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## Memphis 50 Years Since King: The Unfinished Agenda

David Ciscel & Michael Honey

Memphis, infamous as the place where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, is a river town based in the Deep South with a long and problematic history. Nearly 60% African-American, the city remains number one in poverty and infant mortality for any U.S. city of its size (Lamar, 2004). In this article we provide a sketch that might help us to understand why, despite Black advances in civil rights and political power, struggles for economic justice remain so central to continuing the civil rights revolution in the Deep South.

Memphis remains largely a poor community. At the center of the Mississippi Delta plantation economy and as transshipment point for goods and services produced elsewhere, it has always suffered from a weak industrial base. And, like the rest of the Deep South, its long history of white supremacy, low wages, and weak and segregated education has damaged the economy and left a litany of problematic issues.

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- Poverty encompasses one-third of the African-American community.
- Only 35% of African Americans over 25 years of age have a high school diploma, and only 14% of those have college degrees.
- In 2012, whites had a median income of \$52,102, while African Americans had a median income of only \$27,814, a little more than half that of whites. This is only one indication of the racial-economic disparities deeply etched in the economy.
- In 2012, Memphis unemployment rates were 5.9% for whites and

12.0% for African Americans, but the true statistic for Black unemployment in the center city and among youth are much, much higher.

- In 2012-2013, 82% of City school children remained economically disadvantaged, and most of those children were African-American (McFerren and Soifer, 2014).

Why do the city's racial-economic disparities remain so enduring? While much has changed in the Memphis economy since King's day, the low-

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wage model remains.

As described in more detail below, the Memphis employment picture is a difficult one for the Black community as a whole. While it is clear that African Americans have entered every occupation in substantial numbers, the regional economy is clearly rigged against affluence for all. First, employment has stagnated since the Great Recession. Second, employment in the region is skewed toward occupations that do not require as much training and education. Finally, the income disparities between the small numbers of high-income jobs (in the \$60,000 to \$100,000 per year range) and the large mass of jobs (in the \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year range) skew the economic picture against Black workers.

## The Economic Burdens of Segregation and Low Wages

Some praise the Memphis economy as diversified, but it remains highly dependent on a transshipment economy with an erratic demand for workers. FedEx, one of the largest logistics and package delivery companies in the world, is the city's largest employer. This places Memphis firmly in the realm of the modern global economy,

but one that retains a company town employment structure. This dependence on transshipment keeps Memphis stuck with an old economy in the midst of what looks like a modern logistics and technology revolution. And the burden of its racial history continues to weigh heavily on its economic progress.

Historically, the city has always been economically dependent on the Mississippi River and the other small rivers nearby—the Wolf, the White, the Hatchie, and the Nonconnah

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Creek. In the antebellum era, white businesspeople like Nathan Bedford Forrest, a founder of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War, sold slaves “down the river” to New Orleans. After the war, rivers, rails, and highways intersecting Memphis made it an agricultural trading post and a successful city. It later became a center for intermodal trading of all sorts. Today, the warehousing for goods from China and elsewhere brought by rail from the west coast, the airport, the interstate highways and the river today propel the future of much of the Memphis economy.

The power structure of the city continues banking on the city's role as a distribution, retail, and health industry center in the global economy to move it forward, even as the city's history of slavery and segregation continue to weigh heavily on its future. It has another history of worker struggles for racial and economic justice, higher wages, and working-class rights and

benefits. From the 1940s through the 1960s, industrialization and unionization brought many workers into the “middle class,” meaning people could buy homes and send children to college. Numerous Black workers who had previously been shut out of well-paying jobs provided a powerful core for unionization in the city. Industry always played a small but important role in the Memphis economy, however, so that organizing service sector and public sector jobs remained the crucial next step for Black workers. All of this led up to the epochal Memphis sanitation strike of 1968, which forged a labor-civil rights alliance encouraging unionization of Black workers across the South (Honey 1999, 2007).

In the wake of that strike, public employee unionism came into its own as the most important force moving workers in Memphis and elsewhere—and especially Black and women workers—forward. The regional economy and employment structure seemed to be improving: new industries employed black workers on the line and some of them gained higher-skilled and supervisory employment. Yet the failure of the RCA television and electronics plant, moved to Memphis to escape higher wages and benefits in the north, exemplified another problem: employers still sought a low-wage economy that kept African Americans from advancing economically. At RCA, Black workers did not settle for low wage jobs, and through union organization, strikes, and agitation tried to secure a more powerful position within the company. Rather than accepting the higher-waged, unionized model, RCA picked up and moved overseas (Ciscel, 1976).

Following the example of RCA, in the 1970s and 1980s, Memphis went through the deindustrialization that plagued many Midwestern cities. While Memphis could not claim the title of a “postindustrial city,” it lost many important plants: television production, furniture, tires, food processing, agricultural processing and implements plants all vanished. The loss of

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# Double Disadvantage: Rising Income Segregation in Children's Neighborhoods and Schools

Ann Owens

Where a child grows up and where she goes to school are critical in predicting her future success. Over the past several decades, poor and rich children increasingly grow up in separate neighborhoods and attend separate schools—segregation by income between neighborhoods, schools, and school districts increased from 1990 to 2010. These trends are related to one another. Where a child lives often determines, or at least influences, where she goes to school, so segregated schools reflect segregated neighborhoods. But available school options shape where parents choose to live. Inequality in school test scores, spending, or racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition affect which schools parents see as desirable, and parents take school district boundaries and school attendance boundaries into account when deciding where to live. Neighborhood and school segregation are thus a reinforcing cycle. The increasing divide in the contexts that poor and rich children experience may have serious consequences for future inequality and social mobility. Policy solutions aimed at providing equal opportunity for all children must therefore address both neighborhoods and schools and their relationship with one another to address this consequential issue.

## Income Segregation between Neighborhoods

Past research indicated that income segregation between neighborhoods increased since 1970 (Reardon and Bischoff 2011; Bischoff and Reardon 2014). However, my analysis of Cen-

sus data since 1990 shows that this is only true among families with children (Owens 2016). Among childless households, income segregation has been stable, while it increased by over 20% among families with kids from 1990 to 2010 in large metropolitan areas. In addition, income segregation between families with children was nearly twice as high among families with kids as among childless households in 2010.

