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THE CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL FOR METROPOLITAN STUDIES 1970–1991

EDITED BY PAULA BARON

Jonathan Bloom and Spanish teacher Ruby Burnett, c 1972

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METROPOLITAN STUDIES • 1970–1991

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHERI MILA GERSON

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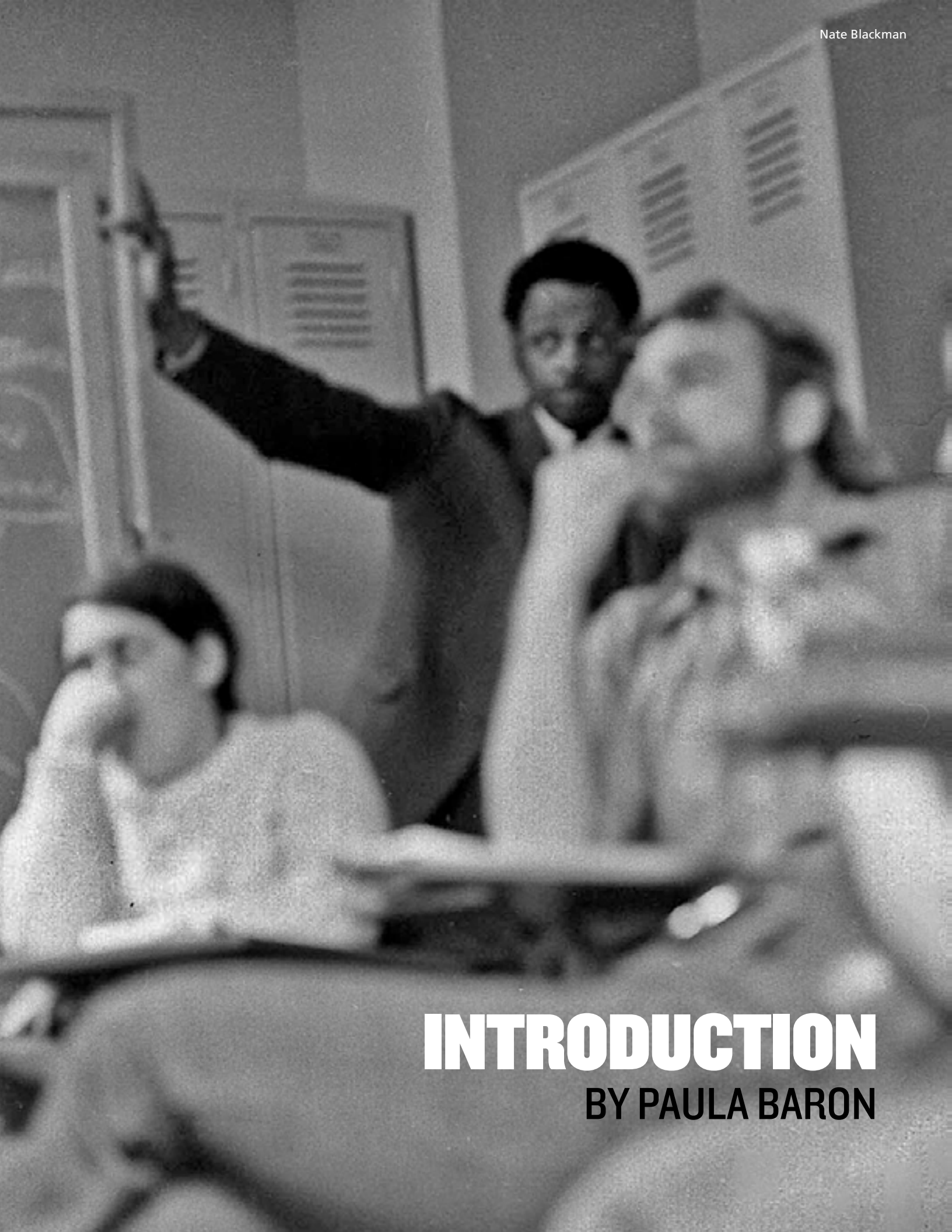


Nate Blackman

INTRODUCTION

BY PAULA BARON

I still remember Ms. Hazlitt.

She was a stern-looking woman who sat at her desk, which was behind a wall of books on three sides. We had the same history text that my uncle had used thirty years before. And the text was the be-all for the class. Class consisted of the teacher asking questions on the text, some even based on the footnotes. She would go right down the aisles, so your main task would be to figure out where in the text she would be by the time she reached you. It was all a matter of regurgitating what was in the text, never touching on the whys and hows. Did I learn U.S. history? Probably not, but I learned how to answer nitty-gritty questions that had no relevance to me. Sixty years later, classrooms have changed. But the emphasis on test prep and acceptance of the text as the total basis for study is eerily similar.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

Blythe Olshan at the blackboard, Michigan Avenue building, c1975

BY THE MIDDLE 1960s, it was clear that the back-to-basics movement fostered as a response to Sputnik, etc., had not produced the expected changes. Progressive educators began to look for ways to break out of the top-down, teacher-led classrooms that stifled student interest and creativity. They rejected the harsh rules and conformity that had characterized so many high schools and began experimenting with more open classrooms. One high school, Metro, was created in the Chicago Public Schools system to experiment with a new paradigm where students would learn from books but also from a wide variety of other experiences both inside and outside the school walls. I was among the lucky teachers in that school. I believe that the experience of both the faculty and students there might enrich the discussion of rethinking high school education in the twenty-first century. This is the story of that unique experiment in secondary education.

The political and cultural upheavals of the '60s gave added impetus to the desire for a more open and challenging secondary education. As part of his contract, Superintendent James Redmond had promised to develop an alternative experimental high school. John Naisbitt, CEO of Urban Research Corporation, and Donn Kesselheim, former principal of New Trier High School, then approached Dr. Redmond with a proposal for a "school without walls." They discussed their ideas with Dr. Redmond for almost a year and drew up a plan for a high school that would challenge the conformity of the traditional high school. The school would recruit a diverse student body, and students and teachers would be able to work and learn in a more open environment. Knowledge would be found not only in texts, but also in direct life experiences in the city.

Metro's official name was Chicago Public High School for Metropolitan Studies. It opened in February 1970 and lasted until September 1991, when it was relegated to a "program" at Crane High School. Though it is long gone, Metro still lives on in the impact it has had on all who interacted with the school in some way. Students, faculty and parents still say, "Metro lives."

As a history teacher at Metro for twenty-one years, I had a front-row seat. What follows is based on my experiences and point of view. Others may have different perspectives to add; I welcome a continuing dialogue.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

AN EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION

METRO WAS A FOUR-YEAR HIGH school that was part of the Chicago Public Schools system. But it was very different from other high schools in that system—it was meant as an experiment to find new ways to involve young people in their education and to utilize the many facets of our very vibrant city. It was small—only 350 students. They came from all parts of the city so they could learn from each other's experiences and ideas. Though Metro was required to follow the basic format of CPS schools, it had the option to develop a variety of strategies to present the high school curriculum.

Metro was in the city, of the city and about the city. For Metro students, the city was their classroom, and Chicago in the '70s and '80s was alive with activity and change in the social, political, cultural and scientific areas. Some classes were taught by Metro's board-certified staff. Some were held at Metro, which was located in a Loop-area building, while others were in donated space, usually near the Loop. Still other classes were held at locations around the city where students were taught by professionals—art at the Art Institute, biology at the Shedd Aquarium and Lincoln Park Zoo, economics at First National Bank. Students in an oral history class interviewed activists in the community, musicians, Vietnam vets and other ordinary people who had lived through extraordinary times. Another class learned about the history of Chicago by traveling to various neighborhoods and talking with the people who had been and were still involved in various struggles. Some studied African American history at the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University, meeting with historians and people who were active in the Civil Rights movement. And because the school was located in the Loop, students could easily make use of the libraries and other cultural institutions located there. Physical education, for example, might be at an ashram to learn yoga, a settlement house for folk dancing, Grant Park for soccer. A class that visited the prisons in Illinois set one student on a career path providing arts workshops in juvenile correctional facilities in Maryland.

FREEDOM, CHOICE, RESPONSIBILITY

METRO'S MANTRA WAS "FREEDOM, CHOICE, responsibility." Thus, there were only limited rules, and students had a good deal of freedom to choose classes, make use of their free time and raise questions or suggestions regarding classes or the functioning of the school. But there was also a corresponding emphasis on developing a sense of responsibility. After all, students were expected to learn and to prepare for life after high school, whether that was college or something else. This freedom worked for many students, but not for all.

Building a community of learners was a top priority. From the beginning, our principal, Nathaniel Blackman, nurtured this by establishing a culture of trust and respect for both students and faculty. Everyone was addressed by first name, including the faculty and the principal. This helped develop a student-teacher relationship where students felt free to share their ideas, dreams and problems. Former students and faculty still refer to Metro as "family."

A FORTIETH REUNION

ON JUNE 26, 2010, MORE than 300 former students, faculty and friends gathered to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Metro High School—"the school without walls." Given that Metro only had 350 students each year and that there were thus only about 1,500 graduates over its twenty-one years of existence, this was a remarkable turnout. There was an extraordinary, almost electric sense of community in the room that day and at events on surrounding days, that belied the fact that Metro had been closed for almost twenty years. What brought all those people together? And why was there such a strongly felt bond, even among a group consisting of students and faculty representing different periods in the school's history? Certainly, it's true that in the current era of attenuated social relations, people long for ways to connect. But with the Metro crowd that gathered for the celebration, there was something else, something that perhaps originated in the culture of the school itself and in the students and faculty attracted by the boldness and innovation embodied in it.

From the beginning, principal Nathaniel Blackman established a culture of trust and respect. Everyone was addressed by first name, including the faculty and the principal.

A strong sense emerged from the June gathering that there was something in the Metro experiment that might still speak to educators today. To that end, I have collected some thoughts and memories from those attending and other alums and faculty in the hope that their stories will capture some of the flavor of Metro. Students, faculty and par-

ents here share their experiences and thoughts about Metro. They talk about the social and political conditions that drew them to Metro, about their experiences at Metro and about its impact on their lives and careers.

What comes through in these stories is not so new and startling, but it does challenge the pressured "teach-to-test" standards of today. What were most valued at Metro were the caring community where students and teachers felt respected and trusted, the openness of the high school and encouragement of independence, and the fact that students had choices and were encouraged to question. The diversity of the student population and the opportunity to learn not just from books, but also by interacting with the vibrant human and physical capital in the city were also prime values. If these offer some guidelines for education today, perhaps the answer is that high schools don't need a reinvention as much as a reinvestment in the basic values of progressive education. That was not easy in the 1970s and '80s, and it cannot be argued that it would be easy in our current age. One could argue, however, that few issues are as important to confront as that of how we educate our citizens.

IN THE BEGINNING

IN 1969, CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS accepted a proposal from Urban Research Corporation to develop an experimental and innovative high school. That school became Chicago Public High School for Metropolitan Studies. Metro opened in February 1970 to much fanfare. It thrived in a period of political change and social experimentation, and it might be said that the school's very existence was a response to the changes and challenges of the late 1960s–early '70s era. Brown v. Board of Education had decreed segregated schools unconstitutional, and yet Chicago was the most segregated city in the country. School boycotts, general urban unrest and student disaffection with school had caused some to search for new ideas.

Part of Metro's mission was to attempt to confront, and to begin to resolve, some of these issues. The school was designed to bring students together from all over the city. And they came—black, white and Hispanic—many looking to escape the racial unrest and violence or, in some cases, simply boredom, that they experienced in their neighborhood schools. Though, of course, we couldn't escape all of the racial conflicts, the open community atmosphere at Metro certainly made for a less tense climate where everyone felt they had a voice. And Metro recruited a faculty that was anxious to try new ideas and to integrate the city and all it offered into its curriculum.

The school was roughly based on the Philadelphia Parkway High School that had been started a year before. It was

Metro was to be a "school without walls" that would use the city as its classroom. The student body would mirror the makeup of all students in Chicago Public Schools.

designed to be a "school without walls" that would use the city as its classroom. The student body was meant to mirror the makeup of all students in Chicago Public Schools. Students from every high school were invited to apply, and two students from each school were chosen in a lottery. Thus, in the early years Metro became the most diverse and integrated high school in the city.

Though students had to complete the same requirements as at other Chicago public high schools, there was a great deal of flexibility in developing the curriculum. Many of the classes were held around the city so that students could become more integrated into the life of the city. Some classes were taught by professionals in the field, some by board-certified teachers. It was an exciting time for teachers and for students.

The original design of Metro called for the first school to be located in the Loop area and to enroll 150 students the first semester and 350 students by the second semester. In addition, there were plans to set up little Metros around the city to total 2,000 students by 1973. (Metro would survive for twenty-one years, but there never was a move to open any of those "little Metros.")

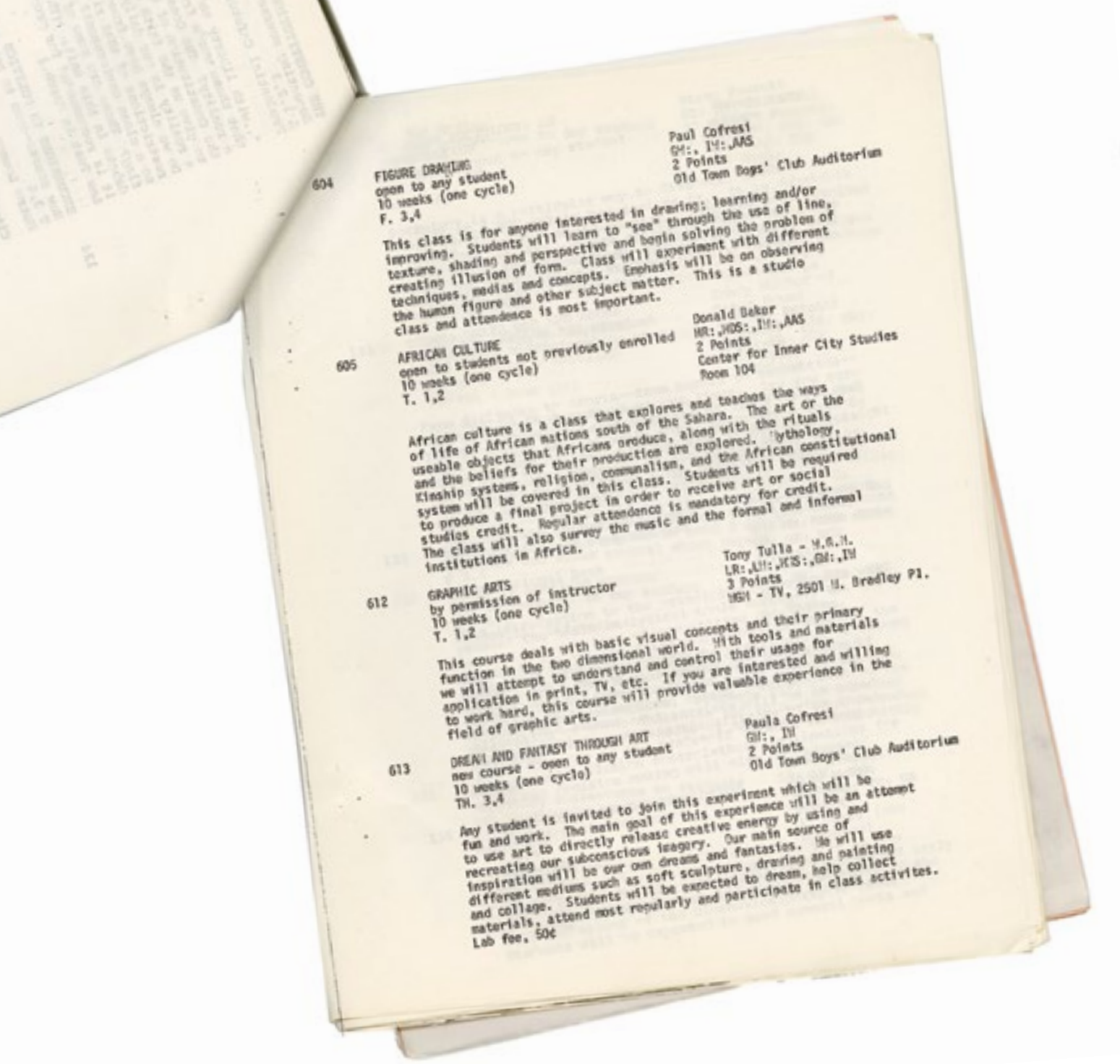
Organizations that participated in the Metro experiment offered space and/or provided interested professionals who taught classes in their facilities. The school year was divided into four ten-week cycles, and students could choose from a wide variety of classes to fulfill their requirements. It was thought that having these short cycles would make it easier for students to gain credit and prevent the failures that seemed to come from the yearlong classes that standard high schools offered. It also allowed for a lot more flexibility in curriculum development. For example, students were required to take a year of U.S. history. Within that, they could put together their own "package" of ten-week units depending on their own interests.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

FIGHTING FOR ITS LIFE

AS AN EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOL IN a bureaucratic, rule-bound system, Metro was always on the defensive. It took a very special leader to stick to the experimental principles and to continue to guide this project in the face of opposition from various external quarters. Metro was blessed to have just such a person as its principal: Nathaniel Blackman Jr. Nate had a uniquely collaborative administrative style that encouraged experimentation. He understood that with this came risks. He understood that if something didn't work, then you just started over and tried something else. It was Nate who defended the program and navigated around unsympathetic Chicago Public Schools administrators. Metro couldn't have survived without his skills.

Of course, Metro wasn't perfect, nor was it the best choice for all students. For some, there was too much freedom and not enough guidance and accountability. And the lack of facilities such as science and language labs made it difficult to offer a fully rounded program at all times. But the commitment of Metro's teachers to innovate and find ways to enrich the learning experience, and Metro's use of private and public companies and facilities across the city as classrooms—



604 FIGURE DRAWING
open to any student
10 weeks (one cycle)
F. 3,4

Paul Cofresi
GH:, IM:,AAS
2 Points
Old Town Boys' Club Auditorium

This class is for anyone interested in drawing; learning and/or improving. Students will learn to "see" through the use of line, texture, shading and perspective and begin solving the problem of creating illusion of form. Class will experiment with different techniques, medias and concepts. Emphasis will be on observing the human figure and other subject matter. This is a studio class and attendence is most important.

605 AFRICAN CULTURE
open to students not previously enrolled
10 weeks (one cycle)
T. 1,2

Donald Baker
HR:,HSS:,IM:,AAS
2 Points
Center for Inner City Studies
Room 104

African culture is a class that explores and teaches the ways of life of African nations south of the Sahara. The art or the useable objects that Africans produce, along with the rituals and the beliefs for their production are explored. Mythology, Kinship systems, religion, communalism, and the African constitutional system will be covered in this class. Students will be required to produce a final project in order to receive art or social studies credit. Regular attendance is mandatory for credit. The class will also survey the music and the formal and informal institutions in Africa.

612 GRAPHIC ARTS
by permission of instructor
10 weeks (one cycle)
T. 1,2

Tony Tulla - M.M.H.
LR:,LH:,HSS:,GH:,IM
3 Points
MSH - TV, 2501 W. Bradley Pl.

This course deals with basic visual concepts and their primary function in the two dimensional world. With tools and materials we will attempt to understand and control their usage for application in print, TV, etc. If you are interested and willing to work hard, this course will provide valuable experience in the field of graphic arts.

613 DREAM AND FANTASY THROUGH ART
new course - open to any student
10 weeks (one cycle)
TH. 3,4

Paula Cofresi
GH:, IM
2 Points
Old Town Boys' Club Auditorium

Any student is invited to join this experiment which will be fun and work. The main goal of this experience will be an attempt to use art to directly release creative energy by using and recreating our subconscious imagery. Our main source of inspiration will be our own dreams and fantasies. We will use different mediums such as soft sculpture, drawing and painting and collage. Students will be expected to dream, help collect materials, attend most regularly and participate in class activites. Lab fee, 50¢

Third Cycle Catalog, 1973
The whole catalog can be found at metrohschicago.com

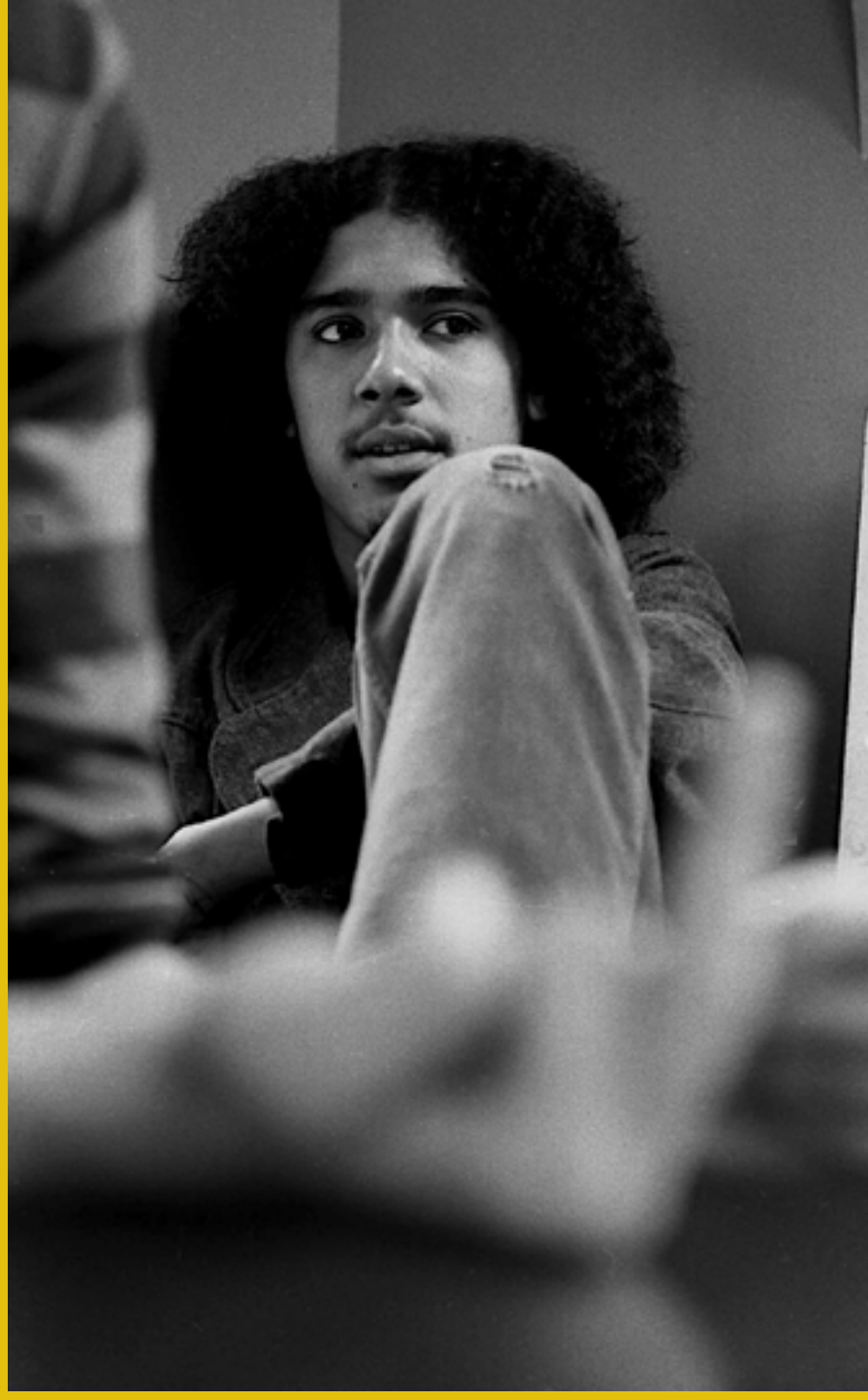
and those organizations' professionals as adjunct faculty—provided uniquely valuable experience.

Key to the Metro philosophy was the idea that students should take responsibility for their own education. Students chose their own classes and walked or traveled on public transportation to the many classes outside the building. Occasionally, students themselves would teach a class. Students were encouraged to participate in all the functioning of the school, and for the first five years, they even participated with teachers on a committee to choose new teachers. But by 1976, the CPS board had rescinded its agreement to allow Metro to choose a staff that would be supportive of the Metro philosophy.

Since running the school was seen as a cooperative venture, faculty at Metro were given a great deal more power than they had in the average school. Faculty voice and input were regularly sought and respected. Many hours were spent in meetings discussing curriculum, student issues and general functioning of the school.

CURRICULUM

"FOR CHICAGO A NEW KIND of School," wrote Hope Justice in the *Chicago Sun-Times* (December 4, 1969). "It will be designed to meet the criticism being leveled at the American



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

High Schools today. Among these criticisms are that students have no say about what they are to learn, that much of the curriculum seems irrelevant to the student's real world, and that opportunities for pursuing individual interests are too limited, at least in city schools."

The planners of Metro had a broad general picture of a curriculum that would "use the city," but they had few specifics. The curriculum would change and grow and change again as faculty and students tried to determine what worked and what was relevant for students. By today's standards, it certainly lacked a clear trajectory or real guiding standards. Our goals were to use the city to make courses relevant and interesting to students and, of course, to provide the basics for college prep and careers, but in truth, an outsider might well have seen it as a hodgepodge.

One real positive was that courses were open to all, so a class that might just be for "gifted" students elsewhere was available for all levels at Metro. In fact, when Metro closed, a parent wrote that a counselor at her son's new school told her that it was too bad his grades weren't better because he could be taking gifted classes that would have been available to him at Metro. On the other hand, early on, we were not as effective in dealing with students who came with limited skills in reading and math. The original plan for Metro envisioned that students would learn at least some of their science by working with someone directly in the field. Some of this did develop, as the science teachers made effective use of Lincoln Park Zoo and the rangers at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park, and some students had placements in various labs. Still, the lack of adequate science lab facilities certainly limited the ability of staff in this area.

WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM

METRO WAS NEVER A FAVORITE with the CPS board's staff. To the first district superintendent, Bessie Lawrence, the whole Metro philosophy constituted an implied criticism of current CPS schools. She could never accept that. In 1972, Metro was preparing for a visit from North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting agency for public schools in Illinois and several other states. Angeline Caruso, associate superintendent of CPS, wrote to Dr. Manford Byrd, deputy superintendent, complaining about the lack of a "real curriculum" at Metro. "From what I can gather, the curriculum at Metro comes straight off the top of the head of the particular teacher or 'ancillary' staff person teaching the course. The present structure seems to be no structure. This has been achieved, but I hardly think it's a curriculum. All it is, is a point of view. I am particularly concerned about balance, articulation, and the integration of discrete bits of knowledge into a four-year curriculum. I think it's possible to professionalize this operation without compromising its philosophy."

It certainly would be hard to fit Metro's approach to curriculum into the standard "educationese" of the day. It would be even harder today with the standards and testing movement. In the beginning, we were creating something new, and in fact, we were flying by the seat of our pants. Even one of our own ancillary coordinators complained in 1972 about some "off the wall" classes.

In 1973, we created a curriculum committee, which required teachers to provide an outline of the course they planned; this outline contained objectives, readings and other specifics. This committee also had the power to request certain classes and to reject proposals for classes they

Metro High School

In A Class Of Its Own: The City

METRO HIGH SCHOOL, For information call the Admissions Counselor: (312) 280-2020

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Photographs: Courtesy of Metro High School

deemed invalid. We put structure into the curriculum, but we still retained a great deal of flexibility.

Over the years, we discussed sequence and coverage, and we made serious attempts to ensure that we were providing a good education for our students. Perhaps our biggest omission was our failure to systematically document what we were doing. Each year, we developed a catalog with the course offerings, and these were supplemented every ten weeks for student registration. As I recall, in the last eight or ten years, teachers were asked to provide a syllabus for their courses, but unfortunately, these don't seem to have been archived. Had we kept more complete records, these could have been used by future teachers. In the rush of daily teaching, it is hard to set aside time for this, and perhaps the Metro structure did not provide the administrative support personnel to ensure that these archiving tasks were done.

Though Dr. Caruso was raising some important issues, she missed the essence of what made Metro attractive. Students had to complete certain classes that were required of all high school students. For example, as I recall the requirements of the time, they had to take four years of English, three years of social studies, two years of science and math, one year each of art and music and four years of physical education. But the beauty of Metro was our ability to work within that structure to respond to student interest and to our own interests and experiences. And despite the fact that the CPS staff was less than enthusiastic, it should be noted that in 1986, the U.S. Department of Education gave Metro an award for excellence in education.

FULFILLING REQUIREMENTS CREATIVELY

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE A FEW examples of how standard requirements were fulfilled using ten-week classes that drew students and teachers alike into specific areas of inquiry that matched learning styles and interests. Some courses that fulfilled English requirements were: Story Workshop, Improv Theater, and Introduction to Aesthetics in Black Literature; for social studies: Cities in the Making, Student Rights: What Are They?, Workingman in America, and 3/5ths of a Man; for science: Animal and Human Behavior, Marine Biology, and Man, Woman and Wonder. Most courses were taught by our regular staff, while some were taught by people with some expertise in a field. For example, Improv Theater was taught by actors from Second City, and Marine Biology was taught at the Shedd Aquarium by their professionals with the aid of our own science teacher. Students took classes in broadcasting at

Recruitment poster, c 1985

The beauty of Metro was our ability to work within that structure to respond to student interest and to our own interests and experiences.

WIND Radio with one of the station's talk show hosts, and writing at Playboy with one of its editors.

Students could also contract for an individual placement. This could be a nonpaying placement in one of various occupations in hospitals, labs, zoos, courts, advertising agencies and other such settings, or it could just be an arrangement with an individual who might teach some particular subject.

Over the years, Metro staff developed a variety of innovative classes. Probably one of the most popular and successful was The Dunes, taught at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park. With the help of some very engaged students, teacher Steve Everett approached the rangers at the park and found they were quite interested. Arrangements for a weekly bus had to be made and approved by the CPS board.

Steve and the students in the Dunes class were very concerned about the environment, so some of their first activities involved cleaning up the beachfront. They also studied the flora and fauna and learned how to get along in the wilds of Indiana. Mike Liberles, a science teacher at Metro, joined in this class, and after Steve left, other teachers worked with the class, including Rich Barone, a math teacher, and Del Yarnell and Carol Block, both art teachers.

Other teachers sometimes arranged to take their classes to the dunes for one or two sessions. Students could designate whether they wanted to get physical education credit, science credit, math credit or art credit for this ten-week cycle. All the students usually met with the rangers, who provided background on the ecology of the area; sometimes the group engaged with local farmers for various activities, such as making sorghum. Each teacher developed projects related to his or her own discipline. For many students, this was their first real encounter with Lake Michigan and the environment outside the city. And of course, the long bus rides provided a time for students and faculty to discuss their experiences and to bond.

Though we changed the schedules a number of times over the years, basically, a class would be held on Monday,

Del Yarnell

Dunes class, 1976–'77 school year.

