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THE EFFECTS OF ATLANTA'S URBAN REGIME POLITICS ON THE ATLANTA PUBLIC
SCHOOLS CHEATING SCANDAL.

by

JOHNATHAN MUNGO

Under the Direction of Lakeyta Bonnette-Bailey Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Atlanta's Urban Regime was involved at every point in the APS cheating scandal and subsequent fall out. The Anglo-American business elites and African American political leaders cared about the image of Atlanta more than the academic well-being of the students. The business community was driving the policies affecting the school system. These policies ultimately benefitted the well-connected members of the regime. At no point did African American voters operationalize their potential political power in the 2013 city elections after the cheating scandal.

INDEX WORDS: Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Public Schools Cheating Scandal, Urban Regime, Corporate Education Movement

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JOHNATHAN MUNGO

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Master of Arts

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August 2020

DEDICATION

*I build on foundations I did not lay.
I warm myself by fires I did not light.
I sit in the shade of trees I did not plant.
I drink from wells I did not dig.
I profit from persons I did not know.
I am ever bound in community.*

This work is for that community, the prayers of my grandparents and the strength of my ancestors (whose names I do not know) helped me through the dark days of this journey and I still feel those prayers on me today. I would like to dedicate this work to the late Dr. Alton Parker Hornsby Jr. a Morehouse Man to the core, who first put Clarence Stone's work in my hands, when I was much too young to understand. To Dr. William Boone for being a listening ear and helping me focus/structure my thoughts. To my parents, John Mungo and Carol Dean Stewart Mungo, the people who put the first book in my hands. Your fierce and unwavering convictions created a burning desire and passion for education in me. The love you all have shown me is unmatched. To my sister Caroline Mungo, thank you for always giving me your time and effort. To my wife Tanieka Thompson-Mungo, Lord knows the struggle to get here has not been a crystal stair, we have grown as individuals and a couple through this process and I love you for it. To my sons, Kennedy and Kaleb you are so young, but I hope this process teaches you about determination and grit. Daddy loves you more than you understand right now.

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To my committee Dr. Sarah Gershon, you have been a wise listening ear with sage advice. Dr. Maurice Hobson, you are the consummate “Atlanta-ologist” a short simple conversation with you turns into an in-depth lesson on everything from Outkast’s “Player’s Ball” and Dr. Benjamin Mays to the Olympics and Atlanta’s missing and murdered children. Dr. Lakeyta Bonnette Bailey “Dr. B” you have been amazing, your gentle but stern force for me to get done was something I needed. Your guidance and nurturing of my work will not be remised. You all are a second to none league of scholars.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Politics of Atlanta	2
1.2 Purpose of the Study	3
2 THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW	4
3 CASE STUDY	13
4 FINDINGS	34
5 INSIGHTS	36
REFERENCES	37

1 INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the Georgia General Assembly adopted a “pay for performance” program for Georgia schools. This program would award bonuses to schools for improved scores on a nationwide standardized test, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). If scores increased, faculty members were awarded \$2,000 in bonuses. As schools positioned themselves for more funds, cheating allegations began to arise. From 1996 to 1999 twenty-five (25) cases of testing malfeasance were reported around the state of Georgia. Longtime Atlanta elementary school educator and board member, Jean Dodd, did not believe the test scores were improving. In fact, she stated, “We know it is totally impossible for scores to go up like that.” Moreover, “somebody possibly changed a few scores. When I say changed a few scores, I say they cheated.” (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). Still by 2001, a southeast Atlanta school, Dobbs Elementary, went from failing to passing. Many questioned the results of the test. However, Beverly Hall, the Superintendent for 2 years, waved them off as racist. Yet, African American school board member and retired APS teacher, Jean Dodd, still did not believe it. In 2001, Dodd declared, “Over a period of 30 years, I taught every grade of elementary school. I had just not ever seen scores like that before” (Downey, 2010). Unfortunately, Dodd was later removed for attempting to get APS to hire a person and the questions concerning authenticity of the scores eventually subsided. During this time, President George W. Bush advocated for a national education overhaul (Robinson & Simonton, 2019).

As a result, the federal government adopted its own “pay for performance” standards for schools across America in 2002. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal education policy was deemed more punitive than constructive. Criticisms of NCLB followed, claiming it was a test-based form of accountability, a very narrow vision of education (Ladd, 2017). Many

educators argued that student's learning is beyond multiple choice tests and is often about being a good citizen, fulfilling lives, and contributing to society (Ladd, 2017). In addition, the final expected outcome was 100% proficiency. When schools could not reach some of the unrealistic goals set in the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), they were shamed, seen as failures, then subject to sanctions by the school system. As such, the policy expectations were considered unrealistic. Subsequently, the morale of teachers declined, and many gave into teaching to the test, while others decided to cheat. Furthermore, low-income students faced different challenges that affect academic needs and the expectations placed more strain on teachers in traditionally low-income and low-performing schools (Ladd, 2017). Observations as these indicate the magnitude of the top-down pressure placed on educators.

Despite these difficulties, Atlanta Public Schools teachers and schools appeared to be up to the challenge. By 2010, Atlanta Public Schools and superintendent Beverly Hall received national attention for perceived academic gains. The local political and economic leadership touted Atlanta as a model school system. However, concerns of testing malfeasance once again became the topic of conversation. These discussions led to inspections and in 2011 investigators concluded that teachers at forty-four (44) of APS's fifty-six (56) elementary and middle schools cheated to help students pass Georgia's standardized achievement test. These charges were not good for Atlanta's image. In consequence, the political and economic leadership had to work to save the image of Atlanta (Downey, 2010).

1.1 Politics of Atlanta

Scholar Clarence Stone asserts that Atlanta is managed by an informal partnership of African American elected officials and Anglo-American business elite, known as Atlanta's

regime (Stone, 1989). He notes that it is not the formal mechanisms of government that make the city effective, but this coalition that handles issues as they arise. As reported by Stone, the informal partnership creates the policy for any given situation.

The city's regime has a significant test when it comes to tangible economic and societal benefits for African Americans in Atlanta, according to Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (2003). They contend that there is a significant gap between the haves and have nots in the African American community in Atlanta and the regime recognizes this gap and stands on the side of the advantaged (Browning, Marshall, & Tabb, 2003). Thus, in this study, I examine the inner workings of Atlanta's regime to show how they benefitted from the biggest school cheating scandal in history.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

While analyzing the ways Atlanta's regime benefitted from the regime, I will also explore other political or coalitional factors that played a role in the APS cheating scandal. This case study of Atlanta investigates how a major city, with a 50-year history of African American leadership, allowed vastly different services for low-income students of color in comparison to higher income students within the same city. With Atlanta being labeled as having the largest cheating scandal in the history of education, one must ask about leadership in this process. The reason for this case is because it is perfect to show clear reasons for alternative behavior by elected officials and the regime. This paper will seek to answer the following questions: 1.) What role did Atlanta's Urban Regime play in the APS cheating scandal and subsequent fall out? 2.) Who is driving the policies affecting the school system? 3.) Who are the policies benefitting? 4.) Did African American voters operationalize their potential political power in the 2013 city

elections after the cheating scandal? In this paper, I will demonstrate how regime theory is not inclusive of the poor populations of Atlanta by using the Atlanta Public Schools cheating scandal as an example of the regime not working to protect hundreds of low-income students, communities, and schools. I will be using publicly available documents to detail this case study.

