissioners ever appointed in Atlanta was responsible for implementing affirmative action guidelines.

EMMA DARNELL: When you begin to move in public policy, in areas that involve race, you can expect a great deal of emotion.

BUDDY FOWLKES: The bidding processes that we've had in this city have stood for years and years like a granite rock. They've been steady and they've stood and we've had very little problems with them as long as we adhere to the lowest and the best bid.

EMMA DARNELL: Operationally. But there are two relevant laws already on the books which I think impact upon this question. The first --

WILLIE BOLDEN: And the white power structure downtown couldn't deal with Emma because not only was she black and a female, but she was smart and she was a very excellent communicator. So she would look at the contract and if it didn't have the appropriate amount of minority participation, she'd say, "Take that back and get it right." They couldn't deal with that, not a black female.

MAYNARD JACKSON: I looked at how the power structure members dealt with each other. If they disagreed they'd say, you know, "The hell with you and you're a so and so and all this," but they would not walk away from the relationship. I said, "That's fair enough. I can deal with that." My preference was to do it as a team. If we stumbled, let's stumble together. If I made a mistake, fine, say I'm a dummy, but don't walk away from the relationship. I was dead wrong. When times got hot, even some of the closest friends I had in the business community, and I'm talking about the white power structure now, said, "Maynard, that was the dumbest thing I've ever seen and good-bye." So I miscalculated.

DILLARD MUNFORD: Black leadership must accept the new roles as city leaders and not black city leaders. With power and responsibility, they must be able to stand --

We found that we were at bay, we were out there barking and nothing was happening. There was no question but he was a full fledged racist against white people. And this is what his charge was, was to see it was turned over to blacks, and you had to be a racist to do that. Colorblindness was not part of his repertoire.

NARRATOR: Jackson held his ground. No affirmative action, no airport. After almost a year of political infighting, the city council approved the first minority contract. New city guidelines called for a minimum of 20 percent minority participation in all phases of the work. Affirmative action opened up opportunities for some, but times were still hard for Atlanta's working poor. Demanding higher wages, the city sanitation workers went out on strike.

STRIKING MAN: I mean, he promised them money and the money's there, so they may as well give it to us. Or give us something.

NARRATOR: Jackson said the city had no money to meet the strikers demands. But some thought that he wanted to prove that he could hold the line on spending, even against a predominantly black union.

MAYNARD JACKSON: What they think is that a liberal black mayor with a pro union background would not dare to defy any demand they would make.

WILLIE BOLDEN: We didn't strike Maynard because he was black, we struck him because our folk were picking up garbage, working among maggots and we felt that they need to get paid for doing that, seven, eight, nine thousand dollars a year, in our opinion, was not enough.

MAYNARD JACKSON: Representing Atlanta, I urge all city employees to report to work immediately. I emphasize that those who ignore this directive will be discharged.

NARRATOR: Jackson gave notice to 1,000 strikers, most of whom were black. The union lost a bitter and divisive struggle, but Jackson remained popular among most blacks. Later that year, he won reelection by a landslide. Four a.m., September 21st, 1980, the first scheduled flight arrived at the world's largest passenger terminal. The midfield terminal of the Hartsfield International Airport was officially open. Confounding critics who labeled affirmative action a social experiment doomed to fail, the \$700 million facility was completed on schedule and on budget with a minimum of 20 percent minority participation in all phases of the work. Affirmative action and the airport were major triumphs of the Jackson administration. But most blacks in Atlanta had not benefited. By the time the airport opened, Atlanta was the second poorest city in the country. There were clear limits to what local electoral power could achieve. Electing blacks to office was only the beginning.

EMMA DARNELL: We were, for all practical purposes, engaged in a revolution. We knew that that's what it was. It was still a civil rights revolution. Those persons during the '60s laid down their lives and died to put us into these positions of power. We did not consider these positions of power to be ends in and of themselves.

MAYNARD JACKSON: Dr. King taught us to remember our roots, remember our brothers and sisters who are still now locked in the dungeons of deprivation. Yet today, he sees some black people who have escaped from poverty, for the time being, and who also are trying to escape their duty to the poor.

EMMA DARNELL: What it's about is what's on the inside, you know. Have you really been deeply and permanently affected by the blood that has been shed in order for you to sit behind the desk? Do you actually feel any sensitivity and responsibility to all of those folk out there in those churches and those programs who stand up and give you big applause, believing that you stayed on the case? Or are you really in there, trying to hold your ground, to get your house, get your car, get your BMW, get invited to the right receptions, and be considered a leader?

NARRATOR: October, 1977, black students nationwide were worried. Affirmative action in higher education was under attack. In ten years of affirmative action efforts, the numbers of black students enrolled in colleges and universities had more than doubled.

