

5G) Blacks and Whites Disagree About the Causes of Racial Violence

Shots Quell Central Islip Race Fight, *Newsday, May 28, 1969*

Central Islip-- Fighting among a number of white and Negro students broke out at the Central Islip High School yesterday for the second time this month. Warning shots fired by a patrolman dispersed the crowd, but the tension continued into the night, and there was a firebombing that caused minor damage to the home of a white resident. The new troubles at the school, according to police, apparently were the outgrowth of a confrontation between whites and blacks outside a bowling alley on Carleton Avenue Monday night. Yesterday morning, black and white students squared off at the school armed with tire irons, chains and sticks, and police were called.

Suffolk Blacks Quite Racial Strife Session, *Newsday, May 28, 1969*

Central Islip-- About 40 black youths appeared at a meeting of the Central Islip Task Force last night to demand quicker solutions to racial problems, but the meeting turned into a heated argument and the youths walked out shortly after they were told by the chairman that he knew nothing of violence Sunday in which four white persons were hospitalized. After the task force meeting, the black youths went to their youth center, where a window had been shattered Sunday, apparently by a gunshot. While they met inside, at least 20 white youths congregated about a block away. They left after being asked to do so by policemen in the area. A few minutes later, Lt. Robert Sommer asked the black youths to leave the center and go home to avoid trouble.

600 Whites Hold Rally in Central Islip, *Newsday, August 26, 1969*

Central Islip-- About 600 white residents turned out for a rally last night in support of a drive to have Soul Village closed or moved. Leaders of the drive told the crowd that the success of their campaign against the youth center, used chiefly by Negro youngsters, lies in political action. Like most of the speakers, he did not identify himself "because it's not fair to announce our names after the fire-bombings by the black militants." About halfway through the two-hour meeting. Ralph Watkins, a Negro who is the chairman of the Suffolk County Human Relations Commission, made his way through the crowd and was helped onto the flatbed truck from which the speakers addressed the group. Although he was interrupted by boos, he said, "You better dig what I'm saying. You feel that the police force doesn't effectively enforce the law for whites. Well, the black people don't feel the police enforce the laws for them either."

Black Gains OK'd At Central Islip School, *Newsday, August 29, 1969*

Central Islip-- The Central Islip Task Force and the school board have agreed to start a black studies program and to hire more black teachers to head off any renewal of racial tension when school opens next month. The agreements were made during the summer by the school board, the Central Islip High School administration and the Task Force, a group composed of representatives from 40 community organizations to deal with racial tension. The Task Force was set up in May to ease racial problems after the high school was closed for two days that month because of scuffles between black and white students. The scuffles came after black requests which included the black studies program and more black teachers.

Bellport School Shut After Scuffles, *Newsday, October, 1969*

Bellport-- The Bellport-Brookhaven-East Patchogue School Board ordered the closing of the high school today for the announced purpose of permitting faculty members to discuss curriculum changes following scuffling between black and white students in the school yesterday.

School officials said that the outbreak started in the school corridors at about 1:45 PM when white students removed posters that blacks had pasted on the walls. The posters said: "Black ... Black ... Black ... History Time" and "Correct History." About 10 blacks and whites scuffled and about 50 milled around as school principal Thomas Feeney told them over the loudspeaker to return to their classes. He then notified police. Approximately six policemen entered the building and several waited in cars outside while students left the school a half hour later under Feeney's orders.

State Education Report Finds Bellport Still Divided by Bias, *Newsday, January 6, 1970*

Bellport-- A special study conducted by the State Education Department contends that polarization and antagonism between those of different races and socio-economic backgrounds are considerable factors in Bellport community life. The study said that rigid de facto segregation was Bellport's most critical problem. Of 4,300 pupils in the district, about one-fourth are black. Two years ago, the state ordered the district to end racial imbalance in its schools. "Black, Puerto Rican and poor residents live in North Bellport," said the report, "while the rest of the district is composed of more affluent middle class whites."

Racially Torn Hempstead High To Reopen With Talks on Strife

New York Times March 9, 1970

Hempstead, L.I., March 8-- Hempstead High School, closed all day Friday after two days of racial disturbances, will not open until Tuesday, giving the teachers an additional day to prepare to discuss the incidents with their students. The 1,500 pupil school, 70 percent black, closed an hour early Thursday after several small fires were set in the auditorium and washrooms, and did not reopen on Friday. School officials have indicated that 15 students might be suspended. The school's 108 teachers spent Friday discussing the incidents that began on Wednesday and led to the school's closing.

Racial Problems: In School and Out, *Newsday, October 2, 1970*

Glen Cove-- The late September afternoon had been hot and sticky, but in early evening a refreshing breeze started blowing in across Long Island Sound. It ruffled the lawns of the expensive waterfront homes and stirred up ripples on nearby Dosoris Pond, where two white youths were lying on the bank, watching their fishing lines and talking about the recent trouble at their high school. "It's a bad situation," one said. "Some white kids are talking about being armed for self-defense. If the blacks start any more fights, if they try to shake down any white kids for money, it could blow up even worse. Nothings settled, not at all."

The breeze died before it reached Mason Drive, a dead-end street in Glen Cove's predominantly Negro "back hill" neighborhood, and two black teenagers gave up trying to play basketball in the heat. They were sitting on the steps of a housing project swearing at the mosquitoes, and saying with equal bitterness, essentially the same thing as the white youths. "Sure, some of the brothers and sisters ask the white kids for money," the taller youth said. "We don't have any money ourselves. That's a big part of the trouble. This town gives us nothing because the whites want it that way. They blame the blacks for the fighting, but some of the whites are looking for trouble, too. A lot of black kids are scared. Everybody's sticking close to their own kind."

After the disturbances, the school board called an open meeting Sept. 21 to explore causes and possible solutions for the racial friction. The audience of 600 was almost entirely white, and nearly every speaker discussed the problem as a law-and-order matter, not a social problem. "Our kids are good kids," one white father declared to thunderous applause. "There are about 35 or 40 others who have no interest in learning, and they should be kicked out. What we need is strict discipline."

Questions:

- 1- According to these articles, what happened in Central Islip from May-August 1969?
- 2- In your opinion, who or what was responsible for these problems? Explain your answer.
- 3- A pattern of protest emerged in many Long Island communities at the end of the 1960's. What is the pattern? In your opinion, was does it occur?
- 4- In the article on Glen Cove, Black children, white children, and a white parent discuss the same incidents. In your opinion, why do they view the situation so differently?
- 5- An African American speaker is quoted as saying, "You better dig what I'm saying." In your opinion, why did the newspaper use this quote?