

## ***Brown at 70 and Milliken at 50***

### **Introduction**

As we approach the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* and 50th anniversary of *Milliken v. Bradley*, what progress has been made, where have we fallen short or gotten stuck, and what is required to truly fulfill the promise of integration and educational equity? This P&R special issue brings together a variety of perspectives—lawyers, researchers, advocates, educators, parents, and students—to reflect on both the fulfilled and unfulfilled promise of *Brown* and offer ideas to help chart a path forward for making truly equitable and integrated schools a reality. Each piece explores a little-known or underemphasized aspect of *Brown* or *Milliken*, ultimately providing insights and guidance about how to strengthen the modern movement for school integration.

### **For All of Our Children: Justice Thurgood Marshall's Faith in Integration Is Still Right**

Rachel D. Godsil, Linda R. Tropp, and  
Kim Forde-Mazrui

*We deal here with the right of all of our children, whatever their race, to an equal start in life and to an equal opportunity to reach their full potential as citizens.*

—Justice Thurgood Marshall, dissenting, *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), p.783.

### **Introduction**

Justice Thurgood Marshall was convinced that, for all children to be “our” children, it would require people to engage meaningfully across racial lines and other lines of difference. In his dissent in *Milliken v. Bradley*, he lamented:

Those children who have been denied that right in the past deserve better than to see fences thrown up to deny them that right in the future. Our Nation, I fear, will be ill-served by the Court's refusal to remedy separate and unequal education, for unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together. (*Milliken*, 1974, p.783)

The vision of our children—where all children in this country would have the freedom to thrive and reach their

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### ***Brown v. Board of Education: The Soul of Our Multiracial Democracy***

Jin Hee Lee, Sarah Seo, and Hamida Labi

Seven decades have passed since the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, that Black people must be treated as equal persons deserving of the full rights of citizenship under the law. A crowning achievement for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), *Brown* was the culmination of legal acumen and political activism working together to challenge the hypocrisy of a democracy resting upon a racial hierarchy. *Brown* is widely celebrated as an illustrious example of the strength of our constitutional principles—and rightly so. The United States has made incredible strides towards racial equality in the past 70 years, more recently witnessing the election of the first Black, first Asian American, and first woman Vice President and the appointment of the first Black woman to the Supreme Court. But it would be a grave mistake to perceive *Brown* as the “end,” rather than the “means,” of our national pursuit of racial equality. For LDF, *Brown* merely laid the foundation for future legal battles to secure the full citizenship and equality of Black Americans in their everyday lives. These battles continue to the present day as we endeavor to fully realize the vision of equality in *Brown* that was—and remains—the soul of our multiracial democracy.

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potential regardless of racial background—still feels far away in 2024, seventy years after *Brown* and fifty years after *Milliken*.

Our goal in this commentary is to share research from the social sciences and legal scholarship that supports Justice Marshall's conviction that genuine cross-group engagement is a critical step for people across race (and other group-based identities) to hold each other in a shared circle of concern and do the work that will create equal opportunities for all to reach their full potential. We describe the mixed legacy of school integration efforts after *Brown* to achieve the cross-racial community that Marshall envisioned. We also explain and endorse Michelle Adams' conception of "radical integration" as a goal for fulfilling Marshall's aspiration. Finally, we highlight empirical research supporting the notion that integrating schools, under conditions of inclusion, cooperation, and respect, would facilitate the kinds of cross-racial understandings and relationships to which Marshall aspired.

## I. *Brown's* Mixed Legacy and Adams' Vision of "Radical Integration"

We are mindful that our support for integration is contested. Indeed, legal scholarship focusing on interracial

contact has been fraught in light of the complex trajectory of *Brown* and its implementation. Most powerfully and iconically argued by Derrick Bell (1976) beginning in the mid-1970s, shortly after *Milliken*, the question of whether educational integration genuinely serves the interests of students of color continues to be explored (e.g., Huq, 2021; Johnson, 1993). Relatedly, the harms of gentrification have drawn attention to the issue of whether residential integration benefits people of color or whether, instead, communities of color are better served by equitable—rather than integrated—access to resources and by in-group solidarity (e.g., Johnson, 2019).

Michelle Adams (2006) named the inadequacy and limitations associated with the traditional integration approach while setting forth an alternative: radical integration. She argues that the original challenges to segregation were focused on the eradication of white supremacy and that the goal of integration without that structural underpinning is deeply inadequate. The inadequacy is manifested in how integration came to be interpreted: "[i]ntegration today is synonymous with 'assimilation,'" the process whereby "a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture." (Adams, 2006, p. 264). When integra-

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# Reclaiming *Brown's* Remedial Principle

Olatunde Johnson

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*Brown* anniversaries have a familiar cadence. We celebrate *Brown v. Board of Education*—the stunning work of lawyers to undo the legality of “separate but equal” and advance desegregation in education and public life—and yet we also lament how much work remains to achieve meaningful equality in schools and beyond. *Brown* often seems to exist more in principle than in reality; the actual remedies to advance integration are elusive.

And this 70th anniversary is particularly portentous as we are reminded by the Supreme Court how the principle underlying *Brown* is in fact deeply contested. The Supreme Court’s 2023 opinion in *SFFA v. Harvard/UNC* invokes *Brown* more than eighty times. But the majority, concurrences, and dissents take sharply different views on the meaning of the decision and its interpretation of the Equal Protection Clause. Is *Brown* centrally about ridding the law of racial classifications and promoting “color-blindness” as the majority and concurrences suggest? Or does *Brown*, as the dissents urge, stand for equal citizenship and substantively equal educational opportunities—goals that might require race-conscious steps to address inequalities that result from past and ongoing discrimination and exclusion? With the majority view prevailing (for now), racial justice advocates may wonder, what in *Brown* is still worth embracing? Considered together with the 2007 decision in *Parents Involved*, *Brown* risks becoming an obstacle to achieving educational equity.

What does *Brown's* complex legacy suggest for areas outside of education? On this 70th anniversary of *Brown*, the *Poverty & Race* editors asked me to consider the meaning of *Brown* for housing in particular. *SFFA* reminds us that the meaning of *Brown* is profoundly shaped by the Supreme Court doctrine and, in that doctrine, the role of the State in maintaining housing segregation is either invisible or invoked to subvert any meaningful integration remedy.

It was not always so. The Court’s 1971 decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County* was perhaps the high point of the Court’s willingness to order far-reaching and meaningful remedies for school segregation that violated the Equal Protection Clause. It held that courts could take actions, such as redrawing school boundaries and other measures to eliminate segregation “root and branch” (consistent with the 1968 *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* ruling), to promote integration. The Court allowed a metropolitan remedy that extended beyond local borders created by residential segregation. *Swann* involved the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district, a single, large county system,

making *Swann* the Court’s “first and only metropolitan-wide desegregation decision” (Orfield, 2015). In striking down the county’s “freedom of choice” plan and reliance on neighborhood assignments, the Court recognized the connections between housing and school segregation.

But by the 1980s and 1990s, the Supreme Court began to retreat on implementing meaningful school desegregation remedies, and it did so by ignoring the role of state actors in creating segregated living patterns, as well as the symbiotic relationship between schools and housing.

*Milliken*, whose 50th anniversary we also celebrate

this year, is perhaps the apotheosis of the Court’s erasure of the relationship between school and housing segregation, and its narrow view of the Equal Protection right at stake and a court’s remedial power. When the Court refused to allow an interdistrict remedy, it took local government boundaries as sacrosanct and refused to acknowledge the complicity of government at every level in creating patterns of segregation. A stunning illustration of the Court’s conception of residential segregation as having no genesis in state action necessary for finding an Equal Protection violation was Justice Stewart’s concurrence in *Milliken*, in which he stated that the causes of housing segregation are “unknown and unknowable.” If the Court had decided *Milliken v. Bradley* differently, the connections between housing and school segregation would have been made visible. Interdistrict, urban-suburban remedies might have produced meaningful and durable educational integration.

The *Gautreaux* litigation perhaps stands as a more positive counterpoint to *Milliken*. Brought in Chicago in 1967, *Gautreaux v. Hills* was the first major public housing desegregation case, and is sometimes referred to as “the *Brown v. Board* of housing.” After a lower court found federal, state, and local governments complicit in creating racially segregated housing, the courts ordered the “disestablishment” of segregated housing, authorizing site selection and voucher remedies in lower-poverty suburbs following the remedial imperative of *Swann*. And when the case arrived at the Supreme Court, the Court sustained this remedy that crossed the boundaries between cities and suburbs, in effect allowing the metropolitan desegregation remedy that had been elusive in *Milliken*. The role of the federal government as defendant, which has funding and programmatic authority over housing in the metropolitan region not necessarily dictated by existing local government, provided an opening for both liability and remedy that extended beyond local government boundaries.

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## The Road to *Brown*

The first half of the twentieth century continued the centuries-long dehumanization of Black people in the United States, as they were relegated to a racial hierarchy that deemed them inferior in all aspects of their lives. Within this legal and social reality, Black civil rights leaders nevertheless had the audacity to not only envision a different reality, but also to map out a plan to make that reality come into fruition. By the late 1920s, then-General Secretary of the NAACP James Weldon Johnson received support from a philanthropic organization called the Garland Fund to create a special committee, which recommended a “large-scale, wide-spread, dramatic campaign to give the Southern Negro his constitutional rights, his political and civil equality, and therewith a self-consciousness and self-respect which would inevitably tend to effect a revolution in the economic life of the country” (Kluger, 2004, p.132). In 1931, the NAACP commissioned attorney Nathan Margold to expand on this recommendation and produce a detailed blueprint of the proposed legal campaign. The resulting “Margold Report” proposed a strategy to desegregate public schools in the South by challenging the constitutionality of segregation under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment due to the fundamentally unequal educational opportunities afforded to Black students (Kluger, 2004).

By 1935, Charles Hamilton Houston—a mentor to a generation of Black lawyers, including LDF’s founder and the first Black Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall—left his position as Dean of Howard Law School to become the first special counsel for the NAACP. In this role, Houston developed a variation of the Margold Report that laid the framework for the ultimate strategy behind *Brown*. Due to the Supreme Court’s embrace of the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), Houston knew that the attack on state-sanctioned segregation had to begin where educational facilities were neither separate nor equal, but non-existent (Kluger, 2004). At that time, there were only two graduate or professional schools for Black students in the entire segregated South—Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C., and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN. Thus, under *Plessy*’s logic, states with *de jure* segregation were constitutionally required to build and maintain “separate” and “equal” public graduate schools for Black students or admit Black applicants to existing, segregated public institutions. The NAACP’s campaign to desegregate public graduate schools could then expand to desegregate public undergraduate colleges and universities and public K-12 schools throughout the Jim Crow South.

Thurgood Marshall was Houston’s student and mentee at Howard Law School, and faithfully implemented Houston’s legal strategy at the NAACP. Their first collaboration was *Murray v. Pearson*, in which the Maryland Court of Appeals ordered the University of Maryland Law School to admit Black students in 1936—Marshall’s first major civil rights victory in his storied career. Four years later, in 1940, Marshall founded LDF, a non-profit legal organization—separate from the NAACP—that had the singular mission of securing racial equality for Black Americans through legal advocacy. By 1950, LDF won two landmark decisions before the Supreme Court, *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1950), which held that the Fourteenth Amendment required the admission of Black students into public graduate schools in a non-segregated setting due to the absence of any separate, segregated educational facilities for Black students that were equal.

