

CHAPTER IV

Peralta Elementary School

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CHAPTER IV

Peralta Elementary School

This is a story of successful participation. Against the tumultuous backdrop of the early 1960s, when the possibilities for and shape of participation were being explored and tested, the Peralta episode described here is moderate by contrast. Few of that decade's majestic promises of participatory democracy and power were achieved. But without the foil of earlier efforts to radically alter the distribution of power in society, it is doubtful that there would be a Peralta story to tell.

The story told here is about the aggressive advocacy by a small, racially mixed group of working-class and middle-class parents consciously capitalizing on the themes, devices, and styles that permeated the atmosphere of the times. They cloaked themselves--somewhat disingenuously--in the threatening garb of the community activists who were being portrayed daily in the media.

This is an episode in which national themes of race, community, power, and educational reform were concretely acted out in a small setting. By carefully using the elements of participation ideology, an organized group of parents restructured the place of their children's daily educational lives. They also made a Place in which the enhancement of their participation--and that of future parents--could be more readily worked at than in the past. This is, then, about the way

in which the ideology of participation was consciously transformed into material for the successful making of a Place.

I will set this account in relation to a prior event that was symbolically and literally connected to it: the struggle for community control of schools in Ocean Hill--Brownsville, New York, from 1966 to 1970. Although that struggle occurred a decade earlier, the events, ideas, and people involved in that explosive occasion set the stage for the attempted restructuring of urban education throughout the country. The city of Oakland, in California, was directly affected because one person, Marcus Foster, who was closely familiar with the New York event and with some of its major actors, was to become superintendent of the Oakland School District.¹

Harlem, the Crucible of Community Control

A new building--including such elements as the announcement of its completion, opening day ceremonies, published accounts of the merits of its design, and architectural awards--is the final flower of its production. Usually it hides or, in effect, misrepresents the social processes that produced it. New buildings are always final summaries of their generating processes. The entire building environment can be read in these terms.

The schools pictured here, (photos) Independent School 201 in Harlem and Peralta Elementary School in Oakland, are buildings that summarize major social and political issues of the 1960s and early 1970s. They are linked to each other across the geographic span of the nation and the time span of a decade.

In 1966 the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded to the architectural firm of Curtis and Davis first prize in the annual New York City School Awards Program, for the design excellence of I.S. 201. New York newspapers and nationally prominent architectural magazines universally lauded the new building for its overall appearance, the flexibility of its spaces, ease of maintenance, color, and "controlled environment." Even its windowlessness was applauded as pedagogically appropriate in light of the "depressing" Harlem site on which the new school sat.

Opening day of the 1966 school year found the five million dollar facility surrounded by black parents and other organized protestors contesting the New York City Board of Education's continuing failure--despite plans and official promises--to integrate a school that had, in fact, opened its doors to a student body 80 percent black and 20 percent Puerto Rican. An agenda of struggle was set in Ocean Hill--Brownsville that was to occupy national headlines for several years and was to influence the course of urban educational practice and administration far into the future. By incorporating themes from other protests throughout the country, the struggle over I.S. 201 became a concentrated version of the overall critique of centralizing tendencies being made against modern institutions: education, higher and lower government, politics, and the professions.

Among those who least comprehended the attack on expert practice were the design professions:

At I.S. 201 . . . the architects were in charge of the total design of the school and found a difficult set of problems.

Though windowless schools had been designed before, the theory was particularly applicable here: The view was depressing, the street noises unusually distracting. The school became embroiled in an integration controversy as soon as it was finished, and its windowless design represents to the local community a symbol of the ghetto, irrationally enough. Actually the site, which made the integration difficult, was the major cause for concern, and the design of the building has been unanimously praised by design critics and school board (Interiors: 127; emphasis added).

"Irrationally enough." In an earlier time, no doubt, the expensive and well-outfitted facility would have been regarded as gracing the community. But the troubles at the base of this burgeoning fight made all authority, expertise, and power problematic to the extent that their exercise did not result in the empowerment of the community comprising the constituency of the school. Participation in the conception and design of I.S. 201 was among the rights contested by the organized parents. The strength of this demand developed from the manner in which the building and its location became an accomplished fact. The demand for participatory rights was only one of a great many--some understood, some yet to be envisioned--that later fell under the

larger demand for "community control." Failure to influence the siting and design of the building increased the sense of powerlessness that community groups felt. It was an example of the events that helped to exhaust "liberal" attacks on fundamental problems, and led to more "radical" community actions.

Because so many issues associated with the struggle for civil equality became focused on this prize-winning piece of architecture, it is instructive to begin examination of "community control" in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville fight by looking at problems surrounding the building. What developed there was modified and deposited, a decade later in Oakland, California, and contributed to the complex of conditions around the creation of Peralta Elementary School, its curriculum, its building, and its relation to the city.

Integration and the Site

Designers complained that depreciation of the fine architecture of I.S. 201 was misplaced; it was the location that made integration difficult. In fact, the location of the school had been fought by the local community several years before its construction began. Despite the ultimate "show-piece" quality of the building, the staff, the proposed curriculum,

. . . none of these features could overcome the hard fact that the school's students would all be nonwhite--a danger against which parents in the community had warned throughout the years since the school had been proposed. The school is situated where Puerto Rican East Harlem meets Negro Central Harlem, at 127th and 128th streets, between Madison and Park avenues. The site is, literally, in the shadow of the elevated tracks of the Penn Central Railroad, which daily carried commuters to and from the middle- and upper-income suburbs of Westchester County and Connecticut. When plans for the school were announced in 1958, some Negro groups and parents opposed the site on the ground that another school deep within Harlem would perpetuate *de facto* racially segregated education. To sense the impact on the community of the prospect that I.S. 201 would eventually open as an unintegrated school, one must recall the anguished, prolonged, and largely unsuccessful twelve-year struggle for integration in the New York Public Schools (Fantini, Gittell and Magat: 5-6).

Immediately after the 1954 Supreme Court decision declaring racially segregated schools illegal, the New York City Board of Education took a formal policy position to desegregate its schools. Despite the board's assorted strategies--a central zoning unit, a master district rezoning plan, teacher transfers, open enrollments, bussing, voluntary transfers of minority students--de facto segregation of New York's schools had increased in the year I.S. 201 opened its doors.

School board paralysis, opposition from the city, the teachers' union, and the white public accounted for much of this failure. But the hard facts of "white flight," expansion of ghetto boundaries, and de facto housing segregation combined, actively and passively, to defeat parents' attempts to integrate the school.

Despite community opposition to the school's construction on the site, a battle raged over the right to participate in its design.

The Negro community's attempts to exercise a voice in the school's design were also repulsed by school officials, according to Mrs. Alice Carnegie and David Spencer, cochairmen of the Parent's Negotiating Committee for I.S. 201. The community's first look at the design, they claimed, came when the parents attended a meeting called for another purpose, during which sketches and plans for the new school were unveiled.

What the parents saw was a substantially final scheme, on which the school board had focused a great deal of attention as part of a new program to upgrade the architectural quality of the city's schools (Architectural Forum: 49).

Ultimately, parents were to learn that design participation was regarded as impracticable because of the size of the New York school district. But district officials also questioned the basic importance and/or effectiveness of participation. The executive director of the school board's office of school building said of the absent participation:

I don't think we would end up with something much different. . . . The design was a new concept which the pedagogical people wanted.

The director of the board's Bureau of Child Guidance Services doubted:

. . . that the community could have contributed much that might have been translated into design. "As a parent," he asked, "what would I know about architecture, site planning, and costs? All I could say was this looks pretty, this doesn't" (Architectural Forum: 50).

I.S. 201 was certainly not a contest over architecture, but nonparticipation in its design, following the accumulated failures to influence policy and official action over the years, added to the weight that finally broke faith in moderate methods.

From integration, community groups escalated their demands to total control of every aspect of the school's functioning. To enforce their demands, they rounded the school with a forest of pickets on the first day of school, and the school did not open. What is more, the character and momentum of the protestors' experience began to attract new support, including that of CORE, the Black Panther Party, and other groups. The protestors' program began, ideologically, to reflect the impress of struggles in other arenas of the national conflict.

The Meaning of Community Control

The school's appearance ("a windowless prison") became a symbol of everything the protestors hated. Because of the vividness of most New York events, the concept of "community control" attracted meanings from arenas socially and geographically distant from the immediate Harlem setting.

There are many in this country, former civil rights activists and others, who remember, fondly or bitterly, the sudden disintegration during this period of racial cooperation and nonviolence as moral anchors of the civil rights movement. Against the background of the continuing national failure to act with "deliberate speed" on court-mandated integration, integration and nonviolence were increasingly questioned.

A succession of additional failures piled up in headlines. Some were dramatic. At its 1964 convention, for example, the Democratic Party was seen as failing its own principles and the goals of the "Freedom Summer." This latter effort was a massive summer project coordinated by SNCC, CORE, SCLC, and NAACP to register black voters in Mississippi who had been excluded by law and everyday practice from participation in the electoral process. At its convention that summer, the Democratic Party failed to seat an "alternate" slate of delegates from Mississippi's Freedom Democratic Party.

During 1965, forces for racial separation began to take their toll on coordinated black and white efforts to influence major social and political institutions. SNCC and CORE self-critiques contended that black subservience to sophisticated white supporters deflected blacks' abilities to develop their own organizing skills, and kept their actions focused on melioristic interventions rather than on radical efforts to assume real power over resources and decisions that affected black peoples' lives.