2 Theory and Literature Review

According to Dr. Clarence Bacote (1955), in 1877 the state of Georgia adopted a new constitution to enforce more stringent residency requirements and poll taxes to be allowed to vote. In 1897, the city instated a white primary suggesting, “Negro participation corrupted local politics.” Bacote (1955) and others argued, access to the ballot and increased African American voter participation would benefit Atlanta’s African American communities. The electoral model focused on African Americans becoming voters and participants in the electoral process to improve engagement in the American political system. The belief was that a massive voting bloc would decrease the burdens of African Americans because people of color would elect officials that looked out for their best interests (Walton, 1973). Veritably, in 1946 after the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated white primary elections in the state, African American voter registration increased exponentially in Fulton county. By primary day, the city of Atlanta had over 21 thousand African American voters opposed to the over 56 thousand Anglo-American voters (Bacote, 1955). The Atlanta Negro Voters League and other auxiliary institutions like social, professional, and business clubs fostered the rise of sharp political participation in Atlanta’s African American community (Hobson, 2017). The increase in African American voters significantly shaped the future interactions in the city. Bacote (1955) described, reduced police

brutality, race-baiting from hate groups, as well as city officials being more courteous and sensitive to the demands of African Americans in the city.

Hobson (2017) denotes in his book, *The Legend of the Black Mecca*, that voter participation of African Americans began to increase steadily since the 1960s. In agreement, Virginia Hein (1972) stated:

In the mayoral election of 1969 Atlantans became polarized over the proportionate amount of power that the blacks should receive. The election demonstrated that Atlanta blacks, for the first time in history, were approaching the threshold of control of their own destiny. They showed that they intended to have leaders, whether black or white, who would be responsive to the needs and problems of Negroes. They had learned from experience that white-controlled boards had not, and would not, serve their interests (p.220).

Meanwhile, Holmes (2009) concludes that the 1970 U.S. census showed Atlanta's black population had increased by 36.8 percent during the 1960s, while the white population had declined by 20 percent. Demographers projected this trend would continue in the 1970s (Holmes, 2009). In turn, Atlanta has been governed by African American leadership in the mayor's office since 1973. Not to mention, as far back as the 1980s, most of Atlanta's city council, school board, and superintendents have been African American. Ergo, there has been evidence of Black political representation within Atlanta's major political institutions since the increase of the Black population within the city.

Scholars like Mack Jones (1978) have argued that voter participation was not the only avenue contributing to the societal and political advancement of African Americans. Jones (1978) posited that African American leadership recruitment, voter behavior of African Americans and Anglo-Americans, the character of political organizations and other support structures within the African American community all contributed to the electoral success of African Americans within Atlanta. Still, this change in political leadership did not come easily. Dr. Jones (1978) suggests that men in power act to preserve their power. "Whenever

blacks make advances toward political control, counter forces are activated in the white community (p.92-93).” With many Anglo-Americans viewing the American political system as a zero-sum game, losing political power within Atlanta, impacted the electoral success of African Americans within the city. Scholars like Samuel Dubois Cook pushed that race and style of African American political life in the south were major factors in African American politics (Walton, 1973). Democratic institutions are often judged by number of elected officials from historically underrepresented groups. According to Dr. Dovi (2002), this judgment implicitly assumes that increased numbers of historically underrepresented groups is a contribution to substantive representation of those groups. However, descriptive representation as Dr. Cook later alludes to may not be conducive to resolving Atlanta’s equity issues.

However, according to Jones (1978), realization of the potential power inherent in black electoral strength is dependent, first of all, upon black voter registration and the use of those votes to elect persons who will work towards the realization of black agenda items. In some cases, perhaps most, operationalization will be dependent upon the ability to form functional coalitions (p.97). Clearly, the demographics are enough to get African Americans elected. But do they have a functioning coalition to effect and set an African American agenda?

The Coalition theory argued that the problems that entrapped African Americans could not be resolved just by African Americans. This theory submits that African Americans and Anglo-Americans work together on a permanent or ad hoc basis to seek solutions as a viable option. Coalitionists wanted liberal Anglo-Americans and African Americans, conservative Anglo-Americans and African Americans, or poor African Americans and Anglo-Americans to form coalitions, believing they could not only solve the ills of the African Americans community but those of society at large (Walton, 1973).

Once the African American population started to increase and favor African Americans politically, Anglo-American business elites and African American political hopefuls built a biracial cooperation with each other. A prime example of this is in 1969 when African American state senator Leroy Johnson and African American businessmen Jesse Hill and Herman J. Russell led political elites to hammer out a deal with the Anglo-American power structure to get African American voters to support Jewish businessman Sam Massell for mayor if Anglo-American voters would vote Maynard Jackson for vice mayor, according to Robert Holmes (2009). This backroom deal led to an African American city-wide school board member, Dr. Horace Tate, going against the coalition and becoming an “outcast” in his mayoral bid against Massell. Hein (1972) argued that the 1969 coalition of African Americans, liberal Anglo-Americans, and labor replaced the 30-year coalition of the former mayor Hartsfield. Hein (1972) went on to write:

But the old Hartsfield coalition of over thirty years’ standing had dissolved in the heat of the election along with the myth-like self-image held by many white Atlantans throughout the 1960’s. This image to quote the New York Times, had been built on a “pragmatic policy of racial moderation geared more to the needs of the business climate than to a genuine concern for the poor.”

In time, this coalition shifted into an Urban regime. The Urban regime theory suggests a governing coalition controls many major cities. The theory goes on to state that the governing allegiance is a long-lasting informal/non-legislated partnership between governmental and non-governmental parties, who have the resources to create and enforce key policy for the city. Manley Banks (2000) affirms that the coalition usually consists of local elected officials, their voters, business leaders, more specifically, major property owners, and upper echelon city administrators. The logical and consistent policies of the governing coalition are composed of an urban regime. Authors like Dr. Maurice Hobson (2017) suggest Atlanta is unlike most other

southern civil rights cities like Birmingham or Montgomery due to Atlanta's black urban regime. The black urban regime is a permanent coalition that governs through a relationship between African American political leaders and Anglo-American business elites. This regime's leadership has an agenda to ensure pro-business development policies that benefit the wealthy and well connected. Tomiko Brown-Nagin (2011) calls this the "Atlanta style" stating African American elites sought to get concrete concessions from the Anglo-American political structure. Brown-Nagin (2011) also asserts:

leaders planned to accumulate sufficient political capital to bargain for racial advances, as well if only they could liberate black voters from systemic discrimination and intimidation. At the same time, they hoped that black electoral power would facilitate informal interracial diplomacy and enhance black influence within the white power structure. In personal meetings with white leaders and at election time, black leaders would wield the power of the black voting bloc—organized and race-conscious—as a threat to compel white decisionmakers to adopt racial reforms (p43).