The legal victories before the Supreme Court convinced Marshall that it was time for the Court to confront, head on, the constitutionality of segregation and the legal soundness of the *Plessy* decision. At the NAACP’s conference in 1950, the

NAACP Board of Directors approved and adopted, as official organizational policy, Marshall’s proposed resolution that all future education cases would be “aimed at obtaining education on a non-segregated basis and that no relief other than that will be acceptable” (Kluger,

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2004, p.293). The strategic focus on public school segregation tied into LDF’s larger goal of vindicating the “intended effect of the Fourteenth Amendment—which was to give Negroes full citizenship rights” (Library of Congress, 1952). This view of the Fourteenth Amendment—with its inherent connection between equality and full citizenship—had profound ramifications that not only influenced the *Brown* decision, but also illuminated the demands of a true multiracial democracy. At the heart of “equal protection” is the recognition of Black people as full persons, entitled to the same dreams and opportunities, as well as the same rights associated with equal participation in our American democracy.

In 1954, a unanimous Supreme Court declared in *Brown v. Board of Education* that “separate but equal” *de jure* segregation of public educational facilities is “inherently unequal” in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Importantly, the Court recognized the vital role of public education in the development of citizenship within our multiracial democracy. According to the *Brown* Court, “education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments” and, as “the very

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Source: Thurgood Marshall met with parents of Black students from Hillburn, New York in 1943 to plan a school desegregation campaign. In the postwar era, the NAACP supported school desegregation efforts throughout the North. Visual Materials from the NAACP Records. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

## How *Brown v. Board of Education* Affected Black Teachers: A New Perspective

Zoë Burkholder

Speaking to a packed audience in Montclair, New Jersey in 1957, director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund Thurgood Marshall asked, “Can you name two counties in New Jersey where there is a mixed faculty and student body in every public school?” As lead counsel for *Brown v. Board of Education*, Marshall was certain of the answer: no. There was not a single community that could boast a fully integrated system with racially mixed students and faculty in every school—even in the supposedly liberal North. “The North,” Marshall continued, “cannot afford to look down on the South and the South cannot afford segregation” (Leader Cites Race Problems, 1957, p. 41).

While the *Brown* ruling represented a monumental victory, Marshall knew the struggle for equal and fully inte-

grated public schools had only just begun. He acknowledged that the struggle against school segregation was a national problem. For Marshall, meaningful school desegregation meant Black students and teachers in every school nationwide, setting a bar for educational equality we are still fighting to secure today.

This essay builds on two of Marshall’s goals for meaningful school desegregation: school desegregation outside of the South and the challenge of Black teacher representation. Thanks to a wealth of new scholarship, we know that in the two decades after *Brown* (1954-1974), more than 38,000 Black teachers in the South and border states lost their jobs due to the closing of previously all Black schools, new testing and certification requirements, firing and non-rehiring of

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*Gautreaux* provided the model for dozens of important public housing desegregation cases. It also ushered in what is known as the *Gautreaux* remedy—housing vouchers that can be used in a metropolitan area for desegregation—a mobility model so crucial in housing policy today. Unfortunately, the “disestablishment” remedy was not fully successful beyond vouchers in these cases, so very little scattered-site housing was built, relative to what was needed or even ordered by lower courts. This is in part because housing takes a long time to build and is often met with vigorous community resistance at every turn.

This is the mixed constitutional and litigation legacy of *Brown* in education and in housing: contestation about the scope of the Equal Protection right—certainly—and also insufficient, limited enforcement of the integration remedy. In this context, if we are to celebrate *Brown*, we must reclaim the equal citizenship principle of *Brown*, and also elevate the remedial principle that is

necessary to vindicate the right, which has never been fully embraced in American public law. If *Brown* will mean anything, it is the glimmers of possibility that we see in *Gautreaux* and *Swann*: the notion that the State must play an affirmative role in undoing past racial harm and in producing the conditions of equal citizenship and inclusion in the distribution of important social goods.

Prior to *SFFA*, it would have been tempting to conclude that, this notion of *Brown*—inconsistently applied by the judiciary—would be realized most effectively through the work of policy advocates and social justice movements outside of courts. This work entails programs and policies to address residential segregation, interrupt the links between housing and school segregation, and invest in high-poverty neighborhoods of color and the people that live within them. However, it is not possible for racial justice advocates to do this work within communities without some degree of attention to the federal judicial sphere and how *Brown* is increasingly deployed within that sphere. The version of *Brown* offered in the *SFFA* decision threatens the democratic space in which advocates are working to address the racialized geography of opportunity. To make it plain: those opposing affirmative action are bringing equal protection challenges to a broad range of programs that seek to remedy racial inequality in housing, lending, environment, schools, employment, and contracts. These include programs that explicitly use race as a factor as well as those that are formally race-neutral but are motivated by the desire to address racial inequality. These

challenges imperil efforts to provide reparations to Black residents excluded from buying or renting housing (Simone, 2021), race-conscious remedies for Black land loss, place-based environmental justice remedies, and efforts to provide students in high-poverty neighborhoods the opportunity to attend well-resourced public high schools (Starr, 2024).

Despite the reality of the current Supreme Court majority, this hollowing out of *Brown* and the abandonment of racial remedy should not go unchallenged by those seeking to advance racial justice. Indeed, housing should be a part of the doctrinal strategy to counter the narrative of state inno-

cence that undergirds the Supreme Court's equal protection law and distorts the meaning of *Brown*. The history of housing segregation provides a crucial throughline between 19th century slavery abolition and the residential segregation that became cemented in state, federal, and local programs by the mid-20th century. Residential segregation is also a crucial linchpin for understanding

contemporary racial inequality and the persistence of educational, mobility, and wealth gaps—even in the absence of explicit racial classifications. Grappling with this history and contemporary reality, thus might expose and even reshape our jurisprudence in the years to come.

And while I am urging renewed attention to courts, work outside of courts will need to continue to be at the center of racial justice work. Racial justice advocates and those most affected by housing and educational inequality can partner with lawyers in constructing the strategies to reclaim *Brown* with the strategies that operate through litigation, as well as through policy and movement work. While the political and legal climate seems daunting, this is a project that demands our creativity and urgent attention. ■

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## Censored, Erased, and Whitewashed: Jim Crow Education in the Twenty-First Century

Elizabeth Gillespie McRae

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In January 2021, a presidential-commissioned study on the teaching of U.S. History titled “The 1776 Report” condemned the teaching of so-called critical race theory, identity politics, an emphasis on political oppression, and a tendency to look at “groups” rather than exceptional individuals. Given that Donald Trump left office that same month, the report had no executive enforcement. And yet, in its aftermath, the United States witnessed an escalation of censorship in public schools and libraries. From 2021 through 2023, multiple news outlets reported that 44 states heard legislative proposals that would have restricted how Black history, racism and white supremacy, violence, sexuality, and social movements could be taught; and 18 of the 44 states passed laws censoring curriculum that dealt with race and sex (Giles, 2023).

In 2022, Florida captured the headlines with the passage of the Individual Freedom Act (known as the Stop WOKE Act), which banned critical race theory in the state’s schools and employment training (Samuels, et al, 2023). A Florida school district then contemplated banning Disney’s 1998 film about Ruby Bridges because it “taught racial hatred” (Wong, 2023). Moms for Liberty, founded in 2021, expanded both its chapters, its advocacy for “parental rights,” and its censorship of books (Butler, 2022). As a new Advanced Placement (AP) course in African American history worked through the pilot stage, the Florida state government again intervened, and the College Board changed its national standards, raising concerns about how the political ambitions of a state’s Republican leadership could influence the history taught to the nation’s high school students (Samuels, et al, 2023). Faced with such attacks, a 21st century version of the Freedom Schools took root in Black churches across Florida, seeking to teach a history erased from the state’s public schools.

While Florida captured headlines, the effort was nationwide. Arkansas declared that students taking the AP African American History course would not receive college credit for it. In April 2022, South Dakota’s Governor signed an executive order restricting how race and equity could be taught in the classroom, limiting African American and Native American history in the public schools (Medrano, 2023). The American Library Association cataloged over 695 attempts to censor library materials in just seven months in 2023 (Giles, 2023). Parent Bill of Rights legislation worked

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## The Southern Education Foundation’s Legacy with *Brown v. Board of Education*

Raymond C. Pierce

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When I reflect on the 70th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine of our nation’s educational system, I can’t help but consider the historic context in which this landmark case evolved and how it reflects the long struggle for educational opportunity.

We know that during the years prior to the U.S. Civil War, strict policies against educating enslaved Black people existed with particular focus against teaching them to read. Nonetheless, Black people had a strong thirst for learning, and despite ever-present danger, they persisted in efforts to learn. It should be noted that society meted out punishment for whites seeking to educate Blacks, and severe punishment for Blacks seeking to learn. This enforced practice of denying education to Black people was a tool of the institution of slavery in the United States.

As the Union Army increased its campaign to defeat the Confederate states and destroy the system of slavery, military leaders sought solutions with increasing attention to aid the plight of freed slaves. It was during this time that Army leaders pressed for the formation of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. The Freedmen’s Bureau, as it was known, had as one of its initial tasks to organize formal education for the growing population of freed Black people. Bureau leaders quickly became allies for education and beseeched white philanthropists to supply books and teachers desired by newly emancipated people.

Schools began to emerge in places like the coastal Carolinas as the Union Army marched. At the end of the war and for the first decade of the Reconstruction era, philanthropists launched a strategy to scale efforts creating new taxes to pay for increased education for African Americans and poor whites in the South. Black elected state representatives during Reconstruction led the charge to sustain the philanthropic effort by legislating new tax structures to pay for what would become public education in the South.

Public education as we know it in the North can largely be defined by the leadership and efforts of educational reformer and abolitionist Horace Mann. In the early 1800s, Mann led a long and successful movement advocating for a publicly funded common system of education. The distinction here is that public-funded education did not come to the South until after the Civil War. By 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed and intended to provide equal rights for all citizens. For the next 60 years, efforts continued to advance the goal of educational

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opportunities across the country. However, the road to equal educational opportunity was not without resistance. Long after the Fourteenth Amendment passed, many Southern states rescinded education tax structures and created separate schools for whites and Blacks.

Schools were supposed to be for everybody, but segregation still emerged. In response, white philanthropists in the North sought to push back on growing segregation by threatening to withhold funding and grants for public colleges and universities in the South as a way of dissuading separate tax systems. Regardless, the force of segregation persisted and ultimately settled into the fabric of public education in the South.