Meanwhile, as the demon of de jure segregation in the South was found to have a de facto twin in the North, social and political action in the North began to affect the neighborhoods and institutions containing the traditional friends of blacks in their southern struggles--many of whom were liberal whites. Thus, within The Movement, the emergent focal notion of Black Power spun out an epithet, "white liberals," meaning, among other things, idealistic deterrents to blacks' quest for self-determination, people who withdrew money and support when forced to stand as witnesses to the critical examination of racism in their own protected enclaves.

Integration as a goal came under criticism from the increasingly prominent cultural nationalists among black people. The Nation of Islam and its foremost spokesman, Malcolm X, increasingly, and in some important measure successfully, portrayed the stance of black integrationists as a kind of prideless, culture-less begging to be let into the white schools, parlors, and gene pool.

Growing on the horizon of the public debate was a critique of pompous black "proverticians" or "poverty pimps," newly co-opted by the Equal Opportunity Act (1964). Many activists now saw these supposed allies as more concerned with their paychecks and recently improved status and clothing than with the intricacies of power and its achievement--about which, it was argued, they remained (not

accidentally) ignorant. The CAPs and CAAs War of Poverty programs created by the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964 were seen by friends and opponents of participation as generating time-consuming chaos in endless "community" meetings.

Finally, while civil rights organizations were moving from integrated, nonviolent direct action to community organizing throughout the country, responsive federal legislation was being tested in this ideological cauldron. These tests were mirrored in education by dismal estimates of the effects of compensatory education programs (Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965), and the slow judicial enforcement of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964.

Thus, by the time SNCC, CORE, and the Black Panther Party joined the I.S. 201 demonstrations, "community control" had a much more complex meaning than the one intended for it by the I.S. 201 parents. But having exhausted their other avenues of redress, the parents welcomed all help in their effort to pry loose action and resources from the state legislature, the City of New York, the board of education and the teachers' unions.

"Community control" had come to stand not only for decentralization of the city's schools, but also for control--of all aspects of a particular school's administrative and resource distribution authority--by parents and relevant others within each school's catchment area. The basis of the demand was that, beyond integration or increased curricular and administrative flexibility of old structures, new structures were necessary. The hope was that these structures, through participation, would redistribute power and authority, involving the poor, the powerless, and the underserved in defining their own needs and in setting policies to direct the institutions established to serve them.

Rhody McCoy, educator, advocate, and later administrator of the Ocean Hill unit of the three "demonstration" districts established by the city, said:

Ocean Hills' people have had little experience with the processes of participatory democracy. It is a tribute to their basic commitment to human values that in a short year and a half they have been able to educate themselves to the point where they can make the city give them at least the rudiments of reasonably decent neighborhood services, including the start of a thoroughly reorganized and remodeled

educational system. The outside observer of the efforts to redo the schools of Ocean Hill must remember that this was a divided and conquered neighborhood. Having undertaken to change the schools, the people are also persistently changing themselves into actively concerned citizens . . .

Thus, the stage is set for a revolution. People--black people--want control over their schools for self-determination, for building a strong self-image, for individual and community development, for recognition, and for survival. Community control means community growth and development, and the school is the hub of this growth (Levin: 170-172).

National Visibility for Local Control

The demonstration districts, of which I.S. 201 was one, were in part outgrowths of "The Bundy Report," a decentralization plan for the New York schools proposed by a panel of distinguished citizens and chaired by McGeorge Bundy. Bundy was president of the Ford Foundation, an agency that was to facilitate community participation with active funding, staff support, and interpretation over the whole period of the struggle.

The report "Reconnection for Learning" (Mayor's Advisory Panel) was an organized response to the state legislature's stated concern for "increased community awareness and participation in the educational process." This goal was shared (and the report was shaped backstage) by established liberal authorities at the state and city levels, including then-Mayor John Lindsay. The plan called for the breakup of New York City's vast school district into community districts of various sizes. The districts were to have their own elected boards, which were to receive annual budget allocations from a central agency, exercise curricular autonomy, hire community superintendents on a contract basis, and have expanded powers over hiring, firing, and the granting of tenure.

Overlapping the emergence of this plan--one that all parties understood Mayor Lindsay to be taking seriously as a potential action play--the city's board of education established three legally temporary and experimental demonstration districts. Their powers were similar to

those proposed by the Bundy report. The three districts also received Ford Foundation money to conduct elections, hire superintendents, and set up administrations. As these districts sought to exercise their new powers, racial tensions, union opposition, violence, and a massive teachers' strike--the longest in New York history--brought the brief experiment in participation to a close. In addition, a modified version of the Bundy report, moving through the New York State legislature, first was received and voted on favorably, then was amended and weakened as the public and state legislators confused--with union help--the demonstration districts and their apparent chaos with those proposed in the revised Bundy plan.

The "myth" (Surkin: 415-421) of school decentralization in New York City ended in 1970. Characterized jokingly as a case of "Christians feeding Jews to the Panthers," the trouble surrounding the windowless school had put the issue of participation and community control of schools on the national agenda. New York made and dominated the news. The demonstration districts became a model, good and bad, for the national response to the growing discontent over segregated schools.

One such response appeared in Oakland, California, nearly a decade later. In February of 1979, a new school building appeared in Progressive Architecture (Woodbridge: 78-79). The design and curriculum of that Oakland school had been created by a parent participation process put in place by Marcus Foster.

Community Participation in Oakland

What had been important about working with vested authority groups is to spell out our fundamental objective--which is not community control. We don't talk community control because we don't think community control. We don't see Oakland divided into separate geographic areas, as did New York City in the sixties. Like Marcus Foster himself, we think and talk community participation--shared decision-making. The people calling for community control would be walloped in any election.

Robert Perlzweig, Chairman

Task Force on School Finances

Master Plan Citizens Committee,

Oakland, California

In April 1970, Marcus Foster became superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District in California. He began his tenure with the following statement:

There are some basic beliefs I have in what is necessary to deliver quality education . . . in urban settings. One of the basic principles, I think, that is essential in urban education is that there be broad-based involvement in the education process. I think that one of our difficulties across the country has been that we have not been skillful enough in involving people in the decision-making process (McCorry: 46).

Many people still hold a media-myth recollection of the Patty Hearst abduction, one that leaves out the beginning. In fact, her abductors began their infamous run into power's fire with a murder. Leaving a meeting of the Oakland Board of Education on November 6, 1973, Marcus Foster, Superintendent of Schools, was shot with cyanide-tipped bullets and killed instantly. A hitherto unknown organization calling itself the Symbionese Liberation Army took credit for his assassination.

The moment of Foster's death signals an odd divergence in the political foci of the times. His murder is perhaps the last distinct expression of total disenchantment with nonviolent and institution-based solutions to the debased conditions of the poor. This disenchantment had grown in the once-peaceful left and civil rights movements as their efforts failed or were perceived to have failed, and as their figureheads and champions were murdered, arrested, driven into exile. But this assassination happened at the very time when confrontation had rattled loose some small inclination to change within our central institutions. Indeed, Marcus Foster literally personified the lessons of events like I.S. 201, albeit modulated into "acceptable" forms of participation. Some recognized this as opportunity, others did not.

What was particularly odd about Foster's murder was the conception its planners seem to have had of personal effectiveness, social change, and the contagious consequences of their act. Surely his death froze the hearts of publicly visible school administrators around the country.

Perhaps, even, high level school administrators were, after it, inclined to pause thoughtfully over any impending act of management or discipline that might be imagined to be hostile to the categories of students whom the SLA's actions were designed to protect. But events proved that there is a vast chasm separating this view of the problem from its solution. The conceivers of this assassination had surrendered to a kind of analytic desperation, imagining Foster's death to be linked, in some complex, unfolding future, to the benefit of the poor and oppressed in schools.

Later, their demands that the Hearst family feed the poor revealed a similar simplicity of comprehension. One cannot deny the pale halo of Robinhood myth that lit the SLA's brief moment on stage. But ultimately their actions were about as effective as Dan White's murder of his colleagues in San Francisco was in resolving the political disputes between them and himself.

On the other hand, people do seem to use the resources at hand or within reach to try solving the problems they face. An articulate conception of how things work, and some experience in successfully acting through that conception, are important tools of action. They are tools not usually available to the poor during struggles over the structure of the educational enterprise. The Peralta parents had such tools.

Foster's Arrival: Threat and Opportunity

The arrival of Foster, and his subsequent policies, posed a major threat to the Peralta community school's existence, and simultaneously provided the tools to save it.

Foster came to Oakland, after a long and bitter fight over the superintendency (McCorry: ch. 2; Medrich: 17-21), equipped with several sticks and carrots. Among the carrots were soon-to-be-enacted plans for administrative decentralization and parent/

community involvement in schools at school site and district-wide levels--both ideas that were de rigueur for an urban superintendent in the sixties and seventies. Among the sticks were certain stark facts about the Oakland schools, including white flight, decreased state support, and a state law requiring up-grading of all schools to modern

earthquake-proof standards--a law that several Oakland schools were violating at the time.

During the first year of Foster's tenure, a delegation from the Oakland School District headquarters came to Peralta Elementary School to announce plans for its closure. Peralta was the near-perfect case of a problem school: dramatically earthquake unsafe; an 85 percent black student body; directly in line for a radical decline in enrollments in light of demographic projections; already small. At the time (fall of 1971) the enrollment in a building with space and support staff for three hundred students was down to two hundred. Foster's new economies required the elimination of all such small schools in the district. He saw them as fiscal drains.