Wednesday and Friday, or on Tuesday and Thursday. Two-day-per-week classes allowed for longer classes and for students to go out into the city. This made for a flexible schedule, but it also meant that a teacher might be teaching six different classes.

For Rich Barone, who taught math, this was a fair trade-off because he could teach fun classes like Cooking Chinese. These mini-classes could spark new interests and, in the case of cooking, even expand student palates. For a social studies teacher like me, Metro was a treasure. History was out there in

the city to be found, and we went out and found it. One of my favorites was the oral history class where students met Mama Yancey, a historic blues singer; WWII veterans; Holocaust survivors; workers; etc. Their stories were collected in a magazine, Streetlights, which is archived in the U.S. Library of Congress.

All students belonged to a counseling group. Initially, these were mixed-age groups that met for two and a half hours a week. Activities for this counseling group were planned by the students and the teacher. They could involve discussions on school policy, career planning or trips in the community. But gradually, students became less involved, and teachers began to find planning a weekly two and a half hour activity on top of their other teaching responsibilities too draining. And not every teacher, no matter how good, is cut out to be a counselor.

Like everything else at Metro, we experimented with a variety of other options while trying to maintain the initial goals. By the later '70s, Counseling Group became more like a traditional homeroom group, though most teachers continued to make serious attempts to connect with their students and to monitor their progress in school. This wasn't much different from a traditional school except that because Metro remained small, teachers and students were able to develop very close relationships.

ANCILLARY CLASSES AND MAKING USE OF THE CITY

IN METRO'S FORMATIVE STAGES, URBAN Research Corporation reached out to businesses and cultural institutions to ask for direct contributions and for in-kind help. In many respects, this is much like today's charter schools. (And, as in the experience of charter schools, after the initial excitement, the support and willingness to contribute dropped off, and supporting the concept of ancillary classes became more intensive.) Businesses and cultural institutions contributed space

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHERI MILA GERSON

The first week of orientation when Metro opened in February 1970. Mike Greenebaum of Urban Research Corp. with student Bruce Goren and an unidenified person.
CHICAGO TRIBUNE, FEBRUARY 9, 1970

for class meetings, taught a single unit or lesson or taught a full course. Individual placements also were arranged in which students might, for example, work in a law office or medical laboratory, or be tutored at a music conservatory. Classes taught by the regular staff had the flexibility to go out into the city to explore, meet with community people and draw on the expertise of many.

A sampling of ancillary offerings from 1971 includes a course called From State Street to Wall Street. In this course, a broker from A.G. Becker and Co. taught students about the inner workings of the stock market and the overall economy. Students read and discussed a variety of economic issues and visited the Midwest Stock Exchange. In another course, offered by Illinois Bell Telephone Co., students learned about electronic equipment and built strobe lights and wireless intercoms. Students interested in medicine could take a seminar with Dr. Eric Kast at Michael Reese Hospital and were allowed to follow him on rounds through the clinics there. Improvisational Theater had a particularly strong impact on the students. It was taught by Roberta Maguire, a former member of the Second City cast, and other members of Second City, such as Betty Thomas. Quaker Oats Corporation taught a class designed to help students make intelligent food purchases and to learn about the art of food preparation. Film buffs were treated to a course on cinema history taught by John West, a freelance film critic and teacher.

Originally, Urban Research Corporation expected teachers to find ancillaries. We did find some, but as a permanent method, this was unrealistic. A teacher had five or more classes to teach, and hardly had time to go out and speak to people. So by the end of 1971, our principal, Nate Blackman, had appointed two of our teachers as ancillary coordinators. Chris Nugent and Mike Nolan were perfect for the job. Chris, having come from an elite Eastern school, was comfortable with business people and other professionals and was able to convince them to contribute their expertise. Mike had grown up in Chicago and knew it intimately.

TOUGH CHALLENGES FOR ANCILLARY CLASSES

FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS, our ancillary classes and contacts grew, but by 1975, it became increasingly more difficult to recruit and retain commitments. The initial enthusiasm began to wane, particularly as the economy took a plunge. Also, though the ancillary teachers were very dedicated, some expected all students to be outstanding—an unrealistic expectation given Metro's open enrollment standard. When stu-

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BLYTHE OLSHAN

dents cut class, were tardy or came with poor skills, some ancillary teachers were discouraged; they did not have the training, or in some cases the will, to work with them.

Chris and Mike eventually moved on. As the student population and interests changed, the challenges of maintaining the ancillary program increased. The ancillary coordinators worked hard, but the odds were against them. Over the next fifteen years, the CPS board was less than supportive in providing resources for personnel to work on the ancillary programs. Overall, people who taught these ancillary classes were impressed with the Metro program and the Metro students, and essentially were volunteering their time and expertise. But as anyone who has worked with volunteer programs knows, it takes a great deal of effort to continue to locate those volunteers and to coordinate them. Briefly, there was funding to pay some ancillaries; in 1975, for example, Jill Forsberg, a talented actress from Second City, was paid $8 an hour. (This was the going wage given to CPS teachers for after-school classes at the time.) But because of CPS budget crunches, by 1979, Metro lost even this minimal funding and periodically lost funding even for staff coordinators.

The ancillary format played out in a variety of forms, changing over the years. Marine Biology, for example, was originally taught solely by a biologist, Beverly Sorrells, from the Shedd Aquarium. After a few cycles, Mike Liberles, a Metro science teacher, began co-teaching this class. In a BBC video on Metro, Ms. Sorrells said she thought this was the better arrangement. Occasionally, a Metro teacher would work in coordination with a professional in the field. Sometime in the early '70s, I met Harvey Sussman, a lawyer and a relative of a former Metro teacher, who agreed to co-teach a class on the courts. That led to several cycles of You and the Courts, in which Harvey accompanied us to the courts, where we sat in on a variety of civil and criminal cases. Afterward, Harvey answered student questions and encouraged students to analyze what they had seen and heard. This led to some lively

On the day of registration, students navigated between tables to register for each class. If students couldn't get their first choices, they had to scramble to find somthing else.

discussions. As the staff teacher, I also assigned readings, and students gave reports, participated in mock trials, etc.

I don't know if any of these students ever went on to become lawyers, but they certainly had a far clearer picture of the legal system than a basic textbook would have offered. Of course, Harvey was volunteering his time, and like most volunteers, after a few cycles, he found he could not spare the time. In this instance, because I had gained sufficient knowledge about the courts and felt comfortable finding proper trials for students, I was able to offer this class for a few more cycles. But for all the richness ancillary classes could add to a student's experience, this example illustrates the ancillary challenge: To make it work, there is the need for a determined commitment. Such a program must have a staffed, constant search to find new ancillaries and placements.

In reflecting on the ability to adapt Metro ideas to the current school situation, Nina Robinson, the last principal at Metro, remarked that the ancillaries who taught would probably no longer be able to do so under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) because they were not "highly qualified" as teachers. And it is true that while most of those who taught ancillary classes were professionals or experts in their fields, they did not possess the requisite education courses to qualify under the current NCLB. How sad! Being able to draw on the experience and passion of professionals in their chosen fields gave students a window to the real world that only such devoted professionals could offer.

TEACHING THE BASICS

THE BASIC CURRICULUM WAS TAUGHT by the regular Metro staff teachers, who did, of course, have the standard requirements for teaching in their fields. In addition, our flexibility allowed these regular teachers to teach some classes "off certificate." This was energizing for the teachers as well as the students because teachers could share their passion and skills in a variety of areas. The teachers would primarily be teaching their own subjects, but might also offer a course in something they loved or in which the students had expressed a particular interest. For instance, our assistant principal, Lee Alo, who loved ballroom dancing and had won a number of contests, taught classes in ballroom dance, and our math teacher, Blythe Olshan, taught folk dancing. Over the years, several teachers offered cooking classes. I must admit that not all of us who offered outside classes were proficient. For example, though I am just a middling tennis player, I am enthusiastic about tennis and offered to teach it for several cycles. Perhaps the students learned some of the basics, and at least they were out on the courts and actually moving around, but I would never claim the students got really good tennis training.

By 1979, when Metro was moved from 223 N. Michigan to 33 E. Congress, the number of ancillaries had seriously shrunk. And because there was a little more classroom space, it became easier for students to plan most of their classes inside the building. If they took ancillary classes, these tended to be internships or classes at Loop College

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BLYTHE OLSHAN

(now known as Harold Washington College), DePaul University and University of Chicago. By the time Metro was moved to 160 W. Wendell, only a small percentage of students actually took any kind of ancillary classes. Since we had no gym, a number of students arranged to take some kind of physical education at outside institutions such as the Y. This last location was three miles from the center of the city, which made travel time to the ever dwindling ancillary offerings too excessive. The loss of ancillary classes also meant that class size in regular classes increased.

EVALUATIONS & REGISTRATION

IN A MAY 1975 ARTICLE in the Phi Delta Kappa, Mary Frances Crabtree described Metro: "Its curriculum is the city, its learning laboratory is the community, and its lesson is freedom, choice, responsibility." That is a good framework from which to view Metro. Metro existed at a particular time and place in history and probably could not be replicated in the twenty-first century. However, as in all school reforms, some of our programs, approaches, and other strengths survived in different forms in other high schools. Our mantra in those early days was that we were teaching students to "take responsibility for their own education." Of course, this was to be coupled with a good deal of mentoring, supporting and prodding. Our procedures for grading and choosing classes perhaps helped students to practice taking that responsibility.

Instead of grades just being posted in a report book, students met with their teachers at the end of each cycle to discuss their progress. Several days were set aside for this process, to allow time for students and teachers to meet and talk. Teachers then filled out an evaluation form that described the course and what the student had accomplished. A student could be given "credit," "no credit" or "incomplete." If a student received an incomplete, he or she had one cycle (ten weeks) to make up the required work. For some, this helped to keep them on course and made it possible for them to pass classes they might not have completed otherwise. For others, it was a euphemism for "no credit," as they never got around to completing the required work.

As a teacher, I found this a wonderful way to actually work with students, to help them take responsibility and learn to evaluate honestly what they had accomplished and

to set goals for the future. It was also quite a grueling procedure. I would meet with a student for approximately ten minutes and then type out remarks on an evaluation form. Since I usually had eighty to ninety students, by the end of the three days of evaluations, I was pretty worn out.

Over the years, we revised the evaluation forms and the schedules and procedures for this process a number of times. The evaluation process worked reasonably well for most students, but by the mid-'80s, students began to ask for a letter grade on their evaluation along with the credit or no-credit designation. Somehow, though what an "A" meant could vary depending on the teacher, class, etc., this old form of evaluation gave them more security. The old attitude from the '70s of rejecting everything smacking of bureaucracy was slowly dying, and there was a definite return to a more traditional outlook among most students. Giving grades got its final push when the Board of Education required Metro to coordinate with its new computer system. Grades were included in the evaluations, but we continued the evaluation process of meeting with students until we closed in 1991.

Because most colleges still wanted some type of actual grades, our counselor developed a process for converting the evaluation reports to grades. This was a less than scientific and objective process, as some teachers wrote rather extensive comments while others were very brief. Somehow, though, most colleges were satisfied. Eighty to 90 percent of our graduates went on to college, many to top-tier schools such as Harvard, Dartmouth, Williams, and University of Michigan.

Each ten-week cycle, a catalog of courses was prepared, including courses taught by the regular staff and those offered by ancillaries. The catalog included information regarding graduation requirements and gave students some information regarding the nature of each course. By the second or third year, we added a code at the front of the catalog that helped students to navigate through their choices. The code included such items as heavy reading, light reading, group work, independent work, beginning course, older students and younger students. Students met with their counseling group to work out their programs prior to registering. The counselor, who was a regular staff teacher, would then try to help students think through the best plan for themselves.

On the day of registration, though, the students had to navigate between the various tables to register for each class. There was a limit on each class, so if students couldn't get their first choices, they would have to scramble to find others to fit into their schedules. As we learned to refine this process, we began staggering the registration using various schemes to ensure a level of fairness. Several students have told me recently that this registration process prepared them for college.

METRO GOVERNANCE

"YOU FOLKS AT METRO ARE always paranoid. You always think you're going to be closed down." It was probably sometime in the early 1980s, and I had run into Margaret Harrigan, then district superintendent of the area in which Metro was located. I had met her at some function and asked for her support to prevent Metro from being moved or closed.

She was right; we were paranoid. But that was part of the landscape in maintaining our small high school within CPS. Virtually from the time we started, we were in some struggle or other with the board. We were trying out a new, more open pedagogy, and the regular bureaucrats found this threatening.

Urban Research Corporation originally sold the Metro concept to the Board of Education as a school that would be modeled after Philadelphia Parkway. Superintendent James Redmond accepted the proposal in 1969. URC went to him as it developed the idea further, but when the school opened, the district superintendent, Bessie Lawrence, was given direct control of the school. She had not been involved in most of the negotiations or planning, and was basically very traditionalist in her approach. Thus was set up a scenario for conflict from the very beginning.

URC was to recruit the principal and teachers and set the agenda for the school. It had chosen Nate Blackman as the principal, but URC still remained in charge. For the first year and a half, Nate was caught in the middle of a three-way governance struggle. He was the principal and therefore had to answer to the line staff of CPS, but on the other hand, URC was still relating to the general superintendent and expecting Nate to carry out its ideas. By the end of the first year, these differences became more manifest, and Nate simply told Don Moore, the URC representative, that he was the principal and had to answer to CPS, and therefore he would do things as he felt were appropriate.

URC's contract expired in June 1972, taking away any buffer that had existed between the board staff and Metro. Nate Blackman was in charge of the school, but the district superintendent, Bessie Lawrence, and the area superintendent, Angie Caruso, were so opposed to Metro that they did everything they could to put roadblocks in our path. Nate largely played interference for the staff and school, often to his own detriment.

In November 1972, the district superintendent gave Nate an unsatisfactory rating known as an E-1. She didn't bargain, however, for the response she would get from the Metro community. Students, staff and parents rallied to Nate's cause. Mike Royko wrote about him in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and students and staff held a protest rally in front of the CPS headquarters. The staff even conducted a sit-in in the superintendent's office, albeit, we caved in and left amicably after a few hours. We weren't quite ready to go to jail over this! The Metro Parents Council called a meeting to which practically all the parents came. By January 1973, the E-1 had been lifted, but this hardly kept the district superintendent from harassing Nate. A lesser man would have capitulated and left the school. Nate was not to be cowed. He continued to find ways to maneuver through the system and to create space for Metro to survive and thrive. It wasn't easy. We lost the right to choose our staff by 1975, staffing was cut and innumerable demands were made on Nate to conform to traditional procedures.

For the first ten or fifteen years, educators from around the country and the world came to study Metro. A number of "school without walls" high schools were developed in other cities. (As far as I know only one—in Washington, D.C.—

Metro Free Press, 1972

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BLYTHE OLSHAN

Yearbook, 1980

still exists today.) This was the opposite of what occurred in Chicago. For though Metro was created with the idea that its experiences would be used to inform changes in the rest of the system, this never happened. We were often given directives and told we had to conform in one way of another, but I cannot ever remember a time when we were asked to share our ideas with teachers in other schools. However, sometime in the late '80s, CPS developed a catalog of places schools might use for field trips. Many of the places listed were sites we had used regularly. A one-shot field trip was, however, very different from the in-depth involvement Metro students enjoyed with ancillaries and the freedom of regular class teachers to take students into the city.

Paul Goren, a former student who now works in educational policy, told me why he thought Metro didn't have an impact on the rest of the system. "The lesson from Metro is how a system like Chicago Public Schools eats its young. There were moments of innovation that actually had some influence. You could make an argument that Metro was the first magnet high school that led to the Whitney Youngs. You could make an argument when you look at the curriculum of North Side College Prep. They have Wednesday off, or a Wednesday when they're doing seminars. There's a school on the West Side that has kids do a once-a-week internship. The Metro experience shows that CPS is not nimble enough to deal with innovation. Metro was a kind of single 'boutique.' I deal with policy on a macro level, so the question is, if you only have one, how can it do much? There was never, in policy words, anything 'in the theory of change' about what this alternative school should be for the rest of the system. It was just a boutique high school. We have a variety of schools—magnets, etc.; we have a patchwork in search of a quilt."

THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR SPACE

METRO WAS KNOWN AS "THE school without walls," but of course, the school was always housed in a building—in fact, over our twenty-one years, we were in six buildings! According to the basic idea that Urban Research Corporation sold the Board of Education, we would have very small "headquarters," and then classes would meet in various places in the city. As it turned out, this was largely in the Loop and nearby locations. In addition, the plan was for students to study right along with some businesses, labs, cultural centers and the like. In some ways, the buildings we inhabited reflected our changing fortunes and the changing relationships with outside businesses and community organizations.

Though we could never prove it, we always thought that one of the main reasons URC was able to "sell" the Metro

idea was because the Board of Education thought the system would save on building costs. (In fact, because Loop real estate is expensive and because any building students inhabit has to be brought up to a stringent code, I think it actually ended up costing somewhat more.)

Over the twenty-one years, five of the six locations were in or near the Loop. This had many advantages. Students could easily travel to businesses and cultural institutions for class. Equally, if not more important, locating the school in the Loop meant that students from many neighborhoods could meet and study together. Students were chosen by lottery, and the school was required to maintain the same racial balance as the entire system. In 1970, that was about 60 percent minority and 40 percent white. By the time Metro closed, more than 90 percent were students of color and less than 10 percent were white. But still, gang barriers, racial barriers and socioeconomic barriers were at least breached by providing this neutral location for students.

Metro's first location, at 220 S. State, was basically one very large open space on the fifteenth floor. As Nate Blackman tells the story, in this first group of 150 students there were some who had never been in the Loop before. "They got into the elevators and the elevator stopped at the fifteenth floor—Ooh! And some of them spent all day long riding up and down the elevator. And so we got them up there on the fifteenth floor. We made the presentation to them, and they broke up into their different groups with the teachers. Everyone was enthusiastic because they were given a chance to be around there, and no one knew what was happening. But it looked impressive. It evolved with the help of URC. We stayed at 220 from February to June. And at that time, they asked us to leave because the students took over the building. They would smoke in the bathroom and put cigarette butts in the urinal and the urinals would overflow—all that kind of stuff. It was just a learning process, and then at the end of six months, we moved to 537 S. Dearborn."

We moved to 537 S. Dearborn in September 1970 with an enrollment now of 350 students. Though we were supposed to occupy the second, third and fourth floors, nothing was ready on time, so we started out on some upper floors. Conditions there were pretty primitive. I remember one student who was entranced with some walk-in vaults. I really worried that he would lock himself in. Then finally, in November or December, we moved into the second, third and fourth floors. By March 1971, however, we were forced to vacate the building due to fire code violations. This could have been the death knell for Metro, but we had already developed a real esprit de corps among both the students and staff. A few of the faculty got on the phone to scare up temporary locations. For five weeks, we traipsed around to a variety of makeshift venues. And finally, the board made the required repairs and we returned to 537 for another four years.

And then another move—this time to 223 N. Michigan Ave. On the surface, this seemed a step up. After all it was on Michigan Avenue, and the floor space was considerably larger. However, from the outset, we knew this would be temporary. In fact, when Joe Hannon, then the facilities manager for CPS, came to speak to students, staff and parents about the anticipated move, he was incensed by my questions about the likelihood of another move fairly soon. We should be grateful that he had found us this lovely building, he said. Within four years, we moved to another building, at 33 E. Congress.

In some respects, the Michigan Avenue building was nice. It was still in the Loop, with easy access to public transportation. It had an auditorium that could be used for plays and presentations and had a fair amount of open space for teachers' desks or offices. However, this open space was also one of the biggest drawbacks. At the time we moved, "open classrooms" were the new great educational panacea. So, on one floor, several classes could be meeting with no real divider. When we confronted the board's point man about this, he said that students in the history class could be learning algebra from the adjoining class at the same time. Yeah, right! Passersby were not too enthused to see our students lounging outside the building, either. Perhaps that speeded our exit from Michigan Avenue. Shortly after Metro left, the building was razed to make way for a much larger multi-use building.

And then, on to 33 E. Congress for eight years. Again, this was still in the Chicago Loop, so students could travel to outside classes fairly easily. Because it didn't have an auditorium, we made do in the one larger open space used for a lunchroom and student lounge. And for more serious pre-

"Open classrooms" were a new educational panacea—on one floor, several classes could be meeting in essentially the same space. A board advocate for the arrangement said that students could learn history and algebra at the same time. Yeah, right!

33 E. Congress

sentations, we used the auditorium at Jones High School, which was only a block or two away. Having more real classroom space in this building was a mixed blessing. While it made it easier to locate standard classes inside, it also led to fewer classes outside. We already were losing many of our ancillaries, and this accelerated the process. Students still attended classes at the Art Institute and Lincoln Park Zoo, and their physical education was frequently taught in Grant Park. And we still had the luxury of taking many field trips for regular classes. True to past experience, though, the basic necessities for a school had to be fought for. As union representative, I had to file a grievance to get blackboards in the classrooms.

Our last real single location was at 160 W. Wendell, an old school that had been used as offices for some board purposes. By the time we got there, the building had been vacant for several years and probably had not been cleaned for as many years. This was a much smaller facility, but the most serious drawback was its location. It was on the near North Side about three miles from the Loop, which made traveling to outside classes far more difficult. It was much easier for students to choose classes that met inside the building. The number of ancillary classes was much reduced, but our own staff still found ways to take students into the city.

In 1991, when Mayor Daley was looking to save money by closing some schools, Metro was put on the chopping block along with a number of other schools. We organized some demonstrations and testified against this move. When we went home in June, we fully expected to return for the fall semester. A few days before Labor Day, we were ordered to move our books and other supplies to Crane High School, a large, troubled high school on the near West Side of Chicago. Parents and students and teachers once again mounted a protest, but to no avail. One of our strengths had always been a very active parent council with some very savvy members. By 1991, we still had some dedicated parents, but a lot less political know-how.

Interestingly enough, those parents most opposed to the move lived near Crane. Technically, the board was not closing Metro, just establishing it as a "program" within Crane. Since Crane was so far from the Loop, this spelled a death

knell for outside classes and meant that Metro would be reduced to a very traditional "program." Of the 350 students enrolled, only sixty chose to stay. And by October, the board ordered a reduction of the staff. (As for me, I couldn't stand the thought of staying for the "funeral," so I was transferred to Richards Vocational High School on the Southwest Side. This school also had been on the list to be closed. However, it had utilized its relationship with a well-connected community organization to save itself.)

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE Metro closed. It was a great ride. For the students and teachers, Metro still lives in their memories and as a force in their lives. As you read their stories, you will realize that Metro changed over those twenty-one years. It fought the Board of Education on a variety of issues and lost most of its ancillaries—a major attraction in the early years. The political scene changed, and students and teachers gravitated to more traditional forms. Yet as one reads these stories, some things stand out. What students always valued was, first and foremost, the open relationship between students and staff and the development of a sense of community. Over and over again, students say, "We were family." The practice of addressing everyone by first name and the easy availability of teachers gave students a sense of stability and groundedness. Not everything to be learned was in the textbook. Students went out and learned by doing, and most important, they learned to ask questions. Teachers felt respected and supported. They knew they could try things, and if they didn't work, they could just try again.

It's not likely that there will ever be a Metro again, but how to make high school relevant and effective for the twenty-first century is still a major concern. Perhaps some lessons can be garnered from the Metro experience.

ADDENDUM

Here Is A Very Brief List of Some Careers That Metro Alums Have Attained:

Lawyer
Judge
Network Administrator In Law Office
German Translator
Graphic Designer
First African American Woman To Be Promoted To Battalion Chief In Chicago Fire Department
Construction Contracts Administration,CPS
Educator—Preschool Through University
Educational Researcher
Principal
Promoter Of Education And Arts Programs For Sustainable Living
Director Of Alternative School
Doctor
Policy Researcher
Arts Manager
Social Worker
Office Worker
Nurse Practitioner
Business Owner
Building Trades, Housing—Nonprofit
Operation And Project Manager
Navy, Army, Air Force Officer And Soldier
Police Officer
It Professional
Paralegal
Field Biologist
Geologist
Forest Ranger
Carpenter
Truck Driver
Probation Officer
Entertainment Business—Video Lighting Production, Director, Costume Designer
Music Performer/Musician
Ice Capades Dancer—Now Legal Secretary
Performance Artist
Cinematographer
Farmer
Printer
Potter
Health Field—Nonprofit Public Health
Nutrition Educator
Entrepreneur
Operating Dispatcher—Com Ed
Secretary
Science Research Center Head
Computer Training
Writer
Editor
Chef/Culinary Arts Educator
Fisheries Management
Community Leader
Labor Union President
Artist
Engineer
Motivational Speaker
Basketball Player In The NBA
Mom, Dad And Grandparent—And Even Great-Grandparent

TIMELINE

METRO AND ITS ERA

1962–'65: School boycotts protesting CPS segregation—part of what led to Metro's founding

1969: Urban Research Corporation proposes development of an experimental high school.to Chicago Board of Education.

Feb. 1970: Metro opens at 220 S. State with 150 students chosen by lottery, 5 teachers and principal Nate Blackman.

Sept. 1970: Metro moved to 537 S. Dearborn. 350 students enrolled—the same enrollment it will have until its final years.

1977
Star Wars released

Winter, 1978–'79
89.7 inches of snow fall on Chicago

Sept. 1979: Metro moves to 33 E. Congress.

1979
Jane Byrne Elected Mayor

1980
Ronald Reagan Elected President

1983
Harold Washington elected Mayor

1986: U.S. Department of Education gives Metro an award for excellence in education.

January 1987: Metro relocates to 160 W. Wendell.

June 1987: Nina Robinson chosen as new principal.

Sept 1991: Metro closed and relocated at Crane H.S. as a "program." Parents, teachers and students protested unsuccessfully. Only 60 students remained in the program.

March, 1971: March-Fire code violations forced evacuation of the building. Classes relocated to various buildings around the loop for almost a month. Students, teachers and parents mount demonstrations to ensure Metro's survival.

1972
Richard Nixon Reelected President

Sears Tower Opens

Nov. 1972: Principal Nathaniel Blackman issued an unsatisfactory performance rating by District Supt. Bessie Lawrence. Students, parents and teachers organized protest marches, sit-ins, rallies, and letter writing campaigns to support Nate.

1976
Mayor Richard J. Daley Dies

Sept. 1975: Metro moves to 223 N. Michigan Ave.

1975
Viet Nam war ends

Jan. 1973: Nate's unsatisfactory rating is lifted.

1976: CPS board rescinds agreement to allow Metro to choose a staff that would be supportive of the Metro philosophy.

1974
Richard Nixon Resigns

June 1986: Nate Blackman leaves Metro.

1984
Michael Jordan drafted by Bulls

1985
Barack Obama first moves to Chicago

1986
Bears win Superbowl XX

Sept. 1986: Roland Long is acting principal.

1991–2001: Metro "program" gradually absorbed into Crane H.S. programs. Students attend classes at the Art Institute one afternoon a week and some science classes taught outside the school building, but all others taught at Crane.

METRO STORIES

The story of Metro is best told through those who experienced it—students, faculty and parents. I have been collecting these stories for the past seven years through face-to-face interviews, e-mails, Facebook, etc. The reunion in June 2010 accelerated this process. Enjoy! **P.B.**

INITIATORS

Before Metro ever opened its doors, there were people working to make it a reality. As part of his contract, James Redmond, the superintendent of Chicago Public Schools from 1966 to 1975, agreed to develop an innovative high school. **John Naisbitt,** *CEO of Urban Research Corporation, obtained a contract to help in the development of such a high school. He was joined by* **Donn Kesselheim**, *and the two worked for over a year with Dr. Redmond to get clearance for the school. In 1969, they were joined by* **Don Moore** *and* **Tom Wilson**, *doctoral students at Harvard, who were working on a plan for a "school without walls." Mike Greenebaum and Dick Johnson became part of the Metro cohort later.*

JOHN NAISBITT

(from an interview in 2011 with his daughter, Claire Naisbitt Schwadron, who graduated from Metro in 1973):

I KNEW OF SUPERINTENDENT REDMOND (and "knew" him professionally) when he worked at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., in the mid-'60s. Redmond was well known by the department. Once back in Chicago, I understood that Redmond was under pressure to innovate, to offer some alternative learning, so I suggested that the Board of Education subcontract the task of developing an alternative high school to Urban Research Corporation. I don't really know why Redmond was obligated under his contract to develop an innovative school. I think Redmond was trying to show leadership by creating an experimental high school. There was ferment for creative solutions, and alternative lifestyles were very visible.(It was, after all, 1969–'70!)

DONN KESSELHEIM

(from a phone interview on June 12, 2011):

How did you get involved with Metro?

Kesselheim: I was working as principal at New Trier High School and was offered a position as principal at the first school without walls, Philadelphia Parkway High School. I didn't accept the job, but I did go to see it and was very impressed. I then approached Superintendent Redmond about such a school. It took a full year of negotiations to get clearance for the school.

Why did you think Metro could be a good idea for a school?

It came after the assassination of Martin Luther King. American society was in an uproar. I felt it was difficult to continue business as usual and was looking for something to do, some way to make some kind of a statement. Public education was at something of an impasse because students didn't want the kind of education they were getting. They wanted a kind that they felt was important. I began working with John Naisbitt of Urban Research Corporation to develop a plan for a school that would meet some of these needs. We had two requirements for students: One, they had to want to go to the school, and two, there were no requirements for entrance.

You worked closely with the business community on this project. Why do you think the business community was interested?

They felt the students from CPS were not prepared to hold a job. I worked with the businesses to get them to provide space and also classes that would be there and connected in some way to the space. So, newspaper at the *Chicago Tribune*, art classes at the Art Institute, biology at Shedd Aquarium. We hoped that students would come into contact with the people there and learn from them.

Did you have any contact/relationship with Chicago Public Schools staff?

Bessie Lawrence, a district superintendent, was at the meetings and plotted to stop it at every step. I felt she and the rest of the staff thought that having a Metro implied a criticism of the rest of the CPS schools. When the issue of hiring a principal came up, she opposed Nate Blackman. I remember getting really furious and saying to Dr. Redmond, "Do you realize that your superintendent is a racist?" Redmond got really red in the face, and I left the meeting thinking that I had caused us to lose the whole contract. Two days later, Manford Byrd called to say Nate was hired.

In 1987, I returned to Metro as chair of the North Central Association, an accrediting agency for schools. I don't think a single item of our recommendations were carried out. The document we produced probably sat on someone's desk for nine months. (Of course, one recommendation was carried out when the board appointed Nina Robinson as principal in September 1987.)

DON MOORE

(on develping the plan for Metro High School (from a speech at Seeds of Change Conference, June 25, 2010):

I CAME TO CHICAGO IN August 1969 to join the staff of Urban Research Corporation in starting Metro High School, as part of a team of consultants. John Naisbitt and Donn Kesselheim had already negotiated an agreement that Urban Research staff would serve as

consultants in starting a high school without walls as part of the Chicago Public Schools.

