

# Letter to the Editor

## To the Editor:

I am writing to correct three mistakes in Ronald Cohen's review of my book, *Politics, Race and Schools* that appeared in the *History of Education Quarterly*, 38:1 (Spring 1998).

First, Professor Cohen writes that in compiling the materials, I concentrated on the public record and ignored interviews, letters, and manuscript materials. This is not true. I tape recorded over 100 interviews with participants. These people lent me personal letters, scrapbooks, and policy documents. In addition, from local archives, I photocopied reams of manuscripts, grant applications, and program evaluations. They appear in the citations marking the places where I used the information.

Second, Professor Cohen complains that my book lacks human interest. While the personal stories of the participants would not fit the theme of my book, their many and conflicting perspectives appear in the descriptions of the struggles. To check the accuracy of my interpretations, I asked several participants to read the chapters in which I described their efforts. A portrayal of people's motives and efforts is an aspect of human interest.

Third, Cohen asks the following question after briefly outlining the book: "So, what's new?" Let me explain what my book offers that is new.

Investigations of important but overlooked details mark innovation. Curricular specialists assured me that few historians have studied the ways that curriculum served racial integration. At their suggestions, I examined the models that curriculum planners followed to construct classroom lessons that might relieve the problems of school desegregation.

Other signs of newness are unique interpretations of commonplace events. In the introduction, I point out that other cities went through similar problems. Unlike Chicago or New York, Dayton, Ohio is small enough to enable a researcher to assemble information about many parts of the city. Thus, I compared the racial desegregation of public, Catholic, and private schools, and I reviewed low-income housing dispersal programs and land-use policies. As a result, my book offers a comprehensive overview of events in a city that reflect the national experience.

My discovery was that there were many techniques that could bring about racial integration. However, there was no widely held and popular value that would lead people to use them. Inasmuch as the debates about racial desegregation centered on human rights without recognizing the value of community, those political discussions weakened peoples's willingness to accept techniques that limited human freedom but enhanced racial integration.

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**To the Editor:**

I appreciate Professor Watras's thoughtful reply to my review of *Politics, Race, and Schools*. As for his use of manuscript and personal sources, which are infrequently noted in the references, it might have helped if he had included a bibliography, list of sources, page of acknowledgments, or some other more specific guide to where the information had come from. Perhaps this omission is a policy of his publisher, which is most unfortunate. I had thought that my review was essentially positive, and I again urge readers of the *History of Education Quarterly* to consult his book in order to gain greater insights into the convoluted history of racial segregation of schools in the urban North.

Ronald Cohen  
Indiana University Northwest