Grassroots movements in the Black community to grow educational opportunities for African Americans continued to spring up across the country, partnering with organized philanthropy such as The Peabody Fund, The Jeanes Fund, The John F. Slater Fund, and the Virginia Randolph Fund. Leaders such as Jewish American philanthropist Julius Rosenwald aligned with this mission. The Rosenwald Fund was ultimately responsible for funding the construction of thousands of rural schools in the South, largely partnering with Black community development organizations. In the 1930s, an association of Black women teachers in the South raised \$300K to support the training of Black teachers. By 1934, the majority of these foundations were consolidated to form what is now the Southern Education Foundation (SEF). (If you want to learn more about SEF's history, see [www.southerneducation.org/who-we-are/timeline](http://www.southerneducation.org/who-we-are/timeline)).

In the years following consolidation, SEF continued to battle segregation and discriminatory policies that limited educational opportunities for students of color. It was during those years that the foundation began its alliance with leaders like Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, Mary McLeod Bethune, Benjamin Mays, Jeanne Fairfax, and Julius Chambers. Through that alliance, SEF and others elevated the academic use of research and data in the growing legal arguments against 'separate but equal' as defined by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

The discussions and deliberations among this community of thought leaders eventually began to clarify legal concepts challenging the constitutionality of segregated school systems. Also, during that era, when no other southern university or hotel would house them, SEF acted as both a research facility and living quarters for the research on the state of Black education in the South for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Oliver Brown was a Black father in Topeka, Kansas who sought a legal remedy for his daughter's denial of

educational opportunity because of the then-lawful system of racial segregation in public schools. Mr. Brown's lawsuit was joined by similar lawsuits that resulted in the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision and civil rights victory

known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that finally overturned the 'separate but equal' doctrine.

Despite decades of court battles to secure equal opportunities in education, vestiges of the once lawful 'separate but equal' doctrine continue to

exist in our nation's schools. Brown may have won the case, but challenges and resistance remain. Now, 70 years after that monumental decision, Black children and students of color in this nation are still impeded by systems of education with a long history of segregation policies.

How do we address this reality within our current political and legal climate? How do we make sure that all children, regardless of race or national origin, are provided equal access to trained teachers and quality educational resources?

It is imperative that together we continue to reinforce the foundational principles of the *Brown* decision that stated, "To separate [Black children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone." The ruling continued, "We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place."

I am encouraged by recent conversations and collaborations around this very issue. I am moved and impressed by the depth of thoughtfulness and analysis around what are now multi-faceted educational challenges. **Brown's Promise** ([www.brownspromise.org](http://www.brownspromise.org)), housed at the Southern Education Foundation, is one example of an initiative that uses an analytical and community approach at addressing lingering issues of segregation.

These emerging conversations must continue, and the spirit of *Brown v. Board of Education* must be kept alive. ■

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# The Future of *Brown* is Multiracial

Alejandra T. Vázquez Baur

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Around the birth of the Civil Rights Movement, integration efforts primarily aimed to desegregate Black and white communities in schools and beyond. Given the undoing of rights for Black Americans secured during Reconstruction and the insidious effects of Jim Crow laws and segregation in the South, this was the just and appropriate focus for the framing and implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

Today, however, the U.S. looks and feels quite different than it did in 1954, and so do our schools. Latine students are fast approaching 30 percent of the total student population (NCES, 2022), and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) constitute the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the U.S. (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). (Note: The author uses the gender-inclusive “Latine” instead of Latino or Hispanic, even where the sources use those terms.) Both groups have faced significant discrimination, and many are funneled into extremely segregated schools (Potter, 2021). As we approach seventy years since the *Brown* decision, and as neighborhoods and school communities continue to change and further diversify, integration efforts in schools and communities must evolve to meet the needs of our increasingly multiracial and multi-ethnic society.

According to the 1960 Census, about 88 percent of the population was white and just over ten percent was Black (Census Bureau, 1960). This pattern quickly changed, though it is important to note that the first effort to estimate the “Hispanic” population across the U.S. was in the 1970 Census. Before that, Latine people in the West were encouraged to select “white” (Cohn, 2010). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act made significant changes to U.S. immigration policy by removing a long-standing national origins quota system that favored immigrants from Europe and replacing it with one that emphasized family reunification and “skilled workers,” or persons whose jobs require a minimum of two years of training or work experience that are not temporary or seasonal. As a result, the U.S. population grew and brought with it racial and ethnic change over the next fifty years. By the 2020 Census, white people made up about 57 percent of the U.S. population, while Black, Latine, and AAPI individuals made up about 12, 19, and six percent, respectively (Census Bureau, 2023). Moreover, the multi-racial (two or more races) population grew to a shocking ten

percent and is expected to grow significantly, alongside the Latine and AAPI populations, over the next two decades.

While these numbers reflect national shifts, local communities and school districts have seen significant demographic changes just in the past decade or so. Latine and AAPI communities are the fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups nationally—increasing by 23 and 35.6 percent, respectively, from 2010 to 2020 (Frey, 2021). While this growth is occurring in some large metro areas where these groups have been overrepresented compared to the national population for decades, there has also been a growing dispersion of both groups to new destinations in the last decade.

To be specific, Brookings reports that there are 155 metro areas where Latine growth exceeded the group’s nationwide growth by over 150 percent. These areas are spread all over the country, especially in new metro areas in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. For example, among the areas registering

the greatest Latine growth are three in Pennsylvania: Scranton, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh.

Some large cities such as Seattle, Dallas, and Atlanta have seen significant AAPI growth since 2010 as well as new metro areas in the Midwest and Northeast. For example, the AAPI population in Omaha, NE nearly doubled from 2010 to 2020. Researchers also found that AAPI growth has particularly expanded in university and high-tech towns such as Raleigh, NC, Columbus, OH, and Madison, WI.

Many of these changes in Latine and AAPI populations are driven by migration, often following international political shifts and destabilizing events. Further, the rise in Latine and AAPI migrant communities is associated with a rise in English learners (ELs) in U.S. schools. Indeed, the EL population in U.S. schools has risen to just over ten percent of all students as of 2022, constituting a total of five million in 2022 compared to 3.5 million just twenty years earlier (OELA, 2022). The growth of the multilingual community in different areas might require new or expanded resources and programming, including additional translation and interpretation services, updated intake and enrollment procedures to support students from new countries and those with limited or interrupted formal education, new or expanded newcomer programs and family welcome centers, and more—especially

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(*The Future of Brown is Multiracial*, Continued from page 9)

in districts that are less familiar with providing these resources in the past.

While Latine and AAPI communities grow in districts across the nation, there are also shifts in white and Black communities that impact schools and efforts to integrate and support their needs in schools.

The aforementioned Brookings report demonstrates a notable shift for Black Americans, reversing the historical Great Migration from big cities of the West and Northeast back to the Southeast. In particular, in 1990, New York led all metro areas in Black population size, followed by Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Detroit. But by 2020, Atlanta had the second-

highest number of Black residents, while Houston, Dallas, and Miami surpassed Detroit and Los Angeles in the same count. Similarly, white Americans have moved away from large metro areas (particularly those along the California and Northeastern coasts), delivering growth in the Midwest, Rocky Mountain region, Texas, and the Southeastern coast.

The rise and geographic spread of different racial and ethnic groups indicate that various nonwhite groups serve as the engines of demographic change throughout the U.S. Further, the fact that people of color hold an even bigger presence among young people suggests that multiracial and multi-ethnic diversity will be much more prevalent across most of the nation in the decades ahead. These local shifts significantly impact the provision of educational resources, programs, and social services.

School and district leaders must take heed of these changes to ensure curricula, services, and resources are linguistically appropriate, historically critical and accurate, and culturally responsive and sustaining for the communities served. Additionally, as the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* approaches, education leaders must recommit to the promise of *Brown* for Black students and families secured by civil rights leaders in the 1954 decision while also ensuring that *all* marginalized students—including students from new, multiracial, and multi-ethnic groups, students from religious minorities, immigrant students, etc.—can enjoy the academic and social-emotional benefits of a diverse learning environment (Stuart Wells, et al., 2016). This has always been the charge of education leaders, and it is just as hard but more important in 2024 as it ever was.

So what does this mean? It means genuinely listening to the needs, ideas, and concerns of parents and students. It means having hard conversations. It means reversing the pattern of historical exclusion and harm for Black students

and families and preventing further harm for new groups by addressing racism, xenophobia, zero-sum mentality, and other forms of bias and discrimination as they arise within communities experiencing demographic shifts. It means including a diverse coalition of community members in district decisions from ideation to implementation. It means removing the barriers to participation. It means hiring and supporting diverse teachers and staff who can serve as trusted liaisons for new students and families. It means reconciling with the evolution and sunseting of what might have once “worked” and reimagining new ways to run schools that welcome and serve all students in the community. Most importantly, it means pushing back on attacks on DEI because our education system should and *must* affirm every student.

Only with thoughtful, intentional leadership can we deliver the true promise of *Brown* for the increasingly multiracial and multi-ethnic America of the next seventy years. ■

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## Bridging Generations: Reflections on Intergenerational Movement- Building and Youth Organizing in New York City

Matt Gonzales and Aneth Naranjo

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The school integration movement in New York City (NYC) was blossoming in 2019. The public's eyes and ears were following the lead of student organizers from groups like IntegrateNYC, Teens Take Charge, the Asian Student Advocacy Project (ASAP), and many others who were bringing segregation to the forefront. The city began to take real action by adopting recommendations from the School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) (School Diversity Advisory Group, 2019), and funding local diversity efforts. During an IntegrateNYC meeting early in the year, one of the youth directors made the point that we should retire segregation because 65 is (supposed to be) the age of retirement. This idea helped launch a citywide public outreach campaign that included the creation and distribution of 10,000 newspapers written by youth and a huge #RetireSegregation rally on the steps of Times Square to demand action. This moment represents the pinnacle of student advocacy for integration in NYC—a momentum that seemed unstoppable. It represents the power of intergenerational youth-led organizing. And, sadly, it represents the last major public action for integration prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly changed the organizing landscape.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of *Brown*, we offer our reflections from organizing in youth justice spaces for the past 10 and 20 years, respectively. We do not seek to glamorize the youth integration movement in NYC, rather we seek to acknowledge the incredible work, mistakes, and intentions that were needed to develop and sustain our intergenerational, youth-led movement, and also what didn't work. We will share our experiences fighting for integration and youth power in NYC, as well as the evolutions in our careers and our current work with youth, locally and nationally. We will conclude with our reflections and recommendations for those interested in supporting youth justice movements.

### The Ebbs and Flows of Youth Advocacy for Integration in NYC

In 2014, the UCLA Civil Rights Project released a report shining a light on the fact that New York State had the most segregated schools in the country, with NYC being the

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## The Problem We All Still Live With

Andrew Lefkowitz and Val Brown

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There is an image indelibly seared into the minds of many Americans. A young Black girl, six years old, in a white dress, schoolbooks in hand, walking down the sidewalk with U.S. Marshalls in front and behind her. The N-word spray-painted on the wall amongst the remains of recently thrown tomatoes. This famous painting by Norman Rockwell from 1966 is called "The Problem We All Live With." The girl depicted is Ruby Bridges, on her way to desegregate her elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1960.

Nearly 50 years later, Nikole Hannah-Jones and the team at This American Life released a podcast episode, also called "The Problem We All Live With." This in-depth look at Normandy, Missouri, a small town on the border of Ferguson, sought to shed light on the school experience of Michael Brown, before he was shot and killed by police in August 2014.

