



Un- COMMON ground

Nearly a generation after the late **J. Anthony Lukas** began to chronicle Boston's busing crisis, the Yankee Divers, the black Twymons, and the Irish McGoffs have come to a new understanding of what "common ground" really means.

By Andrew Cohen



HISTORICAL LANDMARK: In 1976, antibusing demonstrators yelling, "Get the nigger," attacked Theodore Landsmark, a black lawyer on his way to a business meeting at City Hall. One of the assailants, Eddie Irvin, was the vice president of Lisa McGoff's class at Charlestown High. The photographer, Stanley J. Forman, then of the *Herald American*, was awarded his second Pulitzer Prize.

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ANTHONY LUKAS'S memorial service was held in New York City on June 13, 1997, at the Ethical Culture Society, on 64th Street near Fifth Avenue. It was a 90-degree day, in the middle of a heat wave, but the society's spartan, un-air conditioned meeting hall (once a stronghold of civil-rights activism and now, with depressing frequency, a forum for the funerals of the activists themselves) was packed with hundreds of the finest journalists in the country.

Many, like Carl Bernstein, Gay Talese, and David Halberstam, were celebrities in their own right. Others were less well known, but formidably accomplished. There were dozens of Pulitzer Prize-winners in the crowd. Lukas himself, of course, had won *two* Pulitzers: one in 1968, for a *New York Times* story about a wealthy Connecticut teenager caught up in the drug culture; the second in 1986, for *Common Ground*, his best-selling book about Boston's busing crisis. Now, the profession's elite had turned out to honor one of their own—the dour, incorruptible Tony Lukas, nonfiction's fallen soldier.

As the afternoon wore on, the heat outside—and the stifling air in the Ethical Culture Society auditorium—lent the service a certain intensity. Arthur Gelb, the former managing editor of the *New York Times*, described Lukas's exploits in “the old, wild, and unforgettable newsroom” of the 1960s. Halberstam, the author of *The Best and the Brightest*, who worked with Lukas both at the *Harvard Crimson* and at the *Times*, recalled how Lukas was “always hardest on himself.” Betty Friedan, Lukas's Ur-feminist friend, evoked his vision of journalism as a calling whose mission was “to make life better for those who came after.”

Finally, several lesser-known people



IN ONE WEEK IN 1975, THERE WERE SIX VIOLENT

robberies within a block of the Divers' South End home. In February, their neighbors were tied up, threatened, and robbed. Soon after, the Divers fled to Newton Corner.

stepped forward to speak—members of the families portrayed in *Common Ground*—and the mood of the service shifted from reminiscence to raw emotion. *Common Ground* had started as a book about three families trying to cope with court-ordered busing in Boston in the 1970s—the jacket copy pigeonholes them handily as “the black Twymons, the Irish McGoffs, and the Yankee Divers”—but it ended up being a powerful meditation on the possibility, and the price, of racial integration. Though the McGoffs were conspicuously absent from the memorial service, Colin and Joan Diver and Rachel and Cassandra Twymon spoke movingly about Lukas and his work.

Colin Diver, who in the 1970s had been an idealistic young aide to Boston mayor Kevin White, related how Lukas had gradually become his “biographer, confessor, and friend.” His wife, Joan, recalled how Lukas had taught her to overcome her reluctance to “surrender her experience to the fire of truth.” Cassandra Twymon, who had been one of the few black students bused into Charlestown High, confessed that she had had the

robberies within a block of the Divers' South End home. In February, their neighbors were tied up, threatened, and robbed. Soon after, the Divers fled to Newton Corner.

DISILLUSIONED IDEALIST: Colin Diver, left, with Joan and their two sons, Ned and Brad, in their home in Pennsylvania. Diver is now dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Long an advocate of integration, he now sees busing as “ancient history.”

Photograph by BILL CRAMER

opposite problem. "Nobody believed what I was telling them," she said. "My mother couldn't believe me. I sat down and I talked to Tony, and Tony believed what I was telling him. I told him I was frightened. I told him they weren't teaching me anything. I told him they were racist. He said, 'You keep going.'"

And then Cassandra's younger sister Rachel, in a raw off-the-cuff address, described how Lukas had encouraged her to finish school and become a therapist, all without letting on that he himself needed help. She had known that Lukas was sometimes depressed, she said as the room grew quiet, but she had a hard time bringing herself to believe that at age 64, with all that he'd accomplished, and with a new book due to come out, he had committed suicide. Literally strangled himself.

"I just wish Tony wouldn't have done that," Rachel Twymon said, sobbing. "Who's going to be my inspiration now?"

No one answered that question. Instead, almost everyone in the sweltering auditorium burst into tears, and wept so hard that the service had to be delayed until the speakers could again be heard.



TONY LUKAS, SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH IN JUNE

percent of the Boston public school population was white.

Desegregation has been doomed by demographics: white flight to the suburbs and foreign immigration to the city. As a result, the issues Tony Lukas dealt with in *Common Ground* are still relevant today, and haven't been resolved. And this is true not only on a political level but on a personal one: Court-ordered busing may be a thing of the past,

but each of the families portrayed in Lukas's book is still wrestling with the problem of how to find common ground, often in ways that reflect their well-documented struggles in the 1970s.

For the well-off, well-educated Divers, *Common Ground* was a story of idealism and disillusionment. Ardent advocates of desegregation, they acted on their principles, renovating a house in the South End, putting their kids into public school. They were, in the phrase of the time, "urban pioneers," reclaiming the inner city. Yet by the end of the book, worn out by crime and the chaos in the

public schools, they had moved, guiltily, to the suburbs. Today, as dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Colin Diver deals with similar educational problems—from a distance. He supervises the university's affirmative action programs and grapples with the thorny issue of admissions standards.

Unlike the idealistic Divers, the spirited Twymon sisters were brought up believing that, as they say, "You have to fight for every inch of common ground." In Lukas's book, it's a fight that they lose. Bused from poor, inferior, majority-black schools in the South End to poor, inferior, majority-white schools in Charlestown, the Twymon girls found they couldn't endure the racism and the violence at school. They dropped out—and descended into a netherworld of drugs and poverty. More than 20 years later, however, Rachel Twymon successfully resumed the fight. While taking care of three kids—who now attend integrated public schools—she earned a degree in occupational therapy from a community college in New Bedford. Her sister Cassandra is taking courses at the same college.

