



40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION of
UNIVERSITY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
1971-72 + 2011-12

Gangs Disrupt University High

'Students Have Taken Over'

Author: Charles F. Thomson

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University City High School has been plagued by violence this year.

During the first six weeks of classes, the new \$14-million high school at 36th and Filbert has experienced:

- At least four serious stabbings of students by fellow students.
- A takeover of the school by pupils which required intervention of police gang control and civil disobedience squads. It resulted in four days of early dismissals.
- Several assaults by students on teachers and other school personnel, including the beating of a disciplinarian by six girl pupils.

'Growing Pains'

Davis B. Martin, school principal, yesterday called the incidents a result of the school's "growing pains" and maintained that its discipline as "as good as any school's in the city."

Several teachers at the school, however, disagreed.

Many teachers said Martin cautioned his staff not to talk negatively about the school to the press.

But last Friday, before the principal warned the teachers, Jack Fahy, English department said, "This thing has gotten away from us. The students have taken over. Teachers are in fear of their lives and some are saying that nothing will happen to change it until someone is killed."

Mrs. Helene Candeub, a 14-year veteran who has taught at three other city high schools, said, "There is a complete lack of discipline and cutting is so widespread that it is difficult to see what can be done at this point. The school got off to such a bad start that students just do what they please."

One reason for University City's disciplinary problems, shared by other inner-city high schools, is the intense gang activity in its feeder section of West Philadelphia.

However, while most high schools are generally regarded as neutral turf free from gang fighting, University City opened only last December and apparently has not achieved such respect from the many gang members among its 2,400 pupils.

Afraid to Attend

Mrs. Tina Carter, a teacher and union representative at the school, said Friday, "In many instances students are pulled out of classes by gang members and in others they are afraid to go to classes at all."

Another reason for its disciplinary program is unique to University City – its physical plan. Built as a magnet school to use free scheduling without any bell system, the school's many staircases, circular halls and interconnecting classrooms are difficult to monitor.

Its nine exits scattered throughout the building, teachers said, allow students to escape apprehension and outsiders to come and go at will. Fire department regulations prohibit the school from locking any of these exits.

Other Evidence

Other evidence shows the discipline problem at University City is worse than at other city high schools.

University City is currently assigned four school district security men, more than any other high school.

During the takeover two weeks ago, a teacher reported seeing a boy with a shotgun standing on the stage of the school's auditorium. Martin denied the report.

A 15-year-old student, arrested for allegedly stabbing a fellow student in the side after trying to shake him down for a bus token, was still in school. Martin said he had requested that the youth be transferred out of his school, but declined to give any more details.

Punched by Student

The school disciplinarian who was beaten by six female pupils Nov. 3 was also punched by a student two days before, according to teachers. The students' contention that the disciplinarian provoked the fight with the girls sparked the student takeover of the auditorium Nov. 9. Martin refused to comment on the beating or the disciplinarian, who was transferred from the school.

Classes were dismissed on Nov. 9 and the three following school days as a result of the demonstrations. Official reports termed it a takeover.

Fahy gave this description of the situation at the school yesterday:

“There has been improvement since the takeover, because discipline has become the absolutely number one priority at the school and a greater effort has been made. But there are still outsiders in the school and we seem to be slipping back again.”



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