*The problem*, of course, is school segregation. And in 2024, fully seventy years after the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate is inherently unequal and that segregation itself is unconstitutional, it is a problem we all still live with.

Integrated Schools was founded in 2015 by Courtney Mykytyn to ask why.

Today, the majority of parents profess a desire for less segregated schools (Torres & Weissbourd, 2020). In 2020, Eric Torres and Richard Weissbourd from the Harvard School of Graduate Education found that "parents of all backgrounds tend to agree that racial and economic integration is important—at least in principle—and state that they would prefer that their children attend schools that are substantially integrated both racially and economically. This preference is true for men and women, Democrats and Republicans, and people of all races, levels of education, and income levels." And yet, our schools are, by many measures, more segregated now than during the Civil Rights era.

This disconnect between what we say we want as a country and what we have has no simple explanation. Our housing is segregated, our school funding formulae recreate disparities based on property taxes, the ways we measure school quality are often based on demographics and not educational excellence, and the Supreme Court has severely limited what steps communities can take voluntarily. And still, we know that a less segregated education system is possible if there is the will to create it. Good policies that push our school districts to try to address segregation are important, but we also know that our systems are designed by and cater to those families with the most privilege. In the seven decades since the *Brown* decision, we have seen white families undermine those policies at every turn (McRae, 2018).

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(*The Problem We All Still Live With*, Continued from page 11)

With this in mind, Integrated Schools' work is focused on creating a heart shift among parents with privilege to change the choices we make about where to send our kids to school, the playground conversations we have about getting the "best" for our kids, and how we talk about and think about "good" and "bad" schools, acknowledging the underlying racism inherent in those conversations. Given that the burden of so much of our country's past desegregation attempts has been borne by Black and Brown communities, we strive to call in those with privilege to do the work of desegregation, and to be part of achieving real integration.

As a country, we have tried desegregation. We have, often begrudgingly, moved bodies around based on demographic percentages. But we have never truly committed to a vision of real integration rooted in a public school system where power and resources are shared equitably, humanity is valued unconditionally, and all communities reap the benefits. This is the vision that drives our work. To realize that vision, it is not enough to simply change *where* we send our kids to school—*how* we show up is equally important. "Saving" a school, or trying to "fix" it, can cause more harm than if we had not shown up at all. We encourage privileged parents who are desegregating their kids to show up humbly, to work to be in community, to follow, to learn, to listen, and to join the efforts of those who are already at the school.

In November 2018, Andrew, a white dad from Denver, joined Integrated Schools founder Courtney Mykytyn, to launch The Integrated Schools Podcast as a place to have nuanced conversations about school integration with caregivers and experts in the field. With a desire to know better, so that we might do better, we set out to learn from those with expertise and personal experience, while telling a new story about our past attempts at desegregation. We also set out to model what it is like to have honest, hard, nuanced conversations about topics that, as a country, we so often avoid. The appetite for these conversations, as evidenced by the hundreds and then thousands of people downloading each episode, surprised us and motivated us to keep making episodes.

Tragically, on December 30, 2019, Courtney was struck by a car outside of her house and killed. This was a devastating loss to her family, to the Integrated Schools community, and to the broader movement for integration. However, a core group of dedicated parents and caregivers that Courtney had brought into the movement over the years stepped up to continue her vision.

In 2024, our organization has 37 chapters around the country, a large online following, a quarterly book club, a caregiver connection program that connects people from around the country who are trying to know better and do better, and the podcast, which recently released its 125th episode and has nearly 600,000 all-time downloads. This all-volunteer work is driven by people across the country asking why segregation is a problem we all still live with.

As our organization has evolved, we have also sought to become more multiracial. Val, a Black mom from North Carolina, joined as co-host of the podcast in September 2021. Broadening the perspectives we share and the types of conversations we have, has allowed us to deepen our own

understandings and continue to model what conversations about hard and nuanced topics can look like, now across lines of racial difference.

Seventy years after the *Brown* decision, in the wake of the backlash to racial justice protests stemming from the murder of George Floyd and so many others, as the divisions in our country become increasingly obvious, we feel this work is more important than ever. We can't continue to let this be the problem we all live with. The moral arc of the universe does not bend itself towards justice—it is bent by all of us. It requires confronting the past and pushing on, knowing that—without constant effort—we will backslide, but believing that the only way we win—for all of our kids and their kids—is together. ■

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# The Power of Three-Dimensional Synergy: School Finance Reform, Quality Pre-K, and School Integration

Rucker Johnson

*This piece was excerpted from a 2021 interview article in For All magazine.*

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Our existing approaches to what ails the education system often detach pre-K from K-12, health investments from educational investments. Education often intersects with housing but, in policy, they're often treated separately.

But it's not just the *collection* of good policies that matters; it's the *collaboration* of policies that makes the difference. The reason is that there are significant synergistic effects that are more than the sum of the parts.

For example, it's been documented that half of the achievement gap that we observe among third graders was apparent at kindergarten entry. What that reflects, in part, is the strong footprint of early childhood experiences. And that's why access to quality pre-K can play a significant role, particularly in the lives of lower-income children. Without those public investments in early pre-K programs, they would often not have access to environments that promote nurturing interpersonal relationships and school readiness.

What's important about this is that during the initial rollout of Head Start, the first 15 years, those programs also significantly improved *health*, child health. This was because immunizations increased, the quality and continuity of pediatric care significantly increased. This predated a lot of the significant public investments in Medicaid expansions. Partly, it's that healthier children are better learners. Again, there's that connection between education and health, pre-K and K-12.

What we're able to do in that research is leverage the per pupil spending in pre-K programs and the timing of that set of increases at the county level, link it to the student level of children we're following from birth to adulthood, and connect that with the level of school resources in their K-12 years via the court-ordered timing of school funding reforms in their state and district of upbringing.

When we put those pieces together, we found that it was not just that public pre-K spending via Head Start has significant long-term beneficial effects. And it wasn't only that the

K-12 spending has significant positive effects. What we found was that there was a significant synergy; we call it dynamic complementarity.

We found that when children attend poorly funded K-12 environments, the long-term effects of pre-K tend to dissipate. It's consistent with the fade-out effect that other people have documented. It's only when the pre-K investments are followed with

quality K-12 investments—where they're going to schools that are well-funded and well-resourced—that we see sustained, positive effects of pre-K spending.

Similarly, the effectiveness of K-12 spending is enhanced significantly when it's preceded by quality pre-K access. In their K-12 years, children are more prepared to learn and to take advantage of

the educational opportunities that occur in those K-12 years. When we do them in concert, the effects are more than the sum of the individual parts.

Tennessee did a major expansion of their public pre-K, but funding for K-12 there is regressive. Many kids who had access to pre-K subsequently went to less-well-funded K-12 schools, and the effectiveness of the pre-K investment did not translate into sustained beneficial effects beyond the elementary school years. Again, that's evidence of the dynamic complementarity—you need *both* of those effective bits to succeed.

We shouldn't throw money at these problems without understanding first that segregated environments make it much more difficult to equalize opportunity. When we have concentrations of poverty, equal spending is not equal if the need is far greater. The cost of providing equal programming differs across schools that have very different concentrations of need.

What we're finding is that we should be concerned about promoting integration for reasons that go beyond test scores. There are issues around how children learn in integrated environments, about learning across differences, and about the value of diversity in schools. We're able to show that this has an impact on kids' long-term attitudes along

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***But it's not just the collection of good policies that matters; it's the collaboration of policies that makes the difference. The reason is that there are significant synergistic effects that are more than the sum of the parts.***

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race, including racial attitudes expressed in adulthood. This is particularly true among non-Hispanic, White children who did not grow up in a diverse school environment, who were highly segregated.

So we're not just documenting positive effects of school resources and pre-K investments for lower-income and minority children, though those disproportionately have those effects there, but we're also documenting that more integrated environments have beneficial effects for *all* kids.

These are things that are not captured by test scores alone, but they have a vast impact on society in the long run. Our schools are like a microcosm of the kind of social ills that we confront many years down the road.

We're now experiencing the resegregation of our nation's public schools, where 40 percent of Black students and 42 percent of Latino students attend schools where less than 10 percent of their peers are non-Hispanic White.

By analyzing data on children followed into adulthood, I find that the resegregation of public schools has contributed to the increases in racial bias, racial intolerance, and rising polarization of political views that we observe expressed in adulthood. These effects, rooted in a lack of exposure to racial/ethnic diversity in schools, are most pronounced among White Americans. Not only that, but children in these schools struggle to develop the ability to empathize with others and to appreciate the validity of other cultures. For African Americans, our results show that confinement to segregated, poorly funded schools interferes with children's life chances.

We're in an era where the vast share of school segregation is due to housing segregation, including subsidized housing and disproportionately concentrated poverty neighborhoods.

And, today, two-thirds of segregation occurs between school districts, not within them. In the earlier era, a significant part of segregation occurred within district boundary lines. Once the majority of segregation is between districts, it becomes much more imperative to use tools beyond busing to integrate schools. In this respect, housing policy is central.

The United States spends \$44 billion a year on affordable housing programs, but that funding tends to be concentrated in high-poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods, particularly among families with children. That is one of the primary reasons that the two areas that have the biggest impacts on opportunity for children are education and housing. And yet those are the areas in which civil rights has made the least progress, due to segregation.

Sometimes people have the impression that this is about parents' choices and that policy is not implicated in this. But, actually, this is the direct consequence of explicit policies. There are a large number of gerrymandered school district boundaries. There are ways in which parents with wealth, particularly and unfortunately non-Hispanic White parents with wealth, have used their political influence to create school assignment zones that are more segregated along race and class lines to basically hoard opportunity.

When we're talking about segregation, it's not just the separation of school children by race. Integration is not only about the assignments of children to schools by race, but it's definitely about equitable use of resources; that includes funding, teacher quality, teacher diversity, multicultural curriculum, and curricular quality. I just talked about racialized tracking in the discussion on school finance reform.

We document that the longer students are treated for the symptoms of segregated, poorly funded education via school integration as well as school funding reform, the better the outcomes. The higher the dose of integration and funding reform they receive, the better their long-term outcomes are.

We're documenting that school funding reform alone is insufficient to fulfill the promise of equal educational opportunity. There could certainly not be a cure without it, but it's not the full cure. It has to be combined with school integration and expansion of access to high-quality pre-K. That three-dimensional

synergy is precisely the policy prescription that I believe the nation needs to implement in order to overcome the legacy of segregation. So there's no single panacea, but when we combine these efforts, we've seen children's life trajectories fundamentally altered in all of the most positive ways. ■

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***The longer students are treated for the symptoms of segregated, poorly funded education via school integration as well as school funding reform, the better the outcomes. The higher the dose of integration and funding reform they receive, the better their long-term outcomes are.***

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(For All of Our Children: Justice Thurgood Marshall's Faith in Integration Is Still Right, Continued from page 2)

tion is understood as “assimilation,” it is accompanied by an unacceptable identity sacrifice as well as a failure to address related structural inequities (Adams, 2006). Adams’ “radical integration” would recognize the need for authentic chosen identity formation and expression, rather than the felt need to assimilate into a dominant culture; moreover, “radical integration” would demand actual and tangible enfranchisement in social, economic, and political domains of American life (Adams, 2006). The social science evidence to which we refer in the paragraphs that follow is useful for considering whether Adams’ perspective on radical integration is possible and what steps are necessary to work toward this articulation of Marshall’s original vision.

