Introduction:
Among Hannah Arendt’s most disputed works were her 1959 *Disent* essay “Reflections on Little Rock” and its follow-up “A Reply to Critics”, which argue against school integration in the post-Brown v. Board of Education South. They have been widely critiqued, though most have focused on her use of the categories of the political, the social, and the private realm and her racial attitudes. So far left mostly untouched, is the position Arendt takes on the politicization of children and childhood and her criticism of parents and their connection to her 1954 essay “The Crisis in Education”. To make things more complicated, Arendt seemed to acknowledge the problem with her portrayal of African American parents after Ralph Ellison criticized her in a 1965 interview. Ellison argued that African American parents of integrators were initiating their children in the sacrifices necessary to survive as African Americans ( *Who Speaks for the Negro*, 341-344). Arendt replied in an interview with Ellison “you are entirely right” (Arendt Papers, See below). This acquiescence dislodges many of Arendt assumptions in these essays. Revisiting the essays alongside academic scholarship, archival material from the Library of Congress’ Hannah Arendt Papers, and biographical information about the school integrators themselves, provides answers to lingering questions and exposes new problems for Arendt’s anti-integration view.

Central Questions:
• Why did Arendt accept Ralph Ellison’s critique?
  What are the consequences of this acceptance?
• Does Arendt’s claim that the teenage integrators had “neither the ability nor the right to establish a public opinion of their own” ( *ROLR*, 56) hold in the face of biographical information about these integrators?
• What should be made of Arendt’s call for the protection and sheltering of children from the harshness of the political world?

Conclusions:
In “A Crisis in Education”, Arendt argues that education must teach the status quo, the world as it is not what teachers or parents might want it to be. This closely conforms with Ellison’s account of what the parents of integrators were doing, as teaching their children how to navigate the world as African Americans. This similarity provides a plausible explanation for why Arendt so readily accepted the reconceptualization Ellison provided in his critique.

In “Reflections on Little Rock”, Arendt claimed that:
“children...have neither the ability nor the right to establish a public opinion of their own.”
(Arendt, *ROLR*, 56)
In her own life, Arendt put this claim into action revoking a donation to an anti-Vietnam War organization that mobilized high school students (Arendt Papers: 1949-1975). Looking at the stories of the integrators, themselves, this claim appears wrongheaded.

Dorothy Counts, a picture of whom Arendt says motivated her writing, recounts that on the day she faced a four-hundred-person mob while attempting to integrate Harding High School, overwhelmingly she “felt pity for them...they would not do these things if they had been raised better”
(Counts described by Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 5).
This displays a strikingly a mature view of her situation and racism more broadly.

Conclusions continued:
Gloria Ray, one of the Little Rock Nine, demonstrated significant political autonomy, as she registered to integrate Central High School and participated in the integration effort against the will of her parents ( Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, 102, 123, 139).
Jane Emery a white ally of the integrators at Central High certainly proved she had the ability to establish a public opinion of her own when she wrote this for the school newspaper, which is cited as motivating the relatively warm welcome the Nine initially received:

“The challenge is yours, as future adults of America, to prove your maturity, intelligence, and ability to make decisions by how you react, behave, and conduct yourself... What is your answer to this challenge?”
(Jane Emery qtd. in Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, 114)

Nevertheless, Arendt’s worries about the well being of children have merit in reference to young children, who are not yet capable of or ready for political autonomy. Politics should be viewed as a gradual process of becoming. This is an idea found in Arendt’s own work, as she describes children as humans “in the process of becoming” ( *TCOE*, 185).

Acknowledgements:
I’d like to thank my supervisors Charles McNamara and Prof. Moody-Adams for their time and dedication; Prof. Cruz and Patrick Anson for their enthusiasm and support; the URF staff and our anonymous donor for making HRSP a possibility; and my HRSP cohort for their companionship throughout the research process.