



As part of its commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Niagara Movement's meeting in Boston, the Boston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People plans a series of events, starting with an exhibit on W.E.B. Du

Bois, the founder of the Niagara Movement, at the State House on Oct. 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Du Bois is shown above in his office at Atlanta University in 1909. (Photo courtesy of University of Massachusetts at Amherst W.E.B. Du Bois Library)

## The Niagara Movement

One hundred years ago, the civil rights organization held its largest gathering in Boston to help fight for racial equality in America

Howard Manly

By the time the Niagara Movement hit Boston for its annual conference in late August 1907, W.E.B. Du Bois was poised for battle.

The Movement had inched along the prior three years, and the strain of running an organization plagued with chronic fighting, limited resources and an almost insurmountable goal of attaining racial equality within turn-of-the-century America was a daunting task. Especially for an intellectual like Du Bois, more comfortable in academia than slapping backs and shaking hands.

But he tried. Lord knows, Du Bois tried.

"I was no natural leader of men," Du Bois wrote years later. "I could not slap people on the back and make friends of strangers. I could

not easily break down an inherited reserve; or at all times curb a biting, critical tongue. Nevertheless, having put my hand to the plow, I had to go on."

And people, mostly African Americans, were willing to follow, largely because the other national black

leader at the time, Booker T. Washington, the Wizard of Tuskegee, was considered part of the problem. About 800 people showed up that day at Faneuil Hall — the largest gathering of the Movement — and listened to Du Bois try to stir the masses.

"We are not discouraged," he declared. "Help us brothers, for the victory which lingers, must and shall, prevail."

It would be a long fight, and the Niagara Movement did not make it to the end. In 1910, the all-black group gave birth to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. **Niagara, continued to page 8**

### Black HISTORY

## Madison Park nursery has teen moms on track

Liz Hoffman

It is 10 a.m. at Madison Park Technical and Vocational High School in Roxbury, and class is in session. The hiss of soldering irons echoes through the hallways on the ground floor, home to the construction and transportation academy. The hum of hairdryers floats out of the cosmetology school. A teacher hustles a few stragglers into a classroom.

But at the end of the hallway on the second floor, the sounds are different. There is laughter — and a few tears. Blocks crash, babies babble, and in the preschool room, a teacher runs a color matching exercise, asking her students to point out the white computer and the blue chair.

As the sounds of creation and construction float up from the techni-

cal and vocational academies below, the sounds of children fill the Crittenton Early Education Center at Madison Park.

Madison Park is one of two Boston public high schools with on-site early education centers; English High School in Jamaica Plain is the other. While the center is open to the Roxbury community, its focus, like its physical space, is firmly entrenched in Madison Park High.

Eleven of the 18 mothers enrolled in the center's Teen Parent Program attend the high school, which has seen a jump in pregnancies among its students in the past year, despite a birth rate that continues to drop state- and nationwide.

"We're very integrated at the high school, and we're trying to become more integrated because it seems

like the need is rising," said program director Melissa Silva. "As well as raising a healthy child and teaching them about child development, our main focus is to keep the mothers educated. What we do stretches far beyond a normal childcare setting."

As the pressures and costs mount, teen parents often see school as a disposable source of stress. A 2001 study found that only 41 percent of teens who start families before the age of 18 ever finish high school.

"The biggest challenge is being overwhelmed," said Cynthia Smalls, 19, who went through the Teen Parent Program with her son, Antoine, four years ago when she was a student at City on a Hill Charter Public School. "It's a lot to handle, and it's easy to look at it and say, 'I can't do this.'"

Located in the heart of the high school and with a program designed especially for young parents, the Madison Park center is taking a swing at dropout rates by serving both sets

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## Brookline High racing to close MCAS gap

Dan Devine

Massachusetts education leaders had reasons to celebrate last week: the reversal of "two years of flat performance" on the 2007 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and increased percentages of students scoring "proficient" or "advanced" — the top two categories of MCAS scores — in every grade, on every test.

But with every positive educational announcement comes an inevitable negative: repeated reminders of a persistent achievement gap between white and minority students.

The talk is constant, and Brookline High School (BHS) Headmaster Dr. Robert J. Weintraub is sick of it.

He's sick of the two words. "Achievement." "Gap." He spits the pair out like they've gone sour, following them with two of his own: Repetitive. Demoralizing.

He's sick of the violent reactions the words induce, like one he recalls following a conversation with an African American staff member at BHS.

"I asked him, 'How does this tsunami of coverage about low test scores for blacks and achievement gaps make you feel?'" Weintraub says. "He slammed his hand on the table and said, 'It's embarrassing. It's horrible that that's all you hear about the black community, because it's not even the whole picture.'"

Weintraub and the rest of the staff and students at Brookline High — a

*"Now we're going to talk about African American scholars as exemplary citizens and as leaders of our country and of our world."*

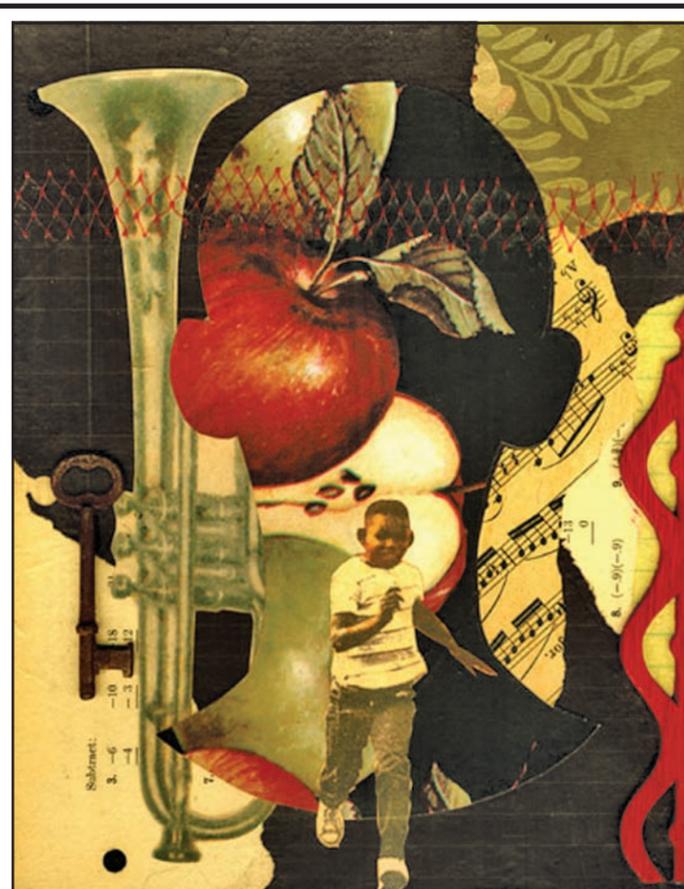
— Robert J. Weintraub

public school home to about 1,850 kids, about 10 percent of whom are African American, half coming from the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program — are doing a lot more than just talking.

In fact, they may be drawing up a blueprint for how to eliminate the gap for good.

According to the 2007 MCAS results for individual schools and districts released last week, 74 percent of African American students at BHS scored advanced or proficient on the 2007 English exam and 67 percent scored in those categories in math — numbers that may not seem particularly impressive when compared

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"Music and Math," by Boston artist Ekua Holmes, takes viewers inside the mind of a young boy who wants to do well in school, yet remain free to roam. Other works by Holmes and collaborator Kim Nielsen are on display in a free exhibit entitled "Something Borrowed, Something New," running through Oct. 28 at the Gallery at the Piano Factory, 791 Tremont Street. (Image courtesy of Ekua Holmes)

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