During the time that *Brown* and *Milliken* were decided, white ethnics in the U.S.—like Irish, Polish, and Italian Americans—were being absorbed more firmly into the broader category of “white” Americans as the federal government subsidized their move to the suburbs (Godsil & Waldeck, 2021). Though not without encountering resistance and varied forms of exclusion and discrimination along the way with each generation, these groups became more assimilated into a dominant vision of whiteness while losing aspects of their distinct ethnic heritages and cultural identities. This transition became a form of “racial agency” for those who were seeking white spaces, and it was achieved with direct

support from the federal government, along with state and local governments through zoning and other land use policies (Godsil & Waldeck, 2021). This agency and financial prosperity made available to white families were denied to Black families (Rothstein, 2017). The divide between “white” people and “people of color” became more stark, as did residential segregation.

Decades after the *de jure* actions to create white spaces, the generational consequences of residential segregation are enormous and include material benefits (such as inherited wealth and access to economic opportunities) as well as differences in racial status. The conventional presumption is that white families earned their heightened wealth and economic advancement solely of their own volition (see Kinder & Sanders, 1996); although persistence and hard work no doubt played a role in the growing prosperity of many white families, conferral of the original federal benefit to white families—the subsidization of housing in the suburbs—is often ignored. And when such historical conditions remain unacknowledged, the more challenging it is for white people to recognize how race has shaped their own and others’ experiences, or to challenge the belief that meritocratic systems determine life outcomes (Knowles & Lowery, 2012).

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## NCS D Turns 15

**B**rown at 70 – Title VI at 60 – *Milliken* at 50. And the National Coalition on School Diversity (NCS D) also marks an important milestone this year: 15 years strong. Founded in 2009 by nine organizations, including LDF, MALDEF, Lawyers’ Committee, ACLU’s Racial Justice Program, Harvard’s Charles Hamilton Houston Institute, and PRRAC, NCS D grew out of the broad Supreme Court amicus effort in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District I* (the Seattle and Louisville voluntary integration cases) – and the agreement of five justices that reducing racial isolation and pursuing racial diversity in schools were compelling government interests.

From the *Parents Involved* amicus experience, we learned two important lessons that led to NCS D’s founding. First, the social science evidence on the benefits of school integration had been progressing rapidly and needed to be publicly disseminated. Second, a wide array of advocacy and interest groups strongly supported school integration, even though they rarely, if ever, mentioned it in conversations with Congress or the Department of Education. We believed that a single-issue coalition would help bring much needed new attention to the long-standing and persistent issue of segregated and inequitable education in America.

Looking back at 15 years, the coalition has exceeded our expectations.

Today, NCS D is comprised of 80+ member organizations and individual members. NCS D’s commitment to evidence-based policy and advocacy draws on the expertise of our distinguished Research Advisory Panel members. As the main hub of the school integration movement, NCS D has been instrumental in supporting, shaping, and communicating PK-12 school integration research, policy, and practice. The coalition has produced dozens of important policy and research briefs and reports, scores of advocacy letters on key Congressional and Departmental priorities, five national conferences, and numerous other resources and events. We help to convene a growing field and, with the support of our government relation partners, maintain a steady presence on the Hill and at the Department of Education, which has helped generate a series of small – but important – policy wins.

As we look ahead at the next 15 years, we understand the challenges we face, both legally and politically, but remain unwavering in our belief in the promise of *Brown* and in the fight for truly integrated, equitable, and thriving schools for all students. ■

**The National Coalition**  
**on**  
**School Diversity**

Not surprisingly, then, a powerful barrier to addressing and dismantling racial status hierarchies is whites' disbelief or skepticism that such hierarchies even exist (Knowles et al., 2014; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014). Further differences in the perspectives of white people and people of color can grow from different reference points in assessing progress: white people in the United States tend to perceive more racial progress than people of color and are far more apt to anchor their assessment of racial progress in how far the U.S. has come relative to the past (Brodish et al., 2008). Additional scholarship has linked these perceptual differences about racial progress to white Americans' attitudes toward affirmative action (DeBell, 2017) as well as their decisions about how best to combat racial inequality (Kraus et al., 2019).

We are now in an era in which the Supreme Court has prevented the use of race in higher education admissions (*SFFA v. Harvard*, 2023) and states are enacting laws to prevent efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion and to teach about the history of race and racism in the United States. At the local level, new school systems have been breaking off from larger school districts, "seceding" so that "their" tax dollars go to teach "their" children, instead of treating "all" children as our own (Taylor, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, 2019). The phenomenon has been led by predominantly white schools and has increased racial segregation.

The research suggests two distinct reasons for the hostility that many white people are expressing in response to efforts explicitly designed to inform the public about our nation's history and to increase access to opportunities for people of color. The first is that those with higher status—like white people in the United States—fear losing that status, particularly when demographic shifts suggest they will not be in the numerical majority for much longer (Craig & Richeson, 2014). For many white people in the U.S., the prospect of losing status can trigger efforts to preserve their own privileged position (Knowles et al., 2014; Tropp & Barlow, 2018).

A second reason is the fear of being left out, or being left behind, in a changing world—a motivation that is distinct from the desire to maintain privilege (see Barsa et al., 2022 for a review). This fear is rooted in the fundamental human need to belong (see Baumeister & Leary, 1995), such that people are highly attuned to what may be perceived as signals of potential exclusion or rejection (Plaut et al. 2011).

## II. The Promise of Intergroup Contact Through Structured Integration

For those who may be activated by the fear of exclusion or rejection, the pursuit of meaningful contact with people from other groups and backgrounds can serve as a powerful counterforce. Cross-group interaction normalizes the experience of diversity in society (Jones & Dovidio, 2018) and offers a way to expand our vision of the "we" to include people of varying racial and other group identities (Dovidio et

al., 2009). We recognize that, at first glance, this description appears to do little to challenge the status quo, thereby maintaining hierarchies of power and privilege as they currently stand. However, our aim is quite the opposite, seeking instead to identify how realistically to support the conditions that are required for Adams' radical integration to be achieved.

Along with other scholars, we contend that intergroup contact—that is, meaningful contact and engagement between members of different groups—can lead to a recognition of our shared humanity and transform how people in diverse societies relate to each other. A robust body of research supports that greater contact between groups can reduce prejudice and promote more positive intergroup attitudes. Such effects are especially likely to emerge when people from different groups interact with each other as equals while engaging in cooperative, interdependent activities toward the pursuit of common goals (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The intergroup contact research literature offers converging evidence across a range of studies, including experimental, longitudinal, and meta-analytic research (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Importantly, studies indicate that prejudice reduction typically generalizes beyond the specific group members who interact with one another, and greater levels of contact at a societal level can motivate broader attitude change (Christ et al., 2014). Beyond fostering positive attitudes between groups, intergroup contact carries the potential to encourage people—and particularly members of historically advantaged groups—to reappraise the position of their own group (Verkuyten, Voci, & Pettigrew, 2022) and to become more supportive of and involved in efforts to promote social change (Hässler et al., 2020; Tropp & Barlow, 2018).

In line with this scholarship from the field of psychology, subsequent research inside and outside of legal academia suggests that racial integration constitutes a powerful means to important social justice ends. Consider, for example, policing and education. The relationship between police reform and residential integration is based on the current correlation of residential segregation with police violence (Bell, 2020). Monica Bell (2020) argues that residential segregation both contributes to and is a consequence of harmful forms of policing. This conclusion is based in part on a study of cities with over 100,000 residents. That study found that the most powerful differentiating variable between cities with higher levels of substantiated claims of police brutality was the level of racial segregation of Black residents (Smith & Holmes, 2014). In the context of educational reform, the social science literature relied upon by legal academics (including one of the authors of this commentary) argues for a research-based focus on educational integration as a means to improving education for all students (e.g., Johnson, 2019; Godsil, 2019; Orfield, 2015). Integrated educational and residential settings provide promising opportunities for sustained and meaningful inter-

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(For All of Our Children: Justice Thurgood Marshall's Faith in Integration Is Still Right, Continued from page 16)

group contact (Godsil, 2019) that can prepare people to live and thrive in a multiracial society (Tropp & Saxena, 2018), and can, in turn, lead to political action to reduce injustice through further integration of society and its institutions (Godsil, Forde-Mazrui, & Tropp, in press).

## Conclusion

Justice Marshall articulated the vision of a society in which we see all children as “our” children, such that we care about the welfare of all children, rather than constricting our circle of concern to include only those from our own racial backgrounds. The ideal of integration articulated by the Court in *Brown* and in the powerful dissents in *Milliken* continues to be an imperative for this country to move beyond the devastating forms of polarization and hoarding of opportunities and resources that endanger our democracy. ■

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(*Brown v. Board of Education: The Soul of Our Multiracial Democracy*, Continued from page 1)

foundation of good citizenship,” is “a principal instrument in awakening children to cultural values, in preparing them for later professional training, and in helping them to adjust normally to the environment.” The impact of the *Brown* decision cannot be overstated. In many ways, *Brown* marked the birth of the United States as a true multiracial democracy that, for the first time, gave teeth to the Fourteenth Amendment’s demand that Black people be recognized as full and equal citizens.

## Fulfilling *Brown’s* Promise

Both the legal and social landscape of the American South was poised to undergo a dramatic shift following the *Brown* decision, spurring resistance from segregationists that was swift and far reaching. Virginia Governor Thomas Stanley established the 32-member Commission on Public Education (also known as the “Gray Commission”), which in 1955 issued a report asserting that “compulsory integration should be resisted by all proper means in our power” and emphasizing the importance of local school board discretion as a key strategy to oppose desegregation (Sweeney, 2008). The Declaration of Constitutional Principles opposing racial integration, commonly referred to as the “Southern Manifesto,” was signed by more than one hundred members of both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives the following year. U.S. Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia also called for what became known as Massive Resistance—a group of laws passed in 1956 to prevent the integration of public schools (Bartley, 1999). Nevertheless, the brave and tireless efforts of Black families, represented by LDF lawyers and an extensive cooperating attorney network, held southern schools accountable to *Brown’s* mandate through litigation resulting in desegregation orders issued by federal courts. Many school desegregation orders remain in effect to this day, as LDF, as well as the U.S. Department of Justice, continue to ensure that formerly segregated school districts abide by their affirmative duty, as prescribed by the Court in its 1968 decision in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, to take “whatever steps might be necessary to convert to a unitary system in which racial discrimination would be eliminated root and branch.”

Neither southern jurisdictions, nor the rest of the United States, have yet fully embraced the transformational potential of *Brown’s* promise of racial equality through quality public education that is equally available and equally accessible to children of all races. Subsequent decisions by the Supreme Court have made it increasingly difficult to follow its own directive in *Green* to eliminate racial discrimination from public education “root and branch.” For example, in the 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* decision, the Court barred federal courts from issuing inter-district desegregation orders to remedy single-district *de jure* segregation, which effectively left Black families with no legal recourse to challenge racially

segregated school systems resulting from the flight of white families to neighboring school districts to avoid integration.