One-hundred-year-old Peralta, located in North Oakland, had once been a laboratory school for nearby UC Berkeley's School of Education. Despite the changed complexion of its student body, the surrounding neighborhood had changed much more gradually. In the 1960s, the area population from which the school drew its students was 50 percent black and 50 percent white. The school had a tradition of parent organization and, even through the racial tensions of the decade, had maintained a self-conscious racial cooperation. However, the Oakland School District had among its regulations a liberal open-enrollment provision that allowed parents to place their children in various other schools. Many white parents had exercised this option and moved their children away from the blackening Peralta. The effect was to leave a distilled group of black and white parents with an organized commitment to integrated public education. But this group was small, beleaguered, and basically fighting a rearguard action.

When Marcus Foster instituted his plans for community participation Peralta was, according to his plans, the school least favorably situated to benefit from the new provisions. In the fall of 1970, Foster initiated a series of novel public hearings with the school board at various locations around the city, seeking "community input" on ways to improve the schools (McCorry: 52). In the spring of 1971, a Master Plan Citizen's Committee (MPCC) evolved from Foster's plans. Among the features of the MPCC was the requirement that each community elect a chair/representative from its school site. Walter Miles, a new black parent at Peralta, ran for the office and was elected. The simultaneous advent of Walter Miles and the MPCC provided just the set of tools needed by the Peralta core groups to restructure its efforts.

What Foster Brought: The Master Plan Citizen's Committee

At the very moment that New York's state legislature was finally acting to close any openings it and others had made for decentralization or community control of schools, Marcus Foster arrived as Oakland's superintendent with the necessary experience and ideas to suggest that he might have practical answers to the major questions being asked of urban education.

Foster had worked closely with Preston Wilcox and Rhody McCoy in black caucuses at national educational forums (McCorry: 3a, fn.) He was, however, the least enthusiastic of the group about community control, preferring the notion of a "community centered" school (Wilcox). Foster had developed a variety of programs around this notion and had won Philadelphia's highest civic award for his successes at that city's notoriously difficult Gratz High School. His experience, pedagogy, and educational and ethnic views took shape in his book Making Schools Work (Foster), which was, and was understood to be, the map of his plans for Oakland.

Against the backdrop of New York's conflict, a major teachers' strike in Oakland just prior to his arrival, and an extended superintendent selection process that had heightened racial tension in a city famous as a source of black self-determination ideology, Foster took a clear position:

I have alluded to the importance of community involvement. I am not talking about window dressing. A school insulated from its community never was a good idea. Nowadays, it is impossible. The people must have meaningful roles in making decisions in order for them to have legitimate means of expressing their power. . . .

In this context, we are developing a multiple-option approach to community involvement. This is based on the notion that communities and schools vary in their readiness to enter into strong partnerships. Some will wish to continue the parent-teacher association format. Others may prefer a more formal arrangement, perhaps an advisory board arrangement where community people sit down and hear what the principal has to say and offer advice and suggestions. Finally, there will be those

communities ready to say, "let us have a part in the formal decision-making process."

Notice, I keep talking about community participation in the decision-making process. I am not talking about community control because there is no such thing as community control. Schools are state institutions. We are bound by state statutes; many of our powers simply cannot be given to the communities. But we can share, in increasingly effective ways, our decision-making prerogatives. While the school site will be the place, the central office will be committed to assisting you and making necessary resources available. It will be our responsibility to see that the notion of community involvement stretches beyond the single schools and encompasses the entire city (McCorry: 61).

Not only did Foster announce his plan not to surrender control of the schools, but he worked vigorously backstage to keep potential "runaway" groups in check. Of a district decentralization study, which Foster contracted Price-Waterhouse to conduct, Elliot Medrich--then a member of Foster's cabinet--observed: "Foster had so clearly defined the intent of the reorganization . . . in administrative rather than political terms that there was virtually no talk of community control, desegregation, or anything else" (Medrich: 44).*

Foster, in deliberations with his cabinet around two later confrontations with a community group of his own formation, said in one instance: "If they can be brought along with us, fine, if not, to hell with them! Community participation shouldn't be a brake on the exercise of (our) best professional judgment in a given issue" (McCorry: 62).

In another instance, he said that: "the MPCC [thinks] we've got to go with their recommendations" (McCorry: 63).²

But Foster did form the Master Plan Citizens' Committee because of his commitment to participation--and because the achievement of his plans required money and a vehicle for its acquisition. Just to keep the school system functioning at its ordinary pace required that Foster overcome a two million dollar projected deficit for the 1971-1972 school year. "Doomsday" letters were prepared by the superintendent's budget staff announcing massive layoffs anticipated because of the money crisis (Medrich: 65-75).

Formation of the MPCC also became relevant as a political vehicle:

Oakland has no strong party organization to which the superintendent could turn and any effort to introduce

*See also, Medrich: 15 & 29.

open partisanship into the city's politics would have met strong resistance from city leaders and the general public. Lacking traditional political resources, the superintendent sought to create his own. One such resource was the MPCC, which Foster mobilized to bring pressure upon the City Council when he asked the city to levy a tax increase to help erase a deficit in the 1971 school budget (McCorry: 66).

Less than two months after Marcus Foster took office, he demonstrated his intentions, introducing, by administrative fiat, a new method of selecting principals. His office surrendered much of its powers of principal selection to panels composed of parents, students, and teachers at the individual school sites. These panels sought out and interviewed candidates and submitted short lists to the superintendent's office, which made the final selections. The new process predictably distressed groups like the Oakland Principals' Association, which worried, as had teachers in New York, about the erosion of professional standards. Later, when the MPCC had been structured into task forces (e.g., school financing, decentralization, school buildings) and had secured major outside funding (from the San Francisco, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations), Foster took his newly instituted principle-selection plan to the MPCC, for its evaluation and development into a process that could become formal, citizen-recommended, board-endorsed policy. But, shrewdly, he took more. In desperate need of new money, he offered a trade. Medrich recalls:

It was very important early on, that there be a clear sign that things were going to happen. And as it happened, the issue of principal selection had been out on the table already. There has been some serious problems during the course of the year. And Marcus went to the committee on school governance of the Master Plan Citizens Committee and said, "help us come up with a model of principal selection which we

could use all over the district, which will insure that new principals coming into schools will be in tune with their constituencies." Out of the committee came a plan for selection of principals which was adopted by the school board. It happened rather quickly and it was real important. Because it said for the first time people could see some evidence of a willingness to do things outside of the traditional way of operating. It was a plan that was essentially developed by a citizens group with technical assistance from outside and from inside the system, but was their own plan. They proposed this to the school board after talking to administrators, talking to principals themselves. In other words, learning the process of negotiating within the system and they got it.

In return for this first public act of good faith, Foster wanted something--support of a bond issue to meet legal require

ments of the state's Field Act.* Oakland voters had been consistently hostile to these education-related measures. Medrich recalls:

So the question became where the hell are you going to get a two-thirds majority on this school bond issue. To begin with you don't even have two-thirds of your voting constituency who have children of school age in the public schools. So he went to the capital planning committee of the Master Plan Committee and said, "Look, there are all kinds of agenda items we can have but we ain't going to have nothing to talk about, if we can't do this. Now, I don't know how or if you want to be involved in this. But understand, that if we could pull this off successfully, one of the things we have to do is provide for a process whereby people will know that if there's going to be new school buildings, those school buildings will not be irrelevant and outside the perceived needs of those communities. And so that is part of the planning for this bond election, if you are so inclined. . . . If you accept this as a valid agenda issue for yourselves, help me figure out a way whereby the school communities of effective neighborhoods will be able to be part of the planning, replanning, redevelopment of their neighborhood schools." He made it very clear, privately, to the committee that although _____

* 1935 California law setting minimal standards for school earthquake safety.

he would have to post this as an issue which was simply meeting the Field Act requirements, it was also an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the educational environment.

Having made a good-faith change toward community participation with the new principal-selection procedure, Foster was now offering community people deeper and more extensive participation if they saw fit to help him with the bond issue needed to meet the requirements of the Field Act.

It was in the setting of this "deal" that Peralta parents found leverage for the making of their new school.

Accepting the Deal

No other community group in Oakland was as distinctively situated to participate in Foster's proffered deal as the Peralta parents. This multiracial group could vary in size from two to twenty committed activists, depending on the tasks that confronted it. Its activities were not exclusively related to school affairs, but included neighborhood concerns like security, business development, and the monitoring of proposed new building in the neighborhood. The core group was at the center of the larger Telegraph Avenue Neighborhood Group (TANG). Thus, its lobbying influence could well serve Foster's needs and its own simultaneously and effectively.

At issue, however, was the problem of new leadership. The group's assaults on the board of education, district administration and staff on behalf of the Peralta school had produced substantial burnout among the core members, but also had encouraged discounting of its members by school officials, who came to feel: "Here comes trouble again." As their children graduated from the school, participation by the most committed parents fell off dramatically or stopped altogether. But some had been continuously active for six years or more.

New Leadership

Happily, new leadership appeared: a black man named Walter Miles. Walter Miles was completely new to Peralta, but he was black, articulate, well organized and extraordinarily energetic. He immediately impressed the existing leaders. He and the two most active parents, Ann and Gordon Winchester, recall the near simultaneous advent of the MPCC and his leadership:

Ann Winchester:

Marcus Foster came starting community involvement in Oakland, with the master plan. And each school site had to elect a master plan committee chairperson. And they had the election, and among the three people nominated was a total stranger named Walter Miles. One of the teachers and I dashed out to go through the cards to see who this man was--if he even had any children in the school. And NO child was named Miles in the school! But we all voted him in and it was a big, big meeting and everybody was so thrilled . . .

Gordon Winchester:

. . . that there was a live body who volunteered to work!