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***Because segregation is higher among families with children than childless households, poor kids are exposed to more poor neighbors than poor adults are.***

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Income segregation can be measured in several different ways, but it generally captures the degree to which households of different incomes live in separate neighborhoods. I use a measure that compares the income distribution in a neighborhood—how many high-, middle-, and low-income households live there—to the income distribution in the neighborhood's metropolitan area. If there were no segregation, the distributions should be the same—the same proportion of high-, middle-, and low-income families would be found in every neighborhood. When segregation is higher, it means that there are more neighborhoods predominantly made up of low- or high-income households and fewer mixed-income neighborhoods.

Because segregation is higher among families with children than childless households, poor kids are exposed to more poor neighbors than poor adults are (and rich kids are exposed to more rich neighbors than rich adults are). For example, in 2010,

children from families with incomes in the highest 20% of the U.S. income distribution lived in neighborhoods where over 40% of their neighbors also had household income in the top quintile. In contrast, childless households with incomes in the top quintile lived in neighborhoods where fewer—about 35%—of their neighbors were high-income. Children experience more segregated contexts than adults.

Income segregation can occur at any point in the income distribution. For example, average income segregation might be high if the poor live in different neighborhoods than middle-income households or the rich live away from poor households, or a variety of other scenarios. My analysis of changes from 1990 to 2010 indicates that income segregation is highest for the rich—high-income households live with other high-income families in the most segregated neighborhoods. Income segregation increased at nearly every point in the income distribution during the 2000s. Its rise has not been driven solely by a concentration of poverty, though the poor have become more segregated from higher-income families.

## The Role of Parents' Resources and Schooling Concerns

Why is income segregation higher—and rising—among families with children? I identified two factors that play key roles. First, parents' economic resources contribute to income segregation between neighborhoods. Income inequality has risen for the last 40 years, meaning that rich families have become even richer—they are pulling away from middle class and poor families in terms of their income. One thing people do with extra income is spend

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it on living in their ideal neighborhood, often a neighborhood that is unaffordable to lower-income households. I find that the relationship between rising income inequality and rising income segregation is twice as strong among families with children as among childless households. Compared to the general population, parents in particular convert extra economic resources into residence in exclusive neighborhoods, leading to residential income segregation. Though income inequality has also risen among childless households (though to a lesser degree than among families with children), its relationship with income segregation is weaker. High-income childless families may spend extra money on different priorities than housing, or if they do spend extra resources on housing, they may choose to live in more integrated areas.

The second key factor contributing to residential income segregation among families with children is concerns about school options. My study shows that in places where parents have more choice among school districts, segregation is higher. When parents have more choice, they can select their ideal district, within their budgetary constraints. This leads to greater separation between high- and low-income families with children as high-income parents spend money to live in neighborhoods within particular school district boundaries. For example, in 2010, income segregation between neighborhoods was extremely high in the Newark, NJ, metropolitan area, where there are over 140 school districts. Income segregation between neighborhoods was more than 50% lower in the McAllen, TX, metropolitan area, where there are 17 school districts. (My measure of school district options accounts for the total number of students in the metropolitan area, capturing the degree to which metropolitan areas are carved into different districts regardless of how many students they serve.) Childless households are likely less concerned about school district boundaries (though this

population does include empty nesters and young couples who will have children), and their segregation is therefore lower than families with children.

## **Income Segregation between Schools and School Districts**

Like income segregation between neighborhoods, income segregation between school districts and between schools has also increased over the past several decades (Owens, Reardon, and Jencks 2016). In analyses of national data from the National Center for Education Statistics, my colleagues and I found that from 1990 to 2010, income

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### ***Parents in particular convert extra economic resources into residence in exclusive neighborhoods, leading to residential income segregation.***

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segregation between school districts among public school families grew by over 15% in large metropolitan areas. From 1991 to 2012, income segregation of students between schools increased by over 40% in large public school districts. In particular, segregation between schools rose substantially—by over 20%—just from 2008 to 2012. This startling uptick may be driven by the Great Recession, as more families became poor and many lost their homes, perhaps forcing them to move to poorer districts, leading to concentration of poverty. Whether income segregation between schools continues to rise at such a striking rate remains to be seen.

Rising income segregation between schools and between school districts means that schools and school districts are less economically diverse than they were 25 years ago. Poor children enroll in districts and schools with more poor children, and rich children attend schools and districts that enroll more rich children. In 2012 in the 100 larg-

est school districts, a student eligible for free lunch attended a school where, on average, 60% of his schoolmates are also eligible for free lunch.

As is the case for segregation between neighborhoods, rising income inequality has also contributed to the increase in income segregation between schools and between districts. Over the past several decades, rising income inequality has resulted in parents increasing the amount of money they spend on their children, with a growing gap in spending between high- and low-income parents (Kornrich and Furstenberg 2013). Buying or renting a home in a particular neighborhood so that their child can attend a particular school or so that they live within certain district boundaries is another way parents spend money on their children. High-income parents have an increasing resource advantage over low-income parents, given the rise in income inequality, enabling them to afford residence in areas unaffordable to low-income families. The rise of income segregation, due in part to rising income inequality, has created more economically homogenous neighborhoods, schools, and school districts over the past 25 years.

## **Consequences of Income Segregation for Children's Well-being**

What are the consequences of rising income segregation in children's contexts? Social science research on both neighborhood and school contexts overwhelmingly suggests that economically homogenous neighborhoods, schools, and districts will contribute to inequality in children's adult outcomes. Research has shown that growing up in poor neighborhoods reduces children's educational attainment, employment prospects, wages, and health and may increase the odds of teen pregnancy (Chetty, Hendren, and Katz 2016; Sharkey and Faber 2014). Research also shows that attending school with low-income peers is detrimental for poor students' educational outcomes (Schwartz 2012).

Racial segregation between schools and neighborhoods remains a serious social problem, but recent research indicates that racial segregation between schools is detrimental for minority students' outcomes largely because of its link with poverty: racial segregation also concentrates poverty in certain schools, and the concentration of poverty reduces children's achievement (Reardon 2016). Further, because local school funding remains linked to household income and property taxes in the district, income segregation between school districts may contribute to inequality in school funding between high- and low-income children's school contexts. Therefore, economic segregation between children's neighborhoods, schools, and school districts may reduce the achievement and future well-being of low-income children, leading to growing economic inequality in the future and reducing the likelihood that low-income children can pull themselves out of poverty.