As a result, the struggle for equal educational opportunities for Black students remains critical today, despite the seven decades since *Brown* was decided. According to the Government Accountability Office, more than a third of students (about 18.5 million) attended schools where 75 percent or more students were of a single race or ethnicity during the 2020-21 school year (GAO, 2022). As of December 2023, nearly 70,000 of the 98,860 Alabama students enrolled in 206 “priority schools”—*i.e.*, schools rated ‘D’ or ‘F’ based on the state’s accountability system—are Black (Morgan, 2022). Similarly, Mississippi’s Black students comprise 46 percent of the overall student population, but make up 73 percent of students attending high-poverty schools (National Equity Atlas, 2020).

The persistence of racial segregation within our public educational system, and the resulting racial inequality in educational resources and opportunities, jeopardizes the “foundation of good citizenship” that public education is supposed to provide to the children responsible for the future of our multiracial democracy, as the Court noted in *Brown*. Yet, as dire as the deficiencies of our public educational system may be, Americans face another, equally dire crisis in fulfilling *Brown’s* promise—the very meaning of *Brown* itself. The extremist effort to redefine *Brown* is exemplified by the legal arguments presented by the plaintiff Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) in *SFFA v. Harvard/UNC* (2023), the consolidated cases in which the Supreme Court upended over four decades of precedent by ruling that the affirmative action policies at Harvard University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are illegal under the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (LDF represented 25 Harvard student and alumni organizations in the litigation against Harvard during proceedings before the trial court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and the Supreme Court.) In its briefing to the Court, SFFA likened affirmative action in higher education to *Plessy’s* “separate but equal doctrine,” thereby reasoning that both are unconstitutional pursuant to *Brown’s* mandate for racial equality. The absurdity of equating Jim Crow laws in *Plessy*, which had subjugated and dehumanized Black people in the South for generations, to affirmative action in higher education, which opened doors to educational institutions from which Black people had been historically excluded, prompted LDF to submit an amicus brief on behalf of itself and the NAACP to essentially explain the meaning of *Brown* (Brief for LDF and NAACP, 2022).

As delineated in LDF’s amicus brief, *Brown* clearly and emphatically rejected America’s racial caste system, which is anathema to a functioning, multiracial democracy. Affirmative action in higher education likewise rejects a racial caste system by expanding opportunities for Black people and other people of color to access selective

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educational resources that often serve as pathways for positions of leadership and influence. In her dissenting opinion in the *SFFA* case, Justice Sotomayor acknowledged Justice Marshall as the “Member of this Court who understood the *Brown* litigation” and criticized the majority’s “recharacterization of *Brown*” as “nothing but revisionist history and an affront to the legendary life of Justice Marshall, a great jurist who was a champion of true equal opportunity, not the rhetorical flourishes about colorblindness.” Justice Marshall himself made the following observation about affirmative action in his separate opinion in *Regents of the Univ. of Calif. v. Bakke*, the 1978 case in which the Supreme Court first articulated the 45-year legal framework for affirmative action in higher education that was cast aside in the *SFFA* decision:

If we are ever to become a fully integrated society, one in which the color of a person’s skin will not determine the opportunities available to him or her, we must be willing to take steps to open those doors.

As devastating as the *SFFA* decision may be, Chief Justice Roberts, who authored the majority opinion, affirmed that the educational benefits of diversity are “commendable goals”—albeit “not sufficiently coherent for purposes of strict scrutiny.” He further explained that “nothing in this opinion should be construed as prohibiting universities from considering an applicant’s discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise.” Nevertheless, conservative activists have distorted the *SFFA* ruling to extend far beyond its legal parameters to undo *Brown*’s legacy and nullify its constitutional promise, most notably in a full-scale attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and the myriad concepts, programs, and policies to advance race and gender equity that have been thrown into the DEI rubric (Confessore, 2024). In essence, these extremists have mischaracterized DEI, affirmative action, Critical Race Theory, anti-racism, racial equity, and even social emotional learning—all efforts to break down unfair barriers that hinder true equality—as forms of discrimination themselves.

Even before the *SFFA* decision, state governments across the country passed legislation like Florida’s Stop WOKE Act (ultimately passed as the Individual Freedom Act), which bans, among other things, the “training or instruction that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels . . . student[s] or employee[s] to believe” that a “person, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, bears personal responsibility for and must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions, in which the person played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex,” or that “[s]uch virtues as merit, excellence, hard work, fairness, neutrality, objectivity, and racial colorblindness are racist or sexist, or were created by members of a particular race, color, national origin, or sex to oppress members of another race,

color, national origin, or sex” (FLA. STAT. § 1000.05(4)(a)). (LDF, along with co-counsel ACLU, ACLU of Florida, and Ballard Spahr LLP, secured a preliminary injunction on behalf of plaintiff university professors barring its enforcement in higher education. This ruling is currently pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.) More recently, on March 20, 2024, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed into law SB 129, which has similar provisions, as well as outright bans of state-funded DEI programs in public educational institutions (Faqiri, 2024).

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***The struggle to actualize Brown’s promise is, quite literally, a fight for the soul of our multiracial democracy.***

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At this moment in time, when people of color are expected to be the majority of Americans by 2045, we stand at the precipice of fully embracing *Brown*’s vision of racial equality or allowing racial justice detractors to hijack its meaning and jeopardize seven decades of progress. Indeed, it is no accident that the extremist fervor against Critical Race Theory, DEI, or the next conservative watchword of the day comes in the aftermath of the largest social justice demonstration in our nation’s history, when people of all races and nationalities worldwide marched in solidarity to protest systemic, anti-Black racism that was so viciously illustrated by George Floyd’s killing (Bryson Taylor, 2021). Nor is it mere coincidence that a war against *Brown*’s true meaning is being waged in our classrooms, where future voters and future leaders are given the “foundation of good citizenship.” The struggle to actualize *Brown*’s promise is, quite literally, a fight for the soul of our multiracial democracy. And, like the years under Thurgood Marshall’s leadership in the road to *Brown*, LDF continues to be at the heart of this fight. ■

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(*How Brown v. Board of Education Affected Black Teachers: A New Perspective*, Continued from page 5)

Black teachers, failure to replace Black teachers who retired, and demotion of Black school administrators. In a new study, Leslie T. Fenwick argues that this number has been grossly undercounted and that nearly 100,000 exceptionally credentialed Black teachers and principals were “systematically and illegally removed and replaced by less-qualified white educators” (Fenwick, 2022). Discriminatory practices during the peak of southern school desegregation created a sharp reduction in the diversity of the teaching force from which U.S. public schools have never fully recovered. But we are less certain about how this history unfolded outside of the southern context, which means we have only a partial understanding of how *Brown* impacted Black educators. This essay seeks to shed light on this question by investigating the history of Black teachers outside of the southern context after 1954.

Recently, scholars have confirmed what Black families have long known: Black teachers matter. Studying under a Black teacher can significantly improve a Black student’s attitudes about school, as well as their motivation and academic achievement (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Dixon, 2003). U.S. public schools today are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever, and about 14-15% of students identify as Black. Yet, the vast majority of teachers are white and the Black teaching force has declined since 2003-2004. In 2015-2016, the percentage of Black teachers declined to only 7% (down from 8% in 2003-2004) (de Brey et al, 2019).

In other words, today, Black teachers are underrepresented in U.S. public schools, the percentage of these teachers has declined in recent years, and the current political climate makes it unlikely this problem is going to be resolved without a meaningful, strategic intervention. To solve this problem, we need a clearer understanding of how school desegregation has affected Black teachers in public schools nationwide, which means we need to know what happened to Black teachers outside of those states that ran a dual system before 1954. Answering this question has the potential to reshape how we understand the legacy of *Brown*.

Many historians see *Brown* as a compromise—a positive force for good that included unintended “hidden costs,” especially for Black communities. Historian Vanessa Siddle Walker has a more complex interpretation of *Brown*’s legacy, highlighting the role of Black educators in the segregated South in terms of the three A’s—advocacy, aspiration, and access. For generations before *Brown*, Black educators in the segregated South worked hard to secure two of these three goals. They advocated for Black students through professional Black teaching associations, like the Georgia Teacher

and Education Association did for the first half of the 20th century, which in turn fueled the growth of high-quality schools that supported Black students’ aspirations for full citizenship. School integration was supposed to secure the third “A”—access, by delivering access to the higher levels of funding and better facilities hoarded by whites.

However, according to Siddle Walker, the long, slow, contested process of court-ordered school desegregation in the South dismantled professional Black teaching associations, which stripped Black students of a powerful ally. In other words, when Black students finally won “access” to integrated schools in the 1960s and 1970s, they also lost the networks of Black educators that had sustained generations of “advocacy” and “aspiration.”

This essay builds on Siddle Walker’s framework to consider what happened to Black teachers outside of the southern context in the two decades after *Brown*. Did Black teachers in the rest of the country lose their jobs as school desegregation pushed North and West in the late 1960s and early 1970s? Did northern Black communities have to make a

trade-off between advocacy and aspiration to secure equal access to public education? If not, what does this mean for the legacy of *Brown* and the history of school integration in the U.S. more broadly?

Last summer, I poured over hundreds of academic studies, school records, court cases, and primary historical sources to answer these vital questions. The research was

complicated by the fact that northern school districts did not keep official records of students’ or teachers’ racial identities; however, I was able to piece together enough data to determine that school desegregation did not result in massive layoffs for Black teachers outside of the South and border states between 1954 and 1974. But many questions remained such as why not, how did this change over time, and what does it tell us about the underrepresentation of Black teachers outside of the South today?

Answering these questions forces us to grapple with the very different historical context for Black students in the North. Most people assume northern schools never segregated Black students, but this is not true. Despite state laws passed in the late 19th century, school segregation in the North, mid-West, and West increased through the first four decades of the 20th century alongside the growing size of Black communities. Whites responded by using illegal, racist school assignment policies to isolate Black students in particular schools. The result was some racial mixing in northern public schools, but also growing patterns of blatant school segregation (Douglas, 2005).

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(How *Brown v. Board of Education Affected Black Teachers: A New Perspective*, Continued from page 20)

Most northern school administrators restricted Black teachers to working in all-Black classrooms or schools before the end of World War II in 1945. This created a dilemma for Black communities who urgently wanted more teaching positions—should they accept the expansion of illegal school segregation in order to secure more teaching jobs, or should they fight for school integration?

The question split Black northerners into two opposing camps as I show in my recent book, *An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North*. On one side, many Black families, teachers, and ministers were willing to accept the expansion of segregated classrooms and schools because it generated more of the stable, middle-class jobs Black communities needed. What is more, many Black families believed Black teachers were more nurturing, and therefore more likely to help Black students succeed. On the other side, the northern Black elite insisted integrated public facilities took precedence over teaching jobs. Black political power was growing, but it was not large enough in most communities to secure integrated public schools with a racially mixed faculty. As a result, school segregation ticked up between 1900 and 1940, but so too did the numbers of Black teachers outside of the South.