Ann Winchester:

. . . that we elected him and only afterwards did we find out that his real name is Davis and that his children were in school under the name of Davis. So from this beginning of having had no involvement and a total unknown in the Peralta School came the unknown man to save us all.

Gordon Winchester:

We are, and were then, a very small school and we just ran through everybody who would possibly volunteer to do anything! (?) and who had been working in the school. And this man stood up and said "Well, that sounds interesting."

Walter Miles:

At that meeting, I think the timing was good. I had talked to the wife, about--well, about the last two or three months I had been talking about "I gotta find something to get into. Something I would enjoy working in--some community activity." And, I knew of no community

activity I wanted to participate in because I wasn't a radical, didn't have time--just working all the time. But when I went to the school meeting--that was interesting.

It is important to understand just how the character of this new leader fit into the new proposals (official and unofficial) that Marcus Foster and his cabinet had put out to elicit participation useful to them.

Walter Miles was near-perfect as a participant. Black in speech and manner, he had a style and knowledgeableness that easily blunted any question of his locatedness in "the community." Indeed, later, after the success of the Peralta people in achieving a new school, curriculum, and enrollment plan, Miles was portrayed by the district and the Rockefeller Foundation (which provided funds for most of the MPCC's activities) as the exemplary community leader.

In its panegyric to the Master Plan process, the foundation praised Foster and his cabinet for their foresight and talent. They drew, in outline, the kind of community leadership they believed necessary, and painted Walter Miles into the picture.

But a major objective of Master Plan was not the use of established leaders but the development of new ones in the leftout black, white, and Asian communities who could operate both within and beyond the school establishment. . . . What had to be provided was the opportunity to challenge people's talents and then trust that in confronting that challenge they would rise to the occasion--becoming something more than, and something quite different from, what they were before.

And so we come to Walter Miles. Miles is 43 years old, black, a jack of several trades--one of the people Whitman sang about. "I do a lot of things to make a dollar," he says. "I have a clock-punching job like every other average citizen. I'm a senior parts technician for a trucking concern. On the side, I buy and sell real estate."

He also likes to deal with children. He has several of his own, one of whom attends Peralta Elementary School (Working Papers: 80; emphasis added).

The happenstance of his relevance suited Miles' and the core group's goals well and set the conditions of their future success in stone. As a bearer of the mantle "community leader," Miles was to become--as in the Rockefeller report--a model to be displayed. But, at the same time, as a representative of the imperiled school, he brought the Peralta community's problems and projects under the direct and sympathetic scrutiny of the new administration. Thus, the representative of a school that was slated to be physically destroyed--as a model of what the new administration proposed to eliminate--became an effective advocate because the advocate was a model of what the new administration wanted to create in its constituency.

Prior to Miles' participation, the existing group had heavily lobbied Dr. Foster for preservation of the school. Their entreaties had been repeatedly rejected. Into this impasse Miles brought genuinely effective leadership and an idea: year-round education. This became the organizing tool that unblocked the core group's stalled pursuit of its goal.

The Year-Round Concept*

Walter Miles takes and is given credit for introducing "the year-round concept," as he liked to put it, to the Peralta

*The term refers to coordinated cycling of teachers, year-round, nine weeks (45 teaching days) on and three weeks (15 teaching days) off. Students can stay in school year-round or leave at parents' convenience for vacations.

discussion. Its introduction is an extraordinarily clear example of an idea that gives interests wings. An entire action plan took shape around the idea.

Year-round education as a mobilizing concept implied clear action. As a pedagogical departure it opened a whole new set of considerations that enlivened the discussion of Peralta School's fate. Since so much

of a technical-educational nature is implied in the idea, lobbying with the district moved from mere arguments over salvaging the school to more professionally appealing discussions of salvaging children's educations. Thus, encrusted with other proposed curricular features, the year-round concept brought the core group and its project one step closer to the full regard of the district.

The Principal Selection Shield

The core group had a habit of using every new formal opportunity to achieve the group's goal. This was one reason, among several, for the group's skill in utilizing new developments. As soon as Foster offered the new principal-selection procedure to the schools, Peralta parents proceeded to get their principal removed and instituted a participatory procedure that selected another person more likely to act as a battering ram for their purposes.

Moving immediately to take Foster up on his offer of participation, and doing so in an orderly way, constituted recognition and acceptance of the new values of the district. But, in the case of principal selection, the move probably was not what Foster and his cabinet had in mind.

The Peralta core group used a succession of principals for limited tasks. This was not intentional. It was simply that the position the principals were put in--reporting to the district but being selected by people at the site--was personally untenable to each of a succession of them. As one parent recalls:

One of the things that Dr. Foster introduced into Oakland was principal-selection committees. They had community parents and staff involved in the picking of principals. And we just were--again I feel we were unique in the strength of our principals and the commitment of principals to the parents and to the community. Now the principals ended up--one by one we just sort of knocked them off, there for awhile, physically, the strain was so tremendous. Because literally our principals had been told "get your parents off our backs!"

The core group had managed to make the continued existence of the school an assumed feature of its discussions with district agents. They had developed a full proposal for the new curriculum. It had also

settled on a new principal who would be pushed forward to get the proposal accepted. The strategy of the core group involved discovering from Foster and other district staff members what model, if any, would be used to decide whether or not Peralta Elementary School should continue functioning, then fitting their action to that model. A carefully selected, racially mixed group of the most articulate and most threatening parents demanded and attended a meeting with Foster. The new principal was pushed to the front of the argument.

Foster was somewhat compromised. Despite the fact that Peralta had been selected for closure, members of its parent community and staff had entered his program of community participation in an exemplary fashion. Now, with their new principal, they were before him arguing that, through their own community process, they had solved the problems he had identified as the basis for closure. With the bond issue deal in place, this small, noisy group of participants in the deal could pose problems, publicly, by challenging his commitment before the MPCC. Foster's rejection of their entreaties was firm but modulated. One parent summarized his final comment: "You say all this. I don't believe it. The statistics I have show something else. Bring me something solid." He challenged the group to show facts on enrollment and achievement effects of year-round education and to prove they had the community support they claimed.

In response, the core group sought to show its community support by conducting a survey of school parents. The survey asked parents' opinions of a broadly characterized program of year-round education, "individualized learning," and open enrollment. Two thirds of the respondents rejected the idea. The core group then rejected the survey and buried the results. Walter Miles' response:

I just couldn't give it up. I said, dadgummit, it's just not right--this small amount of people to say no to an idea. They don't even know that much about the idea. Then I started back to working. This time we went at it a different way. I talked with Ann and Don, the real hard core Peralta parents. And we pursued it from a different direction. This time we went and got the data that we needed and sent our principal to a national conference and she comes back and tells these concepts and this is the concept that we thought all along would be best for our community.

This time when we went out, we did the whole thing. We did just like we were running for president. We campaigned, and telephoned. We had coffees and potlucks and teas and then we went canvassing door-to-door and explaining to the people the concept we had looked at and felt would be best for the school site, that would turn the curriculum into a winner. Then after we had done all that we called an election. At the election those who were unable to come to vote--we would send someone out to get them to bring them in. And those who could not vote or could not come out at all--we sent someone over there with a ballot and envelope, put that ballot in, sealed the envelope, and stuck it right down in the ballot box just like that. And after it was all over then we called in Leo Croce, who was regional superintendent at the time, and we all sat there and counted the ballots. And we had won it--79 percent.

GOALS OF THE YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL AT PERALTA

The goals of Peralta Elementary School in implementing the year-round education program, grades kindergarten through the sixth, are:

1. Change the traditional school calendar to one which will be more adaptable to the needs of urban students--a modified 45-15 plan.

2. Modify the present instructional organization and curriculum scheduling--multigrades, shorter and more varied units of study, and more frequent evaluation of pupils' progress.

3. Develop an instructional program which will give students the opportunity to develop their individual potential--personalized/individualized learning and/or continuous progress education.

4. Provide shorter vacation periods at more frequent intervals to reduce loss of learning, student and teacher fatigue, and give vacation opportunities for students, parents, and teachers in every season of the year.

5. Increase the present enrollment and provide an opportunity for integration through open enrollment.

6. Make better utilization of the available school facilities.

7. Develop a plan for Oakland which can provide classroom space for the children displaced from pre-1933 buildings by July 1, 1975 (Field Act), or classroom space for children on double sessions.

8. Provide more opportunities for closer communication, cooperation, and involvement between the community, the parents and the school.

9. Bring about the adoption of alternative schools in Oakland for students and teachers. ("Peralta Year-Round School": 2-3). Undated pamphlet.

The genius of this parent-supported charter was that it toed the line of professional education language on the one hand, and proposed the very source of its difficulties--open enrollment--as a counter to the district's "declining enrollments" arguments. Also, the process of generating it had conformed neatly with the community participation that would enhance the possibility of getting a new construction bond issue passed by recalcitrant Oakland voters.

The Problem of Success

Lying beneath the surface of the new curriculum's adoption was a morass of difficulties in carrying it out. As Miles saw it, "That's where the politics started. I guess the politics was already there, but we didn't realize what was going on." The larger political atmosphere of the Oakland schools was complicated by the class, ethnic, and economic struggles characteristic of urban school districts of the time. These struggles were especially active in the microcosm of Peralta. In fact, much of the strain to which the succession of principals was subject centered on black-white differences in conceptions of the best format for the education of children. White flight from Peralta through the door of open enrollment was not simply explained by the school's increasingly high percentage of black children. An additional reason was the "traditional" notion, especially among black parents, of what schooling should be about, a notion to which many "liberal" white parents strongly objected.