## Policy Implications

What should be done? This issue can be approached from several angles. First, we can tackle income inequality, a key engine of income segregation across these various contexts, with policies aimed at increasing the incomes of low- and middle-income families relative to high-income families. Second, mixed-income neighborhoods can be created by building more affordable housing in high- and mixed-income areas and protecting low-in-

***Before we decide what should be done, we need to agree that something should be done at all.***

come areas from gentrifying into exclusive enclaves. This will reduce income segregation and provide low-income families and their children ac-

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cess to better opportunities in their neighborhood and schools.

Third, educational policies can be adopted to promote income mixing between schools and, more importantly, between school districts, where most of the inequality lies. Schools can be homogeneously low-income because their entire district is low-income and/or because there is segregation between schools *within* the same district. My research indicates that over 60% of income segregation between schools is due to income segregation between districts. Therefore, student assignment policies that operate within districts, moving students from one school to another, will have limited impact. Cross-district programs are therefore necessary. One potentially promising model for inter-district income integration may be magnet schools that draw higher-income students into city districts from suburban communities, as in Hartford, CT. Until neighborhood income segregation is reduced, other methods of breaking the link between neighborhood residence and school enrollment are necessary. Moreover, such policies may themselves reduce income segregation between neighborhoods, since parents take school attendance and district boundaries into account when choosing where to live. If the neighborhood-school link is weakened, segregation in both contexts may decline.

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## Film Review

# Love and Solidarity: James Lawson & Nonviolence in the Search for Workers' Rights

Tyler Barbarin

*Love and Solidarity* is a documentary chronicling the life and work of James Lawson, one of the key players in the nonviolent movement that shaped much of the Civil Rights Movement in America. The film delves into the formation of Lawson's dedication to nonviolence as a method of organizing and a way of life. This film is a critical look at the dedication to nonviolence as a conscious choice and organizing strategy that was chosen by leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. This look is important because it centralizes nonviolence as more than just a byproduct of the Civil Rights Movement and more than just a tactic of times past. It reintroduces nonviolence as a serious and tactical organizing strategy.

Born in Western Pennsylvania and raised in Ohio, Lawson shares stories of his experiences with racism, emotion and love and how they formed his commitment to nonviolence even before he developed his more complex organizing and racial justice strategies. Lawson was later introduced to Gandhi's conceptualization of nonviolence practice, a conceptualization that he later brought back to and shared with Martin Luther King Jr. and the major civil rights leaders of the time. Lawson was able to use this doctrine of nonviolence to influence not only the famous Civil Rights Movement of the

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*"Love and Solidarity: James Lawson & Nonviolence in the Search for Workers Rights," is a documentary film directed by Michael Honey and distributed by Bullfrog Films. More information is available at [www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/love/html](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/love/html).*

late 50s and 60s, but also labor rights movements in Los Angeles in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The documentary opens with a montage of civil rights era photos and videos, broken up with audio and video of Lawson discussing his commitment to love and dignity as founding prin-

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***James Lawson maintains that commitment to making the world a better place must come from a commitment to seeing every human as deserving of justice and equality.***

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ciples of his work. Then we are introduced to how Lawson found his way into the Civil Rights Movement alongside leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., as a participant, organizer and leader. Next the film provides two concrete examples of Los Angeles based labor movements that James Lawson helped shape—the Latino Workers Movement and the Janitorial Workers Movement.

The film emphasizes the need to ground ourselves and our movements in love and compassion. James Lawson maintains that commitment to making the world a better place must come from a commitment to seeing every human as deserving of justice and equality. Beyond this, his personal journey towards social justice places economic justice as the central tenet of civil rights. The film uses several case studies of movements and coalitions that Lawson had a hand in strengthening through his commitment to economic justice, human dignity and nonviolence. These case studies were in the Los Angeles area and

strove to achieve economic justice and workers rights for low-income and immigrant workers. Lawson motivated organizers to utilize nonviolent tactics to engage large audiences and aim for justice through economic compensation.

The film highlights the expertise of important civil rights actors past and present (James Lawson, Maria Elena Durazo, Kent Wong, Mario De Leon and Isle Escobar) and provides interviews and perspective on several levels of justice work. The interviewees discuss the work that Lawson was doing and how it was historically significant in the era of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They reflect on the importance of nonviolence and a reframing of social justice as the search for dignity in reshaping the labor movement in Los Angeles. The film also presents the implications of Lawson's teachings on movements like the Dream Act and immigrant workers movements. Viewers are allowed room to extrapolate the positions taken in the examples provided to future economic justice and labor movements.

The film's positioning of activists from the Civil Rights Era alongside student activists from current movements speaks both to the lasting passion for justice that Lawson himself holds, as well as the maintained place of nonviolence in the continuum of the work. It also provides prescriptions on how to increase the participation and followership of the current movements.

*Love and Solidarity* clearly articulates the applications of nonviolent action within the civil rights movements during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lawson is a believer that the method of nonviolence is the most salient and impactful in creating a more

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# Regional School Desegregation and the School-Housing Relationship

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley

Last August, about nine minutes apart, North Carolina's two premiere newspapers published editorials with a remarkably similar message. It boiled down to this: school officials in Raleigh and Charlotte, districts that once gained national recognition for path-breaking regional school desegregation plans, need to revisit and reinvigorate those efforts—even as they must expand to incorporate inclusive housing policy.

The *Raleigh News and Observer's* editorial board wrote:

In the 1970s, leaders with vision saw the moral rightness, the educational value and the economic power of a racially and economically balanced school system. They led the merger of the mostly white county school system with a city school system marked by many overwhelmingly black schools. The result was a well-funded school system in which all the county had a stake... The hour has arrived for Wake County to have a hard and honest conversation with itself. Does it want to be distinctive in the diversity and broad success of its schools? Or will it go with the tide, let segregation return and accept that some Wake schools are excellent and many are so burdened by poverty that the culture of learning devolves into a daily scramble to cope? This is not a conversation for the school board alone...it must have the help of other local elected officials in addressing the housing patterns and transportation issues that are cleav-

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Genevieve Siegel-Hawley (*gsiegelhawle@vcu.edu*) is Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University. Portions of this article are excerpted from Siegel-Hawley's new book, *When the Fences Come Down: Twenty-First Century Lessons from Metropolitan School Desegregation*.

ing the county school system into two worlds (Editorial Board, 2015).

