



Don't Bring Back Desegregation Busing

By Educator Barnes - July 21, 2019

For some reason, in education, we have a bad habit of repeating past programs but expecting different outcomes. Desegregation busing is a solution being touted again that I do not want to see repeated during my lifetime again or at any other point in the future.

The desegregation busing debating came to the forefront during a recent Democratic debate. Sen. Kamala Harris challenged former Vice President Joe Biden views on busing. She shared how she was bused to another school to help integrate it. Biden contended Harris did not

understand his opposition to busing. He stated, "I did not oppose busing in America, what I opposed is busing ordered by the Department of Education." I wish Biden took a stronger stance. I wanted him to oppose it completely.

Like Sen. Harris, I was bused out of my neighborhood. Busing lasted for 35 years in Indy and recently ended in 2016. The crux of the debate is all children deserve access to a good education. No matter what side of the education debate you champion, everyone agrees with this point. The contention is how to best make this happen. I assert giving children access to good schools should not destroy or negatively alter their neighborhood in the process. As I was bused to another school district, over the years, I watched my neighborhood change.

Children should not have to sit on a bus for over 30 minutes to get to a good school. That school should be in their neighborhood, even walking distance. The farther away a school is from a child's home, the harder it is for families to be more involved. My mom once told me that my elementary principal reached out to her about getting more parents involved, specifically other black parents. The principal had tried sending home notes and calling. My mother told her the school was too far away. Some people didn't want to drive that far or they did not have reliable transportation.

After working all day, parents don't want to travel across town to attend an after school event. To remedy that issue, they may make the decision to abandon their neighborhood and move into the district where their children are bused. I watched this happen in my neighborhood. Instead of having a family living next door, a home might be empty or filled with a rotating group of people renting the home. Fewer people in the neighborhood means fewer people patronizing the businesses. I watched stores close down. Now, we had to travel far to get to school and to go to certain stores.

Some people who could afford to move do. Other people, like my parents, who could have moved, decided against it. They love their neighborhood didn't want to leave. Now, that busing has ended, the same failing schools I was being saved from as a child are still failing schools now. What did busing solve? It did long term damage to the neighborhood and did not address the root causes of the failing schools.

We don't need another government mandate shipping students off. We need failing schools to get fixed where they are so kids can walk down the street to a good school.