The prospective demise of the school blunted the black-white conflict somewhat and the advent of Walter Miles--a black parent--further subdued it. But with the prospect of continued existence of Peralta School in a novel curricular format, these and other tensions reemerged. And these tensions were accompanied by the hiring, in anticipation of the "new" school, of three innovative teachers--none of them black--who imported aggressive new teaching styles, techniques, and experiments with classroom space.

The crucial point here is that the successful reorientation of the program shifted the focus of participation to the school staff. A new building was implied but not guaranteed by the parents' success in negotiating with the district leadership. Now, a new issue was confronted: how to negotiate a new "house" for the imagined new Place.

The Penultimate Principal

The school had exhausted a number of principals in the doing of limited tasks. Curiously, the principal who accompanied the parent group through the struggle to create the year-round curriculum had been imposed on the school by the district. The previous one, who had been chosen through the new principal-selection procedure, was pulled out of Peralta by the district and assigned, in an emergency, to another strife-ridden school. Outraged at first, the parents soon discovered that the newly assigned principal was tractable, tireless, and genuinely committed to the parent group's quest for an innovative curriculum. She lobbied the district on the school's behalf and did background research and attended conferences on year-round schools. In anticipation of the new curriculum she hired several exciting new teachers and, with parent group backing, asked several to leave. Then, while trying to hold this new mix of elements together, she broke. As one of the most active of the new teachers recalls:

She really had a breakdown. But an incredibly fantastic principal, one who also not only I think was a good principal but also knew curriculum. A real learned person. She just had a lot of trouble with conflict. But this lady tried to work the conflict out, it dragged her under. Plus, you know, she'd experienced so much prior to becoming year-round, with the community and faculty at odds about doing it. So I mean, day one we had planning meetings, before we even started with the kids, and it was just totally clear who the new staff was and who the

old staff was. I mean, we were literally at opposite sides of the room. And they were not about to welcome us in any way, form, or shape. They were extremely threatened. They knew why we were hired. They knew that we were open-classroom innovative teachers, and that we were invading their territory.

This recollection is mirrored in those of the parents:

A.W.:You can easily imagine what resistance we have from some of the existing staff. It was awful!

W.M.:Unbelievable, really, to tell you the truth. You know I think about that now sometimes and I can understand the problems the principal was having with the teachers. We had a meeting to work out the proposal for the District.

A.W.:I can get mad all over again!

W.M.:Every time I think about it I get upset.

A.W.:For a year we had been working on this and some of those goddamn teachers got up and said: We'd never been told!

W.M.:We called a meeting on the proposal, they had to have some expertise in the individualization area. Stan Cohen* came out to answer the questions that we needed to know. We had been in four sessions, four staff members and five parents, and when Stan Cohen got there, there wasn't a sound from the teachers. There wasn't a question asked.

A.W.:We got all of them eventually--one by one.

W.M.:But I didn't understand until later that those teachers who were on the committee were definitely against the program. I didn't understand that until the program was operating and most of them were gone.

A.W.:And the thing was, one teacher, who was a wonderful man, who we really wanted--his wife was a school teacher, they had no children, and he said it really isn't going to suit me, therefore I will leave. He was the only one that left.

*District curriculum consultant.

W.P.:He was a good teacher, and I respect that gentleman until today. He couldn't handle--not necessarily the program, but the calendar didn't fit within his schedule.

A.W.:But the other teachers stayed on--not everyone, but a sizable group. And then the new teachers that were brought in, and it ended up for a while being an ugly racial thing.

G.P.:It was a very ugly split. It was a big change.

A.W.:And, the in-fighting, because several of the new teachers who were enthusiastic about the program were white. Some of the most vocal ones who were opposed were black and stayed on.

G.W.:They could transfer to any school that they chose ...

A.W.:Because the administration really wanted to help us ...

G.W.:No prejudice with their seniority and everything else--all they had to say was I don't want to be involved in this and will not, as one teacher did. And my first feeling was that they felt insecure and incompetent. One of the reasons that some people are fighting these things is that they close the (classroom) door and they're in charge. That's very heady stuff. All of a sudden they were going to be in a program in which they were going to be accountable for, not their program, which they had been responsible for in the past, but for each child's learning, and progress and the principal and parents were going to be looking at them and then came along the whole ... physical change of the school.

The principal was broken on this reef of staff resistance. With a new curriculum in place, a fresh principal was selected to help wage the battle for a new building. In other words, the parent battle to restructure the curriculum, now strengthened by district endorsement, bridged staff resistance through the selection of a new principal for whom the new charter, curriculum, and impending new building were facts to which she had been educated by the leaders. So, while staff resistance persisted for a long time, the parents again successfully

deposited an agent of their unfolding intentions at the administrative heart of the school. Her task, with the elements of the new school in place, was to help the parents shepherd the new school into the best possible physical envelope. In this phase, new characters emerged and the character of old actors changed as they worked against the backdrop of the new task.

Building the School

Marcus Foster's deal with the community was successful. After one failure, his elaborate tilling of the political soil of Oakland's communities resulted in the passage of a second bond issue allowing the upgrading of Oakland's schools to earthquake-safe standards.

Peralta's piece of this deal was \$1,000,000 for construction, and the right to interview and present to the district a short list of three architectural teams. The district would select the "best" team, which would then operate in much the same fashion as the school's principals: responsible to two clients.

Although the bond issue did not pass in Oakland until May of 1973, Foster had, in 1972, sweetened the potential pot for MPCC by instituting the procedure for community participation in school projects.³ Later the MPCC recommended obligatory participation in the design process.

Design Process: The design of each school should relate to the local citizens, the students, the faculty and administration, as well as to the District administration and the Board of Education. A process that assures citizen participation in the selection of design firms and, in the design of each new school will make them more relevant places for education. (Report of the Task Force on School Buildings: 57)

The MPCC also outlined in great detail the issues in and procedures for selecting architectural firms to design new additions or entire new structures on a wide variety of scales. (Report of the Task Force on School Buildings, pp. 69-72, 138-43). A major criterion of firm selection was to be the willingness and ability of the firm to conduct its work in a participatory fashion:

1. Participation of design firms with local site committee, students, and teachers during phases of predesign programming, design, and evaluation should be required.

2. Each design firm, in addition to the normally performed services, should be required to allot a specified number of person-days to on-site research and information dissemination.

a. Some system of community interaction, such as on-site design office, should be established to give students, teachers, and parents an opportunity to express their ideas regarding the new facility and to acquaint the architects with their characteristics and needs.

b. An on-site graphics, model, or other media display should be maintained after completion of the design, to explain the new facility to the students, teachers, and parents. (Task Force: 59)

Selecting an Architect

Winds of rumored work waft constantly through an architectural community. When bond issues for construction confront an electorate, these rumors approach gale force and, when a bond issue passes, joint ventures struggle to take the attractive shape they think the potential client will desire.

I received a call from an architectural colleague. Would I like to join a team? "Community" and "Participation," like "inner city," were often code words for "black," especially in Oakland, where city agencies were pursuing a vigorous affirmative action policy in hiring and contract letting.

Our interview was circumspect and our cross-examination by the community people was rigorous. My own experience told me that these were truly powerful community people: deadly serious, deeply informed, and grounded in their commitment to the social and pedagogical goals that had guided their efforts up to this point. So extensively did these themes overlap with my own experience in CORE, Bootstrap, and other groups, that giving my portion of the presentation was a bit like telling myself my favorite story in public . . . with impunity. Our team won the contract in April of 1974.

Conflict: Charter and Internal Action

When "community" and "participation" are the crosshairs of the gunsight aimed at an adversary, group agreement on specific meanings is subservient to the terms' utility for accomplishing the larger, external goal. The Peralta group became progressively more sophisticated at making the language of district goals and professional education its own. That language was revealed to have hardened around its very strategic utility when used in the early design sessions. Not only that, but the foremost spokesman for the group's goals was suddenly confronted with new leadership problems, as notions like "the year-round concept" and "parent participation in schools" were tested against the need to create an actual building to embody them. The group had equipped itself for one type of struggle. It was unprepared for the new one.

The Peralta leaders, to stay faithful to their precepts, were obliged to bring teachers and relatively inactive parents into the participatory design process. We have already seen that many parents rejected the leadership's new ideas for the school until they were overwhelmed by a campaign of persuasion. We have also seen that much of the traditional teaching staff maintained, on behalf of the school's survival, silence and hidden disapproval of year-round education, open-plan classrooms, experimental teaching techniques, and the like. All of these people--inactive parents, traditional teachers--had to be part of the group making the new school.

Here I want you to "listen to" an interchange within the group, early in its efforts to design the school. Ostensibly the discussion is over the wisdom of providing a single parent/

teacher conference room. But it opens the door to inclinations and desires long buried in the fight to save the school, and it begins the process of the whole group's decision on the nature of Peralta as a Place.

The evening session, in a parent's living room, begins in the scattered way that such occasions often do when differences are not brought to the surface. Although more people were invited, the group consisted of seven parents,* three teachers, the school principal and a member of the architectural team.**

Parent:

If you're going to build a school where parent participation is involved and leave them off without a community room, and they are. . . . You've got to have some activities where parents can be around, they can come in, they can have their meetings, they can do whatever they feel free to do. Free. What's in the type of school that we have? We have a different sort of school. We have a different sort of parent

*Including Miles and the Winchesters

**The session was tape recorded. I did not attend.

involvement. We're trying to build parent involvement around a child, a parent, and a teacher. If you're going to leave off the activities for the parent and just squeeze them out and have a school just for the students and for the staff, you're defeating the purposes of parent participation.