And from Rev. John Cleghorn, in the *Charlotte Observer*:

Once a national model for school integration, Charlotte schools have regressed perhaps more than any other major city in the U.S...The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of

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**Numerous real estate practices are geared toward providing prospective buyers with racialized information about local schools.**

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Education is working on a new student assignment plan, an effort that will last well into 2016. Solutions aren't easy or obvious. They will need funding and support for high quality choices for all, inclusive housing policy and courageous, sustained civic leadership across all our county's municipalities and elected bodies (*Commentary: An Elephant Our City Needs To Talk About*, 2015).

These forceful assertions are based on growing evidence that: 1) regional, or city-suburban, school desegregation is the most meaningful and stable way to address the geographic scope of segregation; and 2) housing policy can be school policy—and vice versa. On some level, both of these arguments are intuitive. People generally understand that the lines separating one school district from another also tend to separate children along racial and economic lines, so it follows that a district covering a larger part of a region would bridge those divides. People also understand, often from personal experience, that school decisions factor into family housing choices. Nu-

merous real estate practices are geared toward providing prospective buyers with racialized information about local schools. Any recent familiarity with smartphone applications like Zillow or Trulia illustrates this relationship. Site users can easily maneuver between home information and value, school attendance boundaries, the racial and economic makeup of the assigned school and test scores—and make decisions accordingly. The human element also bolsters this information. According to a 2006 report on real estate sales from the National Fair Housing Alliance, 87 percent of testers were steered into specific neighborhoods, with agents using the racial makeup of school districts as a proxy for neighborhood demographics. Because providing direct information about the racial composition of a neighborhood is illegal, housing agents discuss school demographics or quality (which is often conflated with racial composition or test scores) with prospective buyers. Yet most of us take these two major contributors to segregation—district boundary lines and the school-housing relationship—as a given, without looking closely at what happens when law or policy helps to overcome them. One reason for our offhanded assumptions: law and policy have often worked in the opposite direction from integration, hardening district boundaries and hailing the school-housing relationship as a product of individual choices rather than as a complicated interplay between public and private actions.

In 1974, a newly conservative Supreme Court handed down *Milliken v. Bradley*, a decision that made it very difficult—though not impossible—to overcome the boundaries dividing city and suburban school systems through court-ordered desegregation remedies. Throwing out the

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careful reasoning of the lower courts, along with extensive evidence pointing toward the culpability of an array of state and local actors in fostering residential and school segregation across the Detroit metropolitan area, the Court splintered along ideological lines. A bare majority of justices agreed to shield Detroit's white suburbs from the mandatory school desegregation, and accompanying dismantling of the social order, that they ordered in the predominately Black central city.

More than 40 years later, *Milliken's* bitter limitations on the scope and meaning of school communities are still with us. The stakes are rising. Educational inequality and segregation are intensifying at the same time that racial diversity in our public schools is blossoming. Separating students of different racial and economic backgrounds is damaging for everyone. It cleaves the interests and resources of families who, by dint of our long history of racial discrimination, have wildly unequal access to political power and social capital. Communities fragment, and children in middle-class, predominately-white schools benefit from more stability and additional human and material resources than children in high-poverty, minor-

ity-segregated schools—the very children who need more, not less. This yields uneven outcomes for our rising racial majority, which damages the economic vitality of the nation's workforce.

When we *do* bring children together in schools, especially in ways that attend carefully to equity, cooperation and inclusion, powerful possibilities occur for learning writ large. Back in Charlotte, the words of James Ford, recent teacher of the year, and a Black

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***When we do bring children together in schools, especially in ways that attend carefully to equity, cooperation and inclusion, powerful possibilities occur for learning writ large.***

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graduate of an integrated arts magnet program in another state, offer a glimpse of what school integration can foster:

In [my creative performing arts high school] space, I was allowed to be me— to rap, to dance, to joke, to have fun without being seen as different by my peers. I imagine this is what integration is supposed to feel like. Today, I consider my edu-

cational environment and the relationships born from it part of my wealth. My classmates helped to shape my being, by doing nothing more than being themselves. It was a cultural exchange. I didn't have to bend or shapeshift when I was around them. Because of my schooling, there is rarely a space in which I feel out of place, even when others try desperately to put me there (Ford, 2016).

Another perspective, from a white graduate of Raleigh-Wake County's school system under the former voluntary integration plan, makes the case for why affluent families should seek out diverse schools:

I graduated among the top of my class. I got into every college I applied to and was offered several scholarships. I was more than well prepared for college, and continued to receive grants and scholarships once I was there. I exhibit my artwork and publish my writing. To top it all off, I have my dream job...To make a long story short, I think I turned out pretty good. I know for certain that as a student in integrated schools, I learned lessons much more important than any content found on a test (Meeks, 2016).

In the long shadow cast by *Milliken*, these two testimonies were made possible by advocacy, law, and policy actively geared toward allowing students from all walks of life to learn alongside one another. To think about how we might create and expand more opportunities for integrated schooling today, we need to take a closer look at the places that overcame *Milliken's* limitations.

Four southern communities with differing approaches to regional school desegregation provide a contemporary, comparative illustration of the dynamics at work when cities and suburbs join together to confront school segregation. As it happens, Charlotte is one of them. Raleigh is not—when the study took place there was so much upheaval in the desegregation plan it would have been impossible to see a clear trend. The other three places are

## **PRRAC launches "Mobility Works"**

"Mobility Works" is a non-profit technical assistance group, supported by a seed grant from the Kresge Foundation, dedicated to improving and expanding comprehensive housing mobility services in highly segregated metropolitan areas, in order to assist low-income families with federal Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) who seek to move to higher opportunity communities. Our group includes two national organizations with extensive expertise in HCV policy (PRRAC and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities) and three of the leading practitioners of housing mobility policy (the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership, the Inclusive Communities Project-Dallas, and Housing Choice Partners-Chicago). We will provide assistance and support to Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and nonprofit groups seeking to improve or expand housing mobility services in their regions, and we are also available for technical assistance services to PHAs or state or local government agencies. Contact Philip Tegeler at PRRAC for more information, [ptegeler@prrac.org](mailto:ptegeler@prrac.org).