African American elites spoke on behalf and made decisions for all African American communities in Atlanta, without consulting or consent from the working class or poor in the African American community (Hobson, 2017). Local African American political leaders use the idea of incrementalism to tie African American voters' interest to the pro-business agenda. An issue for rank and file African American "leadership" was often selected by Anglo-American elites and business leaders (Hobson, 2017). For several decades, the two major organizations that have represented the downtown business elite have been Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. They are well funded, staffed, and organized in the effort to continuously play a major role in the economic development of the city of Atlanta. Stone, Larry Keating, and Charles Steffen all agree that Central Atlanta Progress is the mouthpiece of the business elites to dictate the policy making process (Stone, 1989) (Keating, 2001) (Steffen, 2012). Adolf Reed (1999) found that:

Even in Atlanta, the business elites recognized the virtues of the black administration's capacity to displace potential conflict by reinventing development agendas that had potentially disadvantageous outcomes for black constituents as campaigns for the defense of racial self-respect embodied in black officials (p.213).

In the summer of 1993, the Chamber created EduPAC, a political action committee geared towards having the business community help recruit and finance board candidates. After this committee was created, EduPAC had a 9-0 record that first year. Since the inception of EduPAC the Chamber has lobbied successfully for many changes to the charter of Atlanta Public Schools. They even lobbied for governance changes that serve to concentrate authority in the hands of the superintendent that is hand-picked by the board members they are financing. (Henry, 2010).

In 1999, the Chamber recruited Beverly Hall to come to Atlanta. In 2003, state senator Kasim Reed revised the charter of Atlanta Public Schools. The revision took the system's chief financial officer and general counsel from answering to the board to answering to the superintendent only. Reed defends this action stating it was needed to attract and retain top superintendent candidates. However, it still begs the question of why give one person so much power and control (Henry, 2010)? Senator Reed shaped the school board like a council-manager form of government. Observations suggest the school board sets policy and the superintendent controls all day to day operations, with the board as the only oversight. According to Georgia Senate Research: Per the Senate and House journals for 2003

SB 204 sponsored by Senator Kasim Reed was not adopted in either chamber by roll-call vote. Here are the votes in the House and Senate:

- Senate: Unanimous, 46-0.
- House: 111-3.

Senate Research informed me they did not have the names of the yeas and nays in either chamber. However, we must make some inferences with the limited information at our disposal.

As such, the Georgia Senate has 56 members, if the vote was tallied correctly 10 senators were missing. With the senate votes being unanimous, either some Atlanta delegation members were not present at the time of the vote or had no problem with this type of power grab by the superintendent. Moreover, in the Georgia House of Representatives, 114 members voted with 180 seats in the chamber. This means 66 representatives were not present. Yet, only 3 state elected officials are on record for taking issue with legislation to remove power from the elected body over the school system.

Through examination, it appears as if the Chamber has created a coalition with the school board and superintendent. The charter change by former State Senator Reed placed the superintendent and Chamber in a governing coalition. Senator Reed later became Mayor of Atlanta during the scandal. Board member Khaatim El pinned a letter about his interaction with Mayor Reed and the Chamber at the time of the scandal stating: “It starts with taking your cue from a few leaders in the business community and bullying, berating, and maligning anyone who gets in your way. There's no debate on the issues or room for the kind of dissension that makes good policy.”

Due to the governing coalition's greater resources than many opposing coalitions/groups, it is difficult to upend this powerful alliance (Banks 2000). Scholars like Manley Banks (2000) argue that Atlanta is shifting to a neo-conservative black regime due to the alliance pursuing a more politically conservative pro-business agenda. The coalition more recently pursued regressive taxes (E-SPLOST), while seeking to lower property taxes and privatize school funds by shifting public schools to charter schools. Banks contends that the hegemon is not in danger because of current demographic shifts and lack of serious progressive candidates (Banks 2000).

Creative Loafing interviewed Vincent Fort, a state senator from Atlanta, discussing the APS cheating scandal, he said (Henry, 2010):

The Chamber's involvement in the school board isn't a bad thing in itself," says state Sen. Vincent Fort. "But it's the level of control they've had. Chamber President Sam Williams wasn't elected by anybody, but they think they run the school system and are willing to cover up malfeasance and ineptitude in order to protect their image and their contracts with APS.

The contracts portion of Sen. Fort's statement speaks a rationale for business leaders wanting more control over the school system. In a phone call with the City of Atlanta Equity Office, 51% of Atlanta tax revenue goes to Atlanta Public Schools. This produces a reason for business leaders to want streamlined power with the "bigger purse" in the city of Atlanta. The charter change provided a way for business leaders to deal with one person for financial benefits instead of 5 people on a 9-person board.

More than that, Shani Robinson's book "None of the Above" must be counted in this literature review. Mrs. Robinson and her co-author Anna Simonton focus on Atlanta's business centered policies, as well as Mrs. Robinson's personal experiences teaching, testing, and the GBI investigation. Additionally, it details her subsequent arrest, trial, and conviction. However, the focus of this work is to place the actions of the business leaders and political leaders in a theoretical framework for analysis. Mrs. Robinson addresses actions of leaders on every level of government: federal, state, and local as contributors to standardized tests irregularities in Atlanta and nationally. She repeatedly asks questions about how certain powerful figures when addressing the Atlanta Public School cheating scandal did not mention a policy, relationship, or event that affected the standardized testing. Her questions, just like mine, essentially beg questions about power.

To fully dissect the questions, we must understand power. In this work, we will define power as the ability of one actor to convince another actor to commit an act or acts that it would

normally not do. Dr. Samuel Dubois Cook (1976) claimed that African Americans being in the American political system can “take the initiative to formulate and press issues and help define the terms of the public dialogue and agenda” (p.293). Cook (1976) felt this factor made African Americans participants, and not victims of the political process. We will also look at voter demographics, number of African American office holders, city demographics, and economic wealth. However, these elements are not actual foundations of power, but are potential power bases (Jones, 1978). Understanding that Anglo-Americans in power are by no means trying to relinquish that power, how do African Americans operationalize and utilize their potential power? Jones (1978) stresses that these potential power sources only influence the behavior of other actors and do not persuade them to do an act outside of their norm.

