

**ACTIVITY**

# Supporting Question 3: Responding to *Morgan v. Hennigan*

## Overview

### About This Activity

Students will look at examples of how the implementation of federal judge W. Arthur Garrity's order to desegregate Boston schools impacted the city's students and families. They will also analyze how members of the African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities worked to overcome the failures and blind spots of those in power.

<b>Supporting Question</b>	What impact did the 1974 decision in <i>Morgan v. Hennigan</i> have on Boston's African American, Latinx, Chinese American, and white children and parents, and how did they respond?
<b>Formative Task</b>	Students will make a three-column list naming the ways that Judge Garrity's ruling in <i>Morgan v. Hennigan</i> (1) resulted in progress, (2) led to setbacks, and (3) highlighted the work that was left to do in the pursuit of educational justice in Boston.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Judge Orders Immediate Desegregation of Boston Schools</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> African American Parents Organize Bus Monitors</li> <li>• <b>Video:</b> "Busing: A Rough Ride in Southie"</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> White Opposition to the Desegregation Order</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Latinx Parents Demand to Be Recognized by the Court</li> <li>• <b>Video:</b> "Dos Idiomas, Una Comunidad: The Story Behind Bilingual Education"</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Chinese American Families Boycott the Schools</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Interview with Ellen Jackson</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Chinese Parents Demand Safety for Children</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Hispanic Parents Advocate for Bilingual Education for Their Children</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Document Analysis Form</li> <li>• <b>Timeline:</b> Movements for Educational Justice in Boston, 1972–1979 (Teacher Reference)</li> </ul> <p>Find these materials in this <a href="#">Google Folder</a>.</p>

## Preparing to Teach

### Notes to Teacher

#### 1. A Note about the Historical Narrative

The tension and violence that occurred in Boston during the 1974 school year, especially at South Boston High School after African American students from Roxbury were bused into the white Irish American neighborhood, is the most common focus of books, films, curricula, and other media that have been produced about this moment in civil rights and Boston history. While this inquiry does not deeply examine those episodes of violence and harassment, students do need to have some knowledge of what occurred in order to engage fully in the activities below.

Students should also know that episodes of racial violence and harassment occurred in Boston neighborhoods other than South Boston, while at the same time, schools in many Boston neighborhoods were integrated in relative peace.

You can use or adapt the **Timeline: Movements for Educational Justice in Boston, 1972–1979** to provide necessary context, or you can use one of the numerous resources about this historical moment available online, such as the [video retrospective of the first week of the 1974 school year](#) (34:55–45:11) broadcast by Boston’s PBS television station in 1975. If you choose to share this video with the class, stopping at 38:30 will provide an overview of the unrest and tension during the first month of school. *Preview any resource you intend to share with your students about this topic, because many contain intense images and instances of the n-word that may be emotionally difficult for students to encounter.*

#### 2. Pre-Activity Homework Option

In Activity 2, students will complete a “sentence-phrase-word” routine with one of four short readings. To make more efficient use of class time and to preview the content of this supporting question, you might assign students to read and annotate one reading, or all four, for homework before class.

#### 3. Video Sources for This Supporting Question

Four of this supporting question’s featured resources are videos. Each video is intended to supplement one of the readings that students analyze in Activity 2. Students will be able to understand the video best if they engage with the readings first.

Activity 2 includes instructions for students to work in small groups, with each group watching a different video simultaneously. This will require the use of multiple laptops or other internet-connected devices. If this is not feasible in your classroom, you can modify the activity by having students work only with the readings in their small groups. You can then show the videos concurrently to the whole group after the rest of Activity 2 is complete. In this scenario, after showing the videos, engage students in a brief discussion about how the videos enhanced their knowledge and understanding of the responses of each of the four Boston communities.

#### 4. Notes on Language

The video segments that are recommended in this activity do not contain dehumanizing language; however, we know that dehumanizing language is used in other parts of some of the videos. We recommend previewing the videos before showing additional clips to students.

#### 5. Using the Optional Extension Activity

The extension activity is designed to invite high school students to analyze primary sources representing responses to the decision in *Morgan v. Hennigan*. The background knowledge required to analyze these texts and their length make them more suitable for older students. The extension activity is designed to be used between Activity 1 and Activity 2.

### Activities

#### Activity 1: Consider Judge Garrity's Ruling

Remind students that one of the events they examined in the timeline from Supporting Question 2 was the federal lawsuit brought by the NAACP in 1972 against the Boston School Committee. Students will look at how the judge ruled in the case, which is known as *Morgan v. Hennigan*.