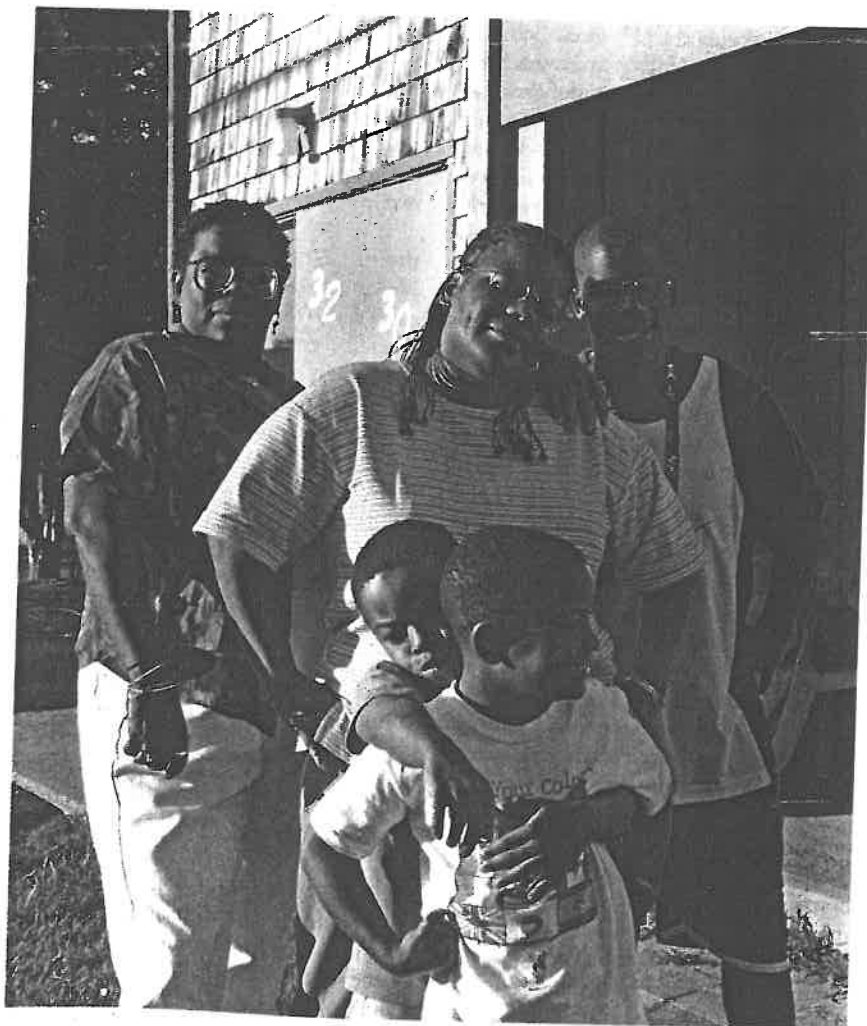
Alone among the three families, the McGoffs fought the busing initiative,

DRIVING HOME to Massachusetts, Rachel and Cassandra Twymon were troubled by the thought that Tony Lukas had apparently considered himself a failure. They agreed with Betty Friedan that Tony had possessed an almost religious sense of mission, but they knew that one man's good work did not necessarily "make life better for those who came after." At least, they felt, that was the case when it came to the Boston public school system. In the 12 years since *Common Ground* had been published, the blatant bigots who once dominated the Boston School Committee had vanished, but the larger problem of how to bridge the racial divide remained as intractable as ever.

In fact, at the time of Lukas's suicide last June, Boston's schools were even more segregated than they had been in 1974 when Judge Arthur Garrity took control of the Boston public school system. By 1996, less than 18

ROLE MODEL: Rachel Twymon, center—with her sister Cassandra and Rachel's sons Michael, Arthur, and Stevin—was devastated when she heard that Tony Lukas had committed suicide. "I wish he wouldn't have done that," she said. "Who's going to be my inspiration now?"

Photograph by JOHN WESTGATE



fearing that the gains of families like the Twymons would come at their expense. Today, Lisa McGoff, now 37 years old, feels genuinely sorry that her activism at Charlestown High made students like Cassandra Twymon feel unwelcome. However, she continues to oppose busing. And, with her son preparing to enter junior high in two years, she has entertained some heretical thoughts—like leaving Charlestown for the suburbs.

More than 20 years after the desegregation battles of the seventies, the suburbs are where the lines remain drawn. The McGoff, Twymon, and Diver families have all come to a new, hard-won understanding of what “common ground” really means in our society. But the common ground they now envision is smaller than it used to be. And they’ve all left, or are leaving, one thing behind—Boston.

TONY LUKAS came into the Divers’ life unexpectedly—“unbidden and thoroughly unwanted,” in Colin’s words. Lukas first called in October 1976, just after Colin and Joan and their two sons had moved into an old Victorian house in suburban Newton. Colin was teaching at Boston University Law School; Joan was the executive director of the charitable Hyams Trust. The last thing they wanted to do was talk to a reporter about busing and white flight; not even a reporter sent their way by Colin’s old colleague at the mayor’s office, Barney Frank, now congressman from the 4th district.

The Divers had moved to Newton after six years in the South End, taking their kids outside the reach of the city’s then two-year-old busing experiment. That fall, when Tony Lukas came calling, they were still feeling guilty. They worried that their move constituted a betrayal of their commitment to a more integrated society.

“When Colin first told me about Tony, I just wanted to run and hide,” Joan recalls. “At the time, white liberals who fled to the suburbs were condemned, pigeonholed, excoriated,” Colin says. “But it wasn’t just white flight. It was so much more complex.”

The Divers’ desire for common ground was born of a sixties-style idealism. Colin, with his chiseled features and air of reserve, was always brooding over the morality of the corporate opportunities made available to him because of his accomplishments at Harvard Law School. Joan, his striking young wife, worked in downtown Boston, helping charities to invest their money in the inner city. They “felt strenuously and passionately about the justice of desegregation,” Colin recalls. In 1968, not many people, and certainly not many

politicians, believed there was a problem in Boston the way there was a problem in, say, Selma, Alabama. But Colin Diver did. And one day in 1968, not very long after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, Colin found a politician to whom he could relate: Boston mayor Kevin White.

White was speaking at the 81st annual banquet for the *Harvard Law Review*. In the 1990 made-for-TV movie version of *Common Ground*, the event is ever-so-slightly glamorized: Colin, portrayed by Richard Thomas, the same actor who played John-Boy on *The Waltons*, turns to Joan (resplendent in her pearls), and remarks in a faux JFK accent (which the real Colin Diver does not have), “All of Hahvahd and hahf of Wall Street are heah.” In reality, the mayor was there to give a routine after-dinner speech. At the end, White, with a flourish, invited the assembled company to join him in his mission, which he defined as “the creation of a single society of black and white above all else.”

Colin took the mayor at his word. He turned down a lucrative corporate job, and applied for a poorly paid position as an assistant to the mayor. White, who didn’t expect to be taken literally, was shocked. “You know, Colin,” he said, “I meant that rhetorically, but we’re glad to have you anyway.”

Colin’s idealism didn’t stop there. He and Joan bought a house in the South End, at that time a rundown neighborhood of transient hotels and boarding houses. And they put their two young children in a Boston public school.

The Divers did have some misgivings at the start. Not long after they moved to West Newton Street, in the fall of 1970, they came home with their son Brad to find a dead wino covered by a sheet on the neighbor’s steps. Another time, when Joan put a \$10 bill in eight-year-old Brad’s hand and sent him to buy a magic marker at the corner store, a gang of boys chased him all the way home, trying to steal his change.

On the other hand, Brad was attending the George C. Bancroft School, in the South End. “It was a poster-child school,” Colin recalls, “not just mechanically integrated, but genuinely integrated,” primarily through the efforts of a deeply committed parents’ group. At school, Brad’s best friends were black; they built a treehouse together in the Divers’ backyard.