3 Case Study

According to Georgia Senate Bill 204 in 2003, Atlanta Public Schools is an independent school system under the management and control of the Atlanta Board of Education. This means the city of Atlanta has no direct oversight or control of Atlanta Public Schools. As previously stated, when business leaders interviewed Dr. Hall, they were looking for a “CEO type” to helm Atlanta Public Schools. This explains the charter change because it mimics a CEO/Board model in a corporation. According to Robinson (2019), traditional education shifted to a corporate education reform movement nationally. The corporate education reform movement is when school systems are run like businesses. The argument was to force higher accountability by rigorous standardized testing. This set up a standard for reprimand and reward. The school choice movement and charter school movement both provide a space for select students to take public school funds and put it towards attending private school. The other option is to have tax dollars taken from public schools for students to go to charter schools. This corporate education reform idea wedded school choice and accountability. The corporate model also pushed for non-traditional teachers to become educators, hence, programs like Teach for America (TFA). Teach for America took college students from all over the US, placed them in urban school systems, and gave them workshops over the summer to prepare for teaching the upcoming school year. The Teach for America mantra for educating students is “no excuses”. Dr. Hall’s focus for Atlanta Public Schools was “no exceptions, no excuses” (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). These methods were all pro-growth business oriented. The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce was open to this idea and provided a space for more chamber involvement in the school system. Knowing that low-income students face different challenges that affect academic needs, why

would African American elected officials adhere to pro-growth policies that could be counter-productive to their voter base?

Scholar Adolf Reed suggests that conflicts with the developmental coalition can be problematic for officials. Unions and developers want new construction projects, planners want modernized governments, and politicians want symbols of progress with which they can be identified. The black regime in Atlanta came to power while Atlanta was already amongst the most economically depressed cities in the United States (Reed, 1999). Rationally, one can see how an elected official could be attracted to policies they know may not be beneficial for their voting base. These upward redistributive policies are portrayed to African American voters as being in the best interest for the African American community enabling the regime to keep its African American support. This ideological hegemony is aided by the lack of progressive candidates with a viable chance as Mayor (Banks, 2000).

The urban regime is highly effective according to Stone. They can act in concert with the government, a space where they are traditionally limited. The Anglo-American business elite have the capacity to mobilize the resources needed for large scale endeavors. The Anglo-American business elites already have financial capital and expertise to produce large scale projects, so the political alliances are needed to enact the policies. With command of these types of resources, political elites or hopefuls will try to partner and create a long-lasting coalition. (Keating, 2001)

Keating argues that African American citizens are disadvantaged by Atlanta's Black regime. The African American community has no similar organization to counter CAP or the Chamber. Any organization that focuses on this type of work like the Atlanta Urban League or the Atlanta Business League do not have enough staff that can dissect issues and push a policy

agenda to see it come to fruition. Both African American organizations primarily focus on affirmative action issues (Keating, 2001).

Atlanta's regime has been successful with social cohesiveness, so African American politics and business elites have no reason to want to see its demise. The regime continued after African Americans had the political majority. It is a historical and institutional pillar in Atlanta politics at this point. To some extent, it has become political heritage and procedure. During the Action forum, members address grievances and compromises are sought. Electoral finances are needed as politicians desire to be a member of a group connected with wealthy elites to finance their campaigns. The organization helps incentivize African American elected officials because they have businesses or professional practices that benefit from this political and social connection with Anglo American business elites. Another reason it has survived several decades is the social affinity of its members. They are viewed as members of the upper echelon of Atlanta (Keating, 2001). The congruence of interest in Atlanta resides on the fact that African Americans have a majority population and substantial voting power, but lack economic resources (Orr & Johnson, 2008).

One issue Atlanta's regime helped to resolve was the problem of collective action. This regime created and preserved active cooperation over years. They wielded power over selective incentives and small opportunities. Civil Rights and downtown revitalization projects continue to provide direction for Atlanta's regime. These select incentives were not enough to cement long term participation. Material incentives were used to reward regime participants driving them to play a key role in cooperation. The contracts generated by the massive business development projects offered incentives or side payments for regime participants including minority business owners. (Davies & Imbroscio, 2008)

Developer Tom Cousins was a major part of the corporate education reform model in Atlanta and New Orleans. Mr. Cousins was Mayor Shirley Franklin's finance chair for her inaugural mayoral election in 2001 (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). Seemingly uncoincidental, Kasim Reed was the author of the new charter of APS and campaign manager for that same race for Shirley Franklin. Furthermore, Cousins started a non-profit named Purpose-Built Communities that "revitalized" East Lake Meadows. He and his non-profit turned East Lake Meadows into what they describe as a mixed-income neighborhood with charter school, YMCA, and a public golf course. After Mayor Franklin's tenure as mayor, she became the chief executive and chair of Purpose-Built Communities (Saporta-Buffer).

The APS charter change gave the superintendent Beverly Hall the day to day control of the school system. This means procurement is more closely related to how the City of Atlanta does contract selection. City council just like the APS board simply votes to approve it or not, streamlining the process and opportunity cost of business elites. With Dr. Beverly Hall at the helm of APS, corporate foundations granted the district millions of dollars. General Electric's vice chairman, John Rice chaired the Atlanta Education Fund, a non-profit geared to solicit corporate gifts for Atlanta Public Schools. One of the most notable donations was \$22 million from General Electric Foundation. Hall and the chamber had a close-knit relationship. When news agencies like the Atlanta Journal Constitution questioned her \$68,300 bonus, Mr. Rice and other business leaders wrote op-eds defending her and touting her gains with the school system. Shortly before the news broke on erasures and testing irregularities, Hall met with the Metro Atlanta Chamber's Executive board, they praised her for being awarded Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators and for the progress Atlanta Public Schools made academically. Hall went on to tell them she was going to continue needing the

business communities help. Dr. Hall explained, “it took a lot of community support to get to where we are today... and it’s going to take at least the same amount of focus to keep us moving in the right direction” (Saporta-Not Done). By no means is Dr. Hall relinquishing her grip on the funds they have been giving to the school system. According to reporter Maria Saporta, Hall goes on to say,

“There’s always a tendency when you start moving in the right direction to slow down... You can’t let up. We have an opportunity to really become one of the first urban systems in the country to transform itself from grades K through 12. We’re getting there, but the last part of the climb is the toughest.”

This interaction between Dr. Hall and the executive board of the Atlanta Metro Chamber, show they had rapport. They boasted about how graduation rates increased from 39 percent to 71 percent since 2002. We can infer from this that Hall was not planning to retire from Atlanta Public Schools at this time. She was preparing the business community to give more than they have been. Both sides seemed to be happy with the results and the image of the city.