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Louisville, Kentucky; Richmond, Virginia; and Chattanooga, Tennessee. All four are roughly similar in size and demographic makeup, with a shared history of de jure segregation. Yet all diverge along key dimensions. While all considered a regional pursuit of school desegregation, only Charlotte, Louisville and Chattanooga actually engaged with it. The Richmond area, like Detroit, came to characterize the more typical metropolitan landscape after higher courts rejected a consolidation plan, leaving the urban school division distinct from its two surrounding suburban counterparts. The other three metros represent a range of impetuses for city-suburban mergers across different time periods. In Louisville, a 1975 court-ordered merger took place for the purpose of school desegregation. In Charlotte and Chattanooga, state laws around annexation and school district governance helped promote consolidations in 1959 and 1997, respectively, with desegregation as one factor among several motivating the mergers. Likewise, school desegregation policy in the four communities unfolded, evolved, and, in the case of Charlotte and Richmond, ended, in distinct ways.

The basic story of these four metros is that efforts to eliminate the walls between city and suburban school districts, especially when they are accompanied by strong desegregation policy, bear important fruits. Regional school desegregation works by defining community broadly and spreading opportunity across it. It overcomes district boundary lines and brings together students from various corners of a region, which in turn brings together the interests and resources of many different families and stakeholders. Critically, evidence—from this study and elsewhere—indicates that the plans lead to stably desegregated school systems after a year or two, and help decouple school and housing choices in dramatic fashion. Families understand that they can move to any community across a broad expanse of the metro and still be linked to schools that are roughly

similar in demographic makeup and quality. Case in point: the Louisville area's regional approach to school desegregation was connected to far faster decreases in housing segregation between Blacks and whites than the nonconsolidated Richmond area where desegregation was limited to the central city. Even when school and housing choices remain largely entangled, as with Chattanooga's more recent city-suburban merger that occurred alongside a modest school desegregation policy, swift progress on residential and school segregation was evident.

Two of the four metros also displayed a rare—if short lived—commitment to explicitly linking school and

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***Opportunity-based housing policies and enforcement of fair housing laws offer a critical long-term path to inclusive communities and schools."***

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housing desegregation efforts. Louisville incentivized integrating housing choices by offering exemptions from the transportation required to desegregate schools. Charlotte, on the other hand, tried to ensure that public housing was distributed in a way that would foster school desegregation, rather than exacerbate segregation. While those efforts were not maintained, they offer a reminder that it is powerfully possible to coordinate school and housing policy to promote integration.

At the same time, the successful example of city-suburban desegregation in Charlotte eventually came to represent the challenges of sustaining support for the policy in a nationally hostile political and legal climate. After court-ordered desegregation was lifted, the once-friendly business community, worried that turmoil would detract from Charlotte's desirability, turned against pursuing a voluntary policy. Those actions turned out to

be shortsighted. Evidence from the years since regional school desegregation ended tells an unforgiving story of resegregation and diminished opportunity for Charlotte's schoolchildren. As underscored by the recent editorial, however, the Charlotte community recently began to revisit issues of student assignment and diversity.

In Richmond, after the higher courts rejected a much-needed metropolitan remedy for discrimination in the former capital of the Confederacy, the failure to erase the lines separating the predominantly Black urban school system from its white suburban ones accelerated an existing pattern of white and middle-class flight. Today, evidence of that earlier default on the vision of *Brown* can be seen on a much larger scale. Schools in the city of Richmond remain heavily segregated by race and class; the two overwhelmingly white suburban school systems originally slated for consolidation are coping with rapid increases in student poverty and have either reached or are close to reaching majority minority status; and Richmond's outer exurbs are experiencing significant white population growth.

Though many places around the country have taken Richmond's path, doing little or nothing to advance regional cooperation around educational equity, an opportunity to reignite such efforts now presents itself. Linking the current regional agenda, which emphasizes fair housing policies, inclusionary zoning, accessible transportation, reinvestment in closer-in communities, limits to sprawl, and revenue sharing across the metropolitan landscape, among other crucial issues, to education represents an absolutely critical way forward.

It is easy to see how existing components of the regional agenda lend themselves to supporting the goal of spreading equal educational opportunity across broadly defined communities. Opportunity-based housing policies and enforcement of fair housing laws offer a critical long-term path to inclusive communities and schools.

*(Please turn to page 10)*

Accessible regional public transportation systems would make it easier—and less expensive—for students to get to metropolitan schools. Land use policy limiting the sprawl that makes it more difficult for students to come together is just good sense. And a strong regional jobs training program can help foster social mobility for residents who have aged out of the K–12 public education system. Yet despite the obvious benefits that these policies would have for promoting equity and opportunity, a regional vision for K–12 schooling is still imperative. Public schools in our metropolitan areas reach the overwhelming majority of the next generation of Americans. Strong systems of public education prepare students for tomorrow’s economy and offer an important path to greater mobility. Weak systems of education represent dead ends and stunted growth.

In many instances, early efforts in Charlotte and Louisville notwithstanding, school desegregation policy bore the full weight of responsibility for interrupting underlying patterns of residential isolation. Given the lack of examples, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend the power of a joint school and housing desegregation strategy. Yet there are a number of well-researched policies in both spheres that can promote such a strategy. Lessons from Charlotte and Louisville, along with a small handful of other places, suggest that voluntary school integration plans should offer transportation exemptions for families making integrative moves, in addition to providing exceptions for students living in stable, diverse communities. These school plans would require an awareness of underlying demographic trends and be developed in collaboration with housing officials.