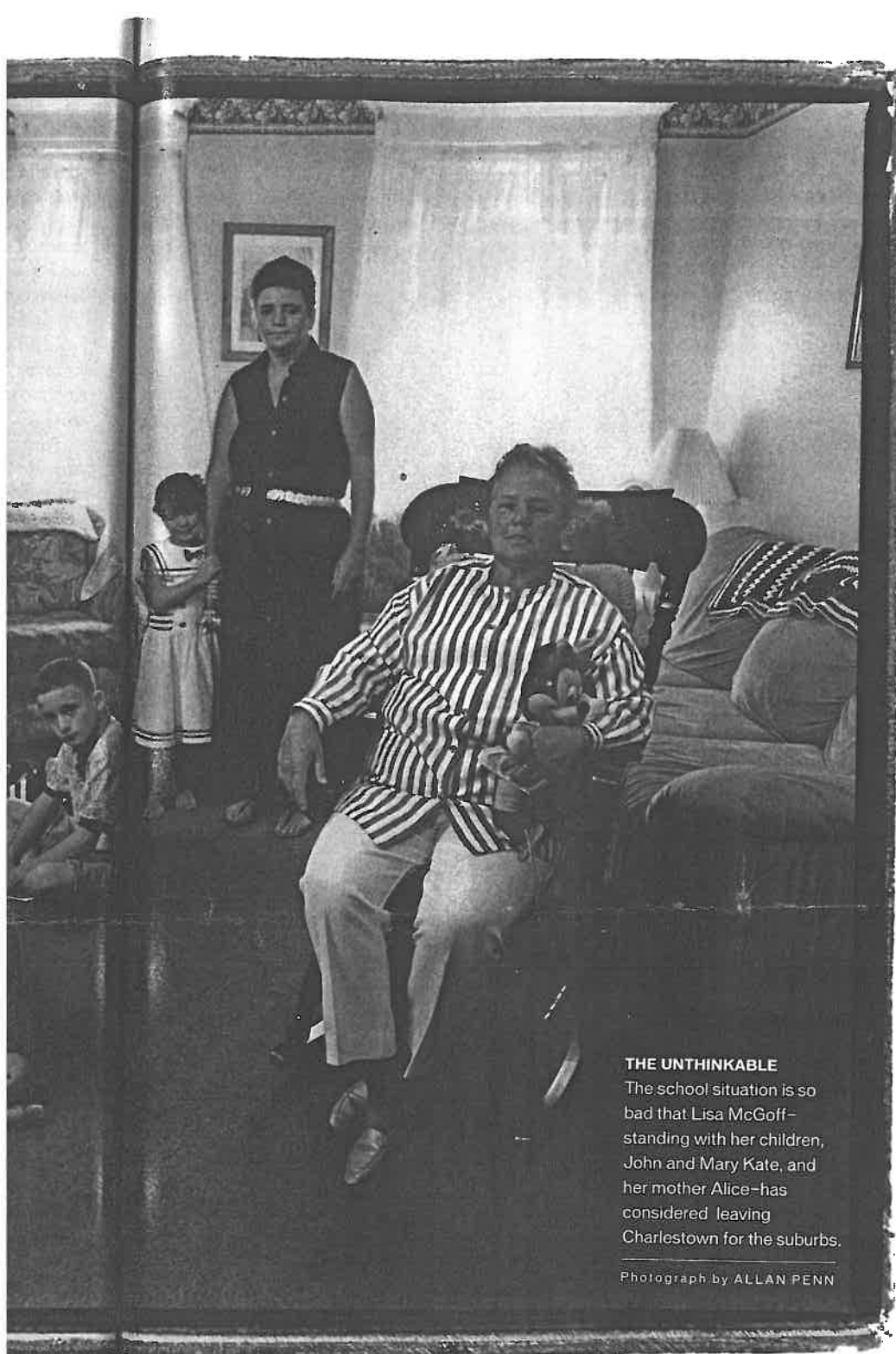
Colin and Joan only had to look out the window to know that they were on the path to a single society.

RACHEL TWYMON SR.—Cassandra and Rachel’s mother—didn’t believe in “a single society of black and white above all else.” She believed that in America a single society had already been formed—and it was white. It was



also hostile, and the sooner you learned to live in it, she thought, the better. When Tony Lukas approached her at a minority students’ protest in Charlestown in 1975, she was willing to talk to him not because of her idealistic belief in the possibility of desegregation, but because of her years of pent-up grievances.

As far as she was concerned, white society’s hostility had been evident in the Boston public school system long before Judge Garrity’s court-ordered busing scheme. And she had good reason to think so. As Lukas himself observed, the Boston School Committee was packed with “some of the most



THE UNTHINKABLE

The school situation is so bad that Lisa McGoff—standing with her children, John and Mary Kate, and her mother Alice—has considered leaving Charlestown for the suburbs.

Photograph by ALLAN PENN

When *Common Ground* was published, Alice McGoff says she “felt exploited.” She was attacked as a racist, not only in the press, but by high school students who’d been assigned the book and, as she puts it, could go to Charlestown to “**SEE THE BIG RACIST LADY.**”

scurilous rascals ever to run for elected office.” Committee member Elvira “Pixie” Paladino couldn’t refrain from making remarks about “jungle bunnies” and “pickaninnies.” John “Bigga” Kerrigan called blacks “savages” and once accused a black ABC News correspondent of being “one generation removed from swinging in the trees.” William Connor once told the *Globe*, “The problem is not inferior schools but an inferior sort of student.”

But the schools *were* inferior. In the sixties, when the Twymons were living in Orchard Park, all six kids except for Rachel—the youngest—went to the Gibson, a crumbling brick schoolhouse in North Dorchester. They brought back horror stories of students being beaten with rattan whips, of classes that met in urine-smelling basements, of shattered windows, crumbling ceilings, and white teachers who used racial slurs around their students. One teacher kept a segregated classroom: whites in the front of the room, blacks in the back.

In the spring of 1965, Rachel Sr. went with 20 other black parents to complain to Dorothea Callahan, the Gibson’s principal, who refused to believe them. A few weeks later, Rachel Sr. was back with 200 other protesters after Callahan fired the school’s star teacher, Jonathan Kozol, for reading his students Langston Hughes’s poetry instead of the usual stories about Miss Molly and Fluffy Tail the rabbit.

In his 1968 book, *Death at an Early Age*, Kozol wrote that a school official later told him that “Negro poetry was unsuitable” for schoolchildren if it described suffering. Kozol confirmed the students’ horror stories, and even added a few of his own: about the Special Ed. kids that nobody was teaching; the classroom that had 25 substitute teachers in three months; the history textbook that skipped over slavery; the falling blackboard that had almost killed one of his pupils.

Rachel Sr. put all her children on the waiting list for Project Metco, an innovative voluntary program that bused minority youngsters into suburban schools and assigned them to “host families” so they’d have somewhere to stay after half-days and sports matches. Her sister Alva’s daughter was in the program, but Rachel’s children never got off the waiting list. “She was bitter about it, no mistake,” says her daughter Rachel. “It’s because you kids are too black,” she said.”

Denied a piece of common ground in the suburbs, the Twymons would have to make do with Judge Garrity’s busing plan.

ALICE MCGOFF didn’t know very much about the state of the public schools in the South End and Roxbury—she hadn’t read Kozol, and she’d never swapped hor-

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ror stories with Rachel Twymon Sr.—but she knew she didn't want her kids going to them. She told Tony Lukas as much when she first met him in 1975, down at Charlestown High, where her daughter, Lisa, was part of an antibusing group called Powder Keg.

Tough and unafraid to express her opinions, Alice (who was played by Jane Curtin in the *Common Ground* mini-series) was a lifelong Kennedy Democrat, and had staunchly supported desegregation in the South. But when Martin Luther King Jr. spoke on the Common in 1965, comparing Boston to Birmingham, and Massachusetts to Mississippi, she felt that King was getting "a bit above himself." When he was assassinated, in 1968—an event which impelled Colin Diver into public service and left Rachel Twymon Sr. in a near-permanent state of mourning—Alice was saddened. Yet she was more upset that Irish politicians like Ted Kennedy and Kevin White were suddenly positioning themselves as champions of black advancement. Only a few years before, Alice had been living with her husband and six young children in an underheated, rat-infested project in Charlestown. Didn't Kennedy's and White's own kind have enough problems?