Pass out or project the reading **Judge Orders Immediate Desegregation of Boston Schools**, and read it aloud as a class. Then ask students the following questions in a brief discussion:

- What do you find to be most important and notable about the ruling?
- What, if anything, seems concerning about the ruling?

Reinforce the idea that following the court's ruling would represent a big change for the students, parents, and school system. The American Experience documentary [The Busing Battleground](#) (59:58–1:03:33) captures the initial response in Boston to Judge Garrity's ruling and shows how Bostonians began to prepare for desegregation in 1974. Consider sharing this clip from the film with your students.

Then ask students to consider:

Who had the *responsibility* to make sure the court-ordered desegregation plan was implemented safely and fairly? Who had the *power* to either help or hinder that process?

This might be a good time to review the **Sources of Power in the Pursuit of Educational Justice in Boston** handout that students used in the activities for Supporting Question 2.

#### Activity 2: Analyze Community Responses to Judge Garrity's Plans

In this activity, students will look at how Boston's African American, Latinx, Chinese American, and white communities responded to the federal court's order to desegregate the city's schools.

By analyzing a variety of sources, students will explore the impact of Judge Garrity's ruling and the important step toward educational justice that it represented. At the same time, they will see how the implementation of the ruling, under Garrity's supervision, created new problems. Those who had the power and responsibility to safely and fairly implement the school desegregation plans in

Boston, even when they acted with good intentions and in good faith, got important things wrong that negatively impacted the city's African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities.

Students will also discuss how these three communities worked to overcome both the opposition to desegregation and the failures and blind spots of those in power.

### Introduce the Activity

Begin by explaining to students that Judge Garrity's ruling in *Morgan v. Hennigan* represented an important step toward racial desegregation in the city. Because of the ruling, in many parts of the city, students of different races and ethnicities began to attend school together for the first time. However, Garrity's ruling also touched off years of turmoil, negotiation, and change in relation to schooling in Boston. Students will not have the time to learn about all of this in depth, but they will look at examples in this activity of how the ruling, and the plans for desegregating the schools that followed it, impacted African American, Latinx, Chinese American, and white students and families in Boston, as well as how members of those communities responded.

### Read and Annotate Sources

Assign *one* of the following readings to each student:

- **Reading:** African American Parents Organize Bus Monitors
- **Reading:** White Opposition to the Desegregation Order
- **Reading:** Latinx Parents Demand to Be Recognized by the Court
- **Reading:** Chinese American Families Boycott the Schools

If you assigned the readings for homework (see Notes to Teacher), students may have already read and annotated the texts. Now their task is to read, or reread, their assigned reading and identify:

- One sentence that they think captures the core idea of the text
- One phrase that moved, engaged, or provoked them
- One word that captured their attention<sup>1</sup>

### Discuss Sources in Small Groups

After students have had five to ten minutes to identify their sentences, words, and phrases, divide them into groups of four to six. All the members of each group should have the same reading. Depending on class size, you might have more than one group for each reading.

Once students are in their groups, give them five to ten minutes to share what sentences, phrases, and words they have identified. To make efficient use of class time, you might ask each student to share their sentence, phrase, OR word and then explain why they chose it.

Next, if logistically possible, give each group the opportunity to watch the video that supplements their reading (see Notes to Teacher). Each video includes voices of people who participated in the community responses to the desegregation plan. After each group

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the "[Word-Phrase-Sentence](#)" thinking routine from Project Zero.

finishes their video, they should briefly name what new information or understanding they gained.

- “Busing: A Rough Ride in Southie” supplements the reading that focuses on the African American community’s response, “African American Parents Organize Bus Monitors.”
- [The Busing Battleground](#) (1:03:35–1:07:30) supplements the reading that focuses on white opposition to the desegregation court order, “White Opposition to the Desegregation Order.”
- “Dos Idiomas, Una Comunidad: The Story Behind Bilingual Education” supplements the reading that focuses on the Latinx community’s response, “Latinx Parents Demand to Be Recognized by the Court.”
- [“Stories from the Stage: Growing Up Asian”](#) (2:10–8:15) supplements the reading that focuses on the Chinese American community’s response, “Chinese American Families Boycott the Schools.”

### Analyze Community Responses

Now share the following discussion prompts. Give students three to five minutes to discuss each question in their small groups, and then ask each group to summarize their conversation for the whole class before moving to the next prompt.

