

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Alexander Polikoff

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key - Public School Funding Oral History project

Interview # EF-A-L-2019-035

Alexander Polikoff, a lawyer involved with the *Carr v. Koch* Illinois Supreme Court case on school district property taxes and the equal protection clause, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key – Public School Funding* Oral History project.

Date: Jun 14, 2019 Location: Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:06 / 1.1 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 13, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Interview being
processed

© 2019 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Abstract

Alexander Polikoff, Education is Key, EF-A-L-2019-035

Biographical Information/ Overview: Alexander Polikoff was born in Chicago, Illinois in January 1927. He grew up in Chicago and attended Senn High School, graduating in 1944. He then attended Purdue University briefly before joining the US Navy. Upon his discharge from the Navy, Alexander earning a BA degree, an MA degree in English in 1951, and a law degree in 1953 from the University of Chicago. Following graduation, Alexander worked for the law firm of Schiff Hardin for seventeen years (1953-1970). He then became executive director of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI) from 1970-1999. At the time of the interview he was still active with BPI, serving as its director for public housing issues. He is also an author, having written *Waiting for Gautreaux* (2006), which covers the famous federal housing discrimination lawsuit filed against the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and other governmental bodies in the area of rental discrimination. That case is still active today. Alexander also wrote, *The Path Still Open*, which discusses cooperative power.

Polikoff discusses *Carr v Koch*, the school funding lawsuit (2010-12). He maintained that the law violated the 1970 Illinois State Constitution's equal protection clause. Specifically, taxpayers in the poorest school districts were taxed higher than in wealthy districts. The Court case was filed in Sangamon County on behalf of Cairo and Chicago Heights, and was reviewed at both the Appellate Court and the Illinois Supreme Court level. All three courts held against the plaintiffs. The final determination was that the state of Illinois, not local school districts, determined policy. Alexander also talks about other BPI cases involving nuclear power, Chicago Housing, school boundaries, and book banning. Other areas of interest included small Chicago area schools and granting greater power to city inspectors general.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI); *Carr v. Koch* Supreme Court Case (2010-2012); Illinois state Constitution's equal protection and property taxes; Illinois's court system; Committee for Education Rights; Urban League; school litigation cases involving school district attendance; book banning in Illinois schools

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955