Alice feared that the new attention to the plight of blacks would come at the expense of poor whites. By 1970, that attitude was widespread. Kevin White's dedication to integration had not gone down well in Charlestown. His nickname there was "Mayor Black." And over at City Hall, the criticisms took their toll; Colin was asked to study the mayor's alleged favoritism. Diver examined the city's budget to prove that the mayor did not spend more on blacks, per capita, than on whites. Nevertheless, when Kevin White ran for governor later that year, he was resoundingly rejected by the very districts he'd counted on, and he lost the race.

By that time, Colin Diver had figured out that White did not really put "the creation of one society, white and black" above all. What had really mattered to White was getting elected governor. Colin decided to move on. In October 1971, he went to work for White's former adviser Bill Cowin, secretary of the state consumer affairs department. In 1974, Colin managed Cowin's unsuccessful campaign for state Attorney General.

Those were rough years for the McGoff family. On a scalding summer day in 1972, Alice's 37-year-old husband, Danny, a Parks department employee, collapsed while cleaning a park in Charlestown. He died two weeks later. [Continued on page 90]



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Suddenly, Alice was a 35-year-old widow with seven young kids. In March 1973, by which time the NAACP was making a case against Boston in Judge Garrity's court, Alice attended a meeting of Charlestown's Home and School Association. There, a Dorchester mother warned against mixing the races in public schools. "The three R's will be turned to Riot, Rape, and Robbery," she declaimed. Alice thought this was a little much, but at the end of the meeting she volunteered to help start a Charlestown chapter of a new organization, Massachusetts Citizens Against Forced Busing.

April brought more bad news: The Charlestown Navy Yard, and with it the Officer's Club where Alice worked as a hat-check girl, shut down. Other job opportunities for the McGoff family seemed threatened when affirmative action was instituted for the first time in traditionally working-class Irish preserves like the police and fire departments. For the McGoffs, this was more evidence that black gains would come at white expense.

The good news for Alice McGoff came in the fall of 1974, when Charlestown wasn't included in Judge Garrity's limited Phase I busing plan. The Divers and the Twymons, however, did fall within the plan's scope. After a fight with the school bureaucracy, Colin and Joan managed to keep their son Brad at the Bancroft School. The Twymons, who were living in Methunion Manor in the South End, not far from the Bancroft School, were assigned to schools in Brighton, the neighborhood where Joan and Colin Diver had once lived. Cassandra went to Brighton High and Rachel went to the William Howard Taft Middle School. Rachel Sr. didn't expect much from these schools, but she believed that integration would open doors of opportunity to her children that had been closed to her. The schools in Brighton already had a substantial number of minority students. There was relatively little racial tension, yet it was still a difficult year for 13-year-old Rachel. She became pregnant, and put the baby up for adoption soon after its birth.

Just a month after Garrity's so-called Phase I ruling, the Supreme Court made a decision that would profoundly influence the future of integration efforts—and inadvertently confirm the McGoffs' fears that blacks and poor whites would be pitted against one another in a political zero-sum game. In *Milliken v. Bradley*, the Supreme Court ruled that cross-busing between Detroit and its suburbs could not be used to remedy segregation in the city. It had been a narrow decision: 5 to

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4. In a bitter dissent, Justice Thurgood Marshall argued that the decision would shift the onus of desegregation onto the shoulders of the urban poor. Judge Garrity's children, for example, growing up in Wellesley, would not have to worry about being sent to formerly segregated, last-resort schools in Roxbury. But Alice McGoff's children would.

That spring, Alice and her strong-willed, tomboyish daughter Lisa protested outside the State House, parodying an old WWI refrain: "Over there, Over there, Our kids aren't going over there." Meaning Roxbury. As Phase II busing loomed, in September 1975, rumors swept the town that the black students on their way to Charlestown High were intent on rape and pillage. That September, the McGoff family slept with baseball bats beside their beds.

ACCORDING TO Colin Diver, 1975 was the "year from hell." The Bancroft School was an early casualty of Phase II busing. Its students, brought together by their parents' desire for integration, were scattered into different busing zones, shipped to different schools, and replaced by children from outside the community. The school was overcrowded, and many of the new students were so poorly prepared that they required special attention. Colin and Joan became concerned when their son's

third-grade reading scores dropped sharply. "In the third grade, I remember needing more attention," Brad, a 30-year-old artist, says today. "My teacher just gave me a workbook to do on my own. I consistently spelled America, *Amarica*."

At the same time, the Divers were also realizing that the integrated South End wasn't anything like the single society they had hoped to find. Many of the poorer residents bitterly resented the evictions and displacements that made room for families like the Divers, and crime across the color barrier was com-

Judge Garrity's children, in Wellesley, would not have to worry about being sent to formerly segregated, last-resort schools. But Alice McGoff's children would.

mon. Joan was punched in the face and mugged just outside her home. Once, an intruder walked into the house when the children were home alone.

In one week, starting on December 30, 1975, there were six violent robberies within a block of the Divers' home. On the night of January 7, Colin chased a mugger down

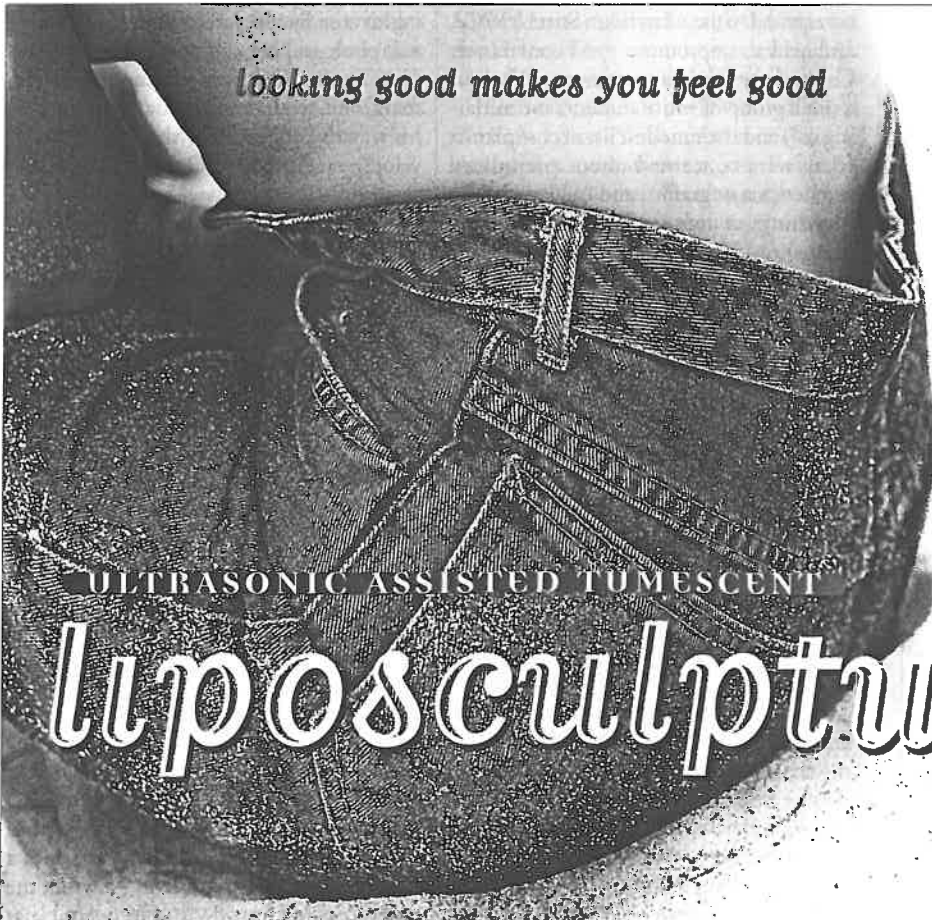
West Newton Street and cracked him on the head with an old Louisville Slugger. "It was a catalyzing event for me," Diver says. "I looked at myself in the mirror, and said: I went out and hit somebody on the head with a potentially lethal weapon. I'm being brutalized by this neighborhood."