Tom Wilson and I were finishing doctoral studies at Harvard and had written a proposal to help establish a high school without walls in a major city. We were negotiating with several school systems about opportunities to set up a school without walls. At that point, we made a connection with Urban Research Corporation.

In the planning semester and in the first three semesters of Metro's operation, the Urban Research consultants were working on the school's basic design, seeking external partners, teaching classes and helping fight with the school system bureaucracy to get the basic resources and autonomy we needed to make the school successful. Superintendent Redmond insisted that Metro become part of the traditional bureaucracy of districts and areas, while we wanted to report directly to his office. We lost that fight, but a critical victory came when we were able to get Nate Blackman appointed as principal despite the district superintendent's objections.

Another overwhelming victory came when a large number of students from every neighborhood in the city applied for admission for the school's first 150 openings and were admitted by lottery to certainly one of the most diverse high schools in the country—in what is still the most segregated big city in the U.S.

Metro allowed me to exercise my creativity as a teacher—designing courses like Halsted Street, in which the class interviewed leaders in communities along Halsted Street, such as Florence Scala, who led the fight against the destruction of her community to make way for the University of Illinois at Chicago.

I was consistently amazed by the creativity of staff in designing courses and in hanging in during the interminable staff-student meetings, and by the talents unleashed in many students when they did things like studying acting at Second City.

A victory came when a large number of students from every neighborhood applied for admission for the school's first 150 openings

Don went on to start Designs for Change, a Chicago-based research and reform group. He was instrumental in designing and passing the Chicago School Reform Act, which created an elected local school council at each school, which had (and still has) real powers and included elected parents, community members, teachers and the principal at each school.

TOM WILSON

(speaking at Seeds of Change Conference, June 25, 2010), on how the politics of the time influenced him, Don and others:

BEFORE WE CAME TO HARVARD, both Don and I had been engaged in a number of actual school projects, mostly urban. Don had worked in the Civil Rights movement in the South, and I had been in the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C. So it's important to understand that we were responding to a lot of things going on in the world—not just making things up out of our heads. This was the era after the '60s, where a lot of folks thought society should be restructured and made much more human. Central to understanding our thoughts were the things that were going on—*Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, and the whole country was wrestling with, "What is integration, and how can it be made to work?"We were both involved in research on integration. In our proposal, the first thing we said about the school was that it would be integrated. The Coleman Report had suggested that poverty was the key issue, so there was great skepticism about what the schools could do. We thought we were taking up the challenge.

We had planned to establish both a student organization and a parent organization. The parents actually created a new kind of organization. In March of 1970, they had a meeting to develop bylaws. Into that meeting walked 15 to 20 students. They made a very dramatic entrance. Their message was, "Students have an organization. This is our school. If you want an organization, you need to join ours."A raucous discussion of the generation gap followed, and the parents never passed their bylaws that evening. The parents did become very effective. The students just had a head start on them, as they had been dealing with the building crisis. The management of 220 S. State had demanded that Metro vacate because the tenants objected to the boys hanging around the girls' bathroom. Nate had called students together and laid down the law, and students had apologized and changed their practice so much that the management was willing to let them stay.

The whole participation of business was critical to the founding of the school. That hadn't been in our original plan, but Dr. Redmond was very interested in that, so we added it. This, of course, became a very popular idea in the '80s and '90s.

After he left Metro, Tom worked with the Essential Schools program and now has his own consulting firm.

NATE BLACKMAN

Nate Blackman was principal of Metro from February 1970–1986. He came to Metro from Walter Reed Elementary School where as principal he had encouraged teachers to choose new texts for teaching reading. Previous to that he had served as assistant principal at Tesla Elementary School and as the Human Relations Coordinator for Chicago Public Schools. These experiences gave him a broad knowledge of the CPS bureaucracy and helped him to navigate the many struggles Metro had.

He spoke about his experiences as principal of Metro at the Seeds of Change Conference June 25, 2010.

I THOUGHT, "IF I'M PRINCIPAL, I've got to be visible. If I'm principal, I've got to involve students more. So I told students, there's nothing you can't do if you tell yourself you can do it, and we talked on that. Whatever you do, if somebody asks you to do something, have no problems in saying, why? Why must I do it? Be able to question. And so students learned to ask questions about things and to become involved."

Another thing—I found out that being a leader meant you know some things, but you don't know everything, and therefore we needed to involve teachers in making decisions, in deciding how classes were to be taught—to give them the ability to feel comfortable. What I told teachers: "Develop classes, and I'll be responsible for the consequences of what you do."We told students to become involved in teaching and to become involved in everything that was going on. What we tried to do was to give students a sense of confidence in themselves, to believe in themselves. We gave teachers the sense that there was nothing they could not do. There was no such thing as failure. Everything was a learning experience, so if you did something and it didn't work out, you didn't fail, because you had learned something.

The other thing I did was to hire people to do great things. Chris Nugent and Mike Nolan were the first two to go out and look for classes and develop classes for students to take.

And then when we came together, we recognized we were not a school; we were a community. We were a group of people—all working for the same goals. We brought the parents in and made them feel they had a say as to what was going on.

You realize that the board could not take this; they couldn't understand it. I put it like this: We were in a war. The board was the Pentagon, sitting there making all the decisions. The students and teachers were the front-line troops fighting the battle, and the Pentagon was still fighting with tanks, and we were in guerrilla warfare every day, and so we had to fight with what we had. So we developed as we went along.

My objective was to give people a chance to be themselves, to do things for themselves, and I gave teachers a chance to develop classes. Now, they developed classes that I thought were the worst classes. They developed classes called "I Hate Math."Students could pick out the class, and they thought, "I'm going to register for that class!" and would take it. Metro succeeded because teachers developed classes that had titles that made students interested in becoming involved in a class. It made students looking at the catalog say, "I want this."

FACUL

Nate Blackman at the 1980 Prom, and at his desk

We had Chris and Mike, and later Shelby and Preston, finding spaces for classes, and we had the business community becoming involved and also students becoming involved. It was a learning experience that everybody had to learn how to become involved in.

The fights that I had with the board: Number one—they didn't want to have students getting credit for classes taught by outsiders because they didn't have the educational background. Another fight was over the curriculum: "How can you have a curriculum here when you're talking about something and your walls aren't the way they're supposed to be?," or they said, "This simply can't be done." I had a fight with my superintendent over how much trash was around in a place over which I had no control. It was a minor thing we were fighting over that had nothing to do with education. The thing that fight was about was that the superintendent didn't want to acknowledge that the board didn't know what was going on. They did not want to learn a new way of guerrilla warfare. They still wanted the tanks

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and that kind of teaching to go on. And so it was a constant battle of trying to prove that these teachers knew what they were doing. "How can teachers develop a class that says this? How can no grade be given? How can you do this?" We were always trying to defend what we were doing.

The reason my head is as it is now: I've been on a teaching circuit. I'd go into a meeting with a superintendent and she'd say: "Mr. B., why do you do this? What's that?" And I would just scratch my head. You know, back in those days, integration was not the thing, and so I was still a black principal. And I'd scratch my head and say, "I'm sorry, and we won't be late again." That's why I'm getting bald so quickly. I'd scratch my head so many times trying to defend what was going on. I'd go in to see the superintendent for a meeting. We had decided to paint a classroom with three different colors—beautiful colors. I've got the curriculum in this hand and the color scheme in the other. For the whole one and one-half hours, curriculum was put down, and we were asked ,"Why are you painting a room three different colors?"

So we had to go through these processes and answer, "How can you give students freedoms? How can you let students walk around?" I was there for sixteen years. In that time, students traveled all over the city, and not one time was there a notice sent to the school about the misbehavior of the students in the streets. That was a compliment to the students.

We were one of the first schools where ladies came wearing pants. We couldn't get enough money, so we were one of the first schools to put in pop machines in the schools, from which we got the money to use for our special things. We were one of the first schools where students could travel outside the city. Steve Everett took students to the Indiana Dunes. It was the creativity of teachers, not

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

me, who created classes that made students interested. It was the creativity of students who taught classes, who said that through this, "I am somebody—you're letting me teach. I learned." So I don't stand and take credit for anything, because Metro was a community. Metro was something that would be hard to exist today because I don't know how many administrators will want to give students and teachers the same level of authority that they had, and that's what made Metro what it was: a feeling that this was not a school—a feeling that this was a place where we could all come and be there, where you could sit, talk. Where you could come early: School started at 8 a.m.; students were there at 7:30.And school closed at 3 p.m.; students were there 'til 5 or 6. It was a place that was home.

We had students who took every class they could possibly take. Some of them graduated in three years. Other students said, "I'm just going to lay back here, this is so nice. I'm going to take five years to graduate, maybe six." As you look back on it now, the students who had the chance and opportunity to really utilize the school utilized it, really utilized it. The others who didn't utilize it, they learned how to socialize, to become involved in everything. We had no gym teacher, and we had to get a gym teacher. Students and teachers decided on that. There are so many things we didn't have, but we involved everybody and then we got the parents involved.

I'm going to end with this. I got an E-1. An E-1, to those who don't know, was a rating that says, "You're the worst person in the world, the poorest of teachers, the least of all we want. If we could get rid of you, we would, and you've got ten weeks to correct it." So I got the E-1.I went back into the school, called all the students together and said, "Look, the board gave me an E-1," and the students thought that meant *excellent*, and they started cheering—rah-rah. I had to explain to them what the E-1 was. And they said, "This can't happen to you," and so, with coordinated efforts of students and staff, they mounted a protest. You have an Internet now. They had the phone. They called all over the country, and people rallied around Metro High School and me. Students and teachers protested. Well, the board had to rescind the E-1, but they gave me hell over it.

But that wasn't the issue; the issue was, it was students, teachers and parents together, and that's what is lacking today in schools. There is no unity between anyone. Everyone is separated. Students are made to feel, "You're a student and no more." Teachers are made to feel like, "You're a teacher, but I'm the boss,"

and that is not what made schools like Metro exist. The Parkway program was there, but people came not to see Parkway; they came to visit Metro High School. Superintendents from all over the country came. There were people, famous educators, who looked at Metro High School as being the top high school in the country, and it was that way because of the students and teachers who put their whole life and their passion into Metro. Metro became their home, their thing, and that was a commitment you don't get everyone to make.

And that is why we say Metro exists today. Metro lives because everyone who went to Metro, everyone who graduated from Metro, they are Metro and that's what Metro is. Metro is not a school, it is the people; it is the personalities of the people, whether you're up here or down there. Tom talked about racial background of the students. If you were black, white, Hispanic, you were Metro. And when you walked out, you represented Metro. That's what made Metro a success, and that's why after all these years, Metro still lives—because each and every one of the students there was Metro.

JUDY QUANBECK

Judy Quanbeck started with Metro in February 1970, the very first semester and left Metro only when it was moved to Crane in September 1990.

IN THE BEGINNING, PARTICIPATION IN Metro was all encompassing. As faculty, we held daily meetings— sometimes more than one a day—to share our observations about student governance, teaching, learning, scheduling obstacles, ancillary classes and miscellaneous minutiae, such as determining how many student bus tokens to provide, or trying to defuse the latest complaint about student behavior in the elevators from the building management (it was similar to "driving while black").

Students also participated in many ways. During that first half year, the student body frequently met to discuss governance from their perspective; we as staff would primarily observe, but occasionally raise our hands to contribute to the discussion. As we moved into the '70–'71 school year, students were included in the faculty interview process, which shocked more than a few candidates, while some loved the practice. You can guess which teachers were recommended for hire. Our school headquarter space was more comfortable when we relocated to 537 S. Dearborn. It became common for students to be "hanging" in the building long after classes had ended.

AS WE MOVED INTO THE '70–'71 SCHOOL YEAR, STUDENTS WERE INCLUDED IN THE FACULTY INTERVIEW PROCESS, WHICH SHOCKED SOME CANDIDATES, WHILE SOME LOVED IT. YOU CAN GUESS WHICH TEACHERS WERE RECOMMENDED FOR HIRE.
JQ

After a time, we needed to seriously address how the Metro academic experience would demonstrate competencies. In any case, if students were unable to move into higher education or work environments because they had attended Metro, how would that work for either the students or the school? Thus, we needed to translate academic experience (no grades, no GPAs—just written evaluations between teacher and student after each ten weeks of classes). It was easier to communicate the sense of freedom that was part of another mantra, "freedom and responsibility." How could we provide useful information for that experience? As someone most interested in validating the Metro experience, and as the school counselor, I took on a significant piece of that challenge. Meeting and consulting with a variety of educators from colleges and private high schools provided some basis for establishing useful information. No doubt the demand to provide higher education to a broader spectrum of students during the Civil Rights era aided the process.

There was an air of excitement. Teachers and students couldn't wait to get to school every day. And we commonly stayed late to work and hang out.

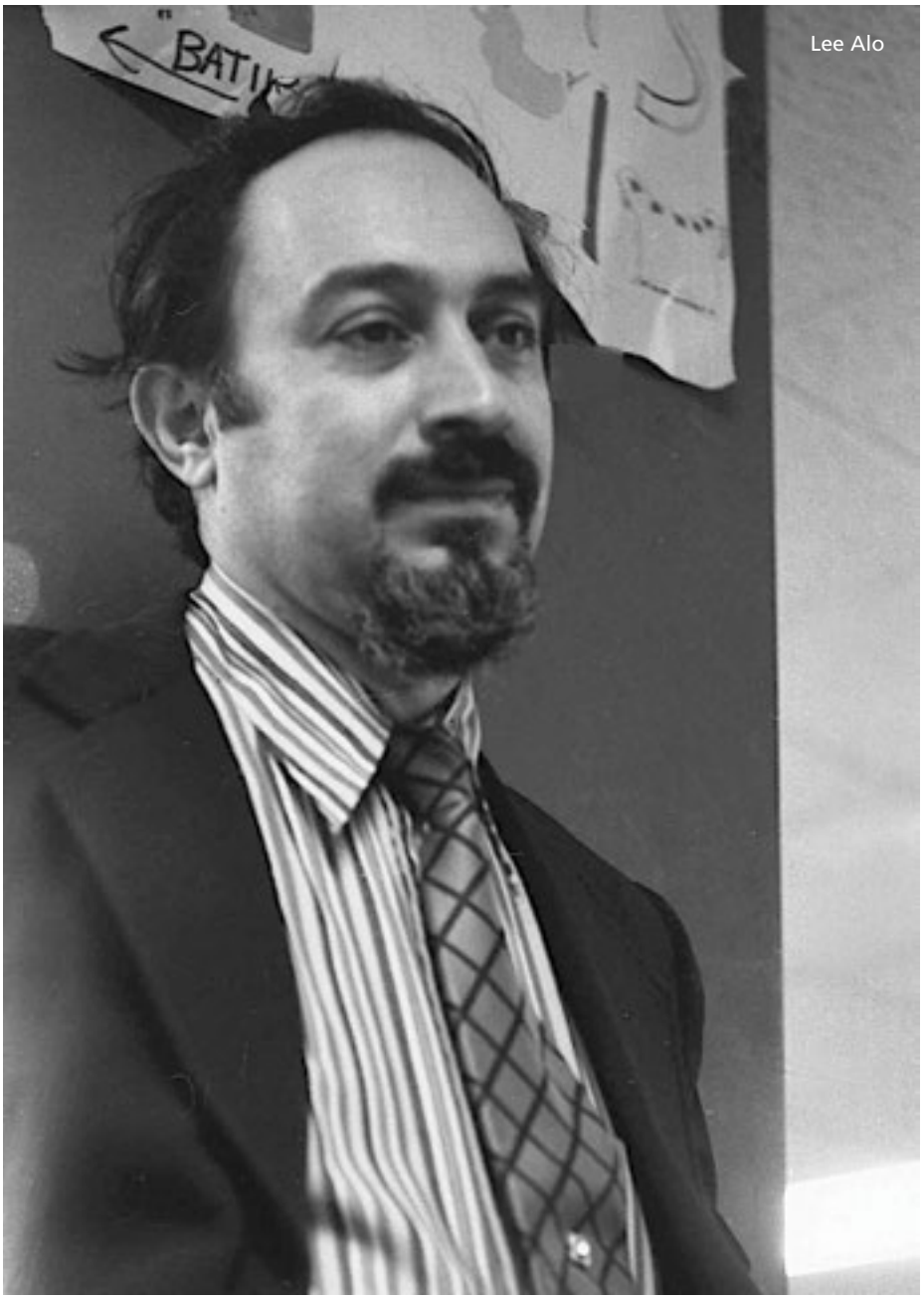
We never knew what to do with substitute teachers. We felt it would be helpful to have people supervise, make copies, whatever, but it was difficult to have a "green" teacher go off to Christ the King Lutheran church to teach Story Workshop or the First National Bank to teach game theory. Larnell Baines was a student who wore a suit every day and looked older. One day, when a substitute teacher finished making ditto copies, Larnell informed him that he might as well go home, that we didn't have any more work for him to do that day—and the substitute left.

LEE ALO

Lee Alo was assistant principal at Metro from 1970 to 1991 (from a phone conversation, September 2011):

LEE TAUGHT IN CPS FOR forty-four years, but the twenty-one years spent in Metro were the most enjoyable and fruitful years of his experience. To Lee, "Metro was Nirvana." As he describes it, "The role of the assistant principal is giving support and understanding to the students and staff to achieve the goals and objectives of the school. The assistant principal must be constantly ready, willing and able to help maintain a positive social and academic climate and help maintain its academic and social goals. Student discipline problems are dealt with by the assistant principal." But of course, at Metro, Lee did far more. He taught Spanish, French and Italian, archery, cooking and most popular of all, ballroom dancing. The students in the ballroom dancing class were inspired to plan a prom. And at Metro, the assistant principal certainly had to be a "jack of all trades." According to Lee, "The janitorial services were nil in the several buildings we inhabited over the years, and so I personally made repairs where possible to help maintain the structures. Locker cleanup was also a task at the end of the year."

A story Lee told illustrates how he handled discipline and kept things going. "Two



Lee Alo

girls were brought into my office. They had been fighting, and each still had hair in her hands. When I asked what the problem was, one replied, 'She's rolling her eyes at me.' I told them they should speak very slowly because I had to write down everything they had to say. [Lee always had piles of spiral notebooks filled with these stories. And of course, this was as much a technique to get the students to stop and think about the issues as it was for recording events.] I told them we could suspend them, call their parents or they could make peace and apologize to each other and go away as friends. And they chose to be friends!"

EDDIE SCHWARTZ

Eddie Schwartz, an ancillary who worked at WIND Radio, on the concept of the school without walls:

I like the concept of the school. I think it gives a whole new face to education. They should do more of it. It makes kids feel alive, like they're really doing something. I think the concept is also energizing for the instructor. You feel like you're making a contribution. You feel like maybe you're igniting a fire in the heart or mind of a student or two, and they might follow through and go into it as a calling. Vince Waldron, Monica Buckley, Bill Dahl—they were Metro students of mine who all got into media, and I think that's a pretty good average. And there may be others I don't know about.

LEO GORENSTEIN

Leo Gorenstein, who taught math at Metro from 1985 to 1991, on the influence of Metro on students:

I THINK METRO HAD A great influence on our students. It broadened their horizons and gave them confidence to try things others didn't. I have that feeling but can't give a specific story. One funny story that might fit into this a little was when I got a call from Kenneth King, who said he wanted to come over to our house in the summer one day. I was very happy about this and had a special place in my heart for Kenneth, not only because he was a nice guy, but because he was my first student to pass the AP calculus test. He came over and I was surprised to find out he was there to sell us knives, not visit. Anyway, we bought a cake knife that was very good—we still have it, and we always call it the Kenneth King knife. When school started again, I told Gloria Cornish [an English teacher from 1982–'91] about it, and she said that Kenneth had gotten her, too.

PAULA COFRESI

Paula Cofresi who taught art and Spanish at Metro from 1970 to 1973, on her interview at Metro:

IT WAS THE SPRING OF 1970, when I attended an educational workshop at the American Friends Service Committee with an old Hyde Park friend, that I first learned about Metro High School. My friend was very active in the women's movement and involved in many social change organizations and activities. At the

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

workshop, I met Jane Erickson, who told us about the new high school without walls that had just started. I was intrigued by the project and excited when, three days later, someone called asking me to come in for an interview that next week. Metro was looking for an art teacher and a Spanish teacher, and they heard I was qualified to teach both.

I sat with a couple of interviewees around a big circle. The interviewing committee consisted of a couple teachers, a few students, a parent and an administrator. I was nervous, but I did my best to project my strengths. I decided to be honest and have fun with the process. Everyone took turns asking questions, one after the other, giving me little time to think. I noticed the pale Caucasian woman sitting across from me with the shy smile and wispy voice. She asked me to tell them about the most memorable learning experience I ever had, and I proceeded to tell them about the first time this Puerto Rican ate an artichoke. I took great pleasure in describing the pulling off each petal and dipping it in butter until reaching the hairy center to discover its heart. The artichoke was one of those vegetables I saw in my youth when I visited the Jewish markets on Fox Street around the corner from my house. It was one of those strange vegetables that only Americans ate. That story really worked. Everyone was in stitches, as they loved my sense of humor.

For years afterward, Robin Smith would always remind me that it was the artichoke story that got me hired at Metro. I was thoroughly entertaining, she said. I convinced her that anyone who could be so excited about learning something new would be just as excited to teach and engage difficult teenagers. Robin believed in my talents and knew I had a lot to share.

Standing: Fred Bullard, Sitting from left to right: Shelby Taylor, Lee Alo, Sandy DeBartolo

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SANDY DEBARTOLO

Sandy DeBartolo taught French, Spanish and Italian from 1975 to 1991,

On choice:

I DO BELIEVE THE BIGGEST thing I saw was choice. I do believe that classes offered gave students a real opportunity to explore different areas so they could decide what they really liked. For example, if someone was gifted in art, they could take art classes and get an idea of what it was really like and what they felt good about. And every child needs to feel good about something—I don't think that exists in the system today; they don't feel good. They're boxed up, they're alienated. We had variety—internship opportunities. The ability to travel to places that brought what they were learning to life so that kids could figure out what their gift was—and from getting that gift, they had confidence they could move on.

On the environment at Metro:

THE AMBIENCE AT METRO JUST doesn't exist elsewhere. You had a leader who was a good leader, not only in the sense of being able to stand up for rights for us—a principal who defended us, but he also trusted us as professionals. I think that leadership in a school has a big influence on your teachers as well as students. Today, what exists in the schools is fear because of the principals being tapped on from the board. They put fear in the teachers that they'll be laid off without even giving them a warning. This trickles down to the kids, because now the teacher is not being humanistic to the kids. The whole thing of having an ambience of positive emotional support coming from top to teachers to kids does not exist, and I think that existed in Metro.

We had time to have meetings where we shared our ideas, and we all had a say in what was happening within the school, and we respected each other even though we had differences of opinion. At Taft, [where Sandy worked after Metro closed], you're dictated to—teachers have no input in the school meetings.

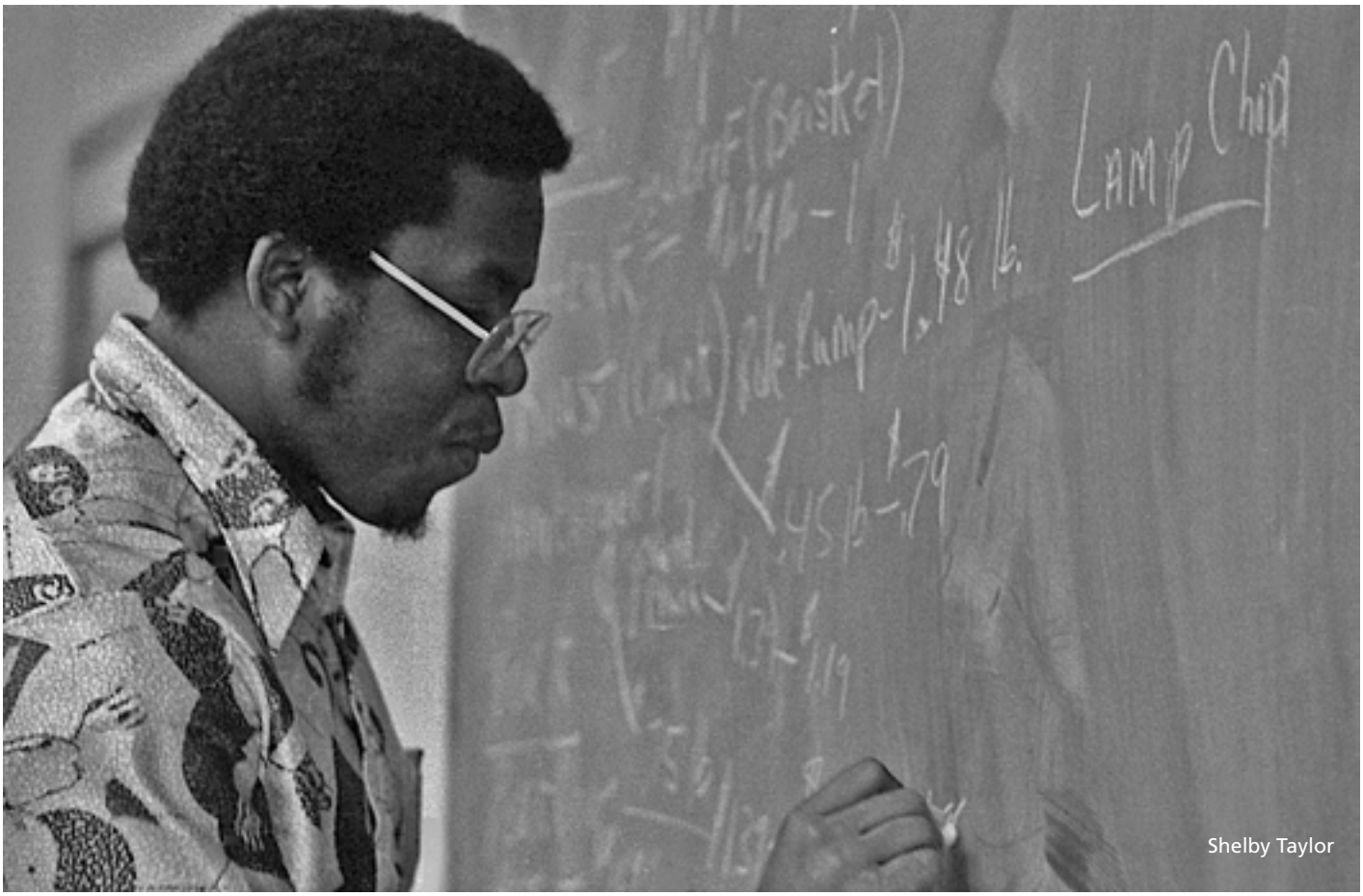
I took something from Metro though—that's chutzpah, to not put up with all this shit. It taught me not to put up with their crap, and so I organized a group to challenge some things.

In regard to service learning—at a place like Metro, the environment was so genuine and naturally supportive that it helped the students to become that way even if they weren't naturally like that.

BARBARA MCKINNEY

Barbara McKinney taught English in the 1980s. She passed away about twelve years ago. This comment was taken from a video, "Metro Lives":

IT'S THAT TYPE OF ATMOSPHERE at Metro. We



Shelby Taylor

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

have a family kind of relationship. We're not quite mothers to them, but we're sometimes a lot more than teachers to them. Some classes I taught just seemed to strike a hit with the kids. For example, Script Writing, where we wrote our scripts and then performed them.

MARTHA JANTHO

Martha Jantho was a Local School Council member in the last couple years of Metro and also had been a member of the CPS board. On why they closed Metro:

THE BOARD CLOSED METRO BECAUSE they had financial problems, and with 500,000 students, they just didn't pay attention to a school of 350. So Metro was an easy target. They couldn't afford the luxury of salvaging the program, and most of the members of the board did not understand the idea of individual learning styles. Metro never got the good publicity that it needed.

SHELBY TAYLOR

Shelby Taylor taught social studies from 1972 to 1992,

On Nate:

I THINK NATE'S ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE lent itself to teachers developing themselves. He would empower you to do things and would encourage you. I did all of these things—mock trial, etc.—because Nate opened the doors. I was exposed to Loyola, DePaul, Chicago-Kent College of Law—all those experiences were critical. I look at Dr. Bibb, all of us, our experience at Metro—we grew professionally.

On serving inner city kids:

THE EXPOSURE THOSE KIDS GOT is immeasurable in relation to what they were able to do after they got out of Metro. An example of this: I got a call from a girl—Patti Hale, a white girl who was always with the black students. She had seen my name as principal and called me to say hello. She is one of the examples of the sharing culture that was part of the experience of Metro. The inner city kids bettered themselves. I run across them all the time.

NINA ROBINSON

Nina Robinson was principal of Metro from September 1987 to 1991, when Metro was moved to Crane. She worked as the program director of Crane/Metro until she retired in 1994. The following are some of her thoughts based on an interview I had with her in July 2004, and her speech at Seeds of Change at Roosevelt University on June 25, 2010.

On education today:

I THINK WE'RE STILL STRUGGLING to find that

mix of academic, spirit and nurturing that I felt made Metro unique and successful.

On the differences between Hyde Park High School and Metro:

IT WAS VERY DIFFERENT, AND the whole climate and atmosphere of the school was different. But since I was a guidance counselor and came from a tradition of being student centered, it wasn't such a shock. I found it was something I could relate to. I thought it was good to see high school students being given a measure of control over their education. And really, that's what it amounted to—not that they had complete control. I felt that Metro students were open to relating to adults—sometimes it was just being glib—and they could meet a group of people, like attorneys or business people, and they weren't intimidated. I had taken kids places and it was hard to get a word out of them, and at Metro, it was hard to get them to stop. I think it was because of the kind of education at Metro and the way they were given some responsibilities that they felt confident that they could meet and greet people and get something from them and be willing to receive as well.

When we had faculty meetings at Hyde Park High School, we weren't asked if we had questions, because they just didn't expect it. I think this atmosphere didn't affect teaching as much as it did teachers' morale and their degree of involvement and willingness to be involved with the kids.

On teaching and teachers at Metro:

I THINK IT WAS AN exciting opportunity for the teachers, but the kind of teachers who were attracted to that were the kind of teachers who needed to work in that situation. And as years went on, teachers were just sent—for some it was good, but some never really understood or accepted what Metro was. For example, there was one teacher who was a good teacher, but very traditional. He was a little impatient with all of the talk-talk that went around. He said to me, "Why don't you just tell them what you're going to do, and why do we have to meet every week?" I didn't feel that way—that it was a waste of time. And then there were some teachers who kind of lost their way—they may have come there with some good, basic teaching skills. Just like with kids, teachers are human beings like everyone else, and if things seem a little loose, then they just get a little loose themselves, and they aren't able to help the kids to function to their maximum. I couldn't do anything about teachers who were sent there. However, I feel I should have done something to better orient those teachers to Metro and maybe to help them to better understand and to kind of buy into what Metro was. This is, of course, hindsight.

