Chapter Summary and Discussion Questions – colorandcharacter.org

Chapter 3:   Busing
**   1970-74**

Focus: The turbulent end of the Jim Crow era

Covers the political and social turmoil created as Mecklenburg County struggled with implementing the *Swann* desegregation order, which required extensive cross-town busing and which was unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court in 1971.

Charts the devastating impact of the closing of African American schools, particularly Second Ward High School, in the wake of desegregation mandates. Details the particular challenges faced by African American teachers and students who were reassigned to historically white schools, and the fight to keep West Charlotte open.

Lays out the challenges raised by Charlotte's federally funded "urban renewal" program, which demolished the city's downtown African American communities, destroyed much of the cultural fabric residents had created and sparked significant changes in the neighborhoods to which displaced families scattered.

Tells the story of the interracial, community-based coalition that solved the busing conflicts by crafting a plan that ensured that students from all of the county's communities would fully participate. West Charlotte, the last remaining historically black high school in the system, became the key to the new plan's success, as families from Charlotte's wealthiest and most politically powerful neighborhoods agreed to send their children to the school.

Questions to explore

As Charlotte sought to desegregate, how did the goals for schooling change?

Which political priorities governed the shaping of school desegregation plans? How did those priorities change over time? What drove those changes?

How did busing, school closings and urban renewal affect African American students, teachers and communities?

What factors finally came together to create a successful busing plan?

Connections

What do you think public schools should seek to accomplish?

What did/do you know about the history of urban renewal and its effects on African American communities? Did your childhood community experience urban renewal? African American school closings?

How important is fairness to bringing communities together?