

Welcome to the “A critical history of our IPS Part 1 1864-1930” presentation

Overview of the 4 part series

September 12, 2016

The Flanner House

First of all I'd like to thank the Flanner House and Director Brandon Cosby, Sandra Green Director. of Operations, and Kirk Butler the IT Director. I would also like to thank Ra Wyse my research assistant who will be helping today's conversations.

Because it is the 200th anniversary of the state of Indiana and because of Ted Green's courageous documentary, *Attucks: A school that opened a city* (<https://video.wfyi.org/video/wfyi-education-programs-attucks-school-opened-city/>), “A critical history of our IPS” is being presented by the Charles E. Loflin & Virginia Vornehm-Loflin Center of the History of the Indianapolis Public Schools. My parents, Ed and Gin, were IPS dropouts. In the 1920s—my dad left School 5 in the 5th grade and my mom left Washington HS her freshman year. And, it's being presented today because on Monday September 12, 1927, exactly 89 years ago, Attucks opened.

Although the Center is about IPS history, the goal of Center is to question the purpose of schools and the intent of public education. To do this, the Center will examine then unpack the history of formal education and schooling in America from Columbus (1492) to the present.

The Center is a place where interested parties can read, research, discuss/debate, and publish around the intent of public education using our IPS as the model American narrative--a frame of reference expanding from IPS to topics, interests, and research in-depth and in all directions.

The Center's orientation is based on the Richardson/Loflin Theory that evolved from an interview I had with Mr. Henry J. Richardson in the fall of 1979. You will learn more about him in *Mr. Richardson*, a play I wrote from our conversation. And, you'll be able to actually listen to how he spoke that afternoon in the Center's oral history collection which also contains the interviews of Dr. Joseph Taylor, Fred Parker, Sam Jones, Willard Ransom, Francis Lithecome and Dr. Dean Evans, former state superintendent.

According to Mr. Richardson, a series of trades offs, or what he calls “one big deal” took place in late 1922. This “deal” created a new state of affairs in Indianapolis. He noted the plan of the power structure then was this: “We will create Attucks for the Blacks; We will create Washington over on the Westside for the Eastern and Southern Europeans; We will expand Manual for the south side Germans, Italians, Jews, and other working classes; and, We will move Shortridge up to the north side, away for all this mess.”

For the Loflin part of the theory, I add Cathedral High School and Butler to the mix.

The question for us today is: Who were the “we” and what was this “mess”? To Richardson, the “we” are what he called “main street” the 1920s *status quo*, an oligarchy of business and economic elites, social and cultural elites, and the political/ideological elites of Indianapolis.

Of course all of this would be better reflected and understood by reading copies of the *Indianapolis Recorder* from this era. However, according to the Indianapolis-Marion County Library and the IUPUI Library Digital Collection, all *Recorder* papers from 1916 to 1926 are missing or cannot be located. If the *Recorder* does not have them, who does? Surely 9 years or 468+ (52x9) editions of this nationally recognized weekly have not disappeared. The raises the question regarding this scenario: *cui bono?*

To look ahead, **Part 2** will cover 1930-1970. The Center will show how these this same types of trade-offs occurred after the 2nd Great Migration (1941-1970) with the move of Manual and the creation of “the Dap school” in the old Manual building in 1953, and the creation of Shortridge III in 1956. **Part 2** will also cover how our IPS circumvented Brown vs Board by creating Arlington in 1961, Northwest in 1963, and John Marshall in 1968.

Part 3 will cover 1970-2000 and will feature the creation of Manual III and the rise the local Protestant schools movement exemplified by Heritage Christian 1965 and Covenant Christian in 1997.

To continue the controversial nature of the Center’s critical history of IPS, **Part 4**, 2000-2017, will cover the post-colonial like era of Dr. Pat Pritchett (1997-2005) where IPS hid behind the state’s graduation rate formulas to inflate its graduation rates, and the regime of Dr. Eugene White (2005-2013) which developed over a dozen pseudo-alternative schools/programs all while creating a policy forcing IPS students into having to wear a costume in order to get a public education.

Part 4 will be based on the Center’s theme, “What are schools for?” The question comes from the idea that if you control the schools, you control the future. This conversation will try to bring all 4 parts of the series together by linking all discussions back to 1492 and bring them forward to 2017.

Part 4 will specifically cover 2000-2017 and what the Center calls the “neo-colonial era” of IPS. The Mind Trust’s valid critique of--yet misguided neo-liberal oriented solutions to--IPS problems will be discussed. The review of the current Dr. Lewis Freebee era will cover the gentrification of IPS. The local manifestations of the corporate school reform movement will be interrogated. The issues surrounding the debate of what some see as school reform and others see as the “dismantling” of IPS, city land/real estate development via IPS “selling its assets,” and the outright purchase of school board seats by Stand for Children and other national interest will be discussed.

Indy’s charter movement will be unpacked via 2 themes: a) the myth of “the success” of Charles Tindley High School, and b) the creation of the Herron “Master Narrative” High Schools.

As well, a critique of the neo-colonial approach of IPS’s acclaimed Project Restore will be used to bridge the conversation to the politics behind the IPS Anonymous and Innovate schools imitative.

Interestingly, the same issues of race, class, and geography which characterized the 1920s era are here now. It was then that IPS school board privileged the district’s white wealthy north side families by moving Shortridge from Pennsylvania and Michigan Sts. to 34th and Meridian.

Today, Indiana is one of America’s 21 most segregated cities. And, this summer, debates occurred around why certain IPS schools/parents some described as “white, wealthy, and north side” were given preference by the IPS board.

How this history is being repeated will be understood through comparing the forces behind the rationale used by the 1920s Chamber of Commerce, Citizens School Committee, and Federation of Civic Clubs (the “Mind Trust” of that era) with the forces and reasoning used by today’s Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce/Mind Trust collusion.