THE KIND OF TEACHERS WHO WERE ATTRACTED TO METRO WERE THE KIND OF TEACHERS WHO NEEDED TO WORK IN THAT SITUATION. BUT, AS YEARS WENT ON, TEACHERS WERE JUST SENT—SOME NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD OR ACCEPTED WHAT METRO WAS. NR

On the 1991 crisis:

IN THE SPRING OF 1991, the school system was criticized because the enrollment was going down but the costs were going up, and so Ted Kimbrough, the school superintendent, said some schools had to be closed. We had a lot of excellent support for the hearings from parents. At the end of the hearings, we were told that we would not be closed, and we were happy. That summer, we worked on the school improvement plan. Parents, students and staff came, and we were feeling good about the prospects for Metro. But then late in August, I received a phone call at 9 p.m. telling us we were to be closed. The district superintendent, Grady Jordan, thought we might be moved to Jones, which wouldn't have been too bad, but then it was decided to send us to Crane. That summer, a teacher in the Crane parking lot was shot—not fatally, but it was news, and many students said they were not going to go to Crane.

Our students showed some Metro spirit that came from earlier days because they said they were not going to Crane High School and demonstrated in front of Metro on Wendell Street. For two years, we had been asking for a sign with "Metro High School" on the building, and it was finally put up the summer before this crisis. When the *Tribune* ran a picture of students sitting out there with the big sign of Metro High School and their own signs of "Metro Lives," Superintendent Kimbrough ordered the sign taken down.

Teachers and parents helped with the protest, but alas, we did not win, and Metro was made a "program" at Crane High School. Many students enrolled in other schools. The principal of Whitney Young offered to take some of our students with high potential. *(By October, only sixty students had returned to Metro. Most of the staff was sent to other schools. The atmosphere at Crane was tense.)*

Crane staff resented us because they felt we had brought on bad publicity to them by the protests, etc. The principal of Crane tried to be as fair as possible, but on the other hand, his teachers were saying that we were given certain privileges, such as leaving the building and developing our own schedules. As I walked down the hall, the teachers would see me coming and would look the other way. They wouldn't even speak, but I would always say good morning because I did understand their feelings.

On the impact of Metro:

METRO WAS A STIMULUS FOR many things

small schools are doing today. These schools would not have flourished without the experience of Metro. Most of them are charter schools. Some succeeded, and others failed.

CHRIS NUGENT

Chris Nugent taught at Metro from 1971 to 1973; he and Mike Nolan coordinated the ancillary program for several years. On businesses wanting to help schools:

I HAVE DONE LOTS WITH business. They're concerned about schools. I think there is a much more significant interest in the corporate community because they're sick and tired of labor market problems. I think what I'm seeing now is businesses going into a school and saying, "Once we're in there, maybe you could come out and do some stuff." The problem with ancillaries is that so many of them were nonprofits—and they're having their own problems now.

MIKE LIBERLES

Mike Liberles, who taught science at Metro from 1972 to 2001, on students teaching classes:

SINCE I WAS IN SCIENCE and the English teachers didn't want to do it, I was the sponsor teacher of a science fiction class that was taught by three students, two of whom were David Samson and Beth Starr. That was just super. People outside of Metro would not have considered those types of classes to be legit. Those kids taught better than I could have taught because they were so into the subject. They had books; we had assignments. Students in the class responded to other kids teaching. We had a good time. I was always there. I don't know if other teachers were the same, but I felt it was my responsibility to be there.

RICH BARONE

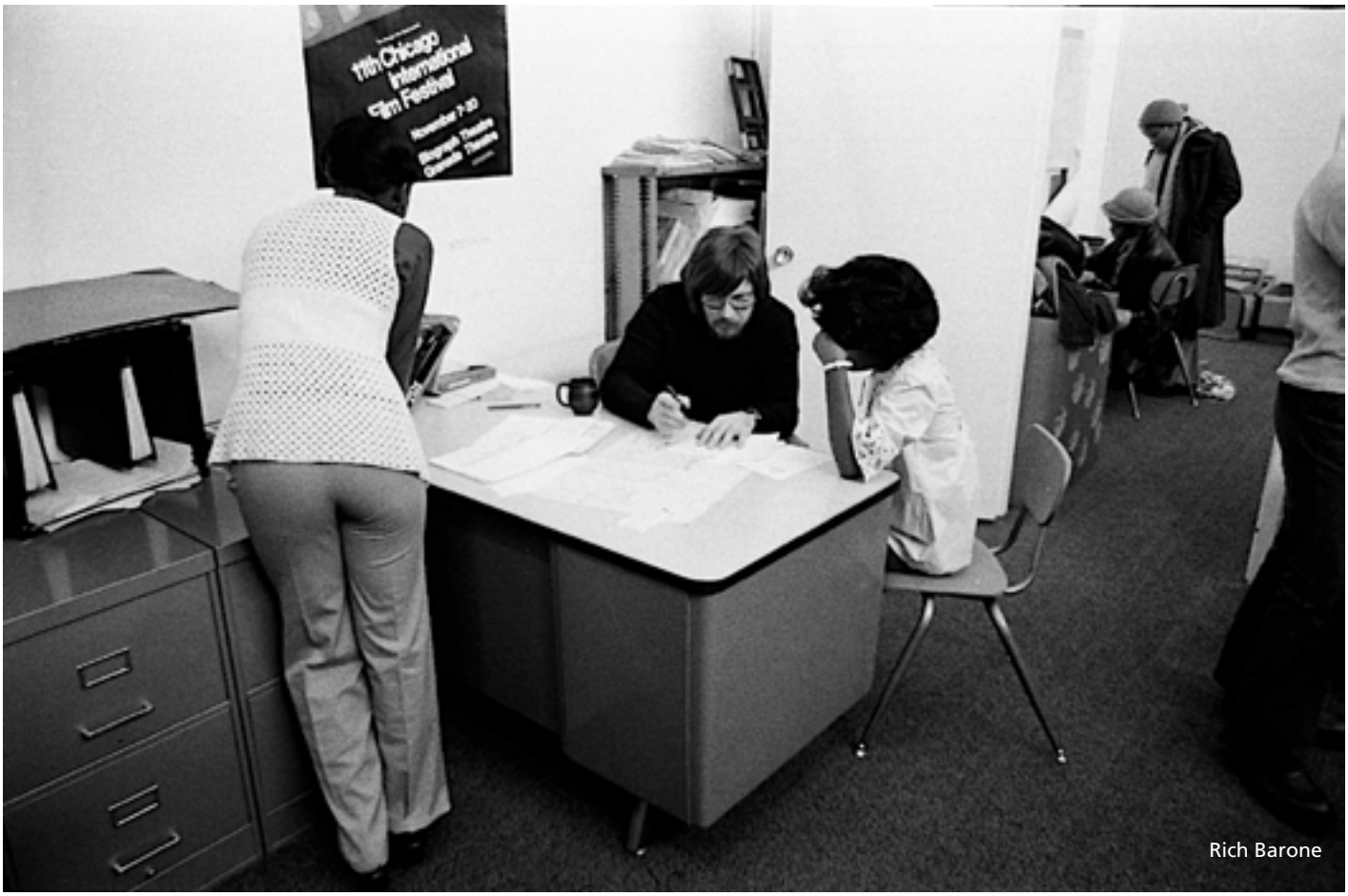
Rich Barone taught math and computers from 1974 to 1985.

On the Dunes and learning from students:

PEOPLE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND METRO—THEY saw it as the "school with field trips." I read an article just after I left Metro that said exactly that. I wondered, "How am I going to teach mathematics in the Dunes?" We built basic instruments, but it was a little more than that. It was getting these city kids out of the city and into the environment to see what it's all about—the ecology of the area. They talked to the rangers. The rangers were fantastic people. We had camaraderie. I made a movie about it.

Mike Liberles

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST



Rich Barone

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

On curriculum:

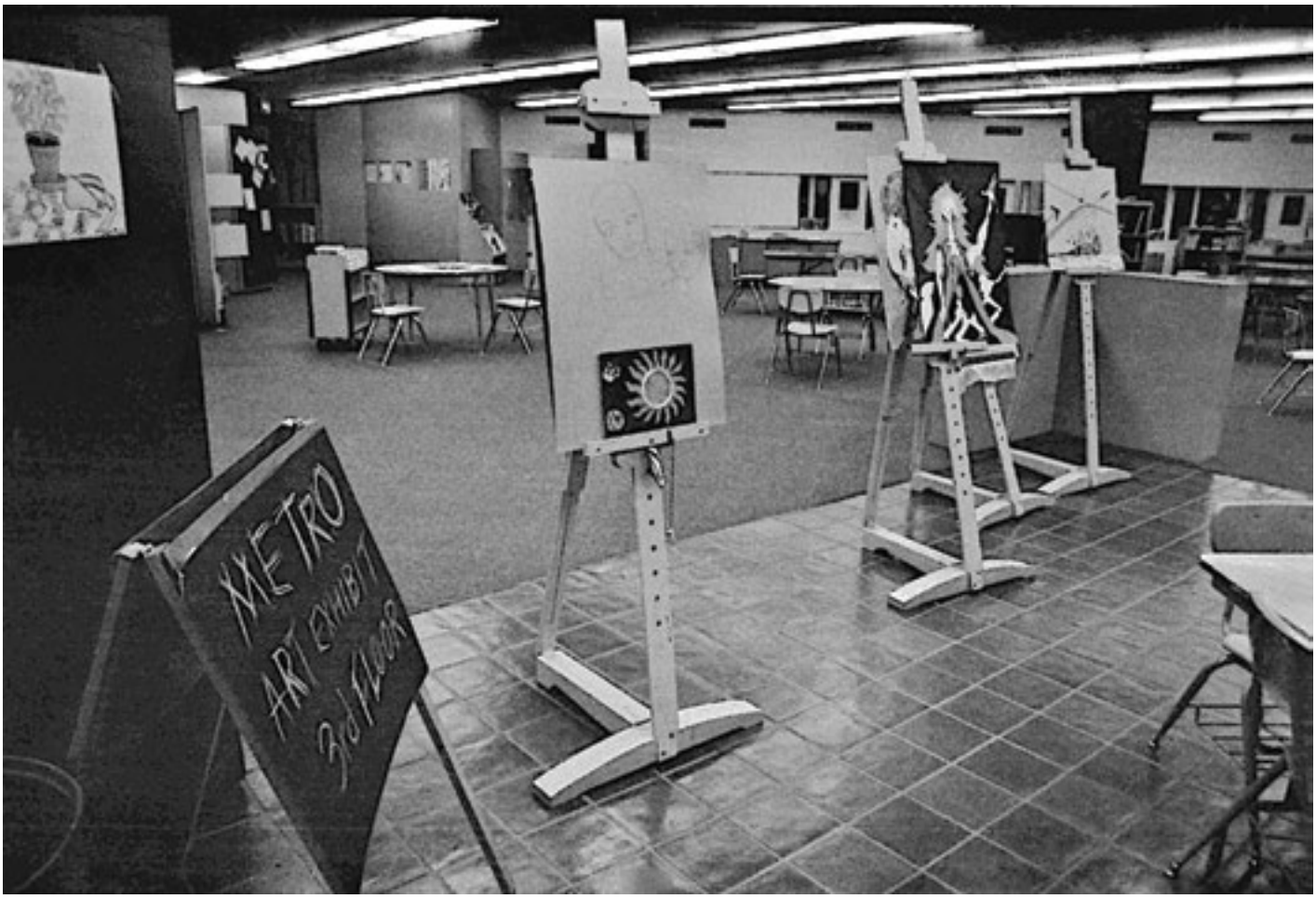
I FELT THERE WAS A sense of communication about curriculum; we were involved, and the parents were involved. Those little outrageous mini-courses that we could do—like my Chinese cooking class—you could do that. So it was a reward to the kids and to the teachers. I can't think of any field where being creative isn't what you want to do. Of course, it was on your own time; you had to do extra work to do it, but it was fun to do it. Another class—we were going to map out the city. We built a trundle wheel and didn't get past a few blocks downtown. It was fun to see the looks on people's faces when we were out there downtown. We should have done more interdisciplinary classes with science.

On what Metro taught him as a teacher:

I RELUCTANTLY LEFT METRO HIGH School in 1985, never to teach formally again. But at Northwestern University, I found a new challenge, spending most of the next twenty-five years working with K–12 and higher-ed faculty to integrate technology, in particular the Internet, into their learning environments. This was an exciting and often frustrating time to be an educational software developer, but ultimately a personally rewarding one, for I was able to witness the beginning of a great awakening on the learning landscape. I truly believe I survived so long in that constantly changing, uncertain age of technical advancement in the schools because of the broad experience and confidence I gained from my time at the little school without walls.

Often, you need to be removed from a situation before you can appreciate it and see it in an unbiased manner. I always appreciated my good fortune to be part of that dynamic school at that time of social awareness. And I took full advantage of the opportunities it provided. However, when I stepped away from my faculty role, I recognized that Metro was an experience I would never replicate. It was unique to its time in Chicago history and a product of the percolating atmosphere of educational reform in the late 1960s. And even though I am a quarter century removed from my last class at Metro, I acknowledge that I will never be able to speak or write about Metro without some bias; the experience was too personal and too formative in the development of my career. Metro was a lesson that changed my perspective on life.

It took me two years to feel that I was a fully integrated member of this organism we call Metro. Nonetheless, I took pride in the accomplishments of other staff members and students and was happy to be a part of it. But I learned some things quickly: Metro was not for everyone; alternative school was a misunderstood term, and we weren't perfect.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

If we perfected anything it was "rolling with the punches." The school board's attempts to dismiss Metro's principal, Nate Blackman, will serve as an example. I remember Nate as this "Rocky" figure, taking everything thrown at him and still standing after their best shots had been taken. In the end, this administrative barrage failed and served only to unite the entire Metro community behind its leader and make the organism stronger. Nate was and still is revered by his staff and former students, and he made it difficult for my future bosses to live up to the standards he set in my mind.

The lifting of one small social formality made a huge impact on this school and ultimately became its most easily recognizable characteristic. Everyone was on a first-name basis, even our most active parents. This confused the world outside Metro more than anything else, but it didn't confuse anyone who wanted to be there. This singular, simple, nontraditional practice was so successful in setting a mood of cooperation and respect that I can't imagine Metro without it. As a teacher, you didn't gain the respect of your peers and students from your title; respect was earned, and to get it, all you had to do was your job. I think the first-name "thing" epitomized the threat that Metro posed to the traditional educational establishment.

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAD TOPICS THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO COVER, BUT WHEN I GOT TO METRO, CAROL TOLD ME, "THIS IS METRO; WE ARE NOT FOLLOWING THIS. THE WHOLE IDEA OF METRO IS TO BE INNOVATIVE, GET STUDENTS' INPUT AS WELL AS GIVING YOUR OWN." I ASKED, "WHAT IF THEY DON'T WANT TO GIVE ANY?"

BY CAROL BLOCK

Carol Block taught art from 1973 to 1989.

I STARTED TEACHING AT BATEMAN Private School and the Hyde Park Art Center. I subbed all over the North and West sides, started the first EMH program (what would now be called special education), and after I got my certification, I taught in the art department in Englewood High School. When


Carol Block


Del Yarnell

I read about Metro in the *Tribune,* I knew I wanted to be there. I wrote the school and went to visit. I got a letter inviting me for an interview, but when I arrived, no one knew what I was talking about. I noticed there was no art anywhere. In those days, you got a position by signing a transfer list, so I went to Chicago Public Schools personnel and asked to sign the list. They said there was no list, so I said, "Make one." They did (probably because at that time we had a strong teachers union). Several years later, I received a transfer. Then the fun began. I got phone calls and was interviewed by a panel of students. I showed them photos of my students' work: tie dye, puppets, marionettes, jewelry, etc. The students were excited, and I was in.

I was at Metro for sixteen beautiful years, from 1973 to 1989. I was at Dearborn first, where we did murals in the lunchroom with Joe Boone, Wendy Gnatz, John Lackner and other students. My dream was to be able to work in many venues with many resources. I soon joined forces with Don Baker (a Metro art teacher, recently deceased). Together, we rescued the Art and Community class with Don Seiden at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago by collecting students from the Dearborn lobby and lunchroom and bringing them over, and getting a viable class together. This class lasted for sixteen-plus years. It had been originally designed by Urban Research Corporation (probably Don Moore and Tom Wilson) at Don Baker's suggestion. We became more involved with the student teachers at the School of the Art Institute, who devised art projects at Metro and plugged into science, math and English classes. We moved to Michigan Avenue, where the superintendent, Joe Hannon, had been generous with supplies for the art department. As we were preparing to go on strike with the Chicago Teachers Union, I began an "On Strike" sign. I felt eyes behind me, glanced back, and right behind me was Joe Hannon, watching. Luckily, I switched from "On Strike" to "Metro High School Welcomes You" just in time!

We used a number of off-site locations. We had science and art and oral history at the Indiana Dunes with myself, Steve Everett, Mike Liberles, Rich Barone and later, Del Yarnell; ceramics at Jane Addams Center; Women Keep Fit at the YWCA. Joe Boone painted a mural at the aquarium. In those days, you could pick up tickets for free museum admission, and this was helpful. Eventually, Del and I reserved times for our classes at the Field Museum. Keeping our personal connections with outside resources was crucial. For many years, we worked with Maggie Phillips from the Art Institute. She was able to get our students to do brilliant work, and then talk to all about what they had done—a great exercise in public speaking. I learned as much as, or more than I taught. The move to Congress went well, and the location was good. The move to Wendell was a disaster. Maggie Phillips threatened to pull the program since we were now a "regular school."She relented, and we went on as best we could.

I left Metro in 1989 and moved to New York City, where I stayed for eight years. Then I moved back to Chicago. I went to City College to learn computer literacy and now use these techniques in my art. I live and exhibit my art now in Indiana.

DEL YARNELL

Del Yarnell taught art from 1976 to 1988 (from an interview on September 23, 2011).

Yarnell had a rough couple of weeks when he began, but students soon came to accept and love his quirky sense of humor.

Del had managed an educational leadership program for the Area C office of CPS. Unlike Metro where leadership was a skill taught as an integral part of the school community, CPS often did and (still does) have area wide programs that were good but because they were add-ons rather than integral to the system, lasted only as long as outside funding was available. When Area C abruptly closed Del's program, he called Nate to ask if he needed an art teacher. Nate told him they already had a "much beloved art teacher," but because she did not have full certification, Del could claim her position. (This was part of the union contract in those days. It protected the seniority rights of assigned certified teachers when their programs were closed. The rules today have changed. Only a teacher within the same school could bump a less senior teacher.)

Nate already knew Del because of his work with the leadership program, but he warned Del that it would be rough sailing because the students loved the teacher. Nate told him, however, that he would support him all the way. And that Sunday night, he got a call from Carol Block, art teacher. She told him she had had a similar experience and offered her support. But when he

started his classes, no one showed up. Carol told him to just let it happen naturally. Those were two or three pretty uncomfortable weeks. Gradually, though, some kids came in and said, "I want to learn something." They would see him sitting down and talking earnestly, and when they said, "Oh, what's going on?" he invited them in. He didn't stand with the attendance book and say, "Well, you're late." He learned to just take it very easy and smooth things along. They could see he wasn't going to leave.

On teaching methods:

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAD topics they were supposed to cover, but when I got to Metro, Carol told me, "This is Metro; we are not following this. The whole idea of Metro is to be innovative, get students' input as well as giving your own." I asked, "What if they don't want to give any?"

Carol told me, "That's where you come in."Of course, we had to cover some things mandated by the State of Illinois or legally, the kids couldn't get credit. But I was forever searching my mind and my spirit to find what I could do to focus. "We have no supplies today; let's see what we can do." I was forced, more than I ever was at a regular school, to be as creative and innovative as I could. So it made me grow as well as the students. But many times—and I wasn't used to this—I'd bring up an idea that I thought was great, and some kid would say, "Who the hell wants that?" So I had to be willing to do a backdraw and switch the whole thing around. But it taught me you are going around with the energy of the moment, and you're not being scheduled. Now, we had a lot of flexibility in the scheduling. Here we were allowed—aside from burning down the building—to really be as innovative as we could.

The challenges came a lot from the students themselves, as they always do. It forced me as a person to look at what I thought was an artistic approach, a creative approach, and to be more flexible. I had to let go of my own sense of direction that I got professionally from my college training, and I was forced to listen if I really wanted to communicate with these kids. And sometimes we could get into terrible arguments, but it made the classes come alive.

Blythe Olshan

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

On teaching the Dunes class:

WE HAD TO HIKE SIX or seven miles and couldn't carry a lot of supplies, so we just had to be innovative. One day we were hiking, and I'm wondering, what are we going to do? Kids said, "What are we going to do? We're bored.'" So I said, "Look at that sand hill—that's your wall, and you're going to decorate it." I said, "You don't have supplies, and I don't either, so you've got water and sand, and I want to see the idea of transportation through nature right on the wall." By God—they developed wonderful sculptures right on the side of the wall.

I remember on our first day at the Dunes,

TIMES CHANGED, AND SO DID METRO AND ITS COMMUNITY. MANY NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS BECAME DANGEROUS, AND STUDENTS WERE COMING TO METRO TO ESCAPE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THEIR HOME SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS. **METRO OPENED ITS ARMS.** BO

two lovely young girls got off the bus at the ranger station, and we noticed they were wearing beautiful silk skirts and very high heels. Now, Mike had always told students that we were going out to the rugged wilderness, so be sure to dress appropriately. Mike said, "What are you doing?" And they said, "We've got to look fashionable for those rangers we're going to meet." It was too late to send them home, so Mike told them they could either stay at the ranger station and watch the film over and over or go plow through the sand without shoes. And that's what they did.

Another time, I said, "We're going to respect nature; we're going to do some art stuff, some science stuff, and we're going to really learn from nature. We are going into someone else's territory—all the creatures that live here—and we're just visiting. So just be careful." And we get out there and get off the bus, and the rangers say, "Come over here, boys and girls." So we're all huddled around one of them, and he's talking, and in the center of the circle, this pretty little spider comes right into the middle, and we all said hello, and this girl says, "Ooh, a bug," and she stamps on it. I went bananas. And Mike was screaming.

We said, "There goes the lesson for the whole day. What did you do?" And she said, "That's what you do; you kill bugs."I said, "I told you we're in their territory," and she said, "Well, I don't like them. She was quiet all the rest of the day. That ranger looked at us as if to say, "Don't you a-hole teachers teach these kids anything?"

And on the perks of teaching, even many years later:
RECENTLY, I MET A YOUNG black man who told me that Carol and I saved his life. He said we taught him to be a gentleman. Apparently, he had a really rough background—gangs and all that stuff. But he said, "You straightened me out; you wouldn't let me get away with stuff. You were my parents."

BLYTHE OLSHAN

Blythe Olshan started as a student teacher in math at Metro in 1971. She left Metro in 1981 to study at Harvard and returned in 1984. On how she found Metro, and its impact:

BACK IN 1971, I WAS walking around the University of Illinois at Chicago campus when I stumbled upon a high school class. I walked in and inquired about this class and was given the lowdown on Metro. That was the beginning of a long relationship that will continue as long as I do!

Metro was a school appropriate for its time. During the '60s and '70s, this country was in turmoil, opposing its leaders and major institutions. We were trying to survive the devastation of the Vietnam War. Our friends and relatives were going off to fight in a very unpopular war or they were escaping by luck with a high number, moving to Canada, or going into a social service profession like teaching! College students were very active on campuses by demonstrating and voicing their opinions. Metro students were just like these role models, and they came into the school with opinions and demands. They helped the teachers and administrators create a school that would meet their needs.

Metro had classes that would attract many diverse students from all over the city. We would go to Lincoln Park Zoo for an Animal and Human Behavior class, the Shedd Aquarium for Marine Biology, the Art Institute for art classes, Second City for Improvisational Theater, the Playboy Club for writing classes, Meigs Field for flying lessons, First National Bank for economics. We had folk dancing on the second floor of our building and later, at the Old Town Boys Club. Tennis and Frisbee were at Grant Park, film at Montgomery Ward. (This alone really dates us.)We went out on the streets of Chicago for Metro History, to Northeastern Illinois University for Black Studies, and to the Indiana Dunes for science and P.E. Our math, foreign language and science classes may have had traditional material, but they were taught in a variety of places. These classes were taught by enthusiastic teachers who would spend enormous amounts of time and effort in designing creative classes, often without supplies and textbooks. Many of us were followers of John Dewey, believing that everyone can learn, and that the best way to learn is by doing. If we failed in any aspect, the students would let us know and we would try something else. Students would also teach classes. And we did all of this under the amazing guidance and support of Nate Blackman, a unique leader with patience and a vision. We developed a pride that enabled us to survive crisis after crisis. Not even the Board of Education in Chicago could bring us down, but boy, did they try!

Times changed, and so did Metro and its community. Many neighborhood schools became dangerous, and students were coming to Metro to escape negative aspects of their home school environments. Metro opened its arms, and students came in droves, taking advantage of the opportunities and freedom. Students now wanted to go to the best colleges, so we changed to meet the demands by giving grades and changing some of the names of the courses so they could be universally recognized. Students also wanted a prom and yearbooks, so we had them. Students wanted a school where they were accepted, and Metro did that for many. If someone had a strange quirk or was eccentric, Metro would welcome them and exude a pride for those differences. I learned how to be a leader and a teacher at Metro. These skills I continue to utilize today when teaching future teachers.

But what is the most important aspect of Metro? We are what made up Metro. It would not have survived if we didn't have

leadership like Nate, Nina and Lee, who enabled us to experiment and grow. We were all taught not to do something just because we were told to do so. We were taught to question and ask why. We learned to strive to reach our goals. Take a minute and look around; boy, think what we have accomplished! We did change the world in many ways, just by being a part of it.

BETH TERRANT TENNEY

Beth Terrant Tenney was a student teacher from the Art Institute and worked with Metro students in 1978 or 1979.

I REMEMBER ONE VERY SNOWY day, we went outside the Art Institute near where the Goodman Theater used to be. We made snow sculptures and did snow dyeing there. The kids loved it, and so did I. I doubt we would ever be able to do that now. The Metro kids were very bright and looking for an alternative. And some of them had problems. I loved working with them.

SUSAN STONE

Susan Stone, who taught English at Metro from 1972 to 1981, on directing plays and taking students to see professional plays:

TO ME, THE HIGHLIGHT OF teaching at Metro was being able to direct plays and being able to take kids all over the city to see plays. (I had a class called Modern American Plays. We got a good rate. We went to Second City; all those people who are movie stars today—we sat ten feet away from them.) I directed a musical called *Me Nobody Knows*, and the music teacher, Judy, helped with the music. We did a play at Loop College (now Harold Washington College). Another play we did was *Excerpts from Our Lives*. This was based on a whole cycle of writing. I guess it was innovative to do that then—now, people have picked up on it. I didn't know what I was doing, but I just did it. We toured this play to many schools. Carol Block, the art teacher, collaborated with us to develop the sets. I was also able to take kids to the Illinois High School Theater Festival. We stayed in Champaign, and a parent came along. Another time, we went to a conference and students got to hear amazing speakers and see college professors.


Paula Baron

The biggest thing about Metro was the small class size. This made it possible to give everyone personal attention; we called their home. We could talk about what were then "taboo" subjects. Kids told us about their family life and their other concerns. We were teaching the "whole child."

JUDY REED

Judy Reed taught English from 1981 to 1991.

On the lack of adequate science labs, etc.:

THE THING ABOUT METRO IS that practically the whole school system should be sets of Metros. Our Metro tended to stress the humanities, but there could be others—a Metro-type setup for students interested in specializing in math and science. If Metro is a viable prototype, then certainly it could be expanded. You wouldn't want cookie-cutter Metros—different areas have different goals.

And on coming to Metro (she was sent there by the Board of Education):

THE WORD ON THE STREET was that Metro was for serious gangbangers. But of course, as soon as I walked into the door, I felt like I was at home, and when Metro died, I felt like I had lost one of my best friends.


Susan Stone

The first day I came, Nate sat all of the new teachers down and he said, "I'm not saying that you won't have troubles at this school, but I guarantee that you will never wake up in the morning and not want to come to work."

PAULA BARON

Paula Baron taught social studies at Metro from 1971 to 1991.

On respect for teachers' judgment:

I CAME FROM A SCHOOL where the principal

Irvin Bibb

AT METRO, A TEACHER WAS FREE TO TEACH, FREE TO EXPERIMENT, FREE TO EVEN FAIL. IB

refused to allow the Honors Club to have a speaker on drugs because he thought they'd start using. And he almost went apoplectic when he discovered I was teaching about American imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century—thought it couldn't possibly be part of the curriculum. At Metro, Nate encouraged us and respected our professional judgment. I could bring in politicians, speakers on domestic violence, Vietnam vets, etc. The students could learn from all of these speakers. I know I probably learned more!

And on field trips:

TODAY, TAKING A FIELD TRIP from a CPS school is a huge undertaking. You have a great idea; OK—now get permission from the principal, get a bus, collect parent permission slips from students, collect money for the bus, make sure students are excused from other classes, coax a few parents to help chaperone your group, and then prevail upon some kindly colleagues to "cover" your classes while you're away. Add to that the pressure to "cover" material and the attitude that field trips take away valuable time from "real learning." No wonder few teachers ever venture outside "the walls" with their students. I learned as much as, perhaps more than my students as we went out into the city. In a class on Chicago, one student suggested that we actually go visit a public housing project where he lived. After a few phone calls, I was able to arrange a walk-through. So, with fifteen students in tow, we were taken through Henry Horner Homes (I think that was the one). Of course, we saw the newer and refurbished apartments, but we also got more of a sense of the tensions there when the security police followed us out of the complex to ensure our safe passage. Teaching the oral history class was probably the most fun. I worked hard to find interesting people for students to interview. Sometimes we just went to a senior citizen center, but often students interviewed individuals who had been recommended by some friend or acquaintance. Students interviewed Ma Rainey, an early blues singer; Oscar Brown Jr., a folk and blues singer; local politicians; artists; teachers; community leaders; and activists. The magazines the students produced from these interviews are archived in the Library of Congress.

GLORIA CORNISH

Gloria Cornish taught English at Metro from 1982–1991.

WHEN I CAME TO METRO in the fall of 1982, I was exposed to a new educational experience. I was welcomed into a small school family where everyone from the administration to the students showed respect and concern for one another, and there was definitely a positive atmosphere for creativity. Rather than being an option, learning and experiencing new opportunities was a mission for the students. The students exhibited an eagerness for learning that sealed the bond between themselves and the staff that made Metro like a home away from home.

Being a part of the Metro family for nine years made it possible for me to tolerate the fourteen years that I had to work after Metro was abruptly closed in the fall of 1991.

IRVIN BIBB

Dr. Irvin Bibb Jr. taught English at Metro from 1973 to 1991.

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE was a unique educational experiment taking place in Chicago. That experiment was the Chicago Public High School for Metropolitan Studies, better known as "Metro," the school without walls. Thank God, Metro was my very first teaching assignment—one that lasted for eighteen years.