Desegregative school policies should be accompanied by desegregative housing policies. On the housing side, subsidized efforts to provide housing for low-income families should be guided by school considerations. Scattered site housing propos-

als and planning for new mixed-income communities must prioritize proximity to high-opportunity schools that offer a realistic path to higher education. Likewise, Section 8 housing choice vouchers and the Low Income Housing Tax Credits should be disbursed to promote affordable housing in high-opportunity areas—attached to high-opportunity schools—throughout a region. Such actions would represent a marked departure from the segregation these low-income housing

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***San Francisco aside, very few examples of sustained coordination between school and housing officials exist, making it is difficult to know how to proceed.***

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subsidies have traditionally reinforced. All new developments in metropolitan areas also should be required to provide a certain percentage of affordable housing to low-income families.

Within metropolitan communities, there is a basic need for expertise in the areas of housing and schools to flow across districts and agencies. Local housing programs develop and shift—as do student assignment plans and building and rezoning decisions—with little knowledge or discussion about the two related processes within the different sectors. And community planning and development often occurs without input from school systems that need to consider how resulting changes might impact school capacity. Local governments should position and empower public officials to bridge these gaps. These officials should convene regular, data-driven meetings between regional school and housing stakeholders with an eye toward creating and implementing joint plans for growth, development, and revitalization. In San Francisco, for example, former mayor Gavin Newsom created a special advisor in charge of education and families. She sat on the school board and helped coordinate commu-

nication between school and housing officials, keeping them abreast of new housing developments that would present opportunities to create more successful and diverse schools.

San Francisco aside, very few examples of sustained coordination between school and housing officials exist, making it is difficult to know how to proceed. A few more steps in this direction, in a few key places, could help build our knowledge base and offer models for the future.

Such policy ideas are increasingly gaining federal support. Since the publication of those two North Carolina editorials, we have seen a push for cross-agency collaboration across education, housing and transportation diversity and opportunity issues. In June 2015, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Transportation (DOT) partnered to host a listening session for leaders to hear about the benefits of diversity and various ways to promote it. The same day, the three departments issued a “Dear Colleague” letter, nonbinding but representative of the Obama Administration’s opinion, on the importance of working together to tackle unequal access to opportunity across metropolitan areas. The departments specifically identified the community engagement and planning process under the Affirmatively Further Fair Housing rule (AFFH rule) as an avenue to coordinate across the spheres of housing, education and transportation to promote mobility and opportunity.

The largely symbolic but nevertheless significant joint actions came on the heels of individual federal agency efforts to call attention to desegregation. In addition to the AFFH rule last summer, HUD issued a detailed report in May 2015 describing the link between neighborhoods of opportunity and schools of opportunity—and outlining numerous possibilities for strengthening access to high opportunity schools through subsidized housing programs. Meanwhile, the Department of Education has asked applicants for its Investing in Innovation grants to focus squarely on diversity,

even as it has requested more funding for magnet schools, a longstanding desegregation strategy, in the 2017 budget. With its Stronger Together proposal, the Obama Administration also requested \$120 million in 2017 funding for a new planning and implementation grant focused on promoting voluntary school integration efforts—which can be regional in scope. The funding has since been authorized through a bill introduced by Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH). All of this has been accompanied by the increased use of the bully pulpit to underscore how valuable integration is for children. The 2016 election will be pivotal in terms of whether or not we continue this incredibly important, long-needed momentum—in the executive and legislative branches, as well as in the judicial branch.

Federal attention to diversity and opportunity obviously should flow down to state, regional and local levels. Advocates need to be on the lookout for upcoming policy decisions involving the structures that contribute to educational and societal inequality.

(SEGREGATION: Continued from page 5)

On July 12, 2016, Senator Chris Murphy and Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge introduced the Stronger Together School Diversity Act of 2016 to promote economic diversity in schools, building on President Obama's FY 2017 Stronger Together budget proposal. This legislation authorizes \$120 million in funding to support districts as they develop and expand strategies to increase diversity, particularly socioeconomic diversity, in schools. This bill may lead to promising programs that can be scaled up across communities.

These are all fiercely contested policy arenas with many competing proposals and stakeholders. Before we decide what should be done, we need to agree that something should be done at all. High-income parents should not be blamed for taking advantage of the opportunities available to them and

Conversations about where new schools are built or where older buildings are closed, how school boundaries are drawn and which communities they include or exclude, various ways in which students are assigned to schools and classrooms, changes to or expansion of school accountability or choice policies, where to build and how to distribute low-income housing throughout a region, and how to zone land (e.g., multifamily housing units versus single-family housing units) in existing and developing communities are all central to creating or blocking opportunity. All such decisions should be closely monitored for their impact

on racial and economic stratification.

For too long, we have ignored the deeply rooted and complex structures and systems that lock unequal educational opportunity in place. The hopeful turn toward both dialogue and initial action at the local and national levels is based in decades of research documenting the harms of segregation and the benefits of integration—as well as the most effective ways of producing stable, comprehensive integration. We must focus squarely on growing these budding conversations and efforts and support communities who commit to expanding access to high opportunity, diverse schools. □

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their children, but we need to acknowledge the inequalities that arise when not everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Some may see these inequalities as a natural or inevitable outcome of some combination of meritocracy, capitalism, and individual responsibility. But a core tenet of American society, and the American education system in par-

ticular, is equal opportunity: where you're born and who your parents are should not determine where you end up. Study after study shows that this American Dream is seriously endangered, if it ever existed at all. Until we start thinking about providing opportunities for all children, not just our own, social inequality in America will remain a costly problem. □

### New on PRRAC's website

Incorporating the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing obligation into EPA's 2020 Environmental Justice Action Agenda (July 2016)

Testimony to House Education Committee on school integration goals (July 12, 2016)

"Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing: A Platform for Public Health Advocates" (June 2016)

NCSd comments on ESSA State Plan and Accountability proposed regulations (August 2016)



(MEMPHIS: Continued from page 2)

the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company and International Harvester eliminated some of the best paying, unionized jobs available to Black as well as white workers. Deindustrialization proved particularly painful for the Black working class. Just as Black workers gained a foothold in the middle class through unionized employment and the civil rights revolution, manufacturing jobs slipped away due to automation and the movement of industries beyond southern borders and overseas (Newmann, 2016; Honey, 1999).