How does this relationship change if a crisis arises? According to Manley Banks, progressive regimes restructure their membership and concerns of the governing coalition once a crisis arises. Leaders in government typically seek out pro-growth policies over social policies because they are grounded in benefitting the elite. However, pro-growth policies cause political alienation and class-consciousness of the plight of select groups, which become a cost for pro-growth policies. This corporate group consciousness contests the standards and norms of the governing regime and creates a legitimate crisis. Ultimately, this crisis fosters new coalitions to challenge the development regime (Banks, 2000).

In January 2010, the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement accused Atlanta Public

Schools of mass cheating. The state determined the standardized test students had taken showed an unusually high number of eraser marks. 250,000 wrong answers were

corrected (Lohr, 2010). According to Sam Williams (former Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President), John Rice (General Electric Executive) recalled him stating that APS should not be investigating itself. Rice deemed it to be a conflict of interest and the chamber should amass a big task force like they have previously done. This task force was later known as the Blue-Ribbon Commission (Torpy B., 2013).

According to an email from Sam Williams, he informed the APS board who would be on the Blue-Ribbon Commission and stated, “we will let the facts from this investigation guide us in our support of Dr. Hall and the next steps the Atlanta Public Schools system needs to take”. The Blue-Ribbon Commission consisted of (Scott, 2013):

Gary Price – Pricewaterhouse Coopers (Chairman)
 LaChandra Butler-Burks – Atlanta Board of Education
 Jack Capers – King & Spalding
 Curley Dossman – Georgia Pacific Foundation
 Ponder Harrison – Allegiant Air and APS Parent
 Gail Hayes – Annie E. Casey Foundation
 Milton Jones – Integrated Capital Strategies
 Ingrid Saunders Jones – Coca-Cola Company
 Susan Pease Langford – Peck, Shaffer & Williams LLP
 Dennis Lockhart – Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
 Helene Lollis – Pathbuilders Inc.
 Thelma Malone – Atlanta Council of PTAs
 Penelope McPhee – Arthur M. Blank Foundation
 John Rice – General Electric
 Dr. Beverly Tatum – Spelman College

The Blue-Ribbon Commission hired KPMG auditing firm and Caveon Test Security to probe the cheating allegations. The firms found that the state recommended only 12 of the 58 schools for investigation for unusual high erasures. The Atlanta Public School Superintendent Dr. Beverly Hall forwarded 109 teachers that were suspected of transgressions for further investigation to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC), the PSC licenses

educators. Dr. Hall claimed exoneration for herself and her legacy. She repeatedly used the name of the renowned psychologist and president of Spelman College Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, to validate the commission's findings.

Sam Williams suggested he had no idea how to investigate this situation and devised a plan with John Rice to create a commission to focus on its mission (Torpy B., 2013). The commission's investigation was deemed "woefully inadequate both in scope and depth" by Governor Sonny Perdue (Lohr, 2010). Five members of the APS board refused to allow the allegation of cheating to be covered up by the Blue-Ribbon Commission. Governor Perdue said, "this is about individual students being robbed and cheated of their one fair shot at a good education" just before he announced he would be appointing a special investigator with subpoena power to investigate the cheating in APS. Gov. Purdue used a 1943 law granting him broad authority to appoint a special investigator. According to the governor's executive counsel, the law had never been used. Perdue appointed former Georgia Attorney General Mike Bowers, former Dekalb District Attorney Bob Wilson, and former City of Atlanta police officer Richard Hyde as the special investigators. When Gary Price, a partner with Pricewaterhouse-Coopers and chair of the Blue-Ribbon Commission was asked about the governor's investigation, Price welcomed the investigation (Torpy B., 2013).

As aforementioned, the school board split was caused by the crisis of possible cheating that disproportionately affected underprivileged African American students. At this point, this is where Banks' argument about a progressive regime is supposed to restructure and face some corporate group consciousness that has board members and other regime members realigning. However, Atlanta's regime held to its pro-growth principles. This points to one of the primary questions: Who is driving the policies? Anglo-American business elites played a major role in

the Atlanta Public Schools Cheating Scandal, but what about African American politicians? At that time, the newly elected mayor of Atlanta, Kasim Reed, was African American. Seven (7) of the nine (9) Atlanta Public Schools board members were African American, the then superintendent was African American and so was most of the upper leadership in Atlanta Public schools.

Prior to this incident the school board had basically been a rubber stamp for Hall. Five members of the nine-member board questioned the independence of the Blue-Ribbon Commission especially after the board chair LaChandra Butler-Burks was on the supposedly independent commission. Next, they questioned the findings of the Blue-Ribbon Commission and refused to accept the findings as a board. Eight of the nine members were endorsed by the Chamber and funded by their political arm EduPAC. Nancy Meister, an Anglo-American real estate broker from Buckhead who self-funded her campaign, was a member of the five-member bloc, along with four African American board members. Blumenthal previously called them the rogue members of the board. They were deemed a “majority in exile” due to their lack of Chamber support (Henry, 2010).

The board members were:

Brenda Muhammad- District 1 (African American)

Khaatim S. El- District 2 (African American)

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane- District 3 (Anglo-American) Vice Chair

Nancy Meister- District 4 (Anglo-American)

LaChandra Butler-Burks -District 5(African American) Chair

Yolanda Johnson -District 6(African American)

Courtney English- at-Large, Seat 7 (African American)

Rueben McDaniel- at-Large, Seat 8 (African American)

Emmitt Johnson- at- Large, Seat 9 (African American)

Muhammad, El, Meister, Y. Johnson, and English were the five-bloc majority. They found issues with transparency in the investigation and knew inquiries about accuracy of graduation rates forced a five-member majority to question the leadership of the board. This day was going to be different. The board reversed itself and accepted the Blue-Ribbon Commission's report unanimously. But that was where togetherness made its exit. In what the AJC called a School Board coup, the five members went on a series of policy changing votes. The Atlanta Public Schools general counsel called the changes illegal. The five members were going to vote to change board policy to remove board leadership with a simple majority vote instead of a two-third majority, until newly elected Mayor Kasim Reed announced he was coming to the board meeting. (Torres, Atlanta Board accepts CRCT report, tables policy change, 2010).

The Atlanta Journal Constitution Reporter Kristina Torres wrote (Torres, Atlanta Board accepts CRCT report, tables policy change, 2010):

“The board is governed by a charter that is approved by the state Legislature — the latest charter revision was passed in 2003, co-written by Reed when he was a state senator. Atlanta school board attorney Veleter Mazyck said the change regarding the replacement of board officers violated the charter, rendering it illegal. She also questioned whether member Yolanda Johnson acted out of turn when she, on her own, without board approval, recently sought a second opinion with the help of state Rep. Rashad Taylor, D-Atlanta.”

“Taylor said Monday that he forwarded her request to the legislative counsel's office at the capitol. Taylor said he did so because the board's charter was written by lawmakers, and the office is where lawmakers go for legal counsel. The opinion that came back, Taylor said, indicated that the policy change was not illegal.”