After Metro closed, I was rudely awakened to exactly why Metro was the best in education. Luckily, I was at the halfway mark of my career

when Metro closed. At Metro, a teacher was free to teach, free to experiment, free to even fail. Teachers had chances to redesign and better their craft. Students knew we were happy teachers, and because of that, they were happy learners. The faculty, despite many differences, was unified in one goal—helping students become self-regulated, engaged learners.

The following comments are from his remarks at Metropalooza (June 26, 2010):

I STARTED IN 1972 AND never graduated. It was a life venture. Once Metro is in your blood, it flows and flows.

Metro was truly a community. Fred Bullard and Marjorie Howell were part of Metro (they were both much-loved teacher aides). Everyone contributed to the environment.

Steve Everett, Amy Lloyd

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

LYNN SHIBELSKE

Lynn Shibelske taught English at Metro from 1972 to 1976.

FROM MY EXPERIENCE AT METRO, I later taught in and developed alternative schools on the West Coast, and ended my main professional career as the principal of The Alternative Schools, an elementary, junior high, and high school in a prestigious school district.

My beginnings, however, were far more humble and naïve. When I was first hired and moved from Wisconsin to Chicago, Judy Quanbeck arranged for two students to help me unload my moving truck. I was to meet them at the El—except I'd never seen one before. I had to ask some bemused man on the street what "the El" looked like. Though thrilled to be hired, I had heard that the Metro hiring pool was very extensive, and I had trepidations on what fabulous lessons I could bring to these eager and personable students.

Not to worry, I soon realized, as instruction and learning fell into a satisfying and rewarding endeavor with collaboration between students and teachers, and among an outstanding faculty and principal. Everyone was there to encourage and support each other, and co-develop new ideas and curriculum. I'd never met and enjoyed such a diverse population of ethnicities, languages, beliefs and skills. Some students didn't really need me, but I hope I encouraged them at the highest levels. Others were hugely impacted by previous poor schools and needed me desperately. In addition to the skills of reading, writing, understanding and composing literature, I hope, as a former high school dropout and teen parent, that I modeled for all a "can do" spirit of overcoming difficulties, forging ahead and setting a goal. Metro was the most enriching and life-changing experience for me, and I hope it's been that for all of you.

STEVE EVERETT

Steve Everett taught social studies at Metro from 1971 to 1978.

I TAUGHT FOR TEN YEARS in the Chicago suburb of Cicero before teaching at Metro. My in-

EVERYONE WAS THERE TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER, AND CO-DEVELOP NEW IDEAS AND CURRICULUM. **I'D NEVER MET AND ENJOYED SUCH A DIVERSE POPULATION OF ETHNICITIES, LANGUAGES, BELIEFS AND SKILLS.** LS

terview at Metro was with a group of students and others who gave me a feeling of excitement. Bearded and radicalized, I was looking for other ways of teaching/learning. Metro offered a real learning/teaching environment. Students and teachers participated in the learning process of creating courses. We did much of our learning at places like the Field Museum, Indiana Dunes, political offices, the CTA, and in on-the-job training. We played a sociology and political science simulation game called Sim Soc, and we studied Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and her research on the end of life.

Metro changed my life. I tried to complete a Ph.D. program at U of I at Urbana-Champaign. The Metro experience prevailed to cut through non-reality. I worked in quality control workforce development for seventeen years and became an assistant dean at Wright College-Vocational Education Center. Then I became a consultant for Chicago Women in Trades. I incorporated Learn-Tec, Inc. to do consulting for the Tooling and Manufacturing Association. Currently, I am teaching at DeVry University in sociology, psychology and ethics. My experience with Metro goes with me.

NOREEN RAPP

Noreen Rapp, who taught math from 1987 to 1991, on teaching a gym class:

I TAUGHT MATH AT METRO for four years at the Wendell Street location, right before CPS closed the school. The building didn't have a gym, so some teachers offered a physical education class in addition to their usual subjects. I offered a Walking for Exercise class that turned out to be really great. My students and I would leave the building and walk east to Lake Michigan, continuing north along the lakefront to the North Avenue chess pavilion, rest a few minutes and then walk back to school. The last class of the quarter was always a picnic at the lake.

We also occasionally joined the biology class when those students and Mike Liberles went to the Indiana Dunes. His students would do their science work, and my class and I would hike the Dunes. My favorite was the time we took Trail #8, which winds through the woods and has three hills. The first one was easy to climb, but by the second one, the kids were complaining about how hard it was to climb this higher one on such a hot day. I told them if I could do it at fifty, they should just keep going. When we got to the third hill, it was so tall that none of us could actually walk; we had to climb up on hands and knees, so there was a lot of grumbling and complaining. But then came the reward: After continuing through the woods, we turned a corner and there, far down below, was the lake. We all enjoyed the vista for a while and then descended and went right into the water. This was the first time most of the students had been to the Dunes, so we all had a good time.

THE 1970s

BEFORE I ATTENDED METRO, I went to Waller High School—now Lincoln Park Academy—in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. Soon after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Waller, like so much of America, erupted with race riots. By the middle of my sophomore year, my parents, observing my vanishing act into a shell of moody silence, decided that something had gone terribly wrong with my education. When they heard about a new start-up school, a "school without walls," they jumped at the chance to get me in. In 1969, only 150 of us were lucky enough to get chosen from a lottery to become Metro's first students.

At Metro, I took Marine Biology at the Shedd Aquarium, and Evolution at the Field Museum. Nate Blackman, our principal and a man who seemed to move about the school in a cloud of dignity, taught The Ghetto Game. Fred Jackson and Marc Masor taught a provocative Animal and Human Behavior class in the basement of the gorilla house at the Lincoln Park Zoo. I can trace the origins of my becoming a writer to a Story Workshop class taught by Brent Jones at the Body Politic Theater, as well as to Directed Reading class, originally started by Rich Sobel and later self-taught by students. We read *Siddhartha*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Native Son* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. I should also mention Chris Nugent's wonderfully tough U.S. history class at the Prudential Building, though at the time, it really ticked me off that he made us write an essay every week. Adrienne Ingley, my Counseling Group teacher, took the time to care about me when I most needed caring.

As for "race relations" between students, I don't think a lot of people today fully comprehend the depth of the social turbulence and anger associated with the times of my high school education, 1968 to 1972. It was a time in America that was as liberating as it was terrible, and as dangerous as it was necessary. I think that another student, Nina Dubois, an African American student, said it best in the Metro documentary film—something to the effect that though racial tension still existed at Metro, it was nothing compared to the tension we had all left behind at our former high schools. That said, come time for my class's graduation in 1972, white students wanted to have the ceremony in the laid-back setting of Grant Park, while African American students preferred the more traditional setting of an auditorium. Tempers began to flare, and then one day an African American girl came up to a few of us whites having lunch at a table in the student lounge. "OK," she said. "We'll do it your way." I wish I could say that I responded, "That's OK. I've already bought my sport coat and tie. And by the way, you're kinda cute," but I didn't. As it turned out, we all graduated in the Art Institute's garden. I can remember that I wore my "freak flag" proudly that day (long ponytail, red corduroy bell-bottoms and blue denim cowboy shirt), but what I can't remember is the name of the girl who came up to us that day in the student lounge.

My mom and dad told me that during a parents meeting at Metro, folks were (as is our Metro tradition) arguing about a multitude of educational issues and concerns. Suddenly, one of the parents took a "time out" from the discussion to remark that his or her child, after attending Metro for only a few weeks, had a change in personality so profoundly for the better that it was literally like living with a different kid. Then, to a parent, everyone began to nod in agreement and comment that they'd observed the same metamorphosis in their own kids.

Before Metro, I'd never been to Hyde Park, never ridden an Illinois Central commuter train, and never known the world of Uptown or the faraway lands of Rogers Park and Albany Park. My classmates and I were on the Federal Building Plaza when the verdict was announced for the Chicago Conspiracy Seven trial. I sometimes spotted cast members from the musical Hair walking down State Street with the regal air and confidence of hippie royalty. I petted dolphins, and I found fossilized ferns in rocks at a strip mine somewhere out in the boonies. I camped at Starved Rock and Rock Hut State Park, and I took behavioral observation notes on Sinbad the gorilla (R.I.P.). I used countless bus tokens to get to classes and also learned numerous illegal ways to ride the El for free. I even watched my friends climb to the top of Buckingham Fountain in the middle of winter, and then also witnessed them getting busted by the cops for their over-zealous curiosity about that famous architectural landmark. Chicago was our playground and our classroom. To this day, as a professor at Columbia College, Chicago, I often find myself

STU

Amy Lloyd, Peter Grunwald, unknown, first floor, North Michigan Avenue building

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

walking past Metro's original home at 220 S. State Street. Once, I stopped in front of where the old Woolworth's used to be, stared across the heavy traffic on State, and counted up fifteen floors of windows. There.
—*Shawn Shifflett, 1970–'72*

IT'S BEEN FORTY YEARS SINCE I graduated from Metro High School. We were the first graduating class. There were sixteen of us, and we had the graduation in Grant Park on a hot day. There was no school like this; we were trusted—funny in this day—but we had to be responsible for our own actions. It was expected of us, and we were part of a wonderful learning experience that we were always a part of. I don't know how to THANK Nate Blackman, Lee Alo, Judy Quanbeck, Mike Greenebaum, Studs Terkel, Mike Royko, Chris Nugent and many other teachers who took the chance on us to create a different learning experience. It was hands-on learning, where students were truly engaged daily. I can't remember a lot of things, but what I do recall is learning the city, how to work with others but still remain an independent thinker. We were taught to engage all people and have confidence that we all

DENTS

had something to contribute. I had great classes, like filmmaking at the Art Institute, law at Northwestern. The point being, students today have little freedom due to the climate of the world, and I really feel bad for them not having the exposure to really grow as individuals. Thanks to everyone who made Metro possible.
—Patty Fisher, class of 1972

METRO STUDENTS IN THE 1970S had front-row seats to much of the drama of the '70s, and in some instances, they were more than just observers!

In 1968, I watched in horror the images of police and protestors who clashed during the Democratic Convention. The arrest of the Chicago Seven made a strong impression on a twelve-year-old me.

When Metro started, I had just turned fourteen. The school was located at 220 S. State, in the heart of downtown Chicago. It was so exciting! My freshman year, I decided to take a photography class. Around the block from school, the Chicago Seven trial was being held at the Federal Building. I picked up my camera and went to document history being made.

The protestors were mainly "hippies." I was wearing knee socks, white blouse and pleated skirt. I mingled with the crowd, shooting pictures of speakers and demonstrators. Suddenly, two large men wearing black trench coats, hats and patent leather shoes grabbed me. They forced me to go with them into the Federal Building. Once inside, they demanded that I give them my camera or film. I very reluctantly gave them the film.

Later, I learned that Judge Julius Hoffman had issued an edict that no one could take pictures within a block of the trial. That was how my Metro experience began, and it undoubtedly influenced me to become a documentary filmmaker.
—Rana Segal, class of 1974

Drawa Shub (foreground), Carman Noriega

I REMEMBER HOW, IN THE early 1970s, Printer's Row looked a little bit like Skid Row. Metro High School was situated off Plymouth Court, and you stepped over bodies in the lobby of the building as you went to your first class of the day. Those men weren't known as "the homeless" back then—that word wasn't in our vocabulary. They were just part of the scenery, along with the rest of the downtown world. Upstairs, there were holes in the wall. There was fallen plaster in the bathroom. But you really didn't care. You rode the 22 Clark and the 36 Broadway to class. Maybe it was to Second City for Improvisational Theater. Maybe it was to the Playboy Building for Writing for Money. Or Lincoln Park Zoo for Animal and Human Behavior. Your P.E. class was softball in Grant Park. Or yoga at an ashram on the North Side. Or folk dancing off Taylor Street. Other classes were at the old Montgomery Ward, the Federal Building and the Prudential Building.

For me, Metro was so much more than a high school education. I discovered the city by going to class. I got off the South Side and realized a whole world existed outside of Hyde Park, where I lived. The West Side, the North Side, Pilsen, Little Italy, Back of the Yards, Wilson Avenue, Rush Street, Racine. I also discovered what having a job really meant—because I had teachers from the working world. It was exposure, it was access. So much of what I was exposed to at Metro led to my adult professional life. Theater classes led to a touring theater company called The Free Street Theater. Cre-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM PROVOST

METRO STUDENTS IN THE 1970S HAD FRONT-ROW SEATS TO MUCH OF THE DRAMA OF THE '70S, AND IN SOME INSTANCES, THEY WERE MORE THAN JUST OBSERVERS.

ative writing and journalism classes led to work as a freelance writer (for the *Washington Post* and other publications). I even went to work for *Playboy* magazine in the editorial and publicity departments (thanks to former teacher Michael Laurence, former vice president of Playboy Enterprises). And it was through Metro that I taught my first classes. (I'm still teaching at George Washington University.) Metro changed my life. And those changes are still in place today, these many years later.

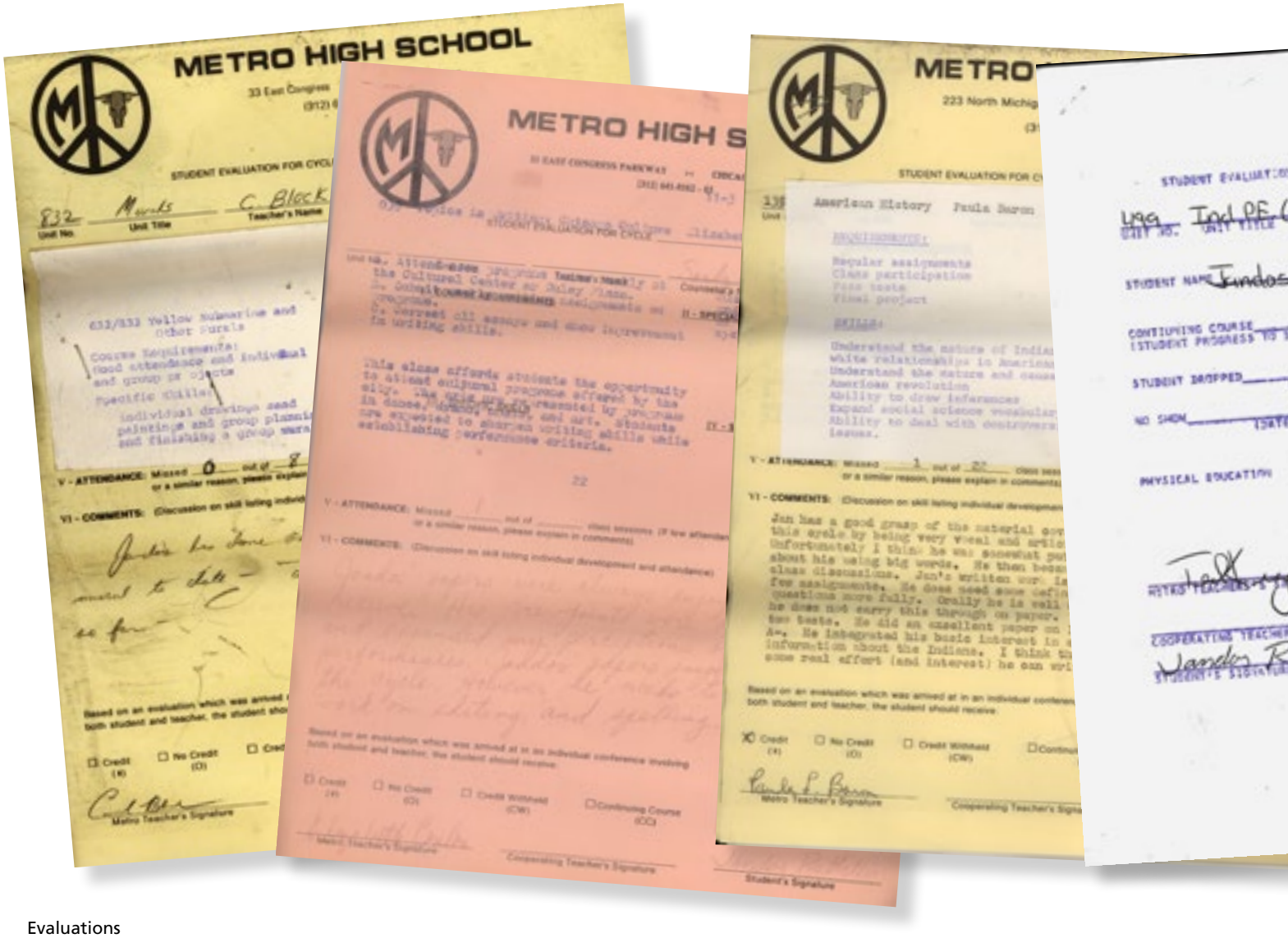
I remember Gwendolyn Brooks visiting with her husband. And Fred Hampton's brother visiting too, and having Bill Singer as commencement speaker when I graduated (the venue was the Civic Center Plaza, now called The Daley Plaza). I remember going to see Chagall unveil his mosaic and then kiss the cheeks of the first Mayor Daley, who turned beet red. Metro was all about the city of Chicago. Metro was also about the world at large. That's what it gave me. What a gift.
—Lisa Johnson Page, class of 1975

WHEN I GOT TO METRO, I really loved it because it represented the human family, and it opened me up to a lot. It allowed me to meet people from different nationalities and identify and experiment with other people from other cultures. Sort of hippie—sneaking into concerts at Roosevelt College and other things downtown. It was a different world.

One thing it didn't do was to get the basics of English and English language and really learn the lessons of a high school setting. I survived, though.
—Joe Boone, class of 1975

METRO WAS BEING TREATED BY adults as if we really mattered; our opinions were considered worthy! And it was learning how to embrace life, be a participant and not be a bystander. We learned how fleeting life can be (the old drunk who was killed, hit by the bus and crushed at the door of Metro—my first look at death), and we learned of the beauty, too. Instructor Fritz Hamilton patiently described social violence. We were the vanguard of the

Barbara Drachney



Evaluations

student movement in Chicago. If there was a social cause, you could bet a Metro student was in on it.

To sum up my education at Metro, it was a wonderful eye-opening experience. I developed into a socially conscious individual, a politically active and decisive person, the civic-minded, responsible adult that every American citizen should be.

I am forever grateful to the teachers and staff of that great school. There were some downsides, like getting back into the "system" of being competitive, taking standardized tests (we could have had a class on test taking), being more prepared for college with academic subjects and more counseling. (I may have been better prepared if I had spent four years, but I graduated in three.)

—Amelie Hamilton, class of 1972

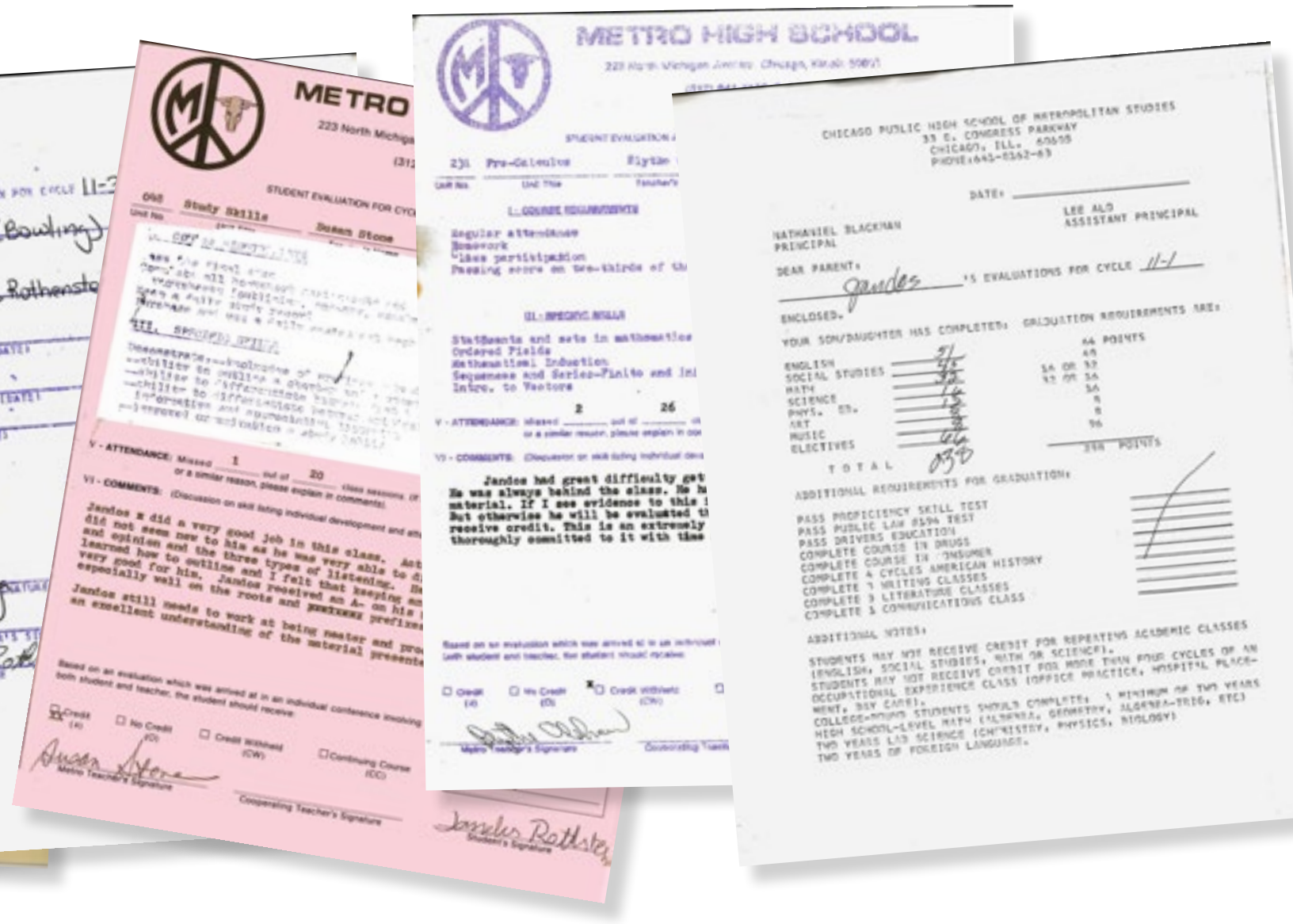
(She now works as an environmental chemist for the state of Maryland.)

REGARDING FREEDOM—IT'S A GAMBLE that for some kids, it might be too much freedom and they'll never become responsible, but for kids like us, it gave us enough space. When I became a junior, I was inspired by my teachers to get it together. It's not that I didn't get an education in those first two years; I was still getting the conceptual education, and then because I wasn't penalized and I had that freedom, I think it gave me the will to work hard, and I got to that place on my own.

—Richie Davis, class of 1975

ONE TIME, BLYTHE WAS AT her desk in the public area, busy helping students with math difficulties. Blythe said, "Marshall, you're good at math. Why don't you help ____ (a student who was waiting to see her)?" So I asked what she didn't understand, and then explained it—backwards and forwards. The student said she was more confused than before, so Blythe took over, saying to me, "You have to explain it the way the other person understands it." That's obvious—now—but at the time, I was surprised and a little befuddled by Blythe's suggestion. It was a great lesson. After that, I learned to go slowly and ask more questions when trying to tutor. Another time, much later, Blythe had each student in our class take a turn teaching a new math subject. I don't think any of us thought we could do it. I had to teach matrices and determinants, which I'd never studied. After learning the concepts and methods involved, I spent a lot of time going through different high school math texts, seeing how each one presented the ideas, choosing approaches that I thought would work best for the students in our class. That was a great experience, too—examining and thinking through different ways to present the same material.

One of the most important things I got from Metro (and some other sources) during



my teen years is the idea that we can work out effective alternatives that go beyond the usual ways of doing things. This was communicated by the course offerings at Metro, by having classes taught outside the main building and by non-staff teachers, by the supportive latitude that teachers and administrators gave us and by the content and style of the classes themselves.

Both aspects of my Metro experience are still central to my life. I'm a philosophy professor. As a teacher, I continue to think about the best ways to communicate to my students given where they are, and in both teaching and research. I try to work out the best solutions to problems without feeling bound by the usual way of doing things.

—Marshall Abrams, 1971–'75

LET'S SEE ... I REMEMBER being confronted by the idea of traveling all over the city by CTA by myself and being scared to death. I remember a sixty-block bus ride up Cottage Grove Avenue to a class at Michael Reese Hospital, sneaking on El trains with Zippo and Vince, and my Second City Improv Theater class that carried on whenever two or more Metro students found themselves on the same crowded elevator or street.

I remember how Lincoln Park Zoo was populated with senior citizens in the wintertime, Richie Davis rousing the lions by roaring every time he casually walked through the houses, Fred Jackson doing chimpanzee imitations and inimitable bird calls on camping trips.

I remember crying over evaluations, getting angry about evaluations and thinking they were a complete waste of time. I remember the entire student body folk dancing on the third floor of the old building on Plymouth Court, the murals that were painted there, the locker decorations and the Metro Mavericks. I remember marching on a bitter cold, snowy day to protest the Board of Education's attempt to remove Nate Blackman, the students and parents and teachers meeting at Jones Commercial High School and Ken LeTraunik's jokes in geometry.

I remember teaching a French class, making a Super 8 movie and not being able to concentrate on Chris Nugent's history lecture because the view from the twenty-first floor of the First National Bank building was so spectacular. I remember learning history, how to write a magazine article for Playboy and how to play pinball, Nancy Katz, a student, teaching elementary Marxism, Adrienne Ingley teaching the literature of the Beats, and Counseling Group.

I don't remember where I graduated (the Field Museum?), but we had our party on a riverboat that went around in circles on the lake. I wanted all of my friends to become famous

Studs Terkel speaks at the 1975 graduation at Comiskey Park. Lee Alo and Judy Quanbeck look on.

and great, and some of them did, and some of them are and one of them died trying.
—*Lauren Deutsch, class of 1973*

HAVING MY HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE evenly split between a traditional situation and an alternative environment may give me a good perspective for reflection. I can easily say that my overwhelming thought on the difference is the concept of containment. The larger institution was more in the business of control. Nobody really seemed to want to be there—not the teachers, students, administration nor the police who sat at the rear of the lunchroom. Get them in, get them out; maybe nobody gets hurt. I didn't see much learning happening. The best teachers were the ones who were there as conscientious objectors. My school was considered "alternative service" at the time.

Metro was much more an atmosphere of creativity. Everyone seemed to want to be there: teachers, students and administration. The vice principal knew my name and traded jokes with me. I felt, for the first time that I was listened to. Everything that went wrong for me there was my fault, and what's unusual, I even knew it at the time. That may have been the biggest Metro influence on my life. I was given an opportunity, and I didn't take as much advantage of it as I should have. I pull that thought out from time to time to ensure that I don't repeat it.

I was trying hard to be invisible at that time in my life and, even so, some teachers took the trouble to peer through and invite me out. At the larger institution, being invisible was not

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM PROVOST

Left to right: Jim Provost, Judy Armstrong, Sue Loick

only helpful to me in terms of survival as a person, but it was actively encouraged by the institution. Theater Workshop at Body Politic got me out of my comfort zone. Mural painting on Lower Wacker Drive made me feel connected to my city. I could go on ....

I had some problems at home, and left, but no one knew at school. When my senior year was ending, I realized I was short a gym credit because I hadn't had my gym uniform pressed when at Austin High School. I never made up that credit,but I did get a GED and go on to get a B.A.

—Cheri Reid, 1970–'72

Metro and My First Big Life Lesson:

I ATTENDED METRO DURING ITS first years in the early 1970's. Travelling around the city of Chicago on my own was a thrill in itself. February through June of that first year, Metro was an adrenalin-pumping ride for all of us, a true experiment in education that I do not think anyone involved will ever forget. When we returned in the fall of 1970 to our new location of Dearborn Street I was still on a high of new experiences. Growing up rather sheltered on the Southwest side of Chicago, I never imagined what lay beyond the boundaries of my cookie cutter neighborhood. Metro opened the world to me. By the fall semester, however, I had attained enough of a comfort level to start to take my freedom for granted.

That September, I learned a key lesson that served me well during my subsequent time at Metro and in all the years since then. It was a beautiful early autumn day, the afternoon before the first session of John Starrs' acting class. I was enjoying hours of conversation and quality time with my high school boyfriend, Vince Waldron, and, as happened occasionally, we lost track of time and ended up arriving late.

I really loved the class, and by the conclusion of that first one, felt I owed John an apology for my tardiness. But as I expressed my regret and determination to do better next time, John looked into my eyes and merely shrugged his shoulders. "It's your class." He said.

I hardly knew what to say or to think. Wasn't it his class? Didn't I owe something to him? Wasn't he the judge of how well I was doing, or not? Wasn't I showing up basically for him? Or, for my mother? For the first time in my life I thought, "maybe not."

It's my class. Those words made a huge impression on me. Whether it was his explicit intention or not, John made me realize that I am

I NEVER IMAGINED WHAT LAY BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF MY **COOKIE CUTTER** NEIGHBORHOOD.

Eve Procopa, unknown

the one ultimately responsible for my own experience. Metro taught us all this lesson in countless ways, over and over again, and I am very grateful to have participated in that once-in-a-lifetime experience that changed me—for good.
—Karen Wagner, class of 1972

I ATTENDED METRO IN THE late '70s, but it has left lasting impressions. Over thirty years later, I can look back on those days and always have a smile on my face. I found Metro when traditional schools failed me—left me bored to death by classes that neither inspired nor challenged me. Lee Alo and Metro offered me those challenges I sorely needed, and hopefully aspired to. I graduated early but could not receive my official diploma until all others in that "year" received theirs—nothing too unusual about this, I guess, but given the fact that I was "done," I was asked to be a chaperone at my own senior prom—where else could this happen but Metro? Though I worked as a stockbroker and a massage therapist, I have followed in my mother's footsteps and currently live in Kenya. And though it's a difficult place to have settled, I have been here most of my life. My partner of twenty years is a wildlife artist. Together, he and I run a successful fine art business, work on natural history film documentaries driving and spotting wildlife, and guiding safaris. A dream come true for me.
—Lisa Asch, 1976–'79

METRO MADE ME FEEL LIKE I was a whole person. Metro kept me balanced, and I always looked forward to something bigger and better each time I went. Being downtown had something to do with it, too, because when you're downtown, you're expected to be a certain way.

When we came to school, we had our heads held high—it was an adventure. I always wanted to go to school, even if I was sick. I said, "I got to go–gotta get out of here," and I would come to school. I was afraid I'd miss something.