Importantly, few of these Black teachers had access to the kind of strong, well-established professional Black teaching associations that Siddle Walker documents in the South. However, there were numerous other Black civic, academic, and social organizations as well as Black churches that supported Black teachers, and Black families remained vocal advocates for Black educators (Woyshner, 2023). In this context, Black teachers and their allies advocated for the twin goals of professional equality for Black teachers and fair treatment for Black students. Many northern Black teachers, for example, quietly developed lessons on Black history and challenged the invisible barriers that restricted Black teachers to majority Black elementary schools.

This northern Black educational activism expanded alongside the growing civil rights movement after World War II. For example, in Chicago, Black elementary teacher Madeline Morgan persuaded the entire district to adopt a curriculum on Black history, which she wrote herself with the help of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Phi Delta Kappa sorority sisters, fellow Black Chicago Public School teachers, and Black librarians at the George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library. In Montclair, New Jersey, a local chapter of the NAACP, with support of local “colored” branches of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), commissioned a civil rights audit that documented the acutely low level of Black teachers (only one), despite a high percentage of Black students in the district, and successfully petitioned the school board to hire more Black teachers (Burkholder, 2021; Hines, 2022).

These examples show how Black teachers outside of the southern context drew on Black clubs, churches, civil rights

organizations, and civic associations to advocate for Black students, support Black aspirations for equality, and fight for equal access in the public schools. The context was in many ways much messier and more varied outside of the southern context—but the goals of equal education and full citizenship were the same.

Between 1945 and 1954, northern Black educators, their local allies, and national civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, fought for and won the right for Black teachers to work in racially mixed classrooms outside of the South, which significantly increased job opportunities for Black teachers. A postwar teacher shortage combined with less racist teacher placement policies improved Black teachers’ employment opportunities into the 1950s.

At first, the *Brown* ruling in 1954 had a very modest impact on northern schools, as most had already adopted supposedly “colorblind” school assignment and teacher placement policies. The assumption was that a colorblind teacher hiring process would be advantageous to Black candidates, and so the goal of school integration took precedence over the goal of hiring more Black teachers. After 1954, the number of Black teachers continued to rise, yet remained notably small. As late as 1966, only 15% of Black teachers in the U.S. worked outside of the South and border states that ran dual systems before 1954.

By this point, it was clear that the so-called colorblind teacher hiring policies in the North discriminated against Black teachers. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights blamed bureaucratic teacher certification and placement policies for this deficit. In Chicago, for instance, a new teacher could only work in schools with vacancies. Since teachers with seniority got preference, it meant new teachers—both Black and white—typically found openings only in majority Black schools as “the ‘popular’ schools with fewer openings are generally in the white areas.” However, White teachers transferred out of majority Black schools in Chicago at a much higher rate than Black teachers. Investigators concluded it was most likely that Black teachers’ retention related to “distance of the school from the teacher’s residence, fear of rejection in white schools, dedication to the teaching of underprivileged Negro children, and sheer inertia” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1962).

Frustrated by the dire state of educational inequality for Black students in the late 1960s, northern Black communities once again prioritized hiring more Black teachers as an essential feature of educational reform. Citing the Black Power movement, they insisted that Black teachers would serve as role models, provide appropriate discipline and high standards, and nurture and affirm Black students’ racial identities. As Robert Kelley, a Black teacher in Stamford, Connecticut detailed, “There is a very, very great disparity in the proportion of minority teachers in the system... and as a result the minority kids who go there have no role models” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977b, p. 30).

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(*How Brown v. Board of Education Affected Black Teachers: A New Perspective*, Continued from page 21)

In response to these new demands, northern school desegregation plans included affirmative action to diversify the teaching force. Portland, Oregon more than doubled the percentage of Black faculty from 2.7% in 1968 to 6.7% in 1975. The school board of Tempe, Arizona voted unanimously to implement an affirmative action program to increase the numbers of “minorities” (Black, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American) on the faculty. The city of Stamford, Connecticut initiated an “extensive minority recruitment program” that included recruitment efforts in New York City and in southern Black colleges, which resulted in a modest increase in the number of Black teachers from 65 in 1971 to 76 in 1975. A 1977 school desegregation order in Los Angeles recommended, “The district should combine staff and student integration planning to coordinate racial and ethnic reassignments of both teachers and students,” and suggested affirmative action to hire more Black and Hispanic teachers (Burkholder, 2024).

For the most part, northern cities saw a meaningful increase in the gross numbers and percentages of Black educators in the 1970s. Many districts adopted school desegregation orders that moved Black teachers into majority white schools and vice versa, a process that was sometimes unpopular, but that nevertheless increased Black teacher representation throughout the district.

Unfortunately, even in northern communities with a large and politically active Black population, this small increase in Black teachers was not enough. In Minneapolis, for example, school leaders added 188 new Black teachers between 1968 and 1975, but they could not keep pace with the growing numbers of Black students in the district, which increased from 8% in 1968 to 14% in 1975. This meant the likelihood a Black student would have a Black teacher actually declined, despite an increase in the number of Black teachers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977a, p. 11).

As this complex history of northern school desegregation shows, a long history of racial discrimination in northern public schools meant that Black teachers were catastrophically underrepresented in the region by 1954, and that efforts to remedy the problem during the era of school desegregation in the late 1960s and 1970s were not enough to make up for this disparity.

Siddle Walker’s focus on the three “A’s of integration” – advocacy, aspiration, and access – highlights the powerful, yet hidden, ways that Black teachers supported their communities in the Jim Crow South until the era of school desegregation destroyed these networks of Black educators. Most northern states did not have these professional Black teacher associations. Instead, Black communities relied on parent teacher associations, churches, school groups, civic associations, and civil rights organizations to advance the goals of advocacy, aspiration, and access for Black students. Unlike in the South, these northern networks of Black educational advocacy were not dismantled after 1954. They continued to support equitable hiring and placement practices for Black teachers that increased their numbers before, during, and after the *Brown* ruling. Thanks to Black political pressure, northern school desegregation plans included efforts to recruit, place, and promote more Black teachers and, as a result, the number of Black teachers increased.

The successful Black educational advocacy that unfolded during the height of school desegregation outside of the South reveals how citizens can work together to support Black teaching, hiring, placement, and promotion as an essential component of contemporary school integration. It also provides a cautionary tale of the limitations of community-based reform, and emphasizes the importance of strong legal frameworks to support fully desegregated, racially mixed schools of students and teachers. As Thurgood Marshall cautioned in 1957, school desegregation is not complete until

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(*The Future of Brown is Multiracial*, Continued from page 10)

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(How Brown v. Board of Education *Affected Black Teachers: A New Perspective*, Continued from page 22)

we find racially mixed students and faculty in all schools, in every school district nationwide. Until then, the struggle for educational equality continues. ■

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its way through several states. These censorship campaigns became signature policies in several of the nation's gubernatorial campaigns.

While these campaigns seemed energized by hyper-partisanship—a reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement or opposition to “The 1619 Project”—they were rooted in a much longer history. Advocates of white supremacy and white segregationist women had long seen public education as a necessary training ground for Jim Crow citizenship.

In the 1920s, white southern women tasked with shoring up the relatively new system of racial segregation turned to censorship and historical erasure. In the early 20th century, Carter Woodson's Association for the Study of African American Life and History and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, among others, sought to challenge the rise of racial segregation through education (McRae, 2018; King, 2017). They encouraged the writing of Black history, teaching of Black history, and creation of “Negro History Week.” White southern segregationists responded in turn, and former United Daughters of the Confederacy president Mildred Lewis Rutherford published a checklist for white Southerners, school boards, principals, and textbook selection committees to use in their evaluation of school textbooks. Her list included the following: “I. The Constitution of the United States Was a Compact between Sovereign States and Was not Perpetual nor National; II. Secession Was not Rebellion; III. The North Was Responsible for the War between the States; IV. The War between the States Was not Fought to Hold the Slaves; V. The Slaves Were Not Ill-Treated in the South and the North was largely Responsible for their Presence in the South” (Rutherford, 1920). Because southern states moved first to statewide textbook adoption, savvy white women lobbied the committees to follow this list, and many did. Publishing houses seeking higher profits, promised by statewide contracts, also met many of these dictates. Soon the nation's textbooks reflected the historical narrative demanded by segregationists in the Jim Crow South. Harriet Tubman disappeared from many texts, so did Frederick Douglass. In fact, two decades after the publication of “The Measuring Rod for Textbooks,” the Mississippi Educational Association conducted a survey of curriculum materials and, in 1938, found that if a student read all the textbooks in all the subjects from first through 12th grade, they would never meet one single African American by name (McRae, 2018).

This censorship was made all the more remarkable by the fact that it erased the very people who lived in their communities—Black southerners who had voted in the decades after the Civil War, held elected office, challenged railroad segregation in courts, joined the Knights of Labor, and catalogued the decades of lynching. Also erased were the stories of white supremacist violence. Nathan Bedford Forrest's massacre of Black Union soldiers surrendering at Fort Pillow disappeared, as did politicians, newspaper

publishers, sheriffs, and public officials who had lynched Black men, overthrown elected city and county governments, and buried voting rights and equal protection under the law. Absent stories of the sustained political work and vigilante violence that it took to establish racial segregation, the Jim Crow system became a “natural” next step in the nation's history (McRae, 2018).

These efforts continued in the aftermath of the *Brown* decision and in the face of widespread Black activism. As she witnessed the legislative end of school segregation, Mississippi segregationist Florence Sillers Ogden told her readers to subvert the high court's ruling by “adopting such textbooks in Mississippi schools as we see fit.” In her formulation, these books would, among other things, teach something “of the development of the races.” Given the local and bureaucratic (rather than legislative) process of textbook selection, Ogden predicted that “even the Supreme Court will surely find... [that] difficult to prevent” (McRae, 2018).

The next year, the Women's Activities and Youth Work subcommittee within the Citizens' Council—a white supremacist, anti-civil rights organization—aimed to “indoctrinate the nation's youth with patriotism, states' rights, and racial integrity.” This effort involved writing handbooks on segregation for elementary children and conducting essay contests on the benefits of racial segregation for Mississippi's white high school students—8,000 of whom participated in 1959. Using state tax dollars, another organization, the Paul Revere Ladies, funded a speaker series that featured “experts” who linked racial unrest to alleged communist agitators. In 1962, the Women for Constitutional Government, a regional organization of white women, disseminated pro-segregation reading lists and wrote that, while they did believe in racial segregation, it was only a facet of their larger crusade to restore constitutional government (McRae, 2018).

It was not simply a southern phenomenon. In Pasadena, California, Pro-America women lobbied against multicultural education in 1952, ousting the school superintendent (McRae, 2018). In 1974, West Virginian Sweet Alice Moore campaigned in Kanawha County to whiten the school curriculum, suppress teachings about Black radicals, Black Power, and the Black Panther Party, and purge “un-American” elements. Students could read Booker T. Washington, but they could not study Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver's writings (Mason, 2009).