In late January, a young man who lived nearby was shot in his own home and left paralyzed from the waist down. Around the same time, an elderly man died of a heart attack after being mugged. In February, the Divers' neighbors—Chip and Marie Huhta and Ginger Brown, a teenager staying with the family—were awakened in the middle of the night, tied up, threatened, and robbed.

That August, the Divers fled to Newton.

WHILE THE DIVERS were in the midst of their year from hell, the Twymons heard from the school bureaucracy that Cassandra and Rachel had been reassigned to Charlestown. That fall—the beginning of Brad Diver's bad year at the Bancroft—Cassandra attended Charlestown High, and Rachel went to Edwards Middle School. Rachel Sr. went to the first parents committee meeting for Charlestown High at City Hall, but antibusing groups had organized a boycott. The white parents refused "to be in the same room with a bunch of niggers," as one mother put it.

[Continued on page 92]



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On her first day, wearing a homemade pantsuit decorated with bicycles and bug-gies, Cassandra was delivered to Charlestown in a police-escorted yellow bus, as crowd-control units circled Bunker Hill. She was greeted with stones and cries of "Go back to Africa." Among the many townies scuffling with police that day was Lisa McGoff's brother Tommy.

The Twymon girls hated Charlestown. Cassandra remembers Charlestown High as a "nasty, dirty, rat-infested trap of a school." Soon after she started there, she joined something called the Minority Students' Council, a group that tried to pressure the school administration into doing something about

"Tony never put us down, no matter what our mother said," says Rachel. "You know, I didn't understand some of the stuff in his book until years later."

the taunts and harassment the new students were enduring. That October, the Council kicked into gear after a vicious melee resulted in the arrest of four white students and the suspension of five blacks. Boycotting school for a day, the minority students and their advisers repaired to the Clarendon Street YWCA and held an impromptu press conference. Cassandra read their statement ("There is a small group of white students intimidating us") and their modest list of complaints (they were concerned about prejudiced teachers, racist graffiti, and "whites throwing things at minorities," among other things).

"A big, tall white guy came up to me afterwards," Cassandra recalls. "My name's Tony Lukas," he said. "I'd like to write a book about busing." I told him, "My mother told me not to talk to strangers." But my mother was there [at the Y], and he went over and met her."

Eventually, Lukas visited the Twymons' home, where he and Rachel first met. "My first impression was, I ain't talking to him," Rachel recalls. "I just sat there looking at him. He came over and asked, 'Do you like me?' and I just kept staring. My mother said, 'That's my evil child.'"

Rachel and her sister grew to trust Lukas, at first because he politely asked their mother if he could talk to them alone and gave them the chance to correct her version of events. By the beginning of 1976, Lukas was a fixture in the Twymon household. "It was like he was living with us," says Cassandra. "We'd go to sleep and wake up and he'd still be there." At the time, Lukas hadn't even met

the Divers, who would soon begin to look at houses in the suburbs.

In early 1976, Lukas was also spending a good amount of time with the McGoffs. By then, Charlestown's various antibusing groups had hatched a potent new political strategy: They would stress the educational problems caused by the influx of unprepared minority students. The implication was that the new students were dragging down Charlestown's standards.

The truth, of course, was that all of Charlestown's students were doing pretty poorly—a fact not lost on Lisa McGoff. Lisa, then a sophomore, was rapidly developing into the antibusing movement's most articulate student spokesperson. That January, accompanied by antibusing champion and mayoral candidate Louise Day Hicks, founder of ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights), Lisa met with Kevin White to lament Charlestown High's academic decline.

On April 5, ROAR tried to meet with Judge Garrity. A group of 120 students and parents from Charlestown, armed with American flags and Bicentennial posters (a popular one compared Garrity to George III), marched to the federal courthouse. On the way, however, they saw a black man in a three-piece suit striding purposefully up the steps of City Hall. Forgetting their own purpose, some of the young townies yelled, "Get the nigger!" They tried to impale him on the spearlike tip of an American flag, and succeeded in breaking his nose. Stanley J. Forman, a *Herald American* photographer, captured the moment on film. The man's name was Theodore Landsmark, and he was a Yale-educated lawyer on his way to a meeting for the Boston Redevelopment Authority. One of his assailants was Eddie Irvin, the vice president of Lisa McGoff's class at Charlestown High. Lisa believed it was all some sort of trick, a provocation engineered by Landsmark. What black man would walk toward an antibusing demonstration? That spring, she attended all of Eddie Irvin's court proceedings. Forman, the *Herald American* photographer, won his second Pulitzer Prize.

THAT SUMMER, just as the Divers were planning their escape to the suburbs, the Twymons were descending into their own year of hell—with Tony Lukas there to record it all. On July 4, 1976, Cassandra and little Rachel were at a barbecue at their aunt Alva's house in Dorchester when a group of white youths, angry that Alva had crossed "the invisible line" by moving into a house on the edge of the "white section" of the neighborhood, stormed the house, shouted abuse, and even stole the white picket fence from the backyard. That fall, while Colin and Joan Diver were moving into a sprawling Victorian home in Newton, the Twymon girls were getting into trouble at

school. Cassandra was suspended for a day, she says, for fighting with Lisa McGoff. In November, Rachel, then 15, and Cassandra, 16, ran away from home to live with boyfriends they'd met in nightclubs—men who were 27 and 39. After a few weeks, their mother's sister Alva tracked them down and brought them to live with her in Dorchester. Alva and Rachel Sr. were soon feuding over where the girls would live. That November, around the time that Colin Diver was building a white picket fence in his basement workshop in Newton, Frederick Twymon, Rachel and Cassandra's brother, was arrested for and subsequently convicted of raping a young white woman he'd met at a party.

Remarkably, with all this going on, Rachel and Cassandra managed to hold their own in school. Yet by their third year of busing, they were losing patience. Living with Alva, they were finally out of range of their mother's frequent sermons on the merits of education. Beginning in the fall of 1977, they started skipping class regularly.

Lisa McGoff followed a different route: She became Charlestown High's class president. To do so, she had to wage a difficult campaign against Eddie Irvin, who'd achieved quite a following thanks to the Landmark episode, for which he had received a one-year suspended sentence.

Cassandra Twymon had expected to fail out of Charlestown High, but to her surprise the principal overlooked her absences and awarded her a diploma after all. She took a job in a laundromat on Mass Ave. that May. Rachel dropped out of Roxbury High and moved in with her new boyfriend, with whom she eventually had a son, Michael, when she was 19.