Parent:

If you're a parent, that's your room, you go over there. If you have a space that you're coming into to tutor. If you have a space, maybe it's in the multimedia. Maybe you've got an alcove . . . where the pods come together somehow there's two little alcoves. Those are what are used. We don't have fifteen parents come into the school and have a meeting in the middle of the day.

Parent:

Let me clarify myself. I wasn't talking about the little spots within the school itself. I'm speaking in terms of space someplace within the school where parents can come in anytime during the day.

Parent:

Who are all these parents that are going to come?

Parent:

Well, I think, there's a lot of functions that are very straightforward . . . and those are very important. I mean physically they determine a lot of things. . . . The thing that to me is the least straightforward, and that I understand the least, is what the parents want to do with the school and what kind of space they want to do it in. Of the whole program, the whole functioning of the school, that's the

aspect of it that, at this point, I think is the most vague. What kind of spaces, what kind of activities? Is it tutoring? Is it meetings? Is it parent conferences? Is it meeting teachers and individuals or is it being together? What other functions that daily go on within the school is that compatible with?

Parent:

Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know what we do down there. We put together a year-round concept. Where we are now is something very unusual.

Architect:

But you put in parent participation together in this room referring to Miles' proposed room set aside for parents.

Parent:

Yeah, we put it together in this room because all of us work.

Architect:

This room does fine for that. I think this room probably does a whole lot better than some room we might build at the school.

Parent:

If we add a room at the school, we can only use it at night.

Parent:

Right. And it wouldn't be beneficial.

Teacher:

I think what he--Miles--is talking about is having a place where people will start to come over and will feel more comfortable and will start to maybe get more involved than they have been in the past. You're saying what people?

Parent:

Let's break down the community, nonworking and working.

Parent:

There are not an awful lot of them. If they're at home, they usually have lots of kids or they're babysitting for others.

Parent:

Nonworking, working.

Parent:

What's your point, Jimmy?

Parent:

I feel it would be foolish to send anyone off into building a luxury conference room for the four or five of us to go over there and rear back and feel comfortable, and not putting something in there that's going to educate that child. That's what it's all about, that child in that classroom. Not how I go over there and "participate." What it's all about is the education of our children. We work. We raise our kids and we send them to school to be educated. I'd rather take this hundreds of thousands of dollars and put it into something that's going to benefit some of those children. Because we have survived all these years without a conference room.

Parent:

O.K., look. . . . We have survived all these years, but let me clarify something. What we are talking about here is education. We've had schools sitting up there for years and doing nothing for most of the children. What we are trying to do here at Peralta is develop a school where children learn. In order to do that you have to have parent participation. The teachers are not going to get it; well, at least they haven't got it so far. They need help, they are professionals, they need help (from) the parents. Now if we're going to say, hey, we'll put the school together and we'll do this and we'll kind of forget about the parent participation then we're right in the same rut that we're in. What we're talking about here is . . .

Parent:

I'm saying don't spend no bunch of money on no room for that purpose.

Principal:

I don't want to negate what you're saying but they just came out with a report from the district and so forth of the idea that schools should be the center of the community. This, in the past, had been one of the great errors. We've had our separate libraries. We've had our separate recreational facilities, and so forth. You want to concentrate on the program too, but it seems to me that perhaps in the design of it where it can function more, not necessarily as an isolated community room that perhaps in the design of it where it can function more, not necessarily as an isolated community room or an isolated parent room,

but more of a functioning thing so the people can come from around and utilize it, whether it be the multimedia center you're talking about, or the cafeteria area, or whatever you're saying, it can be used in many ways.

Architect:

I think that everybody agrees with that. Parent participation is highly important. The thing is what the building might do, not a whole lot, but just a little bit, to influence what form it takes. Whether it takes the form of meetings, or whether it takes the form of tutorials, or so on. The building isn't really going to make or break parent participation. Buildings don't do that, people do that. But it might influence to a small degree what form meetings like this take. This is really a vital thing that we should accommodate. In the evening it could surely be in the multipurpose room, surely be in the media center. If it is a daytime function, that would be in conflict with what goes on in there. Or is it a much more individualized thing between parents and teachers, in which case maybe something like these little conference rooms, or these little "miniconfessionals" would be appropriate.

Parent:

Yeah. Don't most of the parents, the main contact between the great percentage of parents and the school take place at our individual conferences with teachers? Isn't that the main time that parents are in the school? Aren't probably ninety percent of the kids' parents coming to the school every nine weeks to see a teacher on an individual basis during . . . ah ha, it was during the normal school hour but that won't even be anymore. We've even changed that, so . . . it could go into individual classrooms.

Parent:

You know, Ann, I think everybody is misunderstanding me. Maybe I'm using the wrong words, you know what I mean? I don't believe in space unused. I think space within any building should be used where children are because it's a learning center. Now . . . I'd be dumb, really, to sit and think to put a community room there just for parents. It don't make no kind of sense to me. Now I don't want any of you to get the idea that this is what I'm talking about. But I just want you to understand the issue. Now, I'm not interested in one little old space there for parents. Now we maybe could have one little old cubbyhole there maybe a five-by-nine for a community phone, something of this nature. That's something else again. I'm not talking about every

nine weeks when there's a teacher-parent conference. I'm thinking about activities within the school site itself, within a community room. This activity within this particular setting is happening every day!

Architect:

With nurses?

Parent:

Whether it's tutoring, or parent-teacher conference, or what have you. This activity takes place here.

Architect:

Within this concept, the community room, what's it going to say on the door?

Parent:

I use the word community room, we don't have to use community room. We can come up with . . .

Architect:

Will it say "multimedia center," would it say "multipurpose room?"

Parent:

Fancy words mean nothing to me.

Architect:

Is it the room where the kids eat lunch?

Parent:

No.

Teacher:

Is it the room where they go to the library?

Parent:

Well now, that could be interesting.

Parent:

Why not?

Parent:

Well, now, Walter, what you're still opting for is another room, included in all the other little rooms that we have. Even if you're

going to be using it, 'cause like somebody said, we'll use the space. If it's there, we'll use it, no matter what, but we're trying to say, can we save money by putting these meetings or these functions within, say, the library or the multimedia center.

Architect:

Or giving a little thought to the design of the library to make it accommodate these little . . . Barbara, James just said that you're going to evening conferences now. Why then can't the parent-teacher conferences take place in the classrooms?

Principal:

They can. In fact, you know, to me some of the most important conferences don't even happen at the report card time. It's a dropin kind. It's "would you come aside for a minute" kind of thing that happens.

Architect:

Are they with you, the principal, or teachers?

Principal:

I'm talking about with teachers and myself, whatever. Where you can kind of take a parent aside. If it were in a close proximity to your room so that you can kind of keep your eye on it, or whatever. I think that the accidental conferences are just as important as the sitdown.

Parent:

But they don't need a room.

Architect:

What is it about a classroom that inhibits that kind of meeting?

Teacher:

Kids. Kids running around. You know you can't very well talk to the parent and be attentive to your group at the same time. I think that a new school is going to open up and invite people to come, and they need a place for a while maybe, but maybe you can build a base and they need a place to . . .

Parent:

But we're talking about fifty years from now. We're not talking about two or three years.

Parent:

I really think there should be a room. Like I said, where, like the nurse can use, or the psychologist, or parent-teacher conferences. There's got to be a room for that kind of thing.

Architect:

Well, the nurse and psychologist are going to have an office. Barbara [the principal] has an office! Those are spaces that are available to them, and they do some of the conference work. I'm wondering about how artificial also, just completely aside from the issue of money and space, there's a certain kind of conference that takes place when you grab somebody in their own working space and you take three steps and you have a conversation. There's another kind of ritual that takes place when you take them out of their space and you walk fifty feet, and you walk in the door, and you sit down. "Now we're going to talk." There's something really kind of formidable about that.

Parent:

Speaking as a parent, all of you may not like it but a black parent, having a white teacher do that to me, I would become defensive as soon as we get away from the classroom because I figure she's up to some trickery. This is a fact. If she had left me in the classroom, I would have felt more free.

Teacher:

Why is that, James?

Parent:

This is just a fact, Clara.

Architect:

I don't know if it has to do with black or white. It has to do with the funny feeling of going to somebody, and walking down the hall, and sitting down in a little formal room to have a conversation, which is . . .

Parent:

It inhibits conversation.

Parent:

This is true with any kind of thing which you are trying to solve with somebody. It's hard to talk about it, you say "let's go across the street and have a cup of coffee, have a talk," and Christ, you get all defensive.

Architect:

This might be something that is very important to design into each classroom.

Teacher:

Right. I was just thinking give me a little place, because first of all if somebody is going to come in and wants a serious conference while I'm trying to teach forty kids I'm going to say please come after school, or if it's a true emergency where the lady is falling apart, I'm going to have to get her out of there, like that lady that came the other day. You know, the children are just going to ----God! So I can't really see that, if somebody wants to say "is this the schedule for going to the circus tomorrow," well, I can take that for five minutes, but I don't want to be away from that classroom for anything. I'd rather stay inside. O.K., now if somebody wants to come and talk to me, I feel I've got things under control, could I please have a little office with a little door that I could shut and watch out the window, and I could still talk to the person without having the little children saying "teacher, teacher."

Parent:

I agree with that.

Parent:

King* has it in every pod and every section. They have the little tiny booth, and it could be used for groups, it could be used for conferences, it could be used for art, anything. Something I feel that we very definitely inhibit is the ability to separately tutor kids with no facilities, no space.

Principal:

Well, I say in every division of their pods we have a little glass room.

Teacher:

It's nice to be able to keep the child within the room that you're tutoring, and still have a place that's quieter.

*An open-plan school in Oakland.

Teacher:

It can just be like an extra room.

