

Collection #  
SC 3154

## FROEBEL SCHOOL BOYCOTT PETITIONS, CA. OCTOBER, 1945

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION: 1 Folder

COLLECTION  
DATES: Ca. October, 1945

PROVENANCE: Jimmie L. Johnson, Midfield, Alabama, May, 2016

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NOTES:

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Froebel High School in Gary, Lake County, was started in 1912 as a K-12 school and was touted as the first in the city to accept blacks into the system although they were segregated in all areas. This arrangement lasted into the mid-1940s although strides were being made under Principal Richard Nuzum who formed a bi-racial PTA, made it easier for blacks to enroll in academic courses, integrated the boys swimming pool, and allowed African-Americans to try out for the school's orchestra. By 1944 approximately forty percent of Froebel's students were African-American.

Racial tensions began to rise among some members of the white community as part of a nationwide movement to return to segregation. On September 18, 1945, white students walked out of class in protest and questioned Principal Nuzum's qualifications. Nuzum was judged competent for his position and some of the students returned for a brief time in early October. It was estimated that as many as 1,400 students were boycotting.

National celebrities such as Frank Sinatra and Joe Louis were invited to speak in an attempt to end the boycott. Sinatra cancelled a \$10,000 engagement to come to Froebel to sing and talk the students into returning to classes. The strikes ended in November, 1945, although racial tensions remained high.

The passage of anti-segregation bills by the Gary city council and the passage of a state anti-discrimination bill in 1949, opened all public schools to African Americans. Declining enrollment in the 1970s resulted in the school being closed in 1977, and the building was demolished in 2005.

Sources:

*Indiana Historical Bureau*, Historical Markers. Accessed 9 May 2016.

"When Frank Sinatra took a stand for civil rights in school." Time.com. Accessed 9 May 2016.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection comprises thirty-nine completed petition sheets completed by black and white citizens to Gary Mayor Finerty and the city's school board protesting "secret agreements made in settlement of the Froebel School strike, in Negro parents were not permitted to take part." It goes on to support Principal Nuzum and state that the real problem makers are those who organized the strike which was threatening to cause a race riot.

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CONTAINER

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