I had a lot of friends who went to neighborhood schools and they didn't get to go out—they were confined. They didn't know what a Jewish person was. They couldn't tell the difference between a Puerto Rican person and a Mexican person, and to this day they can't.
—Marsha Johnson, class of 1977

I WAS PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCED BY my educational experience. My vast life experience has led me around the world and most recently has culminated in my becoming a vocational high school teacher in an alternative school. I run a glass blowing program for "at risk" teenagers—gang kids, teens out of juvenile detention, the strugglers, etc. ... you know the ones. The program I run has gained a national reputation for excellence in education. I was also acknowledged as being an "outstanding" teacher by my school district. This I owe to the experience I had in high school and the support I was shown by the teachers at Metro, especially at that time in my life when I felt so lost and confused.
—Patricia Davidson, class of 1977

OK, IT IS TIME TO bring Metro back! I feel sorry for the kids today who will never have the opportunity to have the Metro experience. Without Metro, I don't know if I could have gotten through high school. Thank you to Lucinda for

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

helping me get in, Mr. Peoples the gym teacher for giving me a little slack. Shelby for bein' cool, Nate, the principal, for his direction, Carol Block for the arts, Mike for the Dunes, Irvin Bibb for Coleridge and Wordsworth (LOL), Rich Barone for math and many fun, funny classes, and Bonnie for music and tight jeans. And all of the rest of the great faculty and staff (shout-out to Fanny), and the student body that made high school bliss on earth!

Nate is still the coolest. He allowed me to teach classes as a student! I remember teaching Learn to Lock back when the lockers were big and I danced on "Soul Train" from time to time. This was one of the most fun times I had at Metro. But there were so many more. If you went to Metro, you would remember the Dunes.
—Corin Rogers, 1973–'77

BEST THING FROM METRO: WE broke so many barriers. We broke social barriers, economic barriers. Metro taught you how to survive with nothing. How many times did we use our tokens on the weekend to take our girlfriend or boyfriend out, and then walk to class—and make it to class? We came back and acted as if nothing ever happened.

I spent my first five months of high school at Harlan High School. It wasn't working out for me. I was on my way to jail. My homeroom teacher made me mad, so me and my boys took her desk outside and left it. The teacher called security. When I went to Metro, my eyes were opened to different things. And because of Metro, I spent twenty years in the police department (I'm now retired), six years on SWAT team and four years on an undercover narcotics squad. And now I'm working for CPS, and I set up a special program for after school to mentor young men. If we don't get them now, we'll never get 'em. Currently, I am pastor of a church in Englewood and working with the young men in the church. A lot of this stems from learning that was given to me at Metro, and I'm proud to say there were some Metro students who were part of my ministry.
—Mike Jones, class of 1973

I WAS IN MY GAGE Park H.S. homeroom when they passed around a press release about a new high school starting after the first of the year. It sounded interesting so I went to the office and asked to have my name put in the running for the school. I did not expect to get picked for Metro but I was.

At Metro I learned about school board politics, how to speak to adults and the entire CTA bus schedule. I learned that education did not have to be what someone told you; it's what stimulates your mind.

Metro opened my eyes to the diversity of the students and the people of Chicago. It made me believe that I could do anything I wanted to do—and I have.

Since leaving Metro, I worked as a logger, did maintenance work, was successful in banking and finance, and started a communications company. I wrote for a suburban newspaper and then the Chicago Tribune as a fishing correspondent, and later had a local television show.
—Philip (Chauncey) Niziol was not only one of the first 150 students, but also one of the first ten pilot group.

BARRY SOHN TAUGHT A CONVENTIONAL subject: math. And there was no getting around the fact that learning math, as always, required drilling on quadratic equations and lots of boring repetition of that sort. But Barry was never boring. He taught geometry while we played pool, and, while driving students to an event, once made us think about miles per gallon and the cost at different per-gallon prices. He helped us understand that math was a tool that could open up our understanding of music, of physics, of investing. Barry thought of ways to make learning fun and always related to students as if they could, and should, think for themselves. He didn't seem to have much use for the power that came with his age and status as a teacher. When Barry's daughter came into the world, he told me he couldn't wait until she was old enough to tell him off. That's how he was: He was OK with others' opinions and power and didn't seem to have any need to assert his own. He was unique in his approach—to teaching and to life. If only he could have had more time to teach, and to live. *(Barry passed away in 1983.)*
—Monica Buckley, 1972–'74

THE 1980s

I GRADUATED FROM METRO IN 1980. It was the only high school I attended. My Metro experience began when I was thirteen. My friend Holly suggested I come to see her final project for the Nuclear Arsenal class. The project was a skit to be performed multiple times in front of the Field Museum, which provided a captive audience, as the line for a popular exhibit was out the door and around the building. One of the students was unable to attend, so I was asked to participate in the skit. I was not at all sure about taking on this role (a very tiny part), as I was rather shy and certainly not comfortable in front of crowds. Paula and the students were all very nice and encouraging, and made me feel quite welcome. The skit went well, and I was amused that I had participated in a final project before I had even taken the class. It was at that point that I knew Metro would be a much better choice for me than my neighborhood public school.

I liked being able to pick classes with specific topics or themes, and that the classes were made up of students who selected the class, rather than students who were placed in a class by their age. Sharing classes with freshmen and seniors brought more perspective to our discussions.

I developed an appreciation for Shakespeare in Susan's class, and a fondness for Jane Austen in Marla's class. American History Through the Novel with Paula was one of my favorite history classes. Reading and discussing novels was far more engaging than reading a textbook and listening to a lecture. I laugh to myself whenever I see lists of books that have been banned in schools or libraries, because many of these lists could double as required reading for various Metro classes. How limited other people's lives must be.

The Dunes class was a fabulous experience in many ways. Metro had not offered the class for several years, so Mike, Del and a few students (including myself) re-established a relationship with the staff from the National Park Service and planned activities for the classes. I enjoyed the planning as well as the learning experiences at the Dunes. We hiked through the woods and up the dunes. We picked bugs out of puddles and slid down Mount Baldy. There was a major obstacle we had to overcome for the Dunes class: the school board. The board had to approve funding for the bus to take us to Indiana. The class ran for two cycles. During the first cycle, the school board delayed funding approval for the first seven weeks. During this time, we met at a variety of parks, forest preserves, zoos and museums throughout the city. The school board finally approved funding the evening before the eighth class, but had not ordered a bus. The following morning, Nate and Lee called bus companies until they found an available bus. It was a bit more luxurious than a yellow school bus (reclining seats, sound system and bathrooms), and more expensive. I can't imagine any other principal dropping everything to order a school bus so we would not have to miss another week at the Dunes.

When I started at Metro, I remember feeling somewhat cheated. There were fewer ancillary classes than ever before. Prospective teachers were no longer required to go through an interview process. The Board of Education simply transferred teachers to the school, sometimes filling open positions, also replacing existing teachers. Sometimes the results were OK, but other times, they were awful.

Left to right:
Glen Boyajian, Jandos Rothstein, William Meyer, Blythe Olshan

Even with changes at Metro, I consider myself fortunate to have attended. The Metro experience changed me. When I graduated, I was no longer shy. I don't hesitate to ask questions, and I developed critical thinking skills that have served me well. I am reminded of how I am every time I see high school students who won't speak up in class, whenever I meet people who are afraid to take a bus to downtown Chicago, or when I see lists of books that are banned from schools.
—*Sara Rose, class of 1980*

METRO SAVED MY LIFE AND my family's life—because when you grow up on the South Side of Chicago, it is a different world. You just make your way there trying to survive, trying to figure out what you're going to do next. What Metro gave to me was independence; coming from South Chicago on the train by myself—that was an experience. I didn't know it, but it wasn't about me; it was about my family, and my family watching me and saying, "If Sharon can do it, we can do it, too."

One of the things I learned at Metro was

writing. The writing we had to do at Metro was a key to my success. I went to college in Virginia—by myself. Fast forward, and all my sisters, cousins and their children have followed me. This didn't hit me until recently. I just earned my doctorate in education. It was about me honoring my family. Thanks to the reunion committee for putting that labor of love into creating this reunion.

—Sharon Credle, class of 1981 (from comments made at Metropalooza, June 26, 2010):

THERE NEVER WAS A STANDARD kind of day at Metro. Gym was at Grant Park. You could see people trekking out with soccer gear, etc. When I attended, Metro was at 33 E. Congress. Being at a school without walls told this inner city kid who had never been outside his community before that the whole learning process was beyond the school. And when I elected to take the Second City course, I had never been to the area around North Avenue. I didn't know it existed. That improv class taught me to get "beside yourself," I'll say, get over yourself.

The odds for African American males and particularly from Englewood, where I lived, were stacked against me. I see my friends from there and know Metro played a critical part in keeping me moving forward and let me know there was a world beyond the four walls, beyond my community and my own measure of what was possible.

—Cortez Carter, 1980–'84

METRO WAS AT 33 E. Congress when I attended. I was on the softball team. All our teachers were very, very connected to the students. My math teacher, Barry, was very knowledgeable and very encouraging, just one of those kind of men. If you didn't understand the material, he would work with you to break it down. People really cared. It wasn't just that you were showing up to school; OK, you're here, and you're sitting down, and you just go about your business. People really cared.

—Barner Hill, 1980–'82

THE ODDS WERE STACKED AGAINST AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES FROM ENGLEWOOD, WHERE I LIVED. I SEE MY FRIENDS FROM THERE AND KNOW METRO PLAYED A CRITICAL PART IN KEEPING ME MOVING FORWARD.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BLYTHE OLSHAN

BEING A SHY PERSON WHILE around people, I found regular school to be challenging, just to put it mildly. But did Metro ever change my outlook of self worth! I remember I put together the first Metro School Band.
—*Sherrod Brown, class of 1986*

METRO WAS A GOOD HIGH school. Although it was small and didn't have the state-of-the-art equipment, it was a place where a village of teachers was raising a community of children. I have been truly blessed to be a part of a school that inspired me to strive for success.
—*Annette Buckner, class of 1983*

I HAVE NOTHING BUT FOND memories of Metro. It helped me to think outside of the box and to have a wonderful life.
—*Lacy Calhoun, class of 1984*

I THINK THAT THE MAIN valuable tool that Metro provided was more of a "free thinking" atmosphere (which I think I carry with me to this very day). Being able to choose my own classes and register, and the alternative instruction in taking classes outside of school grounds have helped me in planning during my academic and professional career. I earned a Ph.D. in math/electrical engineering.
—*Antwan Clark, 1987–'91*

A few Metro Memories:

I WAS "DEPROGRAMMED" BY RICH Barone! It was the first day of Algebra-Trig, and Rich kicked things off by drawing a line on the blackboard and asking the class to tell him how to figure out how long the line was. The class—fresh out of geometry (and a year of working proofs)—was stumped. If the line was the hypotenuse of a triangle, and we knew the length of the adjacent sides...it would have been easy. Together, we tried earnestly to invent a structure by which we could extrapolate the length of the line. Was there something we could compare it to? Eventually Rich gave in to (mock) exasperation—you get a yardstick and measure it, he said.

Oh.

We were back in the world of "real numbers," and could put all that Pythagoras stuff behind us.

ONCE I WAS AT BREAKFAST at some dive-y coffee shop with Del, Carol and a few students (Del in particular seemed to know every out-of-the-way joint that baked their own coffee cake or featured boiled meat specials or whatever). This place was a tiny 12-seat lunch counter, half taken up with Metro. I was enjoying a piece of the cake (Del was right, it was good) when an enormous black rat—with all the unhurried sense of entitlement and security of a beloved household kitty—waddled out of one

hole behind the counter, between the proprietress' legs, and into another hole a couple of feet down. "Did you see that?" I asked Del. "I try not to," he said.

PART OF WHAT WAS BEST about Metro was having free time between classes downtown rather than study hall. Some of my favorite times were hanging out at Blimpies with Brian, Pam, and Leah, or Heartley's with Jenny and Charles, playing (newly legal) pinball at the I.C. station, or wandering around town. Downtown had a sense of grittiness and peril back then that is nearly all gone now—I'm glad I got to know that Chicago.

MY LAST METRO MEMORY ACTUALLY comes from my Freshman year of college. I went to a tiny school in Ohio, and one of the rituals of Fall was to watch a campy student-made film from the late '60s which included several dance numbers. In one, (with Martha Reeves and the Vandellas playing in the background) students are performing—what seemed to my new college friends to be rather peculiar steps—the dancers mime a digging motion, a shoving motion, and they then wipe their brows. The moves were not mysterious to me. "Oh," I said "sure, that's the Japanese Coal Minor's dance." "See it's about their life... digging the coal, pushing the coal cart...wiping the sweat...." My new mates stared at me in stunned silence.

It would be tempting, if untrue, to say that the incident branded me as a folk dance geek for the rest of my college days. It did not, but it was a small but early confirmation that my high school career had been both different, and in many ways broader than what my peers had experienced. I saw this impression confirmed again and again when people seemed surprised that I had taken yoga, or environmental politics, or woman's health and sexuality or that the version of American history I took did not talk much about the founding fathers but had a fair amount to say about genocide, racism and classism. It was a privilege to go to Metro.

—Jandos Rothstein, class of 1981

I LEARNED ABOUT METRO FROM my older sisters. They went downtown and called their teachers by first names. There were options.

When I arrived at Metro, it was my first experience with diversity; it was very exciting. I was leaving one world—an African American neighborhood—into a totally new world. We got to explore, interact with people. We didn't know we were learning. When I talked with my sister, we said it was just fun. But social interactions were just as important as educational ones. I remember Irvin and Shelby. Here were these teachers, and we could talk to them.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BLYTHE OLSHAN

233 N. Michigan Avenue
Second Floor

I took every opportunity to take classes outside. Kids met up in the hallways and we talked, we were good friends, but we went to different classes. I went here, I went there because we were capitalizing on our learning styles, and in hindsight, Metro was very innovative. Nowadays, schools are struggling to get that engagement—we were learning, but it was still fun.

We were choosing classes and taking responsibilities for our own learning. It didn't occur to me then thaht, as Irvin said, "the teachers knew what to offer."

We were downtown, and there were all these temptations—Grant Park, shopping, movies—but you kept your balance between work and other stuff you weren't supposed to do. I realize now that's what helped to shape the transition into college because that's what you do in college.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

METRO HAD OPENED ALL THESE DOORS AND OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPLORATORY LEARNING. **I COULDN'T STAY WITHIN THE WALLS OF MY COMMUNITY BECAUSE MY EYES HAD BEEN OPENED.**

I realize that my bus trips on Cottage Grove to school made me not accept what I went back to. It wasn't good enough because Metro had opened all these doors and opportunities and exploratory learning. I couldn't stay within the walls of my community because my eyes had been opened, no matter what path my life took. I always knew there was another way. I knew there were all these bells and whistles that are out there, and I can take advantage of them.
—*Macqueline King, 1983–'87*
from her remarks at the Metropalooza, June 26, 2010 (Macqueline is now principal of Dumas Technological Academy in the Woodlawn area. She encourages her teachers to do exploratory learning.)

I REMEMBER RIDING THE EL, going to and from school. Seeing all of the different areas around the city was like traveling to other states or countries for class. I didn't realize how much was outside of my own neighborhood until I attended Metro High School. I have lots of good memories.

Gloria Cornish was one of the best teachers I've met in my life. I love her like I love my mom. Some of my best memories were from the people I met from different parts of the city, and the times I spent hanging out at Seward Park playing basketball. I learned that there are people in this world who are special and can make an impact on you with just a simple show of understanding. Love to my Maverick family.
—*Nick Skenadore, 1986–'90*

I HAVE SO MANY AWESOME memories at Metro...I loved everyone. I miss everyone. I thank Mike Liberles for teaching me the appreciation for culture and curiosity about society. I thank John Bien for my love of geometry. I thank Sandy DeBartolo for teaching me Spanish, Shelby Taylor for my understanding of where I came from. I can't forget Paula Baron for being tough and making us think like adults, and a shout-out to Fred and Skip. I thank Roger for my love for fried chicken (LOL), and so many more...so much I've learned not only from textbooks, but also from life lessons, friendships and love. Metro lives not only in our lives, but also in our hearts. I'm a Maverick for life.
—*Michelle Auntie Sadler, 1988–'92*

I HAVE SHARED WITH CHILDREN and countless others the innumerable facets of wisdom passed on to me from some of the GREATEST: Barbara, Blythe, Gloria, Lee, Nate, Paula, Sandy, Shelby, Steve...I am sooooo appreciative. Shelby was my homeroom teacher, and because of him and his 3/5ths of a Man class, I became interested and passionate about black history.
—*Cynthia Slates, 1983–'87*

IN MY SOPHOMORE YEAR, I was placed in my third foster home, and that foster mother did not give me money to get to school. Arlene and Sandy called me into their office and inquired as to what was going on with me because my grades were slipping. When I told them about the lack of bus fare to get to school, they went to Nina and Lee, and they set it up so that when tokens were given to the teachers for their outside classes, they had me come to the office and pick up tokens for myself. Metro paid for me to come to school. Don't think any other school would do such a thing.
—*Tracy (Mrs. Anthony) Lewis (attended Metro 1988–'91 and transferred to Von Steuben when Metro moved to Crane*

A LIFE LESSON I TOOK beyond Metro: The year was 1984, French class. Quite a few students were not turning in homework assignments and were giving lame excuses. Clearly, Sandy was fed up, and she said to us that she has many problems at home, but that's where she left them—at home. When I enter my workspace or home, all that happens at home or work stays there, and I don't use either as an excuse to come up short of what's expected of me. Thanks, Sandy.
—*Elbert Struthers Phillips 1984–'88*

PLAYING BALL AT METRO FOR three years without a home gym made me love playing on the road my whole career.
—*Monte O'Quinn (class unknown). Though Metro's basketball team didn't have a home gym, it produced two professional basketball players. Monte O'Quinn played for several international teams, and Mitchell (J.J.) Anderson was an NBA player.*

I REMEMBER THE TALENT SHOWS we used to have in the lunchroom (or should I say, our all-purpose room, LOL). Darryl Pandy used to perform there. (Darryl went on to become a very successful singer, but unfortunately, he just recently passed away.)
—*Dottie Fields, 1980–'84*

I ATTENDED METRO IN THE Congress building, four of the best years of my life. My twin sister Tanesa and I (remember Tina and Lena?) graduated in 1986. I think we twins gave Nate most of his gray hair. Nate Blackman, Lee Alo and Sandy DeBartolo inspired me to teach and design curricula, but they don't know it yet. The school without walls ingrained a deep love for the resources Chicago has to offer. The "Chicago" class continues to allot me the expertise to tell people all over the world about the history of the city that is the great melting pot of culture. After attending Upward Bound in Roosevelt University in 1984, I also got my B.A. from there a few years later. I remember Barbara led our pompom team to win sec-

WHAT HIGH SCHOOL HAS ONLY 350 STUDENTS, ALLOWS ITS STUDENTS TO CALL TEACHERS BY THEIR FIRST NAME, IS LOCATED IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN AND JUST PICKS UP AND RELOCATES THE ENTIRE SCHOOL OVER WINTER BREAK?

ond place in 1983 ... always second to Whitney Young. A special heartfelt thanks to the administration and staff of Metro. The school without walls gifted me a life without limits.
—*Lanesa Smith, 1982–'86*

LIKE MANY METRO STUDENTS, I thought I had a special relationship with my teachers; mine was really confirmed the day I came to school after my little brother had died the night before. Steve Slov was the attendance counselor, the first one ever at Metro, and when I went into his office, he just gave me a hug. No words were said (I think Tresa had told him). Then he said, "Go home and be with your family." I said, "I am with family; why did you think I came here?" And I sat in his office for the rest of the day, with the softball team running in and out, until he drove me home. I often say I would never trade my life for any amount of money in the world. My Metro experience was priceless. The family I gained, irreplaceable. The love I feel for all of you, no matter if I talked to you every day, or every once in a while, is enormous. Metro was one of the best decisions in my life.
—*Yanna Gray, 1985–'89*

I REMEMBER WHEN WE DID a student exchange with Glenbard West (or maybe it was East) High School. We went to their school, and they treated us like family! When they came to our school, we put on a show for them with African dances taught by Mark and Barbara. I had a blast, and I will always remember how Metro taught me independence and responsibility.
—*Teri M. Lewis, 1988–'91*

THE SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS TAUGHT me so much, gave me friendships for life, new family members and the greatest memories! Thank you, Metro, for allowing all who attended to see that we could be anything we wanted to be!
—*Tammi Martin, 1986–'89*

THE LAST FEW YEARS

I CAN REMEMBER NOT WANTING to attend Metro because I thought it was lame. I knew for sure that my mother would let me go to one of the neighborhood schools, such as Marshall or Westinghouse. She had other plans. She was dead set on me being given the opportunity to explore life from a different angle. I could not appreciate all of the things that Metro had to offer until I was long gone. Although I didn't go away to college, it totally prepared me for the world that was ahead of me. I loved the one-on-one that we had with all of our teachers and principal. The fact that we were on a first-name basis, the outdoor classes, the classes at the zoo and various places around the city all gave us a sense of responsibility. Not to mention, we were on the Gold Coast. How cool was that? Out of four years, I can remember maybe two fights, and those weren't anything major. We would not dare think of bringing a gun or knife to school. If anyone did, he or she would surely be talked out of it by a fellow student. That's just how we were. I felt comfortable and didn't feel the need to act any other way than how I already was. I'm proud to say that I attended Metro High School.
—*Shaneka Flagg, 1987–'91*

I LOVED METRO. IT WAS the best educational experience I had. I learned things, not just in books. We were independent. My mother thought Metro was too loose; I, however, felt we were trusted, and I loved the openness. I didn't take any ancillaries in my freshman year but was looking forward to taking the class at the Anti-Cruelty Society the next year. When Metro closed, I joined the protests, but eventually, my mother said I had to go to school. There were only a few schools that would accept Metro students that late. I tried Lakeview, but they wouldn't accept us. So I went to Steinmetz, and a few of my Metro classmates went there as well. Steinmetz had 1,000 students, and I really didn't feel I got a good education there. At Metro, I felt we learned to become more open and politically minded; I especially liked Shelby's classes. I also remember going out to protest the Gulf War in 1991. All the students went out, and Nina just said, "Let them go." That was the first time I had ever participated in any protest.
—Julie D*avis attended Metro in 1990–'91. When Metro moved to Crane, she moved to Steinmetz, graduated in 1994 and went to UIC. She has been working ever since as an adult education instructor. She is currently back at UIC for a master's in educational psychology and wants to develop her own school.*

When I asked Julie what aspects of Metro she would like to preserve in a school she would develop, she said: openness, small size and learning outside of the building.

I TELL MY STUDENTS THAT had it not been for teachers at Metro, I wouldn't be here today. I

thank all of them for helping me find myself. I walk into the classroom every day and I swear I think I've got swag like Irvin, street knowledge like Shelby, words of wisdom like Bill. A twist of where you gonna make me remember where I come from, Gloria. That attitude from Sandy: "We can laugh each day, but without the work, you will not pass." A sense of "think outside the box" from Mike. I view that brown eye, blue eye film "A Class Divided" and get shocking results from my diverse student population each semester. And that motherly love from Nina, who told me, "You gotta get out of the West Side and go to college, and that's that." I believe I model this at my school every day, which gets me into a lot of trouble from administration, but I defend my actions and say it is results driven, and students are learning how to think.

—*Fredrick R. Moore started at Metro in September 1989 and graduated from Metro Crane in 1992. He is currently teaching in D.C. Public Schools as a culinary arts instructor. He runs a program at Theodore Roosevelt High School. It's the only culinary program in the public schools in D.C., so they are pretty much known for the successes of his students.*

METRO GOSPEL CHOIR WAS THE BOMB. "Oooo, LORD WE PRAISE U." We won the McDonald's competitions.

—*Sheena Ewing, 1990–'91*

I WAS ONLY AT METRO for a year before they closed the location on Wendell. I loved that school, and I still talk about it today. I truly enjoyed going; it's sad that it was only for one year.

—*Angelique Randle, 1990*

I LEARNED SO MANY DIFFERENT cultures while I was there for my two years that when I transferred, it was as if I was relearning all over again. I still think about that school and how it impacted my life.

—*King Shon, 1989–'91*

METRO HAD TO BE ONE of the most unusual high schools of all times. What high school had only 350 students, allowed its students to call teachers and other staff members by their first name, was located in the heart of downtown and would just pick up and relocate the entire school over a short winter break? Only Metro High School. Not only was our school very united, it was also one of a kind when it came to establishing close bonds, long-lasting friendships and, in my case, one very special relationship.

Throughout my high school years, never could I have imagined that I would be together with and happily married (for almost seventeen years now) to my husband, Anthony Hinkle. Just like our school, our story is also unique. Anthony and I were strictly friends and never even considered dating at the time. In fact, we did not see each other for at least four years after he graduated, but we always managed to keep in touch by phone. It wasn't until the summer of '91 that we finally decided to reunite. And to our surprise, this reunion would be the beginning of two really great friends falling in love and building a promising future together.

—*Natasha Hinkle, class of 1989*

MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF METRO was, "Wow, is that really my school?" (My grandparents drove me by there before I started so I could see it. I couldn't believe how small it was.) Metro was special. I felt privileged to have been a part of Metro; it was like no other. The teachers really cared, and I loved the environment. I remember taking the class where we went to the Indiana Dunes on Tuesdays with Mike Liberles. I used my credits for P.E. and science in this class. The walks, hikes and learning experiences were great. I also remember the homecoming dances, which were not like other schools. We got to dress up and go to a fancy hotel (was it the Swissotel?), and it was fun. The Inside Out program where we went to Cook County Jail to see the inmates put on their skits was interesting. Metro was different, and that's what I loved about it. The teachers were great, and they really did care; they would reach out to you if you needed it. I cried when Metro was chosen to be closed. I remember my mom and the other parents outside the school rallying to keep us open. I didn't attend Crane. I ended up going to Austin, which was a breeze, but not my Metro.

—*Sandra Hambrick-White, 1988–'91*

I ATTENDED METRO IN BOTH buildings, on Congress and on Wendell. I wouldn't change that experience for anything! I loved the students, teachers and all. Metro had a part in making me the lady that I am, and I thank you for all that Metro has done.

—*Danassia Pettigrew,class of 1990*

I HAD SO MANY EXPERIENCES. A school without walls. It was whatever you wanted it to be. My friend Robert, who was in "bad boys' class," is now doing motivational speaking for boys and has two master's degrees.

—*Tamaira Williams, class of 1991*

CRANE/METRO: 1991–2004

TO DEAL WITH A FINANCIAL crunch, Mayor Daley proposed to close a number of schools in 1991. Metro protested but lost, so it was moved to Crane High School at 2245 W. Adams as a "program." Though it lost many of the elements of the original, Metro did retain an identity within Crane. Nina Robinson, who had been principal of Metro, stayed on as program director until 1994. She was replaced by Mr. Frye. For the first year or so, Mike Liberles still took students to the Dunes with the help of retired Metro teacher Del Yarnell.

My mother, Lisa Tucker, graduated from Metro in 1987. I initially enrolled at Crane. When my mother came up to Crane, she discovered there was still a Metro program when she ran into Steve Slov and Mike Liberles there. When I came in 1999, I thought Metro was the best. I understood why my mother loved Metro so much.

We went to school at Crane four days a week, but on Tuesdays, we went downtown to our outside classes. We went to the stock exchange for Financial Markets, to the Art Institute and other museums for other classes. We never really went outside of the downtown area, though.

Some of my classes were taught by Metro teachers, but for others, we were integrated into the regular Crane classes. We pretty much got along with the Crane kids, but sometimes they resented the fact that we went downtown and only came to class four days a week. The counselor we saw to help us plan for college, etc., was a regular Crane teacher. He was very helpful and kind. But we felt closest to the Metro teachers. We could tell them our problems. They had so much love for us. If we got in trouble, they were there for us.

Steve and Mike told us to call them by their first names, but we called the rest of the teachers by Mr. or Ms.

Crane principal, Melver Scott, had mandated that teachers not be called by their first names.

When I attended Crane/Metro, probably 75 percent of the students were females. I don't really know why that was. In 2004, the last Metro Crane class graduated. I don't know why they closed the program, but I do know that kids were dropping out both from Metro and from the regular Crane. Teen pregnancy was a problem. Of ten of my buddies, two had babies. In addition, there was great rivalry with Marshall High School, and something always happened when there were games. Also, the area around Crane was changing. It was "gentrifying," so there were fewer students because they tore down some of the public housing and other housing.

—*Giovanna Tucker, Crane/Metro, 1999–'03*
(from an interview in August 2011)

1992 WAS THE YEAR THAT Metro was housed inside Crane. Although I still had a wonderful experience, despite all the metal detectors and the gang fights, I just wished I could have had the real Metro experience like the students before me.

—*Tiffany Askew, 1992–'96*

HOW STUDENTS CAME TO METRO

I WAS A JUNIOR WHEN I first attended Metro High School. I hadn't been a model student up 'til then. I'd attended Carl Schurz High, where I spent almost as much time outside of school as in. School was big and impersonal. Teachers had no time for students. I was constantly in trouble, but not for the usual reasons. I didn't get into fights. I didn't smoke pot; I didn't destroy school property. I asked questions. I asked an algebra teacher to help me to understand some concepts. She sent me to the office. I asked a history teacher to clarify a term. She sent me to the office.

My "guidance counselor" was tired of seeing me. She knew of a school for incorrigibles like me. She told my mother that I'd have to attend an alternative school downtown. My mother didn't ask how it was that a guidance counselor could simply decide that I had to attend another school, or why we had to fill out an application if I was required to go there. She simply filled out the paperwork and sent it in. I believe the counselor assumed that Metro was some sort of reform school. I am certain she didn't feel that she was doing me a favor by sending me there.

But when I walked into Metro for my orientation, my fears melted away. Here was a school that treated a student as a student instead of as a potential troublemaker. Here were teachers who believed that students learned best if they were challenged to think, given access to information and experiences and given assistance without coddling or handholding. In short, we were treated as the young adults we were becoming, and we were expected (without it being stated) to act and think accordingly. This was all I needed to begin to enjoy school and to explore all that education had to offer.

—*Brian Ashley, class of 1976*

I CAME TO METRO FROM Double EE (a program for dropouts). I remember thinking that I wasn't going to let anyone at the new school force me to do anything that I didn't want to do—an attitude I still suffer from, even today. It seems I may have had that attitude for at least a week or two before I realized there were great experiences to be had, and that was made all the more accessible since I felt the attitude of the administration was that they weren't going to force me to do anything. But if I didn't have enough credits, I would simply be dismissed from the school. I got to the point where I would do anything to be able to attend biology class at Lincoln Park Zoo and Shedd Aquarium. I loved my great creative writing class at Playboy magazine, my Advertising Communication class at a local advertising agency and my Improvisational Theater class at Second City. Learning had finally become exciting for me, and I could feel my world expanding rapidly.

I became familiar with Cornell College after being a part of a group of students (during my junior year) taken to Iowa by Judy Quanbeck, my counselor at the time.