Not long after Rachel gave up on school, the first demographic figures on the impact of busing were released. As it turned out, the desegregation initiative didn't stand a chance against white flight. In 1972, the first year that Ganity heard testimony in the NAACP's case against the Boston schools, there were 90,000 students in the system. Sixty percent were white. In 1976, by which time young Brad and Ned Diver were struggling to catch up to their peers in Newton, there were only 71,000 students left. Only 44 percent of them were white.

In 1985, THE YEAR *Common Ground* was published, Tony Lukas mailed the Divers the 1,300-page manuscript. A lot had happened since the last time Lukas had lived in Boston. In 1981, Colin Diver had become a full professor at Boston University Law School. Lisa McGoff had graduated from Bunker Hill Community College and married her boyfriend, John Collins, who worked on the ice crew at Boston Garden.

The Divers devoured Lukas's manuscript. They sat next to each other at the

dining room table, Colin passing Joan the pages as he finished them. They read the draft almost in one sitting. Joan later said that reading the book was the final stage in a process that "released me from my contorted view of how others would interpret my life." Colin felt the book "laid bare" his life, "peeling away" layers of guilt and frustration. When he got to its final passage, which describes how he built a white picket fence around his new suburban home, "sealing off the Divers' perimeter, rearing its ivory spine against the world," he wept.

Alice McGoff had a very different reaction upon reading the published book. "I felt exploited, to tell you the truth," she says. "I don't know where my Irish was, telling Tony some of the things I did." When she read the part about her late husband Danny's drinking problem, she felt a sharp pang of regret. Worse still, she was immediately attacked as a racist, not only in the press, but by high school students who'd been assigned *Common Ground* and could easily look up the McGoffs in Charlestown in order to, in Alice's words, "see the big racist lady." It wasn't long before Lukas and she had a falling-out.

Lukas and Lisa McGoff stayed in touch, exchanging Christmas cards. "My first impression—honestly?—was, Jesus, this is a lot to read. So I read just the McGoff section," she says. "The way it was set up, though, you couldn't really read it skipping chapters. So then I read the Twymons. And then I read the Divers. They were the hardest to click with. I mean, just a whole different world."

Lisa's only access to the Divers' world was through Lukas. With him, in 1985, she attended a symposium at the Kennedy Library and a number of book signings. "Here I was, a little kid from the projects, meeting TV stars and talking to crowds of reporters," Lisa recalls. "I did a signing with Tony, and the *Globe* covered it. Once I spoke to a group of 300 people, a 12th grader just telling it like it was. It was so inspirational. That was when I realized that the people in the suburbs—all the affluent people, including the judges and the newspaper editors—had no idea what was going on."

Cassandra and Rachel had a similar experience. Not only did Lukas listen to them when even their mother would not, through him they were granted a hearing by the inaccessible outside world, by the suburban decision-makers who had mandated busing but were exempt from it. Reading the book was also a powerful experience. By bringing back the chaos of their high school years and the racist treatment they had suffered, it reminded them of what they had been up against. "If Tony hadn't written that book, I don't know if I would ever have figured out what happened to me," Cassandra says. "I would have gone on [Continued on page 94]



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Un-Common *(Continued from page 93)*

thinking that it was somehow my fault, that I was a piece of shit."

Yet Rachel had one serious problem with the book: the account it gave of her pregnancy when she was 13. Her mother had attributed it to promiscuity, and told Tony Lukas as much. At the time, Rachel had remained silent. It would be years before she could bring herself to tell her mother that she had been raped by a family friend.

Within a year of *Common Ground's* publication, Lisa McGoff and John Collins had a son, and Colin Diver, newly famous, was the dean of BU Law School. Cassandra was living with her mother in the South End; Rachel would soon find herself in a women's shelter in New Bedford.

TODAY, RACHEL TWYMON's home is in a bright, federally subsidized bungalow around the corner from the New Bedford chapter of the NAACP. She lives with her three sons—6-year-old Arthur, 5-year-old Stevin, and Michael, who is now 16. Cassandra, who lives nearby, is sitting in Rachel's living room under a giant portrait of a brown-skinned Jesus with dreadlocks.

"Here's common ground for you," Cassandra says, offering what turns out to be Arthur's report card from the Elizabeth Carter Brooks school, an integrated school housed in a brick complex a few miles down the road. The report card is all A's. Rachel, who has been mixing iced tea in the kitchen, comes back to the room beaming, with a bright purple comb stuck in her hair.

"Tony would call at the most needed times," Rachel says, pointing to her new diploma from New Bedford's Bristol Community College, perched above the television set. "At least once a month. He'd say, 'You can do it.' I'd say, 'No I can't.' I'd tell him about the racists in my classes, and he'd say, 'Rachel, you've been dealing with those white bastards all your life, and it's time to reap the benefits.'"

"Tony always listened," Cassandra says. "Despite our mother. Our mother, you know, could be a domineering person."

"Tony never put us down no matter what our mother said," Rachel explains. "She had the idea we were whoring around then."

"Ask anyone," Cassandra interjects, gesturing at her sister. "She wasn't giving up anything."

"Tony would always say, 'You're both good girls,'" Rachel adds. "You know, I didn't understand some of the stuff in his book until years later."

In 1985, after her breakup with Michael's father in Boston, and a painful time with drugs and rehab, Rachel came to New Bedford to stay with her brother George, a

Methodist minister. In New Bedford, Rachel realized that without an education, "the system was set up to slap you down," as she puts it. Determined to get off welfare, she got a low-paying job, only to find out that she couldn't afford daycare. "What's \$4.25 an hour gonna do for my kids, anyway?" she asked. "You're telling me that I can have \$180, but you'll cut me off from food stamps, cut my aid check, and take away my kids' medical care? You'll let me make \$2, then take \$5 back? I decided I had to go back to school."

Going back wasn't that easy. First, Rachel tried to get vocational training in data processing, as her aunt Alva had done in the seventies. On August 4, 1988, she got her degree, but only 2 people out of her class of 22 got a job. "I was sent down to the New Bedford district court for training," Rachel recalls, "and it turned out they didn't even have a computer yet."

That year, she supplemented her income by working as an extra in the made-for-TV version of *Common Ground*. The McGoffs turned up for the filming in Charlestown. Rachel didn't speak to them.

In 1989, Rachel came back to Boston to take care of her mother, who was sick with lupus. By then, the Divers had moved; Colin had become dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Tony Lukas spoke at Rachel Sr.'s funeral in 1990. Afterward, he encouraged Rachel in her resolve to go back to school.

Rachel enrolled in a preprofessional program at Bristol Community College, but completing the coursework was a trial. First, she had to pay back a portion of an old loan to qualify for financial aid. Then her third son, Stevin, was born prematurely, with a thyroid problem that required hospital visits twice weekly. The college office nevertheless required her to take a full course load, plus a science lab. Spurning the advice of a welfare department career counselor, Rachel decided not to train as a nurse's aide—"the only future in that is a bad back," she says—but as an occupational therapist. "Rachel Twymon was going to be a professional," she says. "She was not going to need nothing from nobody."

Besides Bristol Community College, Rachel had Michael's education to worry about—and Arthur's and Stevin's. There are only a handful of other minority students in their classes. Last fall, Michael, who had been an A student, brought home a D in Spanish. Rachel was upset, but what really infuriated her was that the school hadn't called her.

"Are you gonna wait till my son is *failing*, to call me?" she yelled, barging into the principal's office. "Do I have to act my color? You are going to call me when my son is doing badly. You may call it

(Continued on page 130)

special treatment, but you are going to call me. You may think my son is just the black boy in your class, and that so long as he's well mannered and kisses your ass, you don't give a shit about how well he does. But you *will* call me."

