

## **A reflection on race, parenting and high school**

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[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MPS\\_ParentsForum/message/4242](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MPS_ParentsForum/message/4242)

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Yesterday was the 50th anniversary of the stand-off of the Little Rock 9 - a group of black teenagers who wanted to attend Little Rock Central High School - and the white middle class of Little Rock, Arkansas who were willing to resort to armed force to keep them out.

I listened to an interview with the Little rock 9 on my way to work this morning and one woman discussed her absolute fear as she - a 14 year old - walked among the crowded streets up to the high school and how people she knew, adults, were spitting on her.

And I thought about how terrified I would be if I had been her mother; how scared I would be if my South High 9th grader had to make similar walk. How fierce my feelings are for my kids and how I don't want them to be hurt by friends, by teachers, by their own failures. How incredibly brave those Little Rock 9 black parents must have been to let their children leave that morning - and every other morning of that fateful year as the harassment continued daily inside the school walls. I would have been absolutely nauseous with worry, every day waiting to watch her come around the corner, safe for another evening.

And, then I think of the struggle in Jenna that led to a massive demonstration last week - yet another struggle involving white and black teenagers, violence, the inequities of systems still dominated by the white middle class.

And I wonder what all of this means for Minneapolis.

We all know that race is an issue in thinking about our high schools. The graduation rates of kids of color are not good, the increasing segregation of our high schools is not good, the fear that all parents feel for the safety of their children in some schools and some neighborhoods is not good. And the fear is only confounded by our continuing confusion about race and poverty and what all of that means .

But I was thinking about those parents of the Little Rock 9 and I feel hope. If those parents could send their children through a sea of hate in pursuit of education, how brave can we be for our children.

What's the better lesson for our children: choose our community and fight to make sure that there are great schools for all of our children? or turn away from perhaps the major challenge facing our city today and isolate ourselves in a few schools or a few neighborhoods because we are too scared to send our own children into unknown and untested waters, afraid of things we've heard rather than things we've lived.

It's scary and there is no single person to blame. But the world can change and we can all decide everyday to take another step toward a more just society. Let's start with our high schools, our children who are here with us today, our 14 year olds who are walking into school as I write.

Choose to fight like hell to make your neighborhood school the best school it can possibly be so that we can all live together in peace rather than live separately in fear.

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little\\_Rock\\_Crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Rock_Crisis)