MARY FRANCES BERRY: When I went to Washington to run education in the Carter Administration in 1977, one of the first things that happened was the head of my statistical agency came in to see me and she said, "Good news. The college going rate for blacks is equal to the college going rate for whites for the first time in American history." So this was just wonderful news. And I thought to myself, boy, if we can just keep up this progress for the next few years, just think of how far we will have come.

NARRATOR: Black progress was facing a challenge. Allan Bakke was an engineer in his 30s when he decided to become a doctor. He was turned down by 12 medical schools, twice by the one at the University of California at Davis. Bakke sued Davis. He alleged its affirmative action program unfairly limited his chances of admission. But Toni Johnson was admitted to Davis Medical School. First in her family to attend college, she had gone to Stanford University on an academic scholarship and had graduated in three years.

TONI JOHNSON-CHAVIS: When I was selected for UC at Davis and went into Davis, it was not until well into my first year that I had any idea that I had been selected through affirmative action. Solely, I had met all the criteria for regular entrance. Suddenly, there were other students, white students, who did not even meet the same criteria. Their GPA was far less than mine, their MCAT scores were far less than mine. So I had no idea that I had even come in through affirmative action.

I heard about Allan Bakke the very first year I was in medical school. There was not much said other than there was a guy who wanted to get into our class and he was really angry that he didn't get into the class and he was going to sue.

ROBERT LINKS: I think from the day Bakke walked in our door, we knew what was at stake. Back then, people said that these programs like the Davis program are great things because they include people and bring them into the class. And I think the shortcoming of that analysis is they forget that when you bring in one person, you're keeping out another person.

NARRATOR: The Bakke case reached the Supreme Court and stimulated a national debate on affirmative action.

SENATOR JAMES BUCKLEY: I think we were making enormous progress before anyone conjured up this perversion of affirmative action. I believe there's been a good faith effort, too, on the part of most Americans to comply, to drop the blinders that too many of us have worn over the years. Progress has been made. But what we are now seeing, and what I feel, frankly, is a backlash and a very serious backlash. You see this in unions, for example, you see this in colleges, even in colleges, where people are saying we must discriminate against someone who happens to be white and happens to be male.

MARY FRANCES BERRY: When you start talking about affirmative action as being preferential treatment, you have already set up a situation where anybody who is the beneficiary of preferential treatment will lose. If you say reverse discrimination against somebody, it already sounds like a bad thing is happening and you don't focus on what the injustice was.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON: If in fact women, blacks, Hispanics, have been excluded, the question becomes how do you include them? How do you make up for the legal wrong?

NARRATOR: Hundreds of people camped overnight on the steps of the Supreme Court to gain admission to what was being called the most important civil rights case since *Brown v. Board of Education*. Archibald Cox defended U Cal Davis. He argued for using race as a factor in selecting qualified applicants, not to discriminate against whites, but to remedy the effects of generations of discrimination against blacks. Bakke's lawyer, Reynold Colvin, presented his client as one discriminated against because of his race.

REYNOLD COLVIN: We believe that this is a case where an individual's rights have been defied. We think that --

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON: One of the more unfortunate things about the Bakke case is it became the vehicle for educating, or should I say mis-educating, the public about affirmative action. The public learned about affirmative action almost literally for the first time through sound bites, ten second sound bites on television with people polarized against one another. As a result, what is really a quite complicated concept, one hard enough to explain even if you have a lot of time, became digested as an element of unfairness.

NARRATOR: The Supreme Court handed down a divided decision. The only thing clear was that Bakke would be admitted to Davis. Affirmative action was found permissible, but not mandatory. Civil rights advocates worried that the court had backed off from unequivocal support. Did this signal a change in the way that America looked at civil rights?

REPORTER: Do you think it's going to be bad for minorities?

FIRST BLACK STUDENT: I think it's going to be definitely bad for minorities.

SECOND BLACK STUDENT: I think people instead of, you know, the sincerity involved in really going out and getting minority students into different professional schools, that sincerity will be lost, all right, since there is a legal precedent stated now that, you know, it sort of kills the thrust of the program.

MARY FRANCES BERRY: By 1979, the climate of opinion had changed almost completely in the country on issues related to civil rights and the advancement toward equality for blacks in American society.

For example, people would say, "Well, we can't have equal opportunity and excellence at the same time." And what did they mean by excellence? In many cases it seemed that they meant an absence of black folk at every level of any importance in the society.

NARRATOR: For many Americans, the cost of remedying a history of discrimination was too high. For others, the cost of turning back were all too clear. When she completed her studies, Dr. Toni Johnson Chavez set up practice in a black and Latino community.

TONI JOHNSON-CHAVIS: There are a large amount of poor people and there are only two pediatricians in that whole city. The two pediatricians here are both black. If the two of us had not been trained in that era and were not here, who would have fulfilled that need? That's the question I asked then, and that's the question that I ask now.