The challenges had to do with possibly missing out on some of the basics of traditional education. I always chalked it up to my lack of interest in history and geography at the time. But I don't linger on any of that, since I

Left to right:
Joe Boone, Richie Davis

feel that what I gained from my experience at Metro went far beyond anything I could have ever imagined.
—*Rupert Kinnard 1971–'73*

MY DAD WAS THE ONE who found Metro for me. After my parents separated, my brother and I went to live with him, and I transferred from Kenwood High School, which was near my mom's house, to Lane Tech, which was near my dad. I was miserable at Lane, so Dad networked among his friends and found out about Metro. It was mid-year, so I applied as a special case and was interviewed by a committee of students and teachers. At the end of the interview, they told me I had been admitted. This was when the building was located on Plymouth Court. I went a short distance to State Street, entered the first store I saw with a pay phone, and called my father. As I was sharing my good news, I noticed that people in the store, who were exclusively men, were giving me odd looks. There was one area of the store where the entrance was a curtain. A man emerged from behind the curtain, gave me a weird look, then looked down and quickly exited the store. I don't remember when or how I realized that I was in a kind of "adult goods" store. I said, "Dad, I have to go." Understandably, he wanted more details about Metro—when would I start, what were my impressions of the school—but I got off the phone, saying that I would explain later. When I talked to him that night, we both had a good laugh.

It's funny to remember those times: the pay phones, the mission that was near our school, and how sleazy and run-down downtown Chicago was at that time, and how all of that learning took place in that run-down area that we loved and felt so comfortable in (as long as I knew what storefronts never to enter again!).
—*Lori Osborne early '70s*

I WAS UNHAPPY AT KENWOOD High School. When I heard that there were openings at Metro, I went straight downtown and to the desk of Nate Blackman and got in. My parents were not at all happy; they were convinced I wouldn't learn anything. But I guess they realized there was no talking me out of it; I was wild about the idea. The adjective that comes to mind first is: cool. I just thought Metro was cool, and I wanted to be cool, and different. From my early adolescent point of view, Metro was the perfect place.

I was not disappointed; I loved Metro with all my heart through my three years there. I loved tramping around the city and having classes and friends in various widespread neighborhoods. Academically, it was too easy for me. I easily got all the credits I needed to graduate within three years. For many years later on, I kind of regretted that. Here in Germany, the educational standards are quite high, and when you've finished gymnasium (roughly equivalent to an academically rigorous high school in the U.S.), you've got a fairly comprehensive general education, have read the classics of literature, learned at least one foreign language, etc. It often seems to me that I have a lot of general knowledge gaps, which I attribute to the fact that I went to Met-

THIS WAS THE "METRO GIFT"—NOT A DIPLOMA, BUT A STRONG SENSE OF BECOMING WHO WE WERE MEANT TO BE, **AND THE COURAGE TO FULFILL OURSELVES IN A WORLD THAT DOES NOT ALWAYS ENCOURAGE KIDS TO DO SO.**

ro and not a conventional high school. But on the whole, perhaps especially now that I have found my professional niche, I don't think the academic standards of Metro hurt me.

—*Judy Rosenthal, class of 1974.*
(She now lives in Germany and works as a translator)

THE SCHOOL I LEFT, SENN, was huge, prison-like and in an uproar. There was a lot of racial strife, instigated often by a white gang that the Lerner News dubbed "the Thorndale-Jarvis Organization" but whose real, more accurate name was "the Thorndale Jagoffs." You never knew what was going to happen at school on a given day, but you could be pretty sure it wasn't going to be good.

After Senn, Metro seemed like an oasis. Calm, welcoming, a place where I could have black friends without people thinking I was a race traitor, where I could enter my studies on my interests. I liked the sense of experiment, like we were all creating something together. The flip side of this, however, was a kind of formlessness, so a glib gal like me could get away with murder.

—*Ginny Sorrells, 1970–'74*

I WENT TO TWO CITY high schools in my freshman year in 1974: Waller and Lakeview. They were both good schools. There was the usual gang activity at both schools, which I managed to avoid. My mother had heard about Metro before I entered my freshman year, but I thought I would tough it out in the regular system. But after that first year, I asked my mom if I could get in to Metro and she got me in. While I wasn't the best student, the faculty of Metro allowed me to learn at my own pace, and from my mistakes. I give thanks to the teachers and Metro for their understanding and guidance.

One of the things I liked about Metro was that you could pick the courses that interested you. Because of that, Metro lives in me. Part of who I am now started at Metro. The courses that I took then are still with me now. One of the courses that I utilize to this day is the photography class. It allowed me to pursue my interest in photojournalism. Years later, I helped found an international editorial photo and graphics cooperative based in New York City called Impact Visuals. We had some 150 member contributors and affiliate photo agencies from around the world. Impact Visuals served mostly the alternative press and to some degree the mainstream press and textbook market. Another course at Metro that stuck with me was about apartheid in South Africa. That course came full circle when I saw Nelson Mandela at Yankee Stadium. He did a worldwide tour when he was freed from prison after twenty-seven years for opposing apartheid. At the stadium, we all gave him a few good stadium crowd waves.

Another thing I liked about Metro was the diversity and mutual respect students and faculty had toward each other. I was a long-haired misfit but was treated as an equal. Because of that, I didn't feel like an outsider. It was like my extended family at Metro. I've been able to carry that positive vibe over the years. I think it helped prepare me for my life in New York City, where I lived for thirteen years). In order to survive there, one needs to respect a lot of diversity.

After Metro, I joined the workforce. I earned a living working at a wire factory and as a security guard; then I got a job in a quick print shop and have earned an honest living in the printing business since 1979.

Like at Metro, I still pick courses or hobbies that interest me. Some of them are martial arts, sailing, guitar and bass guitar, electronic communications, photography, history, peace with justice and more.

Thanks to the school without walls for a head start on my life.

—*Tony Yarus (1975–'78)*

METRO, FOR ME, WAS AN outlet from a very gritty environment. I remember being very afraid of entering high school because the high schools in my area were known for violence, gangs and very few success stories. I had a choice between three good, academically sound schools at the end of eighth grade. They were Von Steuben, Lane Tech and, of course, Metro. I chose Metro because of its unique makeup and the fact that it wasn't a neighborhood school, so I had a chance to meet new and diverse people. Metro's signature motto, "School Without Walls," caught my attention. Although the Metro experience was one I'd never forget or trade for another, it did have some low points for me. The low points had more to do with my personal behavior than with the school itself. In retrospect, the faculty at Metro was exceptional at being strict with just the right dosage of leniency. This brave experiment allowed me to go through an adolescent stage of mischief while searching for who I was and to start to shape who I would ultimately strive to become.

—*Robert White, 1987–'91*

IN 1972, I GRADUATED EIGHTH grade from West Pullman Elementary on the South Side of Chicago. Overnight, my neighborhood went from a lower middle-class, well-kept, relatively crime-free area to a drug-infested slum where I could not walk safely down the street, even in broad daylight. My mother and I lived alone, and she worked for minimum wage while trying to send me to a safer private high school. The public one, where I would have been one of the only white students attending, was out of the question for her. My best friend was beaten so badly she nearly lost a kidney. Instead, my moth-

er sent me to two different Catholic high schools. After my second year, there was no way for her to afford it anymore, and I prepared myself, an A student, to drop out or run away. Then my friend, whom I was visiting in the hospital and who was in the same boat as me, had a roommate who was attending Metro. She told us how to apply as "special cases" and avoid the dreaded lottery. I was accepted due to my grades and my inability to continue in my neighborhood. I had already been robbed by gunpoint and knifepoint and survived an attempted rape and other sexual abuse.

When I visited Metro, I was alone, sixteen and scared. I will never forget Lee Alo and his smile as I entered the school. He made a joke about watching me out of his window as I crossed the street and how pretty I was at a distance and even prettier in person. He listened to me talk and told me I would be attending Metro on the spot. I cried with happiness. I would not have to drop out! He took me into some classes and asked me what I wanted to learn! I was floored! My parents were divorced, my father never asked me anything, and here was this man who cared about me and what I wanted to do with my life.

I loved Metro High School. It saved my life because when nobody cared, it did, with all the beautiful teachers who composed the heart and soul of what Metro was. To me, Metro was an oasis in the desert, a drink and a gourmet meal of knowledge and caring to those of us starving for a chance to become the best we could be. Not cogs in the wheels of institutional education, but individuals with individual dreams. This was the "Metro gift." Not a diploma, but a strong sense of becoming who we as individuals were meant to be, and the courage to fulfill ourselves in a world that does not always encourage kids to do so.

—Janice Wieczorek, 1974–'76

I SIGNED UP TO GO to Lane, but what I knew about Lane was that if you were late to class, you had to stand in place. It sounded miserable. So I applied to Metro and got in through the sibling rule. 537 S. Dearborn was kind of shabby, but it was ours. Then we moved to 223 N. Michigan. We were like the Beverly Hillbillies, a real cultural change. At Plymouth Court, we sat on the floors; it seemed really informal. The Michigan Avenue building was bigger. I had some sense that there were more classes inside the building, but I did do the ancillary thing—went to Florida with Marine Biology class. Metro was my hippie school.

And for college, I did the opposite. I went on to Harvard for undergrad and Berkeley for law school. I hated it. But my clinical class at Berkeley was the best class. It was like Metro. And when I was teaching law, the best class was a clinical class that was a lot like Metro, with first names, and the kids did the interviews, etc.

—Laura Ramirez (from her remarks at Metropalooza, June 26, 2010, (Laura is now an immigration judge in California.)

COURSE OFFERINGS AND CURRICULUM IN GENERAL

THEY SAY THAT CONFESSION IS good for the soul. Perhaps enough time has passed so this story can finally be told, filling in an important piece of Metro history.

Back in 1971, I took a course, *Origins of Fascism*, taught by Paula Baron. The course was all about totalitarian regimes, how they started and cultivated their power. One assignment in the class was to do independent research that could be presented to the class. This could be researching from old newspapers, or films, or textbooks, anything that might add to the content of the class.

My friend "E" and I came up with an idea to see if we could plant a rumor and see how fast it spread. After all, fascist regimes are all about misinforming the public and creating fear, uncertainty and doubt. So the idea was to come up with a plausible rumor, then see how far and fast it would spread. So what rumor should it be? Gotta be something people would be driven to spread because it was compelling for some reason.

"I know," one of us said (I really don't remember who), "How about we start a rumor that the school is being condemned by the fire department? That has a sense of plausibility and urgency." Sounded like a winner, so we went with it. "How about I start talking to people on the fourth floor," I said, "and you start on the second floor, then we'll meet in the lounge on third and compare notes?"

So we went off to execute our plan. I didn't have too much luck on the fourth floor. People expressed some surprise but for the most part just shrugged their shoulders. After all, attacks on Metro were relatively common. Eventually, I made it to the third floor lounge and touched base with E.

"Bad news," says E. "This rumor ain't going nowhere. One of the staff on second said they were going to call the fire department and check it out. This project is going to be dead before it barely got started."

"Bummer. Oh well, we'll just have to come up with another project for class." And we went home.

The next day, we came to school and saw there were fire department inspectors walking the floors. Apparently, when the second floor staff member called, the fire department decided to check things out. And here they were! "Wow! This is all happening based on a rumor we started? That's ... fantastic? Ridicu-

lous? Terrifying?" We went with "terrifying." We were scared spit-less. People were concerned and scared. What's going to happen? We decided it would be best to lie low and play dumb for the rest of the day. After all, what's the worst that could happen?

We found out the next day, a cold February Friday that is ingrained in our memories forever. The fire marshals made their inspections and decision. And things happened fast. "This school is condemned," they announced. "It does not meet fire code specs for schools. You will all have to leave ... immediately!"

Oh, man! What have we done! What HAVE WE DONE? Is this the end of our school? Did a pair of fifteen-year-old stupid kids bring an end to the best high school in Chicago?? Oh, man, oh, man, oh, man.... What's going to happen now?

By Monday, decisions were made. Nate made the announcement that we would have to leave the building. But the school would continue to exist in temporary donated space from various businesses. The Standard Oil Building (which at that time was on South Wabash) would handle the bulk of the office and classrooms. Other businesses were asked to expand their commitments. Improvements would be made to our 537 S. Dearborn address, and we could move back in a few weeks. (Actually, it took five weeks.)

The remaining few weeks of Paula Baron's Origins of Fascism class were tense for us. No one else knew the truth. But we did. And we said nothing, in our shame ... in our fear. Eventually, we did some lame research about Mussolini and presented it. The irony was that what we presented was about the same level of effort and research as the rest of the class. No real creativity or surprises.

For everyone else, this class would slip into obscurity and be forgotten like so many other classes. For myself and E? A lifelong secret ... until now.

—*Anonymous*

IN MY OPINION, ONE OF the most important aspects of Metro, if not the most important, was the responsibility given the students by the fact that the teachers were not authority figures. We called them by their first names, but that was superficial—when I taught seventh and eighth grade math at a private school, I went by Michael, but I was an authority figure (if a friendly one). The important part was the contract—no one was going to force us to go to class, but 70 percent attendance (I think) was required to pass. Each grade was pass-fail, with a written evaluation accompanying it. I continue to hold up Metro's grading model as the best of an imperfect tool (and I still think grades are basically stupid). We had a full week each quarter of conferences with our teachers—a ten- or fifteen-minute meeting, and each would write an evaluation of the class, the teacher and the student's performance.

History and social studies were a different ballgame, and I think it is because history teachers have a political agenda. Metro had a political agenda, and it all lined up. And I mean "political" in the world- and consciousness-changing sense, not the "vote for my party" sense. Metro taught a level of political analysis that more Americans could stand to have. I still remember Pat Berg coming to class to explain to all us white kids that we were racist, and my reaction against it (despite the fact that she lived across my back fence, and I played with her son, and I shouldn't have been so defensive). Those lessons in class analysis and political analysis in general are things that we Hyde Parkers pride ourselves on being steeped in from birth, but I think Metro did them well.

—*Michael Scott, class of 1981*

I REMEMBER CHANGING ROLES OF Women. Two things happened that have always stayed with me. The first was a visitor, a former prostitute, who dispelled my idea that prostitution should be legalized (she said if it were legalized, more women would do it—and debase themselves in the process). The second is when the teacher asked how many of us (female) students considered our best friend to be a male, and how that became a discussion about female self-hatred and misogyny.

—*Lisa Johnson, class of 1975*

STUDENTS COULD ARRANGE FOR AN individual placement with a variety of organizations or individuals. I had a placement with Prentice Marshall, a highly regarded federal judge. He was among the very few Democrats appointed to the bench by Richard Nixon, and he served as a federal judge for the Northern District of Illinois. I was introduced to Judge Marshall by an attorney with whom I'd interned.

It was 1977; I was in my junior year at Metro and wanted to be a lawyer—inspired and influenced by Clarence Darrow, about whom I'd read everything I could get my hands on. In our first meeting, I explained this to Judge Marshall, who told me that when he was a boy, he'd read Darrow's autobiography, which was what spurred his own early interest in practicing law. He invited me to intern in his courtroom. I was moved by that but motivated by having learned about his ruling in a discrimination suit in which he ordered the Chicago Police Department to begin hiring women officers and to increase the number of blacks and Latinos on the force. That ruling was made in 1976, I began my internship in the fall of 1977, and when that year the city failed to comply with his ruling, Judge Marshall directed the federal government to withhold funding until the Chicago Police Department changed its policies. I was invited by Judge Marshall to sit with him, his court colleagues and law clerks as they reviewed and debated what to do to force the city into compliance, and while so much of what was discussed went right over my head, I was awed by the process and the level of debate among those present. While I may not have learned a great deal about the finer points of the law, I did learn about the active stewarding of the law toward fairness and toward law as service on behalf of the people.

—*Laura Samson, class of 1979:*

MY FONDEST MEMORY OF METRO "academically" had to be Shelby Taylor's Mock Trial class. That was an extraordinary experience, to compete and feel self-assured as a lawyer and a teenager who was actually trying to convince a jury that her client was innocent. That was

Sheri Gerson and
Nate Blackman,
at graduation 1978

exciting. Socially, I have numerous memories of being a mini-family.
—*Kelley Pinkins, class of 1989*

THERE WAS A CLASS IN the late '80s called "Vietnam," taught by Paula. My stepdad was in Vietnam, and it was a taboo subject with the family since he was a sniper. Though I knew that as a soldier, he had killed many of the enemy, I always thought of him as the most gentle soul you could ever know. I took Paula's class, and as one of the options for a final project, we could do some research on a particular battle or issue or interview a veteran. I asked my stepdad if I could interview him, and he agreed. We sat every night for almost three weeks, and he shared his story with me. Some of the things he asked me not to put in my report, and some things he asked me not to share with family. I had no idea the things he had done or had been through. This class helped me get to know my stepdad in a whole new light, and respect and honor him even more than I ever had. Thanks for opening that door to help us become closer and to help my stepdad start a healing process that was much needed.
—*Starr Jo Flores-Quijano, 1986–'90*

I REMEMBER TAKING A LITERATURE class with Judy Reed in my senior year and being upset by all the books she made us read. I remember her almost being emotional and saying, "If any of you plan to go to college, you will thank me later." I huffed and puffed through that whole class, but when I got to college, I did not have to spend money on some of the books that were required for literature because I already had them, as well as the knowledge, so it was good to have that head start. The Odyssey was one of my favorites and, I believe, Things Fall Apart. Thank you, Judy Reed!
—*LaTasha Reed, 1985–'89*

MY BEST MEMORY IS ENTERING the history fair with a project on Negro League baseball. I got a chance to meet Theo Radcliffe, a baseball legend.
—*Cedric Draper, class of 1991*

I TOOK A CLASS CALLED Penal Justice, which was taught by an ex-con. We went all over the state, visiting jails and prisons, including Joliet state prison, Dwight Women's Prison and Cook County Jail. That left an impression on me, and I now run a program that brings sixteen-plus arts workshops into juvenile correctional facilities and the county jail in the state of Maryland.
—*Claire Naisbitt Shwadron, class of 1973*

I LOVED ART, AND I was able to take all the classes Del Yarnell and the other art teachers taught. I took a class that was offered at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was for Art Institute students to practice on Metro students. They used their skills as apprentice teachers on us. It was great; they always taught us how to go inside and to feel our work first, and then put it on paper. I took a class with Mike Liberles called Animal and Human Behavior. I watched the chimpanzees in their new environment at the Lincoln Park Zoo and recorded their behavior. It was a continuous writing project and behavior analysis. I watched people also. I loved the class. I loved Metro because I could create my own projects or classes. I created an oral history project using my boyfriend's grandfather's life story of riding the rails. I went to Emma Goldman's Women's Health Center for a class. They taught me about all aspects of women, and I was able to spend time reading in their library. I feel fortunate for the experience. I was able to attend the Dunes class. Going out to the Indiana Dunes weekly helped me experience nature and bog walking on the Cowles Bog. I loved the waves and the beach and the friendships.

The Metro experience was so natural: Go to the institutions of Chicago and learn. Hands-on learning helps people to learn their cities, towns and their environment. It helps people know the choices they can make for their careers by taking them out of the box of the classroom. I remember always that learning is an interactive experience. One thing I have been able to pass on to my three girls is the love of learning. Hands-on learning is the thing we always thirst for. Children thrive with attention and the ability to make choices in what and how they learn. Metro was a success, to me.

—Marla Bernstein, 1977–'81

SOME THINGS I LEARNED AT Metro that I have used throughout my life: Del taught me to see through a camera. I became the staff photographer for *Rock and Roll Probe*. My photos have been on album and CD covers, in newspapers and magazines, even features in international journals. I took Carol's sewing class because I was late for registration, and it was the only class left. I've used what I learned from her to make displays for retail, repair tents for festivals and create backgrounds for photography. She also taught me the fundamentals of collage, which has been the basis for my success in designing posters and fliers for bands, protests and festivals, signs for retail, murals, graffiti, album art, my button business, and in my time as a light show technician. They both taught me to use color and light in unexpected ways to achieve new and exciting effects. Bonnie taught me to embrace technology and to write without worrying about perfect syntax or form. She taught me to hear music as something beyond my obsession with the Beatles and their pop culture phenomenon. Her words and influence encouraged me to study music and rhythm and the technologies that accompany them, and helped me to become a record and concert producer. Steve taught me to be confident in my own abilities and embrace obstacles as opportunities. He taught me to be serious and committed while keeping my sense of humor intact. Nate, Irvin and Shelby taught me the true meaning of respect, by respecting me and earning mine. They also awakened my interest in multiculturalism, my activism against racism in American culture and ultimately, my participation in the anti-apartheid movement of the mid-'80s.

And the most important thing I learned at Metro is the importance of community. The inclusive, helpful nature of the student culture was extremely influential in my life, and is something I've tried to encourage and emulate in other communities.

—Steve Wessing,1975–'79 (Steve didn't graduate, because of some health problems, but he considers himself the most successful dropout.)

ANCILLARIES

THE UNIQUE APPEAL OF METRO was not only in its centralized location on the north downtown side of Chicago (220 N. Michigan), but also in the ancillaries. One of those that I was fortunate enough to participate in was a public relations class at BPI (Businessmen for the Public Interest), which was a bridge toward establishing an action answer line-type column in the Thursday "Sidetracks" of the *Chicago Daily News*. The editor of this section was Mr. Abe Peck, who allowed us even into his home to complete the final work product of our weekly columns. The other critical professional we could not have done without was Ms. June Rosner, who was our teacher/mentor at BPI. The column later migrated to the smaller *Chicago Defender* newspaper, where we were welcomed by the editor at the time, Ms. Joy Darrow.

Another scientific adventure involved a Marine Biology class that was held at the John G. Shedd Aquarium and hosted by Ms. Linda Wilson. I did a special study of mangrove ecology. Students from the year prior actually were flown to Florida, where they scuba-dived off the coral reefs and studied coral reef ecology. One student came face to face with a barracuda, as I recall, but fortunately, it darted away from her.

I participated in a musical written by Corin Rogers, a Metro student. After high school, I studied classical voice and did karaoke quite a bit in California.

—Franklin Jones, class of 1978 (and unfortunately, recently deceased)

WHEN I WAS AT METRO, there were still a few ancillary classes: Dunes, something at the zoo, bowling, jogging in the park and music appreciation. I was allowed to take independent P.E., and for that, I actually taught a physical fitness class for Metro students for credit.

—Carla Furca, 1987–'91

JUST POSITIVE FEELINGS AND/OR WHAT METRO DID FOR ME

METRO WAS A LIFE-SHAPING PLACE for me, and I formed relationships with teachers and friends that mean a lot to me still, even though I have lost touch with most over the years.
—*Holly Boyajian, 1976–'78*

HOW DO I SUMMARIZE THE Metro experience? When I bring my kids and my students to Chicago, I make them take trains and buses. I walk them all over downtown, and make sure they walk over the bridge at Wacker and Michigan. I get them to the Art Institute, which, by the way, helped me keep my head from time to time back then.
—*Cathryn Amidei, 1975–'78*

THE POSITIVES ABOUT METRO INCLUDE the fact that I really loved school, wanted to go and had so many experiences and adventures. It was very empowering to be able to navigate the city at so young an age. The negative of my Metro education was that I was not academically well prepared for college, particularly in math and the sciences. I spent the first two years of college catching up and was never able to really do well in science.

One of my best memories of Metro is Improv Theater class taught by Betty Thomas. I particularly remember an improvisation that Lisa Sondin and I did involving two prostitutes who were working on Christmas. The other great memory was a science class where we were discussing gravity and how it was possible to create a perfectly round ball bearing only in outer space. Somebody asked, "What's a ball bearing?" I said, "Baby balls" and started to crack up so hysterically that Chuck Beach went to the soda machine to get me a 7UP to help stop my choking. He became my first true love. (Sigh.)
—*Margalynne Armstrong, class of 1973*

I NEVER FORGOT ABOUT MY days at Metro, and when I think of them, it brings a smile to my face. Such a caring group of people really committed to making a difference in young people's lives, a group of extended friends that really only came together in school. I've always wished that more of my friends from my own neighborhood went there. Most of the friends from school went their separate ways after the last class of the day. It was always difficult to keep up with anyone or even ever see them again. I wish I had kept in touch with everyone, or at least someone!
—*Adam Harris, 1976–'80*

METRO BROADENED MY HORIZONS TO new ideas and other people in a way that probably would not have happened had I stayed at Lindblom High School.
—*Maurice Johnson , 1971–'75*

POSITIVES I SAW IN METRO: small size, collaborative learning, first names. Having to negotiate for different things, such as, for example, getting an independent geometry class. I learned how to learn—critical thinking.

I remember the talent shows, the humor, the relaxed atmosphere—like family.
—*Lolita King, class of 1987*

IN GENERAL, I FEEL LUCKY to have found my way into Metro, as it saved me from dropping out of high school. I loved the ability to choose my classes, and yes, the teachers were all special in their own way—they cared about each of us, or at least they made us feel that way.
—*Stephanie Perom, 1974–'76*

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I learned from Metro was independence—I could go to museums around the city. As principal of a school in Woodlawn now, I want to help students to expand into the world. The four walls are so blah—so much to compete with—therefore, I am working on grants to provide funds for students to travel to St. Louis, etc.
—*Macqueline King, 1983–'87*

POSITIVES ABOUT METRO: THE FREEDOM, responsibility and the culture of the school. Very liberal. Also, the class names were funny!
—*Brenda Sommerville, 1984–'88*

IT WAS A FAMILY THING. Teachers cared whether we succeeded. Everybody got along. There were rival gangs, but they left that outside.
—*Lisa Stead, 1985–'89*

METRO WAS STRONG IN BUILDING critical thinking skills. When I was working at the Field Museum, they initiated a program collaborating with museums across the country on community outreach, and we were talking about lifelong learning. I remembered thinking, "Oh, my God, I know this so well—it's part of my life." I was sitting around the table with experts who had studied this. I never studied this; I lived it!
—*Encarnacion Teruel, 1970–'74*

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS about Metro: You could talk to teachers and develop a personal relationship with them—verbalize things that you might not have shared elsewhere, and teachers could guide you without your being resistant.

I liked having the experience of meeting people outside school—it kind of took the distance off because meeting with people in business broke barriers.
—*Lynda Turner, 1976–'79 (She became the first female battalion commander in the Chicago Fire Department.)*

THE METRO EXPERIENCE WAS SO NATURAL: GO TO THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHICAGO **AND LEARN.**

GRANT PARK WAS METRO'S OWN gym room. I had great fun there and great memories. In the wintertime, we would go to Bicentennial Plaza near Grant Park to ice skate and Marina City to bowl. To this day, I still have the ice skating skills that I learned from there and the bowling skills and taking score. But if there was a teacher who really stands out in my memory, that would be Del Yarnell. He made me and everybody in art class laugh and have a good time.
—*Enrique Villafan (1981–'85):*

I LEARNED THAT EDUCATION WAS an organic process. Learning didn't always require classrooms and textbooks. We were encouraged to find nonfiction paperbacks, visit museums, talk to people around us and observe life. Not only have I applied this in my own life, but it's something I've passed on to my children and, hopefully, to others as I interact and teach.

Though my formal educational credits are not impressive, I have retained my love for learning, and—largely due to Metro's influence—always felt competent to learn things on my own. I currently teach knitting to anyone who wishes to learn, and handle the treasury and publicity duties for a local theatre group. In the past, I've done comedy writing for local access public television shows in Dallas and Atlanta. I've been the producer for an independent film and worked with several other associates on a variety of film and television projects. Again, the positive, "can do" attitude that Metro instilled in me was of great value with every new endeavor I undertook.
—*Kathy Vogeltanz, 1975–'76*

METRO WAS ONE OF THE best things in my life, and I still brag about going there. It felt like every day was a field trip—on the buses, seeing sights and seeing people. Every day was an adventure. I liked going to school every day. I took pottery at Jane Addams Hull House all four years (today, Cindi is a professional potter who shows in galleries, art fairs, etc.). My friends, teachers—it felt we were one big family.
—*Cindi Hicks, 1974–'78*

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE METRO PROVIDED! It is true that people make a place special, and not necessarily where it is. Metro rings true to that notion. Three different locations made no difference to the uniqueness of the people. I remember interesting personalities like Carol (art teacher), students Charles, Eric and Susan, Mike (science teacher), Sandy (French teacher) and Bonnie (music teacher). The movie *Fame* was close, but still didn't capture all that was Metro. I will never forget the time I spent there. Who remembers the class that was taught by the mother of a student, who taught the class with her "domestic partner?" The day they brought in the "probe" will forever go down in education history as a moment to be remembered—maybe not repeated, but definitely remembered. And then there was the English course taught by a student that used comic books as text. Classic Metro. Then there was Ruth's class, among the downtown landscape. It seemed that every day it was nice, she would move the class outside to a park or picnic area. The architecture of downtown Chicago was our backdrop. We had it sooooo good. I learned sooooo much. Metro was one of a kind.
—*Darryl Pope, class of 1980*

WE REALLY WERE A LUCKY bunch to be able to experience this kind of school. We also had very unique teachers at our fingertips. Too bad this school concept didn't go farther. I believe a lot would have benefited.
—*Dru Willey Staples, 1971–'73*

I HAVE MEMORIES OF SITTING for hours in the monkey house at the zoo observing the chimps—Penelope was my favorite. Of not "getting" math until Blythe explained it with great patience and humor. Steve's class about modern existentialism, which went way over my head! Of endless hours on the Jeffery Express to and from Hyde Park!
—*Rondi Charleston, 1976–'77*

WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME WE had—being taught improvisational theater at Second City by Beth Thomas and others ... I have much gratitude to all the teachers and administrators who made my high school experience so exceptional.
—*Zivit Atkins, 1972–'75*

METRO—CRITIQUES

Of course, everything wasn't perfect. There were things we didn't provide, mistakes we made. One size doesn't fit all. As many students said, we were family. And like all families, there were frictions, misunderstandings and political differences.

MY GREATEST REGRET ABOUT METRO is that it now seems likely that it was used by the board in part as a test run for the whole system of magnet schools that they soon developed. Not only did the magnets contribute to the destruction of neighborhood schools, but the pattern of their distribution and the current cutbacks on busing and out-of-neighborhood students make it clear that there has always been a master plan to have elite magnets for the upper middle class and then throw the rest of Chicago's kids to the dogs. Bereft of resources and with the least prepared students and teachers, most neighborhood schools never had a chance to meet the new accountability standards, there-

by opening the door for the Renaissance 2010 program, which contains a few kernels of good ideas while basically serving as a mechanism to continue the social engineering practices that Chicago's power elite is famous for. Schools were historically used as a means to change over neighborhoods racially and are now being used in a reverse manner to change them over from lower class to upper class. But it's hard to be convinced that any of it is about serving the Chicago student population as a whole.
—Carl Rosen (1972–'76):

THE ONLY NEGATIVE I CAN think of is that I wasn't clear about what was expected of me, particularly regarding choosing my class schedules. The first two years, I was absolutely clueless when it came to choosing my classes, regarding credits for graduating. I had enough credits, total, but was unaware that there were certain requirements within those eighteen credits.