Parent:

Another minor consideration about this is that I think with tutoring if you're getting parent involvement in the teaching part of it, parents are much less proficient at working with kids with a lot going on around them than teachers who have always been doing it. So, I think you would get parent involvement better if there were a way that they could take their two or three kids that they're going to work with and be a little more separate and not quite in the middle of things. One of the things that my wife said was that as soon as a parent comes in, this is kindergarten level, all the kids get excited cause there's so and so's parent there. So this is another good argument for making a separation kind of space. It makes it more possible then for parents to be involved in the teaching.

Architect:

Tutorials, parents take on three or four kids in these tutorials?

Teacher:

We'd like that.

Architect:

It's not all one to one, it's small groups?

Parent:

It depends on parents. My idea of community involvement in a school is that there should be more of it. It should be possible, made easy for this to happen more, much more.

Teacher:

Also, I think a really super multimedia center would, you know you were talking about people being attracted to the school because it's nice looking, and there's interesting things to see. A really good multimedia center where parents can go would be a good idea. I'm including books in that too. A library, with, say, adult books also.

Parent:

I'd like to see the office, the multimedia center, all that, all one area.

Parent:

That's right.

Parent:

If there's any kind of quiet holding room, I'd like it there so that it's not "go to the principal's office," it's go to a pleasant area where you can be quiet. A thinking room, right?

Parent:

But in the multimedia center where it is pretty, where the drawings are hung. Where there's a constant art show, and Barbara's there.

Parent:

I agree with that, and, to follow up on something that Jeannie said, I think that the community is not just the parents. There are relatively few parents that live in the area compared to the number of people that live in the area. I doubt that we'll have the facility that has a library that will draw in people in their seventies to it. I think it would be very nice if it were possible for what is now our auditorium-cafeteria, the media center, those things to be built in such a way that by opening and using them at night you were not opening and using the entire building. But the facility could be used if the North Oakland District Council wanted to have a meeting there, it would be possible to have a meeting there. Without the whole idea of having a janitor there.

Parent:

That's pretty important from the standpoint of security. Somebody on a Saturday could run one of the schools.

Architect:

That would be the media center and multipurpose room only.

Parent:

And maybe we wouldn't have to have a custodian there. We could have something so remarkable that, as she said, the College Avenue

Merchants could meet there. So that they would realize that we had a school.

Curiously, addressing design of the new building revealed the same differences in the parent group that had divided the school staff: traditional vs. open education. These differences lay dormant as the group marched in a common ideological phalanx to win concessions from the district, but emerged when they stopped to put their victories to us.

Most interesting was the realignment of positions that gradually emerged in the design sessions. An ostensibly conservative black teacher, for example, fairly constantly--and without guile--came down on the side of open-ness in the plan of the new buildings. On the other hand, as more design clarity was achieved, the new, innovative teachers began to join other teachers in their critiques of the radically open floor plans being negotiated between the design team and the most aggressive parents.

The new alignments hardened into quiet hostilities deposited in the emergent design process. These hostilities had a pernicious effect on group cohesion at the pivotal point when the architectural team presented a plan incorporating the ideas that had come up most clearly and consistently in the design sessions. (floor plan here)

The teachers were quietly but almost unanimously shocked at the way "open-ness" was being interpreted in the new building. A petition signed by the most influential teachers in both camps was distributed to all participants in the planning process:

We, the undersigned staff members of Peralta School, respectfully submit the following objections to the proposed architectural plan for the 2-5 pod. We urge that our objections be seriously considered.

The concept of shared space where children and teachers have the opportunity to interact is one that we support. The amount given, in the present plan, is questionable. We are, therefore, suggesting that the K-1 design would adequately accomplish this goal.

Our main objections to the present design are as follows:

(1) The present proposal requires a great deal of inservice training in order to fully use this type of space. This inservice needs to occur prior to occupancy. At this time we have no formal commitment from the district or administration regarding adequate inservice training.

(2) Coordination of the existent design requires consistent scheduling. This would seem to be an impossible task on the rotational 45-15 plan.

(3) As a result of the above, scheduling would, out of necessity, become extremely rigid.

(4) This in turn would force upon the staff some form of team teaching. We would prefer the choice of team teaching rather than having it mandated by building design. (6-23-75)

Teachers, many of whom previously had remained silent, began individually to lobby the principal and the district by phone and in writing against open-ness.⁴

The teachers' common front solved two problems: First, their common hostility to a radically open floor plan saved them from each other--from having to deal with each other on a daily teaching basis, overlapping very different teaching styles. This potential problem would have been confounded by the fact that the year-round schedule would require classes returning from three week "intersession" breaks to rotate back into a shared space already occupied by an ongoing class. Second, this common front against the parent group reduced expressions of hostility among teachers and gave clearer direction to the participatory planning process.

Then, teachers and parents developed a common cohesion when they were--as it turned out, fortunately--forced back into their familiar fight mode with the district. At each session where a district representative was present the conversation inevitably turned to increased square footage for the school.

Salvaging Cohesiveness

After the right to a new school had been won, the issue of its size haunted the planning process. The Peralta group had established an enrollment level of 370 students in the new building. The district architect, chief of capital planning, and other agents of the Oakland schools administration presented the group with a total allowable square footage for the school based on "figures developed by our demographer." Maximum square footage was based on an assumed maximum enrollment of 300 students. A battle was joined.

As the demography/square-footage fight grew more intense, old roles in the parent group reasserted themselves and new ones emerged. "How was that enrollment target set?" screamed one parent at a planning meeting. "Projected average daily attendance and estimated total enrollment were referred to the State's Office of Local Assistance's guidelines for construction," answered the district staff. "But demanded another parent. "Our demographer projects an enrollment drop in the area," was the reply. "We're an open enrollment school," countered the principal. "These figures were given to us by the district," the staff responded.

In fact, no one in the district had any experience with management of a 41 million dollar capital building program at the scale permitted by passage of the school bond issue. The Peralta people knew from earlier experiences since Foster's arrival that, in carrying out his new ideas--such as decentralization of district authority--many in the district were "winging it" much of the time. Although they ultimately were to lose the fight for additional square footage, the Peralta advocates brought the full range of their tested sophistication to the battle. Within-group differences of style and intention were submerged. All stops were out.

One knowledgeable parent had made efforts to locate the district demographer. After many inquiries--during several of which he was told that no such person existed--he discovered one reticent man who conceded that the data he had were old and not precise or finely tuned enough to distinguish between recommendations of 300 and 370 students.

Sensing a weakness, the group tried every attack it could think of. In the past Chairman Miles would have deflected certain hostile parent comments. Here, he did not interfere with the tirade of one young black mother who said: "I'm a black nationalist. I don't know about you white folks, but black people are going to keep on having lots of babies. This 'demography' thing is just a blueprint for genocide.

I'm sure some of them white hippies are going to have babies, too, so they can get more food stamps." Comments like these, so untypical of the general style of the group's attack, made other, more "reasonable" appeals look moderate by contrast.

Realizing that district representatives were hiding behind a demographic smokescreen, the parents, especially, settled on a final strategy. They sympathized with the district representatives' lack of decision-making power in the district, and asked them simply to be advocates "with your bosses" for Peralta Elementary School's need for more space.

The parents outlined an argument that they thought would be compelling: Peralta was a unique experiment in a city looking for innovative ways to turn the schools around. Peralta was Oakland's only year-round school and could be a model for the city and the state. The state, increasingly stingy with money, was on record as being very interested in year-round education. Peralta's parents were happy with the year-round plan and had endorsed the idea of the new school overwhelmingly. There was now community and parental involvement in and out of class--something, they explained, that Foster, before his death, had surely wanted to display in the city as an example of his realized plans: a successful, community-based process. Moreover, class groupings included different ethnicities and ages: Peralta had reintegrated the school. "Take that downtown," the parents said, "and help us get the space we need to make our school a real success."

Thus, the group turned its hard-won victories, extracted from the district against its will, into virtues for the district to display as examples of the district's success. The ploy worked at a symbolic level. The example of Peralta was used almost precisely as the parents had presented it. And, while this did not gain any square footage in the end, they did get important concessions in other areas. For example, special fixtures and materials were permitted in the multipurpose room (photograph). That room was the school's major design gesture to the community, and one that absorbed much of the intragroup contention about the architectural meaning of "community participation." The multipurpose room was very attractive. It could be used by non-school groups in the immediate community, thereby satisfying those who wanted some wider community participation in the school.

Overview: Conformity with Guile

The essence of the Peralta victory . . . was that they created in their own style, through whatever means, a set of circumstances that would have made it very, very uncomfortable and difficult to not allow the school to continue to exist. In a sense they beat the system . . . they beat the system at its own game. And by that, I mean following its rules. The rules that were established for informed participation and involvement of parents, members of community in the Oakland district, they developed a channel of communication, that once they were in place could not be turned off without great risk of undermining the entire district-wide model. Now that is very much to their credit. Because, in fact, there was nothing that they were doing that was in any sense outside. They were not playing the game except by the game's own rules. They played it very tight and very well.*

*Interview with Elliot Medrich

In the interests of brevity, much detail has necessarily been left out of Peralta's success story. Medrich here summarizes, however, the path they traveled to that success.

I have chosen to frame part of this episode in the Field Act "deal" Foster proffered to gain funding for his ambitious program. Obviously, the Peralta group alone could not "deliver" the favorable bond issue vote, but it could solidify its constituency behind the deal and offer visible proof of Foster's good faith. The Peralta group was all too willing to be that proof. And, as we have seen, the foundations funding the MPCC effort were anxious to display the results of their philanthropy.