Faced with the demands to desegregate the nation's schools, white segregationist women had turned their efforts to creating a curriculum that upheld white supremacy, censored what they deemed as radical thought, and erased Black history. Thus, in school board meetings and Parent Teacher Association meetings, the reassertion of a segregated, whitened national history happened without much

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fanfare. They knew history mattered and that the history students learned could reinforce the status quo or challenge it. Faced with the federal defeat in *Brown*, they decided to continue the fight through school curriculum.

While this effort continues today, the prominence of some of its advocates suggests that it is no longer a grassroots effort flying below the radar. In some places, the erosion and erasure has taken political center stage. However, outside of statewide elections and political campaigns, restrictions on the teaching of race and racism, specifically, has been occurring for more than a few years. A 2015 study conducted by the National Museum of African American History and Culture found that, despite educator's enthusiasm about Black history, only one to two lessons in a typical U.S. History class were devoted to the subject. That same year, a McGraw Hill textbook used in Texas referred to enslaved Africans in the Transatlantic Slave Trade as "immigrants" (King, 2017). In 2016, the efforts of a Fairfax County Virginia mother upset about explicit passages in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* resulted in a condemnation of the book on the floor of the General Assembly and the passage of a parental notification bill related to classroom materials (Weimer, 2023).

In a more comprehensive study on the teaching of the Reconstruction era by the Zinn Education Project, the failures of state standards to include Reconstruction effectively erased the history of Black education, land acquisition, political mobilization, and office holding after the Civil War. The paucity of attention to this era also minimized the impact of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Finally, ignoring Reconstruction also meant ignoring the widespread organized white political violence waged against the political power of Black men and women. In the report, 18 states received zeros on a ten-point scale for their specific treatment of Reconstruction in the state standards for social studies (Rosada, et al, 2022).

On the eve of the 70th anniversary of the *Brown* decision, a new generation of segregationists have returned to the censorship of curriculum materials and library books, the inculcation of white supremacist teachings, and the erasure of Black history. In the name of "parental rights" and "protection" of youth, they have linked fears of sex and sexuality with the censorship of Black history and white supremacist violence. This erasure of Black history compromises the ability of Americans to understand democracy, how it works, and what has challenged it. It segregates Black and Indigenous citizens from the history of the nation and conceals the violence that limited their political, economic, and social power. It teaches the nation's students that a white-washed history of the nation is "the" history leaving them unequipped to challenge persistent and corrosive inequities. Given the decline in the importance of textbooks in public education and the proliferation of information outside of

school curricula, some have argued that this censorship cannot do what it once did. That may prove to be too optimistic. If history offers multiple lessons, one would be that, seventy years ago, it took a social movement to change the story the teachers told. It may require that again. ■

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Source: North Star Fund. Retrieved from <https://northstarfund.org/give/donor-advised-funds/>

primary culprit (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014). This galvanized interest from the public and students, in particular, wanted to do something about it. We came to meet through our work at IntegrateNYC, a youth-led advocacy organization launched by NYC high school students from the South Bronx and their teacher. Aneth was part of the first cohort of student leaders to shape the organization and Matt was the first Policy Coach. IntegrateNYC began as an elective class. It led to a school exchange and discussion about school lunches and school resources. That led to a citywide youth council, which became the space where we dreamed up the “5Rs of Real Integration.” This policy framework was used to shape a Brooklyn desegregation plan, and eventually the SDAG recommendations. Student voices from IntegrateNYC, Teens Take Charge, ASAP, and arts-based advocacy organization Epic Theatre Ensemble were leading voices across NYC on school integration policy, and began to build themselves into the ecosystem of education justice organizing.

## The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Organizing

The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on the student organizing landscape in NYC. Youth organizers knew that inequity issues that existed for years were now being exacerbated, predominantly affecting Black and Brown youth. Students were marked absent or had missing assignments they could not complete because the city failed to have an organized and thoughtful process for delivering laptops to

students. Students who needed a safe space outside their home no longer had anywhere to turn. Young people’s mental health was deteriorating, and the city left them with no resources. Countless young people were not supported and continue to not be supported. Despite being abandoned by local, state, and national institutions to navigate a global pandemic, young people and their families continued organizing and fighting for issues they cared about. While it is a tribute to the persistence of marginalized people to fight for justice, in actuality, it led to much burnout.

Since COVID, the movement has experienced significant turmoil, with leadership and organizational transitions, as well as conflict and harm that has been unresolved and unaddressed. This has had a significant impact on the education justice organizing landscape, and has left many groups absent in policy discussions, allowing anti-equity and extremist groups to take up space. In addition to numerous leadership transitions for ourselves and the organizations we’ve collaborated with, the 2021 Mayoral campaign ushered in an administration hostile to the work of school integration, and many other education justice policy issues.

Whereas under previous administrations and school Chancellors student voices were prominent—or at least impossible to ignore—in the policy-making process, this has not been the case under Mayor Eric Adams. Since arriving in office, Mayor Adams has cut nearly \$2 billion from school budgets, resulting in teacher layoffs, loss of social workers and other mental health support, as well as critical program-

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**1 THE 5RS OF REAL INTEGRATION**

**2 RACE & ENROLLMENT**  
EQUITABLE ENROLLMENT PRACTICES THAT ACHIEVE STUDENT BODY DIVERSITY

**3 RESOURCE ALLOCATION**  
EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

**4 RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS GROUP IDENTITIES**  
ADDRESSES COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND ISSUES THAT LEAD TO IN-SCHOOL SEGREGATION, SUCH AS TRACKING

**5 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

**REPRESENTATION**  
INCLUDES TEACHER DIVERSITY & CURRICULUM

WHILE THE 5RS OF REAL INTEGRATION were developed by students in NYC in the past few years, they harken back to the so-called “Green factors” adopted by the federal courts in the 1960s and 70s for defining a fully integrated school system. The Green factors included measures of equity in facilities, student, faculty and staff assignments, transportation, and extracurricular activities. See *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 390 U.S. 936 (1968).

integratenyc.org

INTEGRATE NYC  
Youth Voice Integrates

Source: National Coalition on School Diversity.  
Retrieved from [https://www.school-diversity.org/wp-content/uploads/NCSDPB10\\_Final.pdf](https://www.school-diversity.org/wp-content/uploads/NCSDPB10_Final.pdf)

ming like restorative justice and social emotional learning. In spite of years of advocacy led by groups like the Urban Youth Collaborative, Dignity in Schools, Ya-Ya Network, Brotherhood SisterSol, and many others, he has also continued to hire more school police in lieu of making the necessary investments to support student mental health. The administration has also reversed COVID-era policies that supported school integration, like reinstating discriminatory middle school admissions screens and doubling down on policies known to perpetuate more segregation. Given these circumstances, the youth organizing landscape and leadership has had to evolve. We see young people now more than ever focusing on creating their own spaces to organize around the issues that impact them—climate change, the school-to-prison pipeline, police brutality, and housing insecurity, in addition to school segregation and many more issues—instead of looking to spaces to “fit” or “accept” young people.

## Breaking the Cycle: Adults as a Barrier to Sustainable Youth and Intergenerational Spaces

In our experience, the biggest barrier to building sustainable and meaningful youth and intergenerational spaces and movements is almost always the way adults show up. This often comes from a failure to recognize adult-youth power dynamics, and manifests in taking up too much space; over-explaining and lecturing, rather than listening to young

people; infantilizing young people; and being transactional instead of relational. These types of behaviors will immediately undermine what is often a well-intentioned desire to collaborate.

We also believe it is important to uplift tensions within the nonprofit sector. It is vital to reflect on how rules are often more imposed on young people when creating organizational structure and how youth are often held to a different standard. These issues are in no way exclusive to youth-serving nonprofits and organizations, but are ultimately toxic and counter-productive for building sustainable youth and intergenerational spaces. Anti-Blackness pervades our country and our institutions. Leaders in nonprofits, especially youth-serving organizations, need to reflect deeply on the ways anti-Black racism manifests in their organizations. We also understand that the funding landscape for youth organizations has created harmful incentives and expectations, and the continued need for youth organizations to produce a product or campaign for their funders has harmed organizing and created dynamics that have led to severe burnout. These barriers imposed by adults ultimately stem from young people’s lack of legal rights and formal political power.

## Moving from Youth Voice to Youth Power

Our time at IntegrateNYC gave us an opportunity to build relationships with like-minded organizations, and to connect school integration and desegregation to the larger education justice movement in NYC. In our current roles at NYU Metro Center, our work is centered on providing strategic support to grassroots education justice organizing groups, with particular emphasis on supporting youth organizations. We continue to provide direct support to groups like IntegrateNYC, ASAP, Youth Power Coalition, Urban Youth Collaborative, and many other youth organizations across NYC.

As the first Youth Justice Coordinator at the Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative (EJ-ROC), Aneth’s goal has been to continue creating spaces and resources for young people. Young people need more free spaces made by young people where they are not being tokenized or feel like they always have to be productive. We’ve currently been helping coordinate and co-facilitate youth power convenings with the Youth Power Coalition, where our goal is to do exactly that. Our youth justice program is focused on helping students build strong relationships, leadership skills, and serving as a hub and network for youth organizers.

These reflections have come from our experiences in numerous youth-serving organizations and over years of collaboration. The evolution of our relationship from adult-youth mentors to now colleagues has created the opportunity for both of us to reflect on our work and practice, and to refine how we do things moving forward. We offer these

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# Adult Allyship 101

By Deborah Chang and Matt Gonzales

## Big Picture Idea

We are part of an intergenerational team in which youth leaders and adult allies are **equal colleagues** who relate to one another with the awareness of how our various privileges, including age, impact one another and the work we do.

## Do's and Don'ts

<b>Do</b> Watch the space you take up. Be careful about when you speak and for how long.	<b>Don't</b> Jump in too quickly, take up a lot of time, or always speak first.
<b>Do</b> Expect youth expertise.	<b>Don't</b> Patronize.
<b>Do</b> Apologize when you inevitably make a mistake. Here's <a href="#">how to apologize appropriately</a> .	<b>Don't</b> Say "I apologize if" or try to explain your intentions. Listen first and take responsibility for the impact you had.
<b>Do</b> Give constructive feedback to youth leaders and take on parts of the work, just as you would with any colleague.	<b>Don't</b> Just step back but also, don't take over. Be a peer, not a manager.
<b>Do</b> Provide necessary context and training for young people to be informed and confident decision makers.	<b>Don't</b> Keep knowledge to yourself but also, don't confuse having knowledge with being right.

Source: Youth Power Coalition. Retrieved from <https://hub.youthpowercoalition.org/t/adult-allyship-101-dos-and-donts/716>

guiding principles and reflection questions for consideration as you approach working with young people.

**Adult Allyship 101:** When we host intergenerational spaces, we have taken on the practice of doing a short breakout for adults and students. In these spaces, we gather adults and walk through the expectations and intentions for adults in a youth space. We lean on the Adult Allyship 101 resource created with the Youth Power Coalition. We use this simple grounding to orient adults to the ways youth expect their participation. Strong adult allyship comes from building trust with your people. This happens through developing authentic and meaningful relationships with young people. Establishing authentic relationships requires adults to show up with authenticity, and to refrain from transactional dynamics. If you are only showing up to a youth space to lecture them, or to get them to do something