However, in this dramatic last-minute appearance, Mayor Reed asked for a “cooling-off period.” Kasim also suggested waiting until the Attorney General opines on this matter. A unique dynamic to this is Rep. Taylor who had just been the senior advisor on Reed's mayoral race.

These findings urge the notion that whomever or whatever is pushing this agenda has power. It would seem out of the norm to go against his campaign adviser publicly. Therefore, we must go back to who is driving the policies and who are the policies benefitting?

Shortly after this public rift, the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce launched a campaign to choose new school board members years before the election. The plan's motto is "You Get What You Vote For." Interestingly, all except one was endorsed by the Chamber and funded by EduPAC, the Chamber's Political Action Committee (Judd, 2010). This new majority attempted to exhibit traits of Banks' progressive regime. They sought a restructuring of the membership and contested the standards of the governing regime. However, the governing regime pushed back. EduPAC's chairman, William "Sonny" Walker said, "We thought we had a great slate of folks... We thought we had found the answer. But apparently, we did not have the answer we thought we had (Judd, 2010)."

The state Attorney General agreed with the board attorney, calling the motions illegal. However, Yolanda Johnson being a practicing attorney, said the opinion of the Attorney General does not change anything because his opinion is not binding. She argued that only a judge can make this ruling and be binding. So, the five-member majority changed the policy and removed board chair LaChandra Butler-Burks and vice chair Cecily Harsch-Kinnane. They were replaced with Khaatim S. El as chair and Yolanda Johnson as vice chair. This action created a space for a judge to decide. The minority sued the majority. Fulton County Judge John J. Gober ruled in favor of the majority but negotiated an agreement to have Khaatim El remain as chair. Yolanda Johnson would be replaced with a member of the minority to make some form of togetherness. Once the judge ruled, they were legal in their actions. Khaatim El said the pressure and threats became blatant. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (accrediting

agency) placed the board on probation for governance issues, but failed to mention the massive investigation and cheating scandal that had shaken the city to its core (Torres, Board Chairman Agrees to resign, 2011).

Chamber president Sam Williams told investigators that GE executive Rice met with Gov. Perdue several times, attempting to tone down the governor's language and persuade him to not tarnish the image of Atlanta. Perdue said, "I was dumbfounded that the business community would not want the truth." The governor explained that he personally received "extensive subtle pressure" from the business community to get him to rescind his orders for an investigation (Torpy, 2013).

AJC Reporter Bill Torpy writes (Torpy, 2013):

"Chamber president Sam Williams, for 15 years the public face of the business community, spotted a couple of messengers — Bob Wilson and Mike Bowers, two former prosecutors who headed the governor's task force. It was at the Ritz-Carlton, and Georgia Trend magazine was honoring the two lawyers for making its annual list of 100 Most Influential Leaders. Williams, a perennial on that list, started in on Wilson as he left the lunch, telling him he thought the task force took a cheap shot at the business community."

"The argument got nasty, according to Wilson and Bowers. Some worried a fist fight was imminent, though Williams said last week, "I never had a testy conversation with Mr. Wilson." But Wilson remembers standing nose-to-nose with the business community's unhappy leader and then telling him, "You need to think long and hard about the things we didn't say."

During the trial, several educators implicated in the cheating scandal, board member Yolanda Johnson testified about what was going on with the school board during the scandal. One of the prosecutors began asking questions about Beverly Hall's concern with what she felt was board micromanagement of system operations. Johnson went on to testify that the Chamber and select board members were involved in picking the members of the Blue-Ribbon Commission and that the majority were getting pressured to accept the conclusion of the

commission. The prosecutor asked, “who was putting pressure on you?” Ms. Johnson explained that other board members and Kasim Reed’s administration were pressuring them.

Ms. Johnson’s testimony exposes who is driving the policies and benefitting from them. The Chamber and Atlanta Public Schools relationship has been financially beneficial to both parties. The 1 cent local option sales tax provides about 100 million in annual revenue for construction projects; a general fund budget that topped \$650 million in 2010. That was about \$90 million more than the city of Atlanta’s budget. The Atlanta Education Fund, run by John Rice GE executive has funneled millions in corporate donations, \$22 million just from the GE foundation. The Atlanta Partners for Education is a Chamber and Atlanta Public School joint program that matches business with schools (Henry, 2010). Beverly Hall, the business community, and Kasim Reed liked the image of Atlanta and the financial benefits of the governing regime, they could not allow this crisis to create a new coalition to upend them.

According to Manley Banks (2000), the primary factors in shaping public policies are: (1) the structural makeup of the governing coalition, (2) the circumstances of the rapport amongst members of the governing coalition, and (3) the assets that the members provide to help the governing coalition.

In 2012, the Chamber and Mayor Reed sought out new board members to challenge the existing members or compete for the 4 open seats vacated by the incumbents. One seat was vacated in 2011 during the middle of the term and the regime-backed candidate (Byron Amos) won. That candidate ran unopposed in 2013. So, with 4 open seats and 1 previous claimed seat, they had at least a viable chance for 5 seats in the new term. The Chamber has endorsed 38 candidates through EduPAC for the school board since 1993. Thirty-four of their candidates have won since inception of the political action committee (Judd, 2010).

According to campaign disclosures from the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission, EduPAC did not fund any candidate directly in the 2013 race. Charter school groups like the previous mentioned Purpose-Built Communities and others funded the governing regime's candidates. Former Mayor Shirley Franklin and Mayor Kasim Reed were also heavily involved in funding governing coalition friendly candidates.

Eshé Collins' Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$100.00 Jordan Jarrod- Regional Director of Leadership for Educational Equity

\$1,104.03 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,500.00 Arthur Rock- Leadership for Educational Equity Board member

\$520.44 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,500.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

\$2,500.00 Diana Blank- Philanthropist (ex-wife of Arthur Blank)

\$2,000.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$1,500.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$1,500.00 Lillian Giornelli-CEO C.F. Foundation

\$1,000.00 David Goldberg – CEO SurveyMonkey

\$121.44 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$1,500.00 Gregory Penner-Chairman Walmart

\$500.00 Kent Thiry-CEO DaVita Healthcare

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$1,250.00 Atlanta Restaurant Partners- Daniel Halpern, Brooke Edmond, and Valerie

Jackson

(Former Mayor Maynard Jackson's business partner, daughter, and wife respectively)

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$2,500.00 Philip Kent- Insider Advantage

\$2,500.00 Jonathan Sackler- Director Purdue Pharma

\$2,000.00 David Tepper-Owner Carolina Panthers

\$500.00 Kent Thiry-CEO DaVita Healthcare

\$226.03 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$1,300.00 Atlanta Restaurant Partners- Daniel Halpern, Brooke Edmond, and Valerie