1. Evaluate the actions of the leaders who had the responsibility to carry out the plans to desegregate the schools in Boston. What did they get right? What did they get wrong?
2. Why do you think the leaders got things wrong?
3. In your reading, how did the African American, Latinx, Chinese American, or white community respond?

As groups report out, take notes on chart paper or the whiteboard in three columns: *What Leaders Got Wrong*, *Why*, and *Community Responses*. **Note:** Students will need the notes from the chart to complete the formative task. You can have students copy down these notes, or you can snap a photo to post online for them to access later.

### Activity 3: Debrief the Community Response Analysis

Debrief students’ analysis of community responses to Judge Garrity’s 1974 ruling by asking them to compare and contrast the experiences and responses of African American, Latinx, and Chinese American students and parents. Ask:

- What similarities were there between the *experiences* of Boston’s African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities after Judge Garrity’s 1974 court order? What differences were there?
- How were the *responses* from parents and leaders in these four communities similar and different?
- Did these groups share any similar goals and aspirations for their families and their communities? What opportunities might there be for cooperation and common cause between these groups?

- What, if anything, do these similarities and differences reveal about what it takes to achieve educational justice?

If students do not make the connections themselves, point out some of the concerns that overlapped between the communities. Some of these concerns are explicitly stated in the resources, and some are implicit. They include:

- Members of all three communities, as well as white families in the neighborhoods that resisted desegregation the most, shared similar socioeconomic (or class) status.
- All three communities feared for the safety of their children who were sent to schools in white neighborhoods that were hostile to the desegregation plan.
- In all three communities, working parents took the lead in organizing and protesting for justice for their children.
- While El Comité was formed and led by Latinx mothers, their efforts to save bilingual education were important to several immigrant communities in the city, including the Chinese American community.
- Members of the Chinese American community, also led by mothers, were successful in getting most of their demands met, but this also came with the realization that they were being used by officials to separate white and Black students.

### Optional Extension Activity

This activity is designed to invite high school students to analyze primary sources representing responses to the decision in *Morgan v. Hennigan*. The background knowledge required to analyze these texts and their length make them more suitable for older students. This activity is designed to be used between Activity 1 and Activity 2.

In this activity, students will get a snapshot of the research process that historians engage in as they try to understand events in the past. Explain to students that they will analyze primary source documents that provide evidence to help them answer the supporting question, but that these documents will not provide the *entire* answer. When historians do their work, they glean what helpful information they can from documents like these, and they note what pieces of the puzzle are still missing. They also ask new questions based on the information they have gathered in order to guide and deepen their research.

Assign students partners for this activity or ask them to choose. Then give each pair one of the following three primary sources:

- **Reading:** Interview with Ellen Jackson
- **Document:** Chinese Parents Demand Safety for Children
- **Reading:** Hispanic Parents Advocate for Bilingual Education for Their Children

With their partners, students will first complete a [Document Analysis Form](#) to familiarize themselves with the primary source (see the [Document Analysis Form](#) teaching strategy for more information).

Then ask partner groups to discuss and record answers to the following questions about their documents:

1. What information does this source provide to help answer the supporting question?
2. What parts of the document are confusing or difficult to understand?
3. What questions do you have about the document after reading and discussing it with your partner? Which of your questions are most relevant to the supporting question?
4. If you were a historian conducting research to answer the supporting question, what would you want to try to find out about next?

*It is important to remind students as they work with the primary sources that they are not expected to understand all of the vocabulary, topics, people, and events that appear in them. Historians often encounter things that they don't understand, and they use those things to generate new questions and decide what to research next.*

The readings in Activity 2 will provide more context for the sources students work with in this activity and will answer many of the questions that might come up for them.

### Formative Task

#### List Evidence for Progress and Work to Do for Educational Justice

Students will make a three-column list. They can label the first column with the heading *Progress* and list two to four ways that Judge Garrity's 1974 ruling resulted in progress toward educational justice in Boston. They can label the second column *Setbacks* and list two to four challenges that African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians experienced in their pursuit of educational justice in 1974. Students can label the third column *Work to Do* and list two to four ways in which Judge Garrity's 1974 ruling highlighted work that still needed to be done to achieve educational justice for all of Boston's children. The items in students' lists should be supported by evidence from the sources they explored in this supporting question's featured resources.

After students complete the first column of the list, consider pausing as a class to reflect on the progress toward educational justice that Judge Garrity's order represented. It can be easy to downplay the NAACP's success in bringing about the *Morgan v. Hennigan* decision by moving on too quickly to discussing how the city fell short of realizing its promise.