In the next room, Cassandra has put on the tape of the *Common Ground* miniseries and is fiddling with the VCR. "My grandmother gave me her copy of the book," Michael says. "The first time I read it, in eighth grade, I only read the chapters about my family. I had to go back and read everything. I asked, Mom, why would you even go to a school where people don't like you? Why would you go through all that?"

"It's taken me this long to figure that out," Rachel says.

On the television screen, Martin Luther King's assassination is being replayed. In Roxbury, rioters are burning an American flag.

"Oh, here's the good part," says Michael, sitting down.

"Why would they be doin' that?" five-year-old Stevin asks his mother from the couch, thumb in mouth.

"Long story," Rachel says. "Tony would have had something to say about that."

IN HIS AUSTERE OFFICE at the University of Pennsylvania, under the egg-shaped skylights and the black-and-white pictures of elderly law professors, Colin Diver, 53, conveys a certain steeliness. Ask him about the future of busing and his response is no-nonsense: "What's the point?" he asks. "The schools are mostly minority anyway. Unless you sweep the suburbs into the picture, you don't have enough whites to desegregate anything."

Diver came to Penn in the fall of 1989, after a one-year stint as dean of BU Law School. At Penn he was quickly embroiled in a new controversy. In 1990, law professor Lani Guinier, who would soon become famous as Bill Clinton's nominee for assistant Attorney General, wanted the new dean to release an array of student admissions data for her latest study. She was trying to find out why female law students on average didn't perform as well as men with comparable LSAT scores. Diver decided to release the data—grades and LSAT scores for 981 Penn students. In 1994, Guinier published her first conclusions—which amounted to an attack on the "needlessly confrontational" law school teaching methods that she believed were culturally and psychologically hostile to women and minorities. Because the LSAT could not account for this bias, she wrote, the test completely failed to predict students' academic performance in law school.

Diver was soon caught up in a heated debate about admissions standards. He was criticized for giving Guinier ammunition to attack the very institution he was supposed to steer

and safeguard.

For Diver, the debate recalled his Boston experience. It was, he thought, an argument about the meaning and possibility of common ground. The biggest issue for him was the substantial gap between black and white LSAT test scores. This became a pressing concern at Penn in 1997 after U.S. Circuit Courts struck down affirmative action policies at state universities in California and Texas. When graduate programs in those states began using test scores as their sole admission criterion, they found there was a precipitous drop in the number of minority students they accepted.

At Penn, reliance on LSAT scores alone would mean no more than 5 blacks in a 230-student law class, instead of 26, Diver says. While Guinier preemptively assailed what she

White flight made busing pointless, says Diver.

"Unless you sweep the suburbs into the picture, you don't have enough whites to desegregate anything."

termed the "test-ocracy," he reiterated his commitment—ambivalent though it may have been—to affirmative action.

Diver sees affirmative action as the last, best chance for meaningful desegregation in the educational arena. Busing, he says, "is ancient history." Since *Milliken*, the suburbs cannot legally be included in citywide desegregation efforts, and since the urban school populations have become predominantly nonwhite, court-ordered integration has become impossible. Even the NAACP is questioning the practicality of its integration mandate. "Maybe Clinton is on to something," Diver reflects, looking over the law books lining his office. "Maybe we have to have a national conversation on race. Because that's literally the only thing we can do: have a conversation."

Unless the suburbs are brought into the picture, of course. The NAACP recently won a desegregation suit against Hartford by suing under the state constitution. The state supreme court has directed the legislature to consider a proposal to integrate the city's minority students with pupils in 21 suburbs. And in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and a handful of other southern cities, business leaders have supported voluntary busing programs that consolidate city and suburban school districts, creating a system of majority-white schools.

Yet Diver remains suspicious of what he calls "large-scale social engineering." "In the fifties and sixties, segregation was an issue that had to be resolved at the highest levels, with Supreme Court decrees, presidential involve-

ment," he says. "Seems to me that the issue of racial justice has become more dispersed throughout society. It's an issue in our daily life, in the workplace. Thanks to the success of affirmative action, we do interact now, and we're constantly trying to get beyond the awkwardness. Call it the privatization of desegregation."

Joan Diver's solution is even more private. She has become deeply religious, and practices the laying-on of hands. She believes that religion—not organized religion but what she calls "spiritual awareness"—is the ultimate arena in which people will come together on common ground.

"The most telling thing," says Joan, "about Tony's memorial service was something that Betty Friedan said: Tony was not a religious man, but he lived a religious life."

ON A HOT AFTERNOON this past July, Lisa McGoff took her six-year-old daughter, Mary Kate, to the park in Charlestown, not far from the Bunker Hill projects. She joined a group of mothers by the side of the public pool, which was filled with children of all races.

The mothers by the pool looked up when a young black woman came striding into the park, screaming at the top of her lungs for her son. The woman had a belt in her hands, a long leather strap. As soon as her son, a skinny kid, maybe 12, came out of the water, she started lashing at him with the belt. "She was really beating him," says Lisa. "And he was yelling, 'I didn't do it!' We thought she'd kill him, and a few of the mothers spoke up."

The woman had glared back at them. "He's my kid and I'll do what the hell I want to him," she said. "Got a problem with me?"

"We got a problem with you beating him," one mother said. All the kids in the pool had frozen in place. "They were in shock," Lisa remembers. "My Mary Kate was on the bench, crying her eyes out."

There was a swearing match between the distraught young woman with the belt and the women by the pool, Lisa says. "Nothing racial—no nigger words," Lisa says. Lisa even approached the woman's frightened child and said, "We're not angry at you, we just don't want you to get hit." The boy's father came out to the pool later and apologized. The story goes that the mother had hit the boy because he'd pulled a knife on someone, down at the Edwards School, where both Lisa McGoff and Rachel Twymon had attended junior high.

"Is that what's going on at the Eddie today?" Lisa asks. "No wonder the 12- and 13-year-olds in our neighborhood don't want to go to school. Is this what they have to see? My daughter was traumatized. The next day she was asking, 'Is it in the paper, Mommy? Is it in the paper?'"

Lisa McGoff has [Continued on page 132]

just come back from the pool to her apartment on Bunker Hill Avenue. Short-haired and stocky, she's wearing a bathing suit under her jeans and tank top. Her sister-in-law, just back from the hospital with a tiny, wrinkly baby girl, is in the next room. Lisa's five-year-old niece, still wearing her inflatable water-wings, is sitting on the floor, playing with a Hulk Hogan doll. Her mother, Alice, who lives downstairs, is not at home, preferring not to be bothered. "I don't have much more to say," she explained. "This book has beat us to death."

Alice has had enough of living in the public eye. Back in 1993, she pleaded guilty to lying about her salary on applications for federal-housing subsidies. The inevitable publicity was humiliating. (While the *Herald* identified her as the "Common Ground Widow," the *Globe's* headline read, "Prominent busing foe pleads guilty to fraud.")

In Lisa McGoff's living room, there's a soap opera blaring on the television; all the characters on at the moment are black. "You didn't tell me the DA was a jazz fan," a man in a suit is saying. Lisa McGoff isn't paying attention; she's explaining how, in two years, her 10-year-old son will have to leave the award-winning Kent elementary school and go to the Eddie. Or to Catholic school. Or leave Charlestown altogether.