Jackson

(Former Mayor Maynard Jackson's business partner, daughter, and wife respectively)

\$750.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$1,300.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

\$1,300.00 Diana Blank- Philanthropist (ex-wife of Arthur Blank)

\$1,300.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$1,300.00 Josh Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (son in law of Arthur Blank)

\$2,500.00 Emma Bloomberg-CEO Murmuration (Michael Bloomberg's Daughter)

\$1,300.00 Emma Bloomberg-CEO Murmuration (Michael Bloomberg's Daughter)

\$1,300.00 Kasim Reed for Mayor Inc.- Mayor of Atlanta

\$1,300.00 Katherine Bradley-Founding Chair CityBridge Education

\$500.00 Joel Klein- former Chancellor NYC schools

\$500.00 Egbert Perry- CEO Integral Group

\$1,300.00 Arthur Rock- Leadership for Educational Equity Board member

\$1,300.00 Jonathan Sackler- Director Purdue Pharma

\$1,300.00 Dave Sandberg-CEO Survey Monkey

\$1,300.00 Sheryl Sandberg- COO Facebook

\$1,000.00 Students First-Michelle Rhee Lobbying organization

\$1,300.00 Students First-Michelle Rhee Lobbying organization

Courtney English's Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$2000.00 Gregory Penner-Chairman Walmart

\$2,000.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$597.37 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$500.00 Egbert Perry- CEO Integral Group

\$2,500.00 Arthur Rock- Leadership for Educational Equity Board member

\$2,500.00 Joel Klein- former Chancellor NYC schools

\$265.75 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$1,000.00 Egbert & Ardis Perry- CEO Integral Group and wife

\$2,000.00 Herman Cain- Former Republican Presidential Candidate and Radio

Personality

\$2,500.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

\$2,500.00 Diana Blank- Philanthropist (ex-wife of Arthur Blank)

\$250.00 Alisha Thomas Morgan- Charter School Consultant

\$250.00 Cynthia Kuhlman- Charter School Consultant (Cousins Foundation)

\$1,000.00 David Goldberg – CEO SurveyMonkey

\$ 500.00 Shirley Franklin-Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$62.71 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,000.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$1,500.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$1,500.00 Lillian Giornelli-CEO C.F. Foundation

\$1,000.00 Egbert & Ardis Perry- CEO Integral Group and wife

\$500.00 Mack Wilbourn- Owner Mack II Inc.

\$2,500.00 Kasim Reed for Mayor- Mayor of Atlanta

\$1,000.00 Kent Thiry-CEO DaVita Healthcare

\$2,500.00 Emma Bloomberg-CEO Murmuration (Michael Bloomberg's Daughter)

\$250.00 Lisa Borders- Former President of Atlanta City Council

\$1,000.00 Katherine Bradley-Founding Chair CityBridge Education

\$100.00 Curley Dossman-Executive Georgia-Pacific

\$250.67 Curley Dossman-Executive Georgia-Pacific

\$ 750.00 Shirley Franklin-Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$1,000.00 David Goldberg – CEO SurveyMonkey

\$1,000.00 Reid Hoffman – Chair of LinkedIn

\$1,000.00 Ardis Perry- wife of CEO Integral Group

\$2,500.00 Jonathan Sackler- Director Purdue Pharma

\$1,000.00 Students First-Michelle Rhee Lobbying organization

\$2,000.00 David Tepper-Owner Carolina Panthers

\$1,000.00 Michelle Yee-Wife of Chair of LinkedIn

Jason Esteves' Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$469.31 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,500.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

\$2,500.00 Diana Blank- Philanthropist (ex-wife of Arthur Blank)

\$2,000.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$2,500.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$2,500.00 Lillian Giornelli-CEO C.F. Foundation

\$500.00 David Goldberg – CEO SurveyMonkey

\$341.74 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$1,000.00 Gregory Penner-Chairman Walmart

\$250.00 Christina Perry- Purpose Built Communities

\$2,500.00 Arthur Rock- Leadership for Educational Equity Board member

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition’s Better Community PAC

\$2,500.00 Emma Bloomberg-CEO Murmuration (Michael Bloomberg’s Daughter)

\$1,000.00 Katherine Bradley-Founding Chair CityBridge Education

\$2,500.00 Philip Kent- Insider Advantage

\$2,500.00 Jonathan Sackler- Director Purdue Pharma

\$1,500.00 David Tepper-Owner Carolina Panthers

\$500.00 Kent Thiry-CEO DaVita Healthcare

Leslie Grant’s Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$2,500.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

\$2,500.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition’s Better Community PAC

\$1,000.00 Students First-Michelle Rhee Lobbying organization

Brenda Muhammad’s Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$500.00 Thomas Cousins- Founder Cousins Properties and Purpose-Built Communities

\$2,000.00 Gregory & Lillian Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities and CEO C.F. Foundation (Thomas Cousins’ son in law and daughter)

\$2,500.00 Atlanta Restaurant Partners- Daniel Halpern, Brooke Edmond, and Valerie Jackson

(Former Mayor Maynard Jackson's business partner, daughter, and wife respectively)

\$1,000.00 Egbert & Ardis Perry- CEO Integral Group and wife

\$300.00 Thomas Dortch-CEO TWD, Inc.

\$750.00 Shirley Franklin- Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$200.00 Shirley Franklin- Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$1,250.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$1,250.00 Lillian Giornelli-CEO C.F. Foundation

\$500.00 Sonya Halpern- Wife of Daniel Halpern CEO of Atlanta Restaurant Partners

\$250.00 Cynthia Kuhlman- Charter School Consultant (Cousins Foundation)

\$500.00 Egbert Perry- CEO Integral Group

Steven Lee's Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$750.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$1,000.00 E.R. Mitchell- CEO E.R. Mitchell Construction

\$1,300.00 Kasim Reed for Mayor Inc.- Mayor of Atlanta

\$1,000.00 Mack Wilbourn- CEO Mack II

\$1,300.00 Wassim Hojeij- Owner Hojeij Branded Foods, Inc.