Throughout the 1960s and for a long time afterwards, African Americans with significant support from whites made progress in dismantling the barriers of formal and informal racial segregation, and yet racial-economic disparities remained. The region spent the end of the twentieth century recovering from deindustrialization. White collar and pink color jobs replaced blue collar jobs, with career ladders based on education or certification rather than seniority. Numerous jobs opened in logistics and transportation, providing new sources of Black employment. But these jobs remained mostly non-union, often on-demand (with neither full- nor part-

time employments), and lacked comprehensive benefit packages. Local public sector unions organized after Dr. King's assassination, including sanitation, police, and fire fighters, remained the bulwark of the unionized economy. But unionization among production and most other workers largely disappeared in the Memphis

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**The percentage of home owners in the Black community fell – largely due to the impact of the Great Recession—from 53.5% to 50.4%.**

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economy.

Some held to the illusion that racial barriers of the past had also disappeared. Black workers seemed to be in every sector of the Memphis economy. African Americans enjoyed access to public accommodations, education, and public offices. Black politicians came to dominate the city, the regional governments and, for a time, the main Congressional seat. African Americans came to lead the police department and made up perhaps as much as half of the police force, undercutting a long history of almost unbelievable police violence.

Economic and political conditions

in the early twenty-first century seemed poised to substantially improve the Memphis economy. By the end of 2007, 655,000 jobs existed in the Memphis regional economy with only 631,000 workers vying for those jobs; officially, only 5.5% of the workforce was unemployed. Although manufacturing now made up less than 10% of jobs, expanding employment in trade and transportation, education and health care, made up for most of the job losses in older sectors. While wages and benefits may not have matched those once offered in unionized manufacturing sectors, increasingly women and people of color had access to growth segments of the economy.

### **The Great Recession and the Post-Segregation, Post-factory Economy**

Then the Great Recession hit in 2008 and pulled back the curtain in Memphis, just as Dorothy had at the Emerald City. Begun as a bursting real estate bubble, the downward spiral first captured the local finance sector and then began working its way through the other sectors. The number of jobs in Memphis shrank quickly to 590,000 in 2010. Trade and transportation, the core of the regional economy, shed thousands of jobs. Education and health services, largely supported through government expenditures, became stagnant. In 2009, regional unemployment hit double digits, and remained at 9.7% at the end of 2010.

The collapse of home ownership at the root of the recession proved especially disastrous. The percentage of home owners in the Black community fell—Largely due to the impact of the Great Recession—from 53.5% to 50.4%, after Black homeownership had reached a peak of 54.2% in 2004. Wells Fargo bank (which settled a Memphis housing discrimination case for its sub-prime mortgage practices for \$400 million in 2012) and others had loaned money to people who clearly could not afford to pay their mortgages. Banks and finance companies made millions by securitizing

### **Thanks for your contributions to PRRAC!**

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Thank you to everyone who responded so generously to our mid-year funding request to support PRRAC's lobbying campaign for the "Stronger Together School Diversity Act of 2016." We are still a few thousand dollars short of meeting our goal, so if you haven't yet contributed, please consider visiting the "donate" page on our website.

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those unviable loans to global financial institutions. In the nearby suburb of Frayser, boarded up homes, shuttered churches and schools, rising crime rates, and a sense of hopelessness replaced a once optimistic working-class environment in which homes had provided a family's greatest economic asset (Honey, 2016).

The Black community has not recovered from the housing or the jobs crisis. The American Housing Surveys of 1996, 2004 and 2011 show that the number of Black households rose from 153,400 in 1996 to 226,400 in 2011, increasing the overall Black household percentage in the eight-county Memphis MSA from 38.2% to 47.1%. But African Americans had smaller houses (in square feet) than the community as a whole, and dramatically lower household incomes: a mere 62.2% in 2011 of the community average. And while Black homeowners saw the current value of their homes rise from \$53,861 in 1996 to \$78,826 in 2004 to \$80,000 in 2011, their relative conditions of home ownership had not improved. Relative to the purchase price, homeowners' equity had fallen from 133% to 115%, and Black homeowners' home values remained substantially less than the overall median house value in Memphis. Black household income, for renters and owners, rose from \$22,525 in 1996 to \$29,554 in 2004, but fell to \$24,000 in 2011.

In an era in which home ownership has dropped to its lowest level since 1965, and in which racism still strongly influences who banks will lend to, African Americans in Memphis did not make significant progress in accumulating the primary source of wealth for most families—a house—over the 1996-2011 15-year period (US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1996, 2004, 2011).

Economic recovery also proved slow and weak in terms of jobs. By the end of the 2015, 18,000 fewer jobs existed in Memphis than in 2007. Although the number of Memphians working or looking for work had fallen to 622,000, now fewer jobs than workers looking for them existed.

Official unemployment had fallen to 6.1%, still higher than before the Great Recession, and significant numbers of uncounted workers had dropped out of the job market. Although employment in education and health services had expanded significantly, trade and transportation had not recovered to pre-recession levels. Manufacturing provided a mere 6.8% of the regional jobs (*The Labor Market Report*).

The Great Recession had an especially devastating impact on African Americans in the central city and in the region; upward movement to equality for Black people stopped in

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### **Black workers remained dramatically underrepresented in supervisory jobs.**

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its tracks. As the job base shrank, Black workers often found themselves unemployed without any hope of future employment, with official unemployment levels stubbornly at twice the official unemployment rates. Full-time employment proved difficult to find, as many employers, particularly in trade and transportation, offered only part-time or on-demand employment. Benefits, already weak before the recession, became a luxury.

The mantra of almost every city mayor in the United States today is jobs, jobs, jobs. For that reason, many cities and states have instituted vast “subsidies” and “tax deferrals” for new employers who transfer offices or plants. Memphis is no exception. Known for its extensive use of tax incentives, the City has still failed to deliver sufficient job growth, while subsidies to business partially cripple its tax base. Hopes for economic development are behind efforts to “improve” educational quality in the region so that workers will be “ready” for new jobs, and behind the various advertising campaigns to get the city perceived as a creative, dynamic, millennial friendly place. But in Memphis, as in most cities, long-term trends and business cycles overwhelm these

efforts for short term gain.

The Great Recession brought economic growth to a grinding halt. Since the bottom of the recession in 2009, jobs have come back only very slowly. And unemployment has been reduced not only by new jobs but also by the loss of many workers from labor force participation altogether. The supply of workers is now greater than the supply of jobs, so the bargaining power of workers, always weak, has been further sapped. But more importantly, new jobs are not the real answer to the problems that face a diverse labor force like Memphis. Over the years, Memphis has, relative to its population, had a lot of jobs, but many were really not worth having.