She is careful to say that her worries have nothing to do with race. At Charlestown High, she'd refused to play on a basketball team with blacks. Today, however, she coaches in the neighborhood's interracial basketball league, volunteers at Head Start, and feels sorry that she was prejudiced against black students at Charlestown High. But she's not apologetic at all about her continued, adamant opposition to busing.

"The real issue in busing is not race but schools," she says. "Why did struggling families in Charlestown have to send their children outside the neighborhood, to crime-ridden, last-resort schools in Roxbury? How can the city spend millions on busing and security instead of making the schools better so that people won't leave the Town to get away from them?"

Lisa says she didn't have to think about these issues until recently because she was lucky. Under the current "parental choice" busing plan, her son John was assigned to the best elementary school in Charlestown, the Kent. Like Rachel Twymon's son Stevin, John was born prematurely and suffered health problems, enabling Lisa to claim "special circumstances" to keep him near home. "Now it's decided by ratio, you know, one-third white, one-third black, one-third Chinese, the usual," she says. "But if you're persistent, you can figure out a way to get into the school of your choice, you know, like a letter from a doctor saying your kid gets migraines and needs to

go to school near home."

Now that John is nearing junior high age, Lisa finds herself running out of options. Her husband, John, is dead-set against the Edwards, as is her mother, Alice, who says it's "full of animals." Yet she finds herself wishing her son would go there. "The whole purpose of my 20 years of being a rebel is so my kid can walk down the street and go to school, so if something is wrong I can go down there and get him," Lisa says. "I'm hoping the Eddie becomes better."

One alternative is Catholic school, but the cost (about \$2,500 a year) is daunting. She could go back to work, she says, but the daycare costs would eat up most of her earnings. Yet John himself is lobbying for Catholic school; 14 of the 16 kids on his hockey team go to one.

Lisa and her husband have already discussed

McGoff says the real issue isn't race, it's schools. "Why spend millions on busing instead of making schools better so people won't leave to get away from them?"

another alternative: moving to the suburbs. Lately, this has been the preferred route for middle-class families, white and black. "If people can't get their kids into the Kent, that's it, that's the end," Lisa says. "They pay for Catholic school or they move out to the suburbs, buy a house for \$200,000 in Reading or Wakefield, and end up paying more for a house than they would for school."

Lisa doesn't want to do that. "I told my husband, I've been here for 37 years and I'm going nowhere else."

Yet there's no doubt that Charlestown is changing. The McGoffs worry more about crime. They're concerned about a new exit ramp for I-93 that may dump as many as 1,500 more cars a day into their neighborhood. And they worry that gentrification, which is turning parts of Charlestown into clones of Beacon Hill, will price their kids out of the Town's real estate market.

"I get so angry when people leave," Lisa says. "But even the kind who like to fight are jumping ship."

Some things haven't changed since *Common Ground*. Poor whites in Charlestown still enviously accuse minorities of receiving special attention. "They're getting more even though we live in the same town," Lisa says. She mentions a few initiatives: Headstart; the federally funded bilingual program at the Kent School; the quotas at Boston Latin, which were recently, and successfully, challenged; and even Metco, the voluntary suburban busing experiment that currently includes 3,000 minority students (with another 7,000 on the waiting list). "I grew up in the projects too,"

McGoff says. "But Metco isn't getting white kids from Charlestown, are they? No. It's black kids from Roxbury. Do the white kids get the opportunity to go to the schools that are sending kids to Harvard? No. Why can't something like that be available to anyone who wants the opportunity?"

Much as she would like access to the suburban schools, Lisa thinks that the best thing for townies is a return to neighborhood schools. She supports Boston City councilwoman Peggy Davis-Mullen, who has been trying to put her "neighborhood school" referendum on next month's ballot. Davis-Mullen's measure, if approved, would scrap Boston's existing busing system entirely, leaving students with an old-fashioned network of "walk-to" neighborhood schools. The proposal makes sense, in a way. In a predominantly minority school system, busing no longer serves its original purpose of integration. Unfortunately, since there aren't nearly enough schools in black neighborhoods for a "walk-to" system, the proposal has caused some controversy. Some black leaders, tacitly accepting the inevitability of a segregated neighborhood school plan, are already lobbying for more "black" schools, the same sort of arrangement described in the opening chapters of *Common Ground*, which was determined to be unconstitutional more than 25 years ago.

Lisa McGoff would be happy to see the busing budget spent on better schools, but she doubts that will happen. She wishes there were a way she could convey the Town's needs to the "people who run things." Lukas used to be her conduit to that world. When he died, Lisa was surprised that she wasn't even invited to his memorial service.

"The Divers and the Twymons were there?" she asks. "So people thought we were the nasty racists who didn't come? It figures."

IN THE WINTER OF 1996, Tony Lukas returned to Cambridge for a panel at the Harvard Graduate School of Education about Gary Orfield and Susan Eaton's new book, *Dismantling Desegregation*. The book described the series of Supreme Court decisions in the early 1990s that had relaxed desegregation standards and set the stage for a return to neighborhood schools in many cities. Orfield, Eaton, and the other researchers involved in the Harvard Project on School Desegregation argued that the abandonment of integration efforts had done little to reverse white flight, and still less to improve the quality of education.

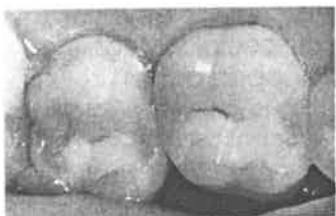
Before the panel, Orfield and Lukas had a long talk. Orfield, a civil-rights veteran on the Harvard faculty, felt that *Common Ground* was "profoundly misleading" insofar as it portrayed busing as a well-intentioned disaster. His research suggested that the most ambitious form of busing— (Continued on page 134)

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Un-Common *(Continued from page 132)*

the kind that mixed pupils from impoverished inner cities and affluent suburbs—had been the quietest, and the most successful. More than a million students in the South broached the line between the city and the suburbs every day, he told Lukas.

As the panel commenced, Orfield put the problem succinctly: "We're putting the most disadvantaged kids in the worst schools, in the city, and all the most privileged kids in the best schools, in the suburbs, and it's wrong."

When Lukas's turn came, he tried to address Orfield's concerns. The situation Boston now faced, he said, reminded him of his favorite class at Harvard: Democracy and Its Critics. The final exam had been a single essay

"We're putting the most disadvantaged kids in the worst schools in the city and the most privileged kids in the best schools in the suburbs," says Gary Orfield.

question: Defend democracy.

"Garrity was prevented by *Milliken* from dealing with the real Boston," Lukas said. "Which shows how courts are not ideal instruments for social policy. It wasn't for nothing that Garrity was always compared with King George III. Over 10 years Boston's elected officials abdicated responsibility for the schools and made palpably unconstitutional decisions—but that doesn't mean we have to allow judges to keep doing our work for us."

While panelists like Orfield were full of suggestions for elected officials—including expanding the Metco program—others were not so sanguine about politicians' capacity to deal with desegregation. Author and former Boston public school teacher Jonathan Kozol pointed out that, historically, the Supreme Court and the NAACP had led the way. So long as the urban school districts were predominantly minority and the suburbs remained untouchable, he warned, American schools, and American society, would grow more polarized, and more angry.

"This is not just a problem in social policy," Kozol said that day. "This is America's sin. It's going to take a theological upheaval in our nation to force us to deal with this—but I think that it also might take the other kind of upheaval. And I hope I live to see it."

Anthony Lukas did not. **B**