Reuben McDaniel's Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$1,000.00 Thomas Cousins- Founder Cousins Properties and Purpose-Built Communities

\$2,000.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$500.00 Shirley Franklin- Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$250.00 Cynthia Kuhlman- Charter School Consultant (Cousins Foundation)

\$2,000.00 Egbert Perry- CEO Integral Group

\$1,000.00 Mack Wilbourn- CEO Mack II

Cynthia Briscoe Brown's Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$1,000.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

Byron Amos' Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$250.00 Cynthia Kuhlman- Charter School Consultant (Cousins Foundation)

\$750.00 Shirley Franklin- Former Mayor of Atlanta

\$2,500.00 Kasim Reed for Mayor Inc.- Mayor of Atlanta

\$444.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$500.00 Arthur Blank- Owner Atlanta Falcons

Matt Westmoreland's Governing Regime Related Campaign Contributions

\$190.85 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$444.00 Buckhead Coalition's Better Community PAC

\$2,500.00 Diana Blank- Philanthropist (ex-wife of Arthur Blank)

\$100.00 Dena Kimball-Director Arthur Blank Foundation (daughter of Arthur Blank)

\$254.00 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$1,000.00 Gregory Giornelli -CEO Purpose Built Communities

\$1,000.00 Lillian Giornelli-CEO C.F. Foundation

\$243.75 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,000.00 Coca-Cola Company

\$214.77 Coca-Cola Company (In-Kind)

\$629.00 Leadership for Educational Equity (In-Kind)

\$2,500.00 Arthur Rock- Leadership for Educational Equity Board member

\$25.00 Matt Smith- Leadership for Educational Equity Consultant (In-Kind)

Of the new 9-member board 6 received donations from charter schools' groups, 2 received checks from former Mayor Shirley Franklin, 4 accepted contributions from former Mayor Kasim Reed, and 7 accepted donations from the Buckhead Coalition's Political Action Committee. From the disclosures listed, Arthur Blank and family gave these candidates over \$34,000.00. Thomas Cousins and family donated over \$20,000.00 to candidates. Byron Amos is the only winning candidate to accept a donation from the Atlanta Federation of Teachers. However, he also received a donation from a charter school consultant. Nancy Meister is the only candidate to reject all donations and self-finance her campaign. With the majority of candidates receiving large donations from charter school groups and the lack of winning candidate with endorsements by teachers unions solidifies the privatization of public school.

After the business community heavily financed winning candidates, Mayor Reed sought to have the business community supplement the new superintendent's salary. According to Atlanta Business Chronicle (2013), Mayor Reed had already raised commitments from private donors to provide the incoming head of APS with an extra \$300,000.00 a year for 5 years. This would boost the salary of the incoming superintendent to over \$600,000.00 a year. State Sen. Vincent Fort was quoted in the article saying, "We know that who pays the cost is the boss." He also added, the salary was too much and that would be more than Reed's salary, the governor's salary, and the president's salary. The article also explained that APS services less than 50,000 students, while New York City is the largest school district with 1.1 million students and pays its leader \$212,000.00 the previous year.

Did African American voters operationalize their potential political power in the 2013 city elections after the cheating scandal? A few years after the election Atlanta Public Schools developed a school “turnaround strategy” that was developed by Thomas Cousins’ family foundation and several pro-charter school consultants. When the consultants advised of turning some schools over to private operators, the superintendent and board agreed to contracting Purpose Built Communities to take over Thomasville Heights Elementary. During the school board vote to approve the contract with Purpose Built Communities, the board voted to close and merge several schools. This caused massive layoffs for teachers (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). One school more specifically, Mary Mcleod Bethune Elementary on Northside Drive caused several community members to question Arthur Blanks’ role in the “turnaround strategy”. The school had just been renovated and was being shut down. Students were sent to a different school. Currently, the school sits across the street from the Georgia World Congress Center and Arthur Blanks’ new billion-dollar stadium. Additionally, the school system settled with Invest Atlanta over the BeltLine dispute. APS accepted \$64 million less than what they were contractually obligated to receive. To some extent the school system helped fund gentrification on the backs of the poor students that money was supposed to help (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). In a video of the APS board meeting community members and advocates expressed their concern for the direction of the new board. An education advocate Nathaniel Dyer suggested that Superintendent Meria Carstarphen was brought in by big business and Arthur Blank had his “fingerprints” all over the school turnaround plan. Longtime activist Joe Beasley believed Arthur Blank desired the Bethune Elementary property. He went on to state, “I would suggest to the powers that be, Mr. Bland, doesn’t hold any elected office in the state... Therefore, his money

may mean a whole lot to him and others, but it don't mean a damn thing to me.” State Senator Vincent Fort replied to the APS board,

“The fact of the matter is the children of the City of Atlanta ought to have that money (meaning the BeltLine funds). Then you all are talking about getting rid of 400 positions of teachers. What can we do with 70 million dollars when it comes to teachers? There is something wrong with the turnaround plan. I am lost... I thought the cheating scandal was pretty bad. But the cheaters won. The same people that are so-called reformers are the ones that created the cheating scandal, they're the same ones that tried to cover it up, and now they're the same ones that created the turnaround strategy.”

Fort continued saying the board needed to be transparent about 3 topics: 1.) Is Bethune Elementary going to fall in the hands of Arthur Blank or other developers in the area? 2.) Are the current teachers that needed to reapply going to get preferential treatment like Teach for America teachers? 3.) Is the board going to put an E-SPLOST on the ballot requesting the city's poorest to fund schools after the board made a deal to get almost 70 million less than they were contracted to receive?

These policies effectively continue the governing regime's pro-business ideology. Courtney English and Nancy Meister are the only members on the board pre and post cheating scandal. Out of a 9-member board, the citizens elected a more pro-growth board than they previously had. Voters clearly failed to build a coalition to effectively operationalize their electoral power.

4 Findings

Atlanta's Urban Regime was involved at every point in the APS cheating scandal and subsequent fall out. The Anglo-American business elites and African American political leaders cared about the image of Atlanta more than the academic well-being of the students. The business community was driving the policies affecting the school system. These policies

ultimately benefitted the well-connected members of the regime. At no point did African American voters operationalize their potential political power in the 2013 city elections after the cheating scandal. The corporate education reform movement and corporate interests gained more power and control after the election. Jones contends that African American electoral power will be operationalized when the elected faction/coalition supports the agenda of African Americans. The 2013 election created a board that heavily supports the same pro-growth agenda that led to the cheating scandal. Noted scholar Adolf Reed argues, until Atlanta gets a viable liberal candidate to challenge the pro-growth regime, Atlanta will still follow the same pattern of siding with the wealthy and well-connected over the poor and disenfranchised. Additionally, regimes form and legitimize themselves. Once people view them as contenders of power, they become the hegemon and difficult to replace. This pro-growth ideology is proliferated and bolstered by interested parties and permeates throughout the local community (Reed, 1999).

5 Insights

The idea of a city too busy to hate is a facade, created by business to benefit business. To some extent the business community is too busy to hate, they are indifferent to the needs of the disadvantaged in the city. They are indifferent to the image of the messenger if the message produces pro-growth policy. Clarence Bacote had a very aspirational ending to his article “The Negro in Atlanta Politics”. He found that the 1946 elections produced positive outcomes for Atlanta’s African American community due to the voting bloc. He recognized the conditions were not ideal, but it was progressing because of voting. The voting demographics changed to be more representative of the underprivileged, but the policy constraints remained the same. Even with the cheating scandal the image of the city not the outcomes for the students, was the priority of Atlanta’s governing regime.

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