### **What Kind of Jobs, and for Whom?**

Beyond jobs, there is the issue of the kinds of jobs that are created. For example, Memphis has seen rapid growth, like many other cities, in medical services. It is a sector that actually escaped the downward pull on jobs during the recession. But medical services tend to be dominated by jobs without internal career ladders (that is, you must leave the job, get training and gain certification before advancement can occur). In transportation and warehousing, part-time and on-demand employment often prevails over normal 40-hour jobs. And almost all new jobs shift the burden of retirement savings to the employee, so that benefits are eroded. While advertising emphasizes the need for highly educated or trained creatives, the actual new jobs are often employments that only require brief on-the-job training sessions. These issues affect all workers, but Black workers especially.

Finally, who gets what jobs is as important as the number of new jobs and the kinds of jobs. While the racial distribution of employment in Memphis has changed dramatically since the 1960s, the earning potential in the Memphis economy has stagnated, like the total growth of jobs, since the end

*(Please turn to page 14)*

(MEMPHIS: Continued from page 13)

of the recession. For example, EEO-1 data for 2007 and 2014 indicated that total private sector jobs fell over the recession and into its recovery. Almost half (49.3% in 2014) of all private sector jobs were held by Black workers. While Black employment in managerial jobs rose slightly from 21.4% to 23.2%, Black workers remained dramatically underrepresented in supervisory jobs. The same is true for professional and technical type occupations. African Americans are proportionally represented in sales and clerical occupations (49.6% in 2014), but underrepresented in craft jobs (34.8% in 2014). By contrast the number of operative, laborer and service jobs fell between 2007 and 2014, but Black worker dominance of these occupations rose fairly significantly.

As the distribution of jobs in the total economy and for Black workers indicates, there is a dominance of low-paying jobs in the Memphis economy and Black workers tend to be crowded into those occupations. Managerial jobs in Memphis (in 2014) paid, on average, \$93,760 per year. Business/

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**Some 50 years later, King would support today's cries for "\$15 and a union" and our larger demands to restructure the American economy on behalf of the 99 percent.**

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Finance jobs paid \$62,870 and engineering jobs paid \$73,400 per year. Those three job categories make up less

than 10% of all jobs in Memphis. Production jobs paid \$34,530 per year. And clerical workers in Memphis earn \$33,980 per year while materials movers (often in warehouses) earn \$32,240 per year. And these three lower-paying occupational groups represent 37% of all jobs in Memphis (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

And so the experience of the Great Recession reflects the contradiction of the last 50 years. The American economy seems to have successfully integrated consumption: racial stereotypes no longer dominate the advertising and social media of American society, and public accommodations are available to all. But the ability to maintain the myths of television advertising are laid bare by the underlying income story. And the tale of Memphis is indicative of the plight of minorities and the poor in general. As former Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton put it, the economic overlays of class and race now constitute the greatest obstacle to completing the legacy of the civil rights revolution (Honey and Wharton, 2016).

The Great Recession halted forward progress in income growth and wealth accumulation in the Memphis Black community. It also revealed that economic progress had been far slower than many had thought. Conditions today hark back to Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking in Memphis on March 18, 1968:

You are reminding, not only Memphis, but you are reminding the nation that it is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive starvation wages... Now the problem is not only unemployment. Do you know that most of the people in our country are working every day? (applause) And they are making wages so low that they cannot begin to function in the mainstream of the economic life of our nation.

Speaking at Mason Temple to an overflowing audience of hundreds of Black men on strike and thousands of people supporting them, Dr. King declared, "You are going beyond purely civil rights to questions of human

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rights.” King came to Memphis as part of his Poor People’s Campaign, seeking to bring together a mass coalition of the poor, including African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and poor whites. Congress and the nation, he said, should guarantee a basic standard of living—decent housing, health care, education, and meaningful employment—for all (King, 1968). King called on the city government to recognize Local 1733 of AFSCME and agree to check off union dues from the workers’ pay checks, something Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb vowed he would never do. The union victory that followed King’s death helped to open up a new chapter in the city’s labor history, but workers and African-American workers have also suffered defeats that undermine the legacy of the Black freedom struggle. Nationally, Republican Governors like Scott Walker in Wisconsin have drastically rolled back the public employee collective bargaining rights that workers won in Memphis in 1968.

King in Memphis linked together equal access to well paying jobs, decent housing, education, health care, and incomes, declaring, “Now our struggle is for genuine equality, which means economic equality.” King called his campaign for economic justice “phase two” of the freedom struggle. Some 50 years later, King

## PRRAC Update

- **PRRAC Board transition:** We are excited to announce that PRRAC Board member **Olati Johnson** has accepted the Board’s nomination to become PRRAC’s new Board Chair, effective July 1. Olati is the Jerome B. Sherman Professor of Law at Columbia Law School, specializing in civil procedure, anti-discrimination law, and public interest practice. She is also an alumna of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Senate Judiciary Committee. Olati replaces our wonderful, longtime Board Chair **Jack Boger**, Professor and former Dean at UNC Law School, who has guided PRRAC with great humor, wisdom, and judgment over the past decade-plus. Jack will remain on the PRRAC board, we hope for many years to come.

would support today’s cries for “\$15 and a union” and our larger demands to restructure the American economy on behalf of the 99%. The struggle for labor rights and decent employment, as King insisted in Memphis in 1968,

today remains central to improving the lot of the multi-racial working poor and working class and to continuing the civil rights revolution in the Deep South and across the United States. □

(*SOLIDARITY: Cont. from p. 6*)

just society. In its push for nonviolence, the film leaves little space for discussion of alternative or concurrent methods of organizing and political strategy. In the beginning, Lawson discusses how he saw a need for nonviolence, because he believed the actions of pre-civil rights activists insufficient to effect long lasting change.

Fifty years after some of the most significant movements utilizing non-violence as a central strategic theme, long lasting change in some ways has still evaded realization in many areas of society. Re-examining non-violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how it would be defined and utilized today could have added a further platform for discussion and action. □

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