The positives were the phenomenal learning experiences like none other—learning things that I would have never had the opportunity of in a regular high school setting. Going to John Marshall Law School, or U. of I. to learn anthropology and mythology, to CBS to learn radio broadcasting and the technology (of that time) of making TV commercials. Going to AFL-CIO headquarters and learning how labor unions began and why (which was AWESOME). Going to Peoples Gas, Bell and Howell, Bell Telephone, Michael Reese Hospital, etc.
—Robert Olson, class of 1975

I ATTENDED METRO IN MY last year of high school so I don't really remember any of the teachers or students. I do remember being excited with the idea of attending the"school without walls." Unfortunately my most memorable experiences at Metro are negative. I remember a piano class at Lyon and Healy Piano store where the teacher never showed up. Then, my grades were so poor toward the end of the school year that I was advised by the assistant principal to "quit school and get a job." However, I do believe the innovative educational ideas that Metro offered were very helpful to students who were not only seeking, but needed an alternative to conventional education.
—Craig Harris, 1979 (When I asked Craig what Metro could have done to help him, he told me he felt there wasn't anything Metro could have done. His teen years were profoundly in turmoil. He did get a GED and a job, raised a family and, as of 2004, was returning to college to get a degree in education!)

METRO WAS BOTH GOOD AND bad for me. That much freedom when you aren't responsible enough to handle it can be a bad thing. The day you realize that whatever advantage you may have had from being born clever has been negated by the effort of others with fewer natural fits is a hard day for a smart-ass. I lacked confidence in my own ability to accomplish because I never really had to work for anything. It was all too easy.

The other side to that, however, is that Metro gave me a sense that learning is not contained within books and walls, but in every person we meet who can tell us their story. I have been open to that. The Bible teaches us to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." I understood that with freedom comes responsibility! I also remembered a teacher who told me how he had dropped out of high school but later got a GED and went on to teach math to brats like me.

So I went and took the GED, and eventually (eight years later), I went to college and got a degree in accounting. Today, I am the director of medical economics for a consulting company that manages Medicaid managed care plans in six states.
—Garrell Jordan, 1970s

I remember my father asking Paula, "If you had to give a grade, what would it be?" The fact that we only received pass-fail or credit withheld drove him crazy. I guess you can say that was a positive for me and a negative for him. I learned a lot at Metro, but I think that for me, it was too much responsibility at a young age. I had too much freedom to do "whatever," and the fact that so much was left up to me, I don't think I was mature enough to do the right thing and take the classes I really needed. Therefore, I didn't graduate and had to go on and get my GED.

Even though I never walked across that stage with my classmates, it was an experience that I will never forget.
—Julia Wilson, class of 1987)

DIVERSITY

From April 6, 1970:
I AM A STUDENT AT Metro High School, 220 South State Street. I have taken time to write to tell you about Metro because I am a student here.

Metro has a wonderful staff and a very fine Principal, Mr. Blackman, a man who is willing to listen to the students and staff. The staff at Metro helps the students in every way they can.

Before coming to Metro I did not like white people. But Metro has changed me. Today I like white people. From my heart I truly love them.

At my former high school I missed 16 days. Since coming to Metro I haven't missed one day because it is very interesting.

The staff from Urban Research has been wonderful. I hope they will stay with Metro for a long time and whatever you do, don't take Mr. Blackman because he is a wonderful man. I hope in September that we will have more staff coming in and they will be as nice as the staff Metro has now.

I don't think I could go back to my former school.

METRO is where it's at!

I hope the Board of Education takes further steps and action.

—Letter from Larnell Baines to Dr. James Redmond, general superintendent of schools.

IT'S INTERESTING THAT METRO STILL has a place in our lives and still serves as a model all these years after it went out of existence. My closest friendships are with people with whom I went to Metro.

Metro gave me the confidence to go to college. I may not have gone if I hadn't had this experience. I think about the only thing that Metro neglected was building a true multicultural community. Metro was very diverse but segregated within. Black, white and Hispanic kids hung out in different areas of the building and took more classes with teachers of their own race. Steve Everett did teach a class on race, which I took, but only one nonwhite kid was in the class. Rarely did any white kids take an Afro-American history course, and rarely (if ever) did a black and white teacher teach a class together. I really feel that this was a missed opportunity, and not to have had it impacts my life and work today.

—Jim Provost, 1971–'73

AS FAR AS THE SCHOOL'S ability to encourage interaction between students of different backgrounds, I'd say it did as good a job as any public high school could have. As a white kid from a mixed-race family who commuted to Metro from an all-black neighborhood on the South Side, I was aware of the segregation that was peculiar to Chicago and most large northern cities in the early '70s. Naturally, this segregation was reflected among the populations of the city's high schools, public and private. While Metro did not single-handedly erase the lines separating the races, the citywide makeup of the school's student population made it impossible not to interact with kids of other races and socioeconomic classes, even if that wasn't your primary focus.

It's also worth noting that Metro was made up of a self-selecting population of progressive thinkers who tended to be more enlightened than the norm on issues of race—very few overt segregationists, I suspect, ever applied to Metro. That said, one could still find "black tables" and "white tables" in the student lounge area. The thing of it is, I never felt unwelcome at any table, or any corner of the school's eccentric indoor campus or environs that poured out onto the streets surrounding the school's run-down office building (on what is now choice South Loop real estate).

—Vince Waldron, 1970–'73

I GREW UP IN A totally black neighborhood and went to an all-black school. I grew up on the South Side, in Englewood. Metro was a real exposure—being around other races. This was something new. This was different; this was good for me, to know other cultures.

—Juanita Boone (class of 1977), Her whole family went to Metro

PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE lesson I derived from my time at Metro was that of community, of being part of a much larger and more diverse community then I'd ever experienced before. On my first day, I walked from the El station and turned onto Michigan Avenue, confused and bumbling. I was a sixteen-year-old naïve white girl, wearing bell-bottom jeans, halter top and my long, brown hair parted in the center and trailing down my back. Terribly unfamiliar with downtown Chicago, I felt—and looked—vulnerable. A group of five or six young black boys saw me. "Hey, where are you going?" one of them called to me. I held back my discomfort and called back, "High school—Metro." They broke into smiles—"Welcome!"

It was an introduction that set the tone for my entire year and a half at the school. It was a time that broke down barriers of black and white, literally and figuratively. At Metro, there was a respect and appreciation for other cultures that deeply affected me and helped guide me to understanding others with different backgrounds.

—Kathy Vogeltanz, 1975–'76

I HAVE SO MANY STORIES swimming in my head from 1974–'78, when we were on Plymouth Court and Michigan Avenue. I remember first being introduced to the "lobby crowd" and quickly realizing that there was a group of people whom I could feel a part of. Of course, as a freshman, we had to take freshman courses, and we learned to ride the CTA bus to the Boy's Club on Roosevelt Road for our weekly discussion to learn about Metro, traveling the city and being in a school without walls. I recall getting our weekly tokens so we could take our classes outside of the Plymouth Court building. It included a journalism course at the Chicago Defender and a biology class with Mike Liberles at the Indiana Dunes.

Without Metro, I would not have met my husband of twenty-seven years from the Austin neighborhood, Tyrone White, and had our one biracial son, Paul White (fourteen years old in 2010, and about to attend Whitney Young High School). At the time, even though Whitney Young was in existence, we always claimed Metro was the first magnet school that brought in youth from around the city to learn from each other's experiences. I have fond memories of students organizing protests to go to the Board of Education to keep our school from being closed. I know that I have a different appreciation for African American history, as Shelby Taylor schooled us based on Dick Gregory's No More Lies and not from the standard textbooks.

We enjoyed social times at Metro, includ-

ONE COULD STILL FIND "BLACK TABLES" AND "WHITE TABLES" IN THE STUDENT LOUNGE AREA. **THE THING OF IT IS, I NEVER FELT UNWELCOME AT ANY TABLE.**

German teacher Jean Ashe, Hubert Morales

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

ing card playing in the basement on Michigan Avenue and the senior prom at the Playboy Club. We had an outstanding basketball team and can brag on the years of J.J. Anderson (who became a very successful professional basketball player), even with no gymnasium. Because of Judy Quanbeck's guidance, we studied abroad in Switzerland and raised our own funds to get there. We graduated in 1978 at the beautiful Chicago Cultural Center. Our principal, Nate Blackman, greeted each of the graduates on the stage, shook our hands and said, "Be humble." These words ring with me to this day. I credit Nate Blackman for the advice he gave many of us. When I went out of state to college and returned to Metro for a visit, I talked to Nate about being separated from Tyrone White during this time, and he said very simply, "Follow your heart." This was a turning point for me, as I returned to Chicago and completed my college degree at Northwestern University.

I think many educators can learn that to inspire students, you have to connect with them where they are. We lived in Chicago, and it was our urban school ground. We met people we would have never encountered had we stayed at our local neighborhood school. We are better and more successful adults because of the experiences given to us by Metro and its staff. Metro lives in each of us. I bring these experiences to my current-day work as the director of the Office of Accessibility and Customer Support with the state of Illinois, Department of Human Services. I have worked in public service for over twenty-five years, and I know it is in part due to the exposure and the diversity I shared at Metro.

—Martha Younger class of of 1974.

BEFORE COMING TO METRO AS a freshman, I was what could be called a very naïve hillbilly! My family was from the deep South, and kept me as sheltered as life in a Chicago slum would allow. Metro was an eye-opener for me. People from all over the city, all walks of life, all colors and types. I was in shock for the first month. Half the time, I was afraid to even open my mouth. Then the teaching staff took over. My first crush was on Marc Masor. I took his Animal and Human Behavior class, and my life began to change. I had freedom to come and go as I wanted without judgment. I started to learn just because it was fun. The practical things I learned while part of Metro have lasted and helped me through life. I have seen amazing things and done some wonderful things during the last thirty-some years, most of it due to Metro. I have always had the courage to try new things and go new places. Sometimes I think Metro gave most of us a wanderlust. Always ready for change and needing thing to change.

—Debby Espy, class of 1973

ONE OF MY MOST MEMORABLE experiences was being in a class whose name I can't remember, but it was a class that had great representation of kids from all parts of the city.

I LEARNED TO QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS. I LEARNED TO HAVE NO FEAR IN QUESTIONING AUTHORITY. I LEARNED TO HAVE A **HEALTHY SKEPTICISM** ABOUT THE WORLD THAT WOULD SERVE ME WELL IN MY LIFE.

It was the first time for me to meet kids from the West Side and, I'm sure, the first time for them meeting a Jew from the Southeast Side. I had my eyes opened for the first time about how people who came from different environments were affected by those environments. I can't remember a lot of specifics, but remember feeling enlightened and also confused about what to do with that. It had a profound effect on me—not sure what effect on others.

—Lauren Deutsch, 1971–'75

METRO GOT ME OUT OF my little neighborhood and out into the world. Since Metro, I have lived all over the U.S. and also in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Spain. Metro made me much more open to other points of view due to the variety in the student body. It makes a great interview story, especially when the job is about something that needs a lot of work to get off the ground.

—Arthur Goldstein 1970–'74

I WAS RAISED ON THE West Side of Chicago and until attending Metro had very little interaction with young adults outside of my African American race. I honestly feel my Metro experience prepared me for interaction with other races during my military years that began at age seventeen.

Since there was a great amount of freedom extended to students attending Metro, I've been able to instill in my daughter the idea that choices that we make in life can positively or negatively affect us. When opportunities present themselves, we have to make the choice as to whether we want to take advantage of them. We then have to be ready for any consequences that derive from either accepting or declining those opportunities.

—Paula Jones, '80s

IMPACT ON CAREER CHOICES

METRO MADE ME BELIEVE ANYTHING was possible.

I was only at Metro for my senior year, but the memories and experiences had a profound impact on my life. Diane Ratkovich and I became close friends at Metro, and we are still close today. After graduating Metro, we embarked on a trip to California with Keith Sanders and Greg (I don't remember his last name). We bummed around California for several months, mostly in the San Diego area. We worked odd jobs and shared an apartment. I had told my parents I was going out to look at colleges, and I did have an aunt in the San Francisco Bay area, so we did actually start that process. After a few months, I went home and worked for a year before starting college. The next year, I applied for and was accepted at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland.

Here's how Metro figured in all of that, other than the obvious—that I would have never met my best friend. Somehow, along with all of the freedom we were offered at school, it was firmly ingrained in my mind that I MUST go to college, and that I could go wherever I wanted (Thanks, Judy Q.). I was the fourth of eight kids, but only the second to consider college. There was no money saved for my college, so I knew I'd be doing it on my own.

Without learning that I had the power to direct my future, which I learned in one short year at Metro, I'd never have had eight great years on the West Coast, never would've had the balls to apply to art school, never would've met people or had experiences that are precious to me today. After going to Metro, it just seemed like anything was possible, and of course, it was.

I worked as a designer in the jewelry industry and I'm now an art teacher.

—Mindy Miller Milan, class of 1973

IT TAKES SOMETHING LIKE THIS event to be able to say how important this school has been to me. I have been very selfish in my memories of Metro. I thought I was the only one that Metro affected. I had a math class in an office building, and across the hall was an advertising agency. I was always a creative person, so I peeked in, and some very serious guy, Dennis French, came out. I said I just wanted to know what they did, and he told me he would tell me if I could tell him why these students kept coming here once a week. He ended up showing me the agency, and this has been part of my work ever since. I went back to Metro and told them about this agency, and we ended up with a class at their agency. We created an actual ad campaign. In no way was it a lighthearted class. It really took work to get things done.

—Rupert Kinnard, 1971–'73 (from remarks at the June 2010 Metropalooza event)

EVEN THOUGH I SPENT ONLY one year at Metro, it had a profound impact on my life. It helped to form my character and thinking process. It helped me develop the skills to question assumptions and authority—which later on in life helped me to earn an Emmy and a Peabody Award as an investigative journalist.

A particularly strong impact was made in Steve Everett's anthropology class—in which every aspect of social and cultural evolution

Amy Lloyd

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM PROVOST

under the sun was put on the table and hotly debated. From Steve, I learned to question assumptions. I learned to have no fear in questioning authority. I learned to have a healthy skepticism about the world that would serve me well in my life.

Years later, after graduating from Juilliard and singing all the Mozart maid roles on opera stages, I felt unsatisfied with my life. My natural curiosity about the world led me to the journalism school at NYU. Much to my surprise, in my first class, I exposed a cover-up story involving the powerful Metro North train crash in which an engineer was killed—and made a scapegoat by the company. Their story was that he had been high, and caused the crash. I dug around and, with his family, got the autopsy report, which showed no drugs, and found out that the crash had been caused by a malfunction of a very fancy new CAB signal system.

My story ran in all the major New York papers, and overnight I won an NYU investigative journalism award and was hired by ABC News. I spent six wonderful years working for Diane Sawyer and won awards for our investigative stories on health care and the environment. Thank you, Steve Everett and Metro, for giving me the skills and the chutzpah to ask the questions that needed to be asked.

—*Rondi Charleston, class of 1975*

METRO PROMOTED INDEPENDENCE AND FREE thinking. In this regard, I was able to come to the realization that it was OK for a macho kid from the South Side to want to cook. (I became a chef and culinary arts instructor.)

I remember Chicago People Make History. The interview process, for a person such as myself, was an extraordinary method to help me retain the information. It was also remarkable to speak to so many people with such interesting and diverse pasts.

—*James Simmers, 1978–'81*

I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT Metro not only shaped my high school years, but it really shaped my professional life. During college, when I was trying to figure out what to do, I kept thinking about how those who set up Metro did so to change the lives of students and families and to change the way public schools did their business. I saw the Metro founders and its faculty and staff as urban education pioneers and said to myself that I would like to do the same—and some thirty-four years after graduating Metro, I continue to work to improve public education.

—*Paul Goren, 1972–'76*

I SPENT ONLY A YEAR and a half (1974–'75) at Metro High School. Growing up on the far Northwest Side of the city (6000 north, 7200 west), downtown was a world away. But with the help of many people, I was given a chance. Meeting fellow students from every neighborhood and social background of the city opened my eyes to what a great place I had landed. The wide selection of classes at so many places in the

downtown area and beyond was more than anything I could have dreamed of. Walking through Grant Park as the hallway to my next class—who else had such a high school experience? But at Metro, this was just another day at school. As the back of my school ID stated: "Metro High School students must travel throughout the city as part of their educational program. N. Blackman, Principal."

One class at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore led me to the path I would take as an adult. The class exposed me to the outdoor world and its careers. After leaving Metro, I applied for and received a job working for Illinois State Parks. In my thirty-plus years in the field, I held many different positions—Hot Shot Crew member, ranger at an historic village (Bishop Hill), assistant manager of a World Heritage Site (Cahokia Mounds). This opportunity was, in great part, due to Metro High School.

I have a sixteen-year-old daughter. It is hard for me to think of dropping her in the middle of the Chicago Loop for high school, but I did it, so why not her? Metro students traveled the city without cell phones or even telephone cards. But somehow, in the middle of the 1970s, this school worked. Maybe it is time to try it again.

—Matt Migalla, class of 1975

METRO WAS ONE OF THE most special places on the planet and a godsend for me.

I grew up on the South Side of Chicago in a transitional neighborhood. I was being targeted by gang members and bullies by my last year in grade school. I had been beaten so severely on more than one occasion that I was terrified to leave my house. The high school I should have had to attend was Gage Park, and there was no way I was going to become a statistic. I literally feared for my life.

A friend of the family told us about Metro, and let me tell you, I ran....

Metro was a place of diversity and creative thinking—sometimes it was a little too lax, but we liked that, too.

Had I not gone to Metro, I would not have been able to attend the Art Institute at such a young age, and I would have never met Carol and Del. They were a great influence on my life; they were free thinkers, and they did not place restraints on creativity—something that bit me in the butt in college, where lots of restrictions were placed on me.

—Sharon Antonia Ogata, class of 1983

IT WAS THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING at Metro that caused me to look for a university or college just like it. I completed all of my credits to finish Metro in two years (after one and a half years at Sullivan.) I traveled around the country with money earned at several jobs working in restaurants during the year. I decided to go to Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, because I found the same commitment to experiential learning that I feel saved me from those tearful moments on the Sullivan steps. Many of my friends whom I went to Sullivan with continued to do drugs, and never left the city. Many of them are now dead. Some went to jail, and I don't know what happened to them. I feel that Metro offered me a hope I never had going to traditional school.

Today, I am working as a hospice social worker. I have no doubt that the class taken with Steve Everett in death and dying provided impetus for addressing difficult issues with others and in my work life.

—Sheri Gerson, 1975–'77

IN 2004, I BECAME AN attorney and went on a mission trip; I am chairperson of the singles ministry of our church and also a Christian education teacher.

It's always been my belief as an adult that teachers—the good ones, at least—aren't appreciated enough. It wasn't until I started teaching that I realized that teachers actually do more work than the students, and it's a never-ending cycle.

—Joni Lawrence, late '70s, early '80s

WE WERE FAMILY

Since many students mentioned the idea that "we were family," I asked some of them to explain what that meant to them.

WHEN WE SAY IT IS family, we mean that the school was so small that you got a chance to know everyone. Even if we didn't hang together, they were still considered as my friend. Teachers were like your parents away from home; they coached you with school work, lectured you for behavior and applauded you for your accomplishments.

—Sharee Washington, 1982–'86

I WAS ONE OF METRO'S first students in January 1970. We stood together and stood for fairness and against injustice and took up for each other in good times and bad! We were family. We were students and faculty second and family first And foremost. Our principal and teachers cared about each and every one of us and went to bat for those who were not used to being respected as students and human beings. We had to accept responsibility for going to class versus going to jail, and when we lost Roxanne and Perry, who drowned at Apple Canyon, we became closer and really a family. Our principal Nate Blackman and our teachers were our second parents. We did not want to let them down in this life or the next. We love you.

—Joan Flowers, 1970–'74

WE WERE A SMALL SCHOOL, and that gave us room to know and grow with one another. We developed friendships that are still strong to this day. The teachers really cared about you

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHERI GERSON

inside and outside the classroom; they were there if you needed them.
—*Sandra Hambrick White, 1988–'91*

BEING A FAMILY AT METRO was looking forward to being at school, even if you weren't doing all that great, be that in school or home. It was knowing there were more than one or two people there who really loved you. You knew that you were going to be interested in learning some new challenge that would take your mind to greater levels. I knew this especially after having been there for a while and comparing it with other kids from traditional high schools. There was always a teacher willing to just be there and give you their time, even if you weren't in any of their classes, and always a friend to welcome you into another group of friends you would never have gotten to know at all in another school environment. My great diversity in friends and family to this day comes from Metro directly! I loved it.
—*Starr Jo Flores-Quijano, 1986–'90*

We were a small, diverse community unlike any other school, especially during that era.
—*Michelle Bardwell Hood, 1985–'89:*

ALTHOUGH WE WERE SMALL IN number, we were big in heart. Our size and unorthodox way of approaching high school studies allowed us to be resilient and resourceful. Metro brought people from all walks of life together. There was a sense of pride and respect that wafted throughout our institution. Even when we transitioned to a more traditional faculty, the spirit of Metro continued through its teachers and students, thereby making us a family. Never have I encountered a group of teachers who had such a vested interest in my educational journey and seemed to care for me in general. This was evident with all students, and I believe Metro's size contributed to that. Our teachers had a chance to get to know us because there were fewer of us. Students were free to express themselves without boundaries, and that brought us all closer. Though we were misunderstood by people who did not attend Metro, we gained a level of confidence and brotherhood that is unrivaled.
—*Joseph Rice, 1970–'73*

METRO PARENTS

Parents played an active role in Metro, particularly in the early years. They helped protect and defend the program from its detractors at the board and provided aid and support to the program in a variety of ways. The Metro Parents Action Council was organized in March 1971 to respond to Nate Blackman's E-1. This council remained active for many years. It was essentially replaced by the Local School Council in the late 1980s. Sometimes a parent would speak to a class, and the whole staff remembers the food they provided at the open houses. Unfortunately, I was only able to speak to a few parents. Their comments follow.

Frank and his late wife, Lois Ann, were active in the Parents Action Council. Though Frank was on the Executive Board, he said Lois Ann was probably more involved. Unfortunately, he couldn't remember the details of what they did. After all, it's been almost forty years! He does remember, though, that being on the Parents Council was a liberating experience for the parents.

REBECCA FOUND METRO. IT WAS great for her and allowed her to strike out on her own and not be in her big sister's shadow at Gage Park High School. Frank thought that Carl in particular was exposed to things he couldn't possibly have been elsewhere.

"We were very impressed with Metro,and for us, it was the greatest thing since sliced bread. We especially liked Nate. He paid a price for his support of Metro's ideals."

—Frank Rosen, parent of Rebecca (1970–'74) and Carl Rosen (1972-'76)

Dorothy learned about Metro from a special education program. (Metro wasn't a special education school and, in fact, actually had limited services for special education students. Apparently, the people at that program just were knowledgeable about Metro and its flexible program.) She felt that Metro was exactly what Steve needed. He wanted to make his own decisions. Students were doing real things, learning from people. The Dunes class was an excellent experience. She liked the emphasis on the whole child and felt that the staff wanted to know what was going on with students.

OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS VIEWED PARENTS as an interference, but Metro welcomed them. There was a collegial feel with the parents.

Steve learned that he could learn anything he wanted to. He learned how to circumvent difficulties after watching how CPS treated Metro. This has stood him in good stead in his work with medical marijuana. He left home and left Metro before he graduated. (Note: At the reunion in June 2010, Steve described himself as Metro's most successful dropout. He now has a small business and is very active in pushing for medical marijuana. He has some health issues that he feels are definitely helped by the medical marijuana.)

—Dorothy Werner, parent of Steve Wessing (1975–'79):

MY GRANDSON FELT FREE AT Metro. There was no gang violence. He would get up every morning, dress and come to school with some dignity.

—From a TV clip on the Metro protest when Metro was moved to Crane, 1991

I FOUND METRO THROUGH A colleague at school where I taught. He, John Davis, had a son attending and spoke well of it. My son, Richard, was not interested in school although he was bright. I didn't want to send him to his neighborhood school, Hirsch High School, and thought Metro would be a good fit because it was innovative.

I liked the idea of innovation because I am an educator myself. Metro was non-threatening and loosely structured. But I was upset at the fact that students did the interviewing for potential students, and because Richard was initially rejected. I was surprised at the use of first names with teachers and no let-

ter grades, but I liked the idea of a "school without walls." Richard was exposed to various places in the city and various ancillaries, and that appealed to me. Richard made a lot of good friends at Metro.

I was involved in parent activities and attended parents meetings. It seemed that there were always the same parents at those meetings, but then, that's par for the course in most organizations. Metro was always threatened—the building, Nate's E-1, etc. I was concerned about the move to 223 N. Michigan because the rent was obviously going to be so high it would take away from other services. I remember CPS sent over a portable science lab, but it was never installed and sat in the lobby gathering dust.

I went to the open houses and met all their teachers, and felt my voice was listened to. I was, however, upset when I found out that Richard had been cutting Spanish, and I had never been informed. I felt this wasn't a college situation. He was on the basketball team, and the coach tried to convince me not to take him off. I felt they didn't have the right to intervene in my decisions. In general, though, parent-teacher relations were good.

I don't feel Richard really got a good education. He needed more structure. [When I asked why she didn't take him out, she said she didn't know where to send him. She also indicated that this was pretty much hindsight based on the fact that Richard didn't finish college. He did, however, get chef training and has a very good job as manager of a Costco.]And Jennifer's needs were not met in regard to math and science, so she had to catch up on this in college to prepare for her career as a radiology technician.

—Jeanne Chaney, parent of Richard and Jennifer Chaney (mid- to late–'70s):

I LOVED THE IDEA OF Metro. My children attended an alternative school called The Parents School that had been started by Paul Sills, founder of Second City, and Dennis Cunningham, founder of People's Law Office. My oldest son went to Lane, but I was underwhelmed by Lane, so when I heard that this other school was starting that was a school kind of like The Parents School, I was most interested. It was the worst thing in the world for Adam. My kids had already had an unstructured situation; he needed more structure.

[In reply to my question of why she didn't remove Adam from Metro, she said, "Because I was following my ideals more than the reality of what was happening. I can say this now, but I didn't respond to it then."]

Teenagers have the capacity intellectually, but they're not ready emotionally to make some of these decisions. I think the material and the way the teachers taught was wonderful, but it didn't guide the kids enough. Kids registered for their classes as if they were in college, and if they didn't get the classes, they just got something else. There was no real guidance. It was left up to the kids. Too much was left up to the kids. Even though their intellectual capacity is good, their judgment capacity isn't. And Adam needed structure. (I asked whether her feelings about Metro were hindsight, or whether she felt this way while Adam was going to school. She said she did see Adam wasn't doing what he was supposed to do, but she was just on him, not questioning the school as such.)

I think Metro was a great place for learning. And some of what Adam learned was unforgettable to him. I liked the fact that the school was very diverse. Idealistically, I loved everything about the school. It just wasn't good for my kid. It wasn't what he needed. Adam was a good artist and photographer, and he won second place in a citywide photo contest when he was at Metro. Today, Adam manages a maintenance crew at Lincoln Park Zoo.

I went to parents meetings but really can't remember them. My interactions with Metro were good, and I remember being pleased with the open houses. Nate Blackman was a wonderful principal. And the science teacher who taught nutrition was great. (She couldn't remember his name; possibly it was Jimmy Bush.)

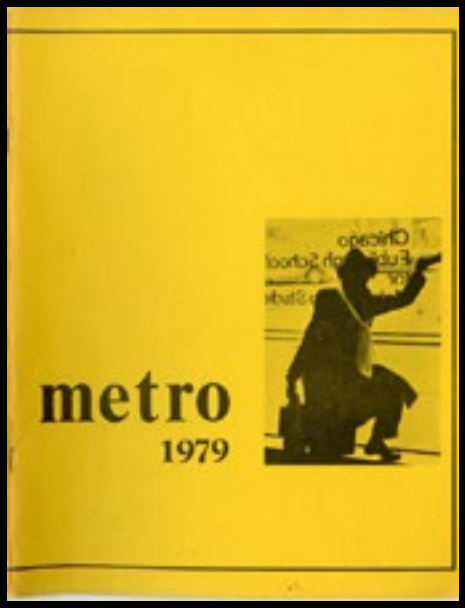
—Mimi Harris, parent of Adam Harris (1976–'80):

BONUS MATERIAL

METRO ARCHIVAL MATERIALS, DOWNLOADABLE AS SEARCHABLE PDFS OR IMAGES

1975 Yearbook

1978 Yearbook



1979 Yearbook

1980 Yearbook

1982 Yearbook

1983 Yearbook

1985 Yearbook

1973 Cycle Catalog

PDF Version
Purchase on LuLu
Purchase on Amazon

1972 Metro Free Press

Metro Photo Group on
Picaweb

Do you have
any old Metro stuff that
we don't? We'd
be happy to share it with
the community on
metrohschicago.com
Contact Paula Baron
or
Jandos Rothstein

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WHEN METRO WAS CLOSED IN 1991, I pondered how to save its many stories and lessons. How could these be made useful and meaningful for the Metro family and others? Around 2004 I began interviewing former faculty and students and also contacting other Metro alumni via Classmates.com. As the replies came in, it became clear that the best way to tell the Metro story was through the voices of those who had lived it. The Metro Reunion of 2010 gave a new impetus to this project and a wonderful way to make contact with many more students and faculty. My heartfelt thanks go to all the students, faculty and parents who took time to talk to me and to write their stories.

A very special thanks to two wonderful Metro alums: Monica Buckley and Jandos Rothstein.

Both of them were more than generous with their time and expertise. This book would probably never have seen the light of day without them. Monica asked questions and provided great guidance in editing the introduction. Her positive attitude and support convinced me that someone might really want to read about Metro. Monica also introduced me to Marilyn Cavicchia who copy edited the manuscript. I certainly gained a new appreciation for the role of editors from both Monica and Marilyn.

When I sent the manuscript to Jandos, it looked much like a mimeo that I might have used for a class. Jandos located and sorted through pictures and other materials, asked questions and applied his superior graphic art skills and knowledge to produce this book. Thanks also to Jim Provost and Sheri Gerson who permitted the use of their excellent archival protographs and provided captioning information.

Thank you to all and enjoy! We can still say "Metro Lives."

Freedom, choice and responsibility was the mantra of Metro High School—the School Without Walls—a bold experiment by the Chicago Public Schools that operated from 1970–1991. This was a far cry from the test driven standardized high school of today. And while Metro is long gone, the stories here suggest it may still offer some food for thought for re-evaluating high schools today. Metro was designed to draw students from all over the city and to seek new ways to involve students in their own education and to utilize the many facets of this very vibrant city. Students took classes at Metro's Loop headquarters but also at such varied locations as the Art Institute of Chicago, Lincoln Park Zoo, Shedd Aquarium, Second City Theater and Northeastern Illinois' Center for Inner City Studies. They travelled throughout the city to learn from the people of Chicago.

Here is Metro's story in the voices of those who lived it. We hope it will generate a continuing dialogue for reshaping high school education in the 21st century. We welcome your thoughts. Write to plbaron@rcn.com

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