The MPCC was Foster's charter, realized, from Making Schools Work. It was Oakland's "Bundy Report," moderated and enacted. Emptied of any notion of community "control," it still offered opportunities to those strategically positioned.

But other features of the district's new process were open to manipulation by the group. They used no picket lines. Instead, as Medrich puts it, "They were going to take on the roles . . . the system invited them to take and work it to the limit." Two examples of how they did this round out the Peralta story.

Example #1: In 1970, Foster had decentralized authority in a reorganization that divided the school district into three regions and created a regional superintendent for each. These regional superintendents were regarded as powerless by a large segment of the wider community. Fairly consistently, schools with special needs or interests had ignored these new officers and took their requests directly to the Board of Education or to Foster himself (Medrich: 114-119). Not so Peralta.⁵ Having chosen to take the roles the system invited, the group used--one might say abused--its regional superintendent, insisting that Foster's new structure work as announced. With each successive obfuscation or denial by their district (?) superintendent they presented to him new items in their accumulating conformity with the new district structure.

They did this by effectively meeting the four major standards of district policy: efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, and individualized service (Medrich: 142). Peralta was to be an educationally and fiscally efficient year-round school; it had an 80 percent parent validation of it and its innovative curriculum of "individualized" learning; a principal had been selected by the community through new district procedures. All of these initiatives met the district's requirements. But the district objected to Peralta's proposal citing declining enrollment and racial imbalance.

[of the value of year-round schools]

There was evidence. They weren't making it up. No one was making it up. In fact, we brought in, as I recall, various consultants from SRI and a couple of other places. Actually, Educational Facilities Labs as I recall had the best studies, showing that year-round schools tended to attract more students, increased enrollment, better programs, fresher kids, no big problem going year-round, etc. And that then became one of several ways of addressing that which the administration argued was the central issue, which is where are the kids going to come from?

Example #2: One last, chameleon-like strategy solidified the Peralta success: proposing a new building type.

The Peralta group was aware of the district's financial stress and of Oakland's rapidly changing school-age demography. Members of the

group helped to write the recommendations of the MPCC's Task Force on School Buildings (1973). Among these were recommendations (p. 23) that

The Board of Education recognize and support the validity of COMMUNITIES TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN NEEDS AND PRIORITIES.

The Board of Education adopt a policy of DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN BUILDING FUTURE OAKLAND SCHOOLS.

The Board of Education, possibly through the Buildings and Grounds Committee, work with the MPCC in REVIEWING AND FINALIZING SPECIFICATIONS FOR NEW PORTABLES AND FUTURE RELOCATABLE FACILITIES.

Even before these recommendations emerged, however a member of the Peralta group convinced a member of Berkeley's architecture faculty to use the Peralta site as a class problem. Armed with the architect's elaborate site model constructed by the class, the Peralta group then descended on their regional super-intendent with a radical proposal, later to emerge in print as a Task Force recommendation. The new curriculum was in place and showing signs of success.

Now, to save the school we had to develop a building to keep the curriculum in--our only outlook then and the only way to go then was to portables. Well, Oakland was new to portables. No one ever heard about portable schools. So then we started looking at portable schools. There weren't many around this part of the state. We came up with a portable school and sold it to region--we sold the idea to them, and then we were able to pursue it on to the district and we sold the idea of Peralta as being a portable school.

We went out and looked at various ones--went to various transportable schools. Because actually, technically, ours is not a portable school--it's a trans portable school, which is of course a lot of bullshit. You couldn't any more pick up that school realistically and move it . . . I mean, it is a game but that's alright. It's a game. It's hysterical.*

What was finally proposed was a "relocatable" building: a system of prefabricated modules assembled on concrete slabs. Technically, it was movable. It could be made architecturally attractive and also met an informal district standard of which the groups was aware:

Marcus felt strongly that in minority communities especially, people valued the structures in which their

*Interview with Walter Miles.

kids went to school. It was a sense that the community mattered. You could have, if you will, some pride in the structure to which your child was going, whether the kid was learning anything or it was only secondary. And for that reason, I think he was rather ambivalent to the idea of large numbers of portables. The feeling being that this is somehow, not necessarily a slap in the face, but it gave to the community a sense that they mattered less, because they didn't have a real building.*

The core group's members argued among themselves about the wisdom of temporarily relocating the students during construction of the building. Some contended it would disrupt the teaching process; others thought that watching construction from the old school would be educational for the children. The strategists argued that vacating the site might give the district an opportunity to close the school. The problem was resolved when the district turned down their feeble entreaties for temporary relocation.

The Fruits of Community Participation

Today, Peralta Elementary School is a model in the District.⁶ Its waiting list is long. Parents and faculty are active advocates of the school's interests. The successful making of this Place was also the confirmation of a tradition of participatory involvement. From his close vantage point, Elliot

*Interview with Elliot Medrich.

Medrich described the nature of the group's success:

So, the genius, the ultimate genius of Peralta was that they overcome the resistance of the administration. And in fact, the administration began to see this as something of an opportunity to provide a particularly clear victory of a community, but using an entirely reasonable and justifiable decision process.

Marcus and all of us had a significant commitment to that kind of a process as a way of making changes in schools. That was philosophically central to the way he wanted to operate. The way he wanted to have others perceive the district was that: (a) We wouldn't be mau-mau'd, but (b) we were very reasonable people who, given a good thorough give-and-take resulting in a consensus in a community and among school officials, could result in change in schools; big change, not small change. So that's really crucial to all of this, because he was predisposed to doing that kind of dealing and he felt that we weren't getting a bad deal in Peralta. They came as close as any to meeting all the prerequisites for a kind of positive involvement experience which met his sense of how school communities, school administrations, and other interest groups ought to be interacting.

Marcus had a marvelous way of sort of laughing, when he'd sort of been beat on an issue. It was almost a chuckle. It was a profound respect for those . . . that did it.. . . It was a real slow recognition that these people, in some fashion, weren't to be denied.

Peralta: Strategic Participation

Operation Bootstrap was prescient in rejecting Sargent Schriver's offer of OEO funds. For, while the Nixon administration was structuring the program of experimental schools from which Berkeley and Kilimanjaro benefited, it was tightening the choke hold of the federal purse strings and reducing required levels of citizens participation (Rohe and Gates:37). But, at the same time, the general expectation of and competence at some level of citizen participation in civic and neighborhood affairs had risen. Tracing the transformation in Community Action and Model Cities programs, Rohe and Gates (p. 48) conclude:

Unclear guidelines concerning the nature of citizen participation also led to conflict between community groups and city hall, which in many instances resulted in the delay of program implementation and inflated project costs. Phrases such as "maximum feasible participation" were interpreted differently from program to program. Only after considerable conflict arose were more specific program guidelines offered, and by that time battle lines had been drawn. Given the desire of program planners to permit as much local discretion as possible, however, these conflicts may have been unavoidable. In fact, it may be argued that the ambiguities associated with the nature of citizen participation in these programs were instrumental in the development of strong neighborhood organizations. It provided an issue around which they could rally supporters and learn how to negotiate with city hall.

The organized parents of Peralta Elementary School were a particularly crisp rendition of this. But they prosecuted their cause with a special strategic guile. However modulated by governmental fears of excess, the moral righteousness of causes based in the call for citizen participation had been firmly established by the previous fifteen years of struggle across the country. So, when Marcus Foster arrived in Oakland, wise from his exposure to "community control," he met those expectations with an articulated conception of "Community participation," husbanding control to the school district and flushing out private funding to support the participatory program.

Peralta parents threw up a shower of available "participation" verbal chaff to protect their cause. They never quite knew what much of it meant because it was a self-justified battering ram. Agreement on the limited goal of saving and rebuilding their school made their internal decision-making consensual in effect. Their main crisis in this respect arose only after they had guided the professionals to a design of the building consonant with their vague sense of openness and participatory possibilities. Only then were they forced to examine the meanings that had accompanied them to an intermediate victory.

But, they were clear about their right to participate and how. They kept Foster and his agents precisely to his definition of participation and met every aspect of it. Like adversarial chameleons, they matched official school district expertise on curricula, architecture, demography, and so forth, with their own. They "educated"

or released unsympathetic or recalcitrant teachers, hired and exploited principals to advance the achievement of their goal. They self-consciously engineered broad parental agreement on their goals. In short, they noisily and strategically conformed to the participatory structure they were handed. These were instrumental, manipulative, and interest-driven builders strategically positioned against "city hall." As such, they represent a major shift that citizen participation was undergoing in the 1970s. They were not the experienced and sophisticated poor who had watched government at various levels retreat from maximum feasible participation, but they were tactically alert to this retreat. They knew what Foster was doing and used that knowledge to their advantage. They won against the system, not outside it.

The Peralta episode involved governmental control of the offer and structure of participation mediated by contracted professionals. In this respect, the episode is an example of a new version of citizen versus government against a backdrop of increased citizen assumption of participatory rights. The significant outcome of the Peralta success, aside from the new building, curriculum, and disciplined staff, was the lesson communicated to the school district: This place would continue to be, through the model of its successful process, one in which participation would be expected within the school setting and between school and the district.

Marcus Foster did not have to offer participation. He was too smart not to. Judging the outcomes of government-sponsored participatory programs of the sixties and early seventies from the perspective of the eighties, Rohe and Gates see that:

[T]hese programs created a new expectation in the area of citizen participation. As a result of these programs, citizen participation in community development programs has become standard procedure. Public officials now feel required to involve citizens in these programs, and neighborhood groups reinforce this by pressing for involvement (46; emphasis added).

This required participation arrived early in San Francisco, California, the scene of our final episode.