



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 5, 2019

Harris Tries to Backtrack on Support for Forced Busing

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“California Sen. Kamala Harris got all the attention for playing prosecutor in chief, but her case against former Vice President Joe Biden boiled down in some ways to a ringing call for forced school busing,” wrote former California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown in the *San Francisco Chronicle* following the recent Democratic Party presidential debate.

“It won’t be too hard for Trump to knock that one out of the park in 2020,” Brown lamented.

Harris (shown) apparently realized that, in her zeal to score points against Biden in the ultra-Left pool of Democratic Party primary voters, she had handed Trump an issue that would severely damage her chances were she to emerge as the nominee against him. On Wednesday of this week, she attempted to — as politicians are wont to say — *clarify* her debate remarks.

“I think of busing as being in the toolbox of what is available and what can be used for the goal of desegregating America’s schools,” Harris told reporters at a Democratic Party picnic in West Des Moines, Iowa. When pressed if that meant federally mandated busing, Harris responded, “I believe that any tool that is in the toolbox should be considered by a school district.”

The Biden campaign was quick to respond. Deputy campaign manager Kate Bedingfield retorted, “It’s disappointing that Senator Harris chose to distort Vice President Biden’s position on busing — particularly now that she is tying herself in knots trying not to answer the very question she posed to him!”

During the debate, Harris went after front-runner Biden, who publicly opposed federally mandated busing in the 1970s, even sponsoring a congressional measure that would have limited federal funding for federal busing measures.

Federally mandated busing to achieve racial balance in America’s public schools was a hot and intense issue in the early 1970s. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education* that schools racially segregated by law were unconstitutional. The case involved an elementary black child who had to travel a longer distance to attend an all-black school, rather than the all-white school, which was closer to her home.

As school districts across the country slowly complied, and ended the practice of *de jure* (legal) segregation, schools largely remained segregated *de facto* (in fact) due to housing patterns in which blacks and whites tended to live in separate areas of towns and cities. Accepting the position that black children could only achieve if they were in a school with white children as dogma, liberal social planners agitated for reassigning children in large city schools, based on their race.

In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* that federal judges could use busing as a “tool” — to use the words of Harris — to achieve whatever they considered the proper racial balance. As a result, children were bussed from predominantly white schools to predominantly black schools, and from predominantly black schools to predominantly white schools to



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accomplish this purpose. Children were forced to travel on school busses up to 2-3 hours per day, riding past schools near their homes.

The policy was extremely unpopular among both white and black communities. In 1972, Governor George Wallace of Alabama sought the Democratic Party nomination, centering his campaign on the issue of busing, and was leading the field in delegates — he captured 51 percent of the vote in Michigan, where busing was a major issue, over candidates such as Senator George McGovern, former Vice President Hubert Humphrey and others — until he was removed as a serious candidate by an assassination attempt that nearly killed him, leaving him unable to campaign.

A leading factor in home selection, as any real estate agent can tell you, is what school the family's children will attend. Rather than have their child used as a pawn in a social engineering scheme, many whites fled the big cities for the nearby suburbs. Other whites remained, but sent their children to private or parochial schools, if they could, leaving only poorer families — white or black — to populate the big city schools.

In other words, principally because of busing, large city school districts became *de facto* even more segregated than before.

Eventually, the Supreme Court ruled in 2007, in the case *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, to prohibit the use of racial classifications in student assignment plans to maintain racial balance.

For Harris to praise a policy that was so unpopular is a testimony to how far Left the Democratic Party is going. Despite her efforts to backtrack, it is quite clear that Harris was calling for the reimplementing of the extremely unpopular busing policy. During the debate she asserted, "That's where the federal government must step in," looking at Biden and basking in the applause from the decidedly left-wing audience in a Miami auditorium.

Before it had become evident that Harris had given Trump a ball to hit out of the park, as Willie Brown said, she doubled down on her initial support of forced busing. "I support the busing," she told reporters on Sunday. "The schools of America are as segregated or more segregated today than when I was in elementary school. And we need to put every effort, *including busing*, into play to desegregate the schools." (Emphasis added.)

And it wasn't just Harris. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) told ABC's *This Week* program on Sunday that "Busing is certainly an option that is necessary in certain cases," while allowing that it was not "optimal."

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) also said that she did not oppose federally mandated busing as an option. (It is almost Orwellian how something can be both mandated and an option at the same time. Clearly, the option would be held by federal bureaucrats and judges, not local school districts.)

While Harris's support for mandated busing may play well with the ideological leftists who will vote in Democratic primaries, this could very well come up again in the general election, especially if Harris is the nominee. "If she's the nominee, Trump will never let it go," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics. Even Democratic political consultant Don Shaw cautioned against the Democrats supporting forced busing.

"This is not an issue that is favorable for Democrats in a fight against Donald Trump," Shaw said. "The last thing the Democrats need is to create a divisive issue out of nothing and hurt our chances in the



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general election to take back the White House.”

As Willie Brown noted in his op-ed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “The first Democratic debates proved one thing: We still don’t have a candidate who can beat Donald Trump.”

Photo of Sen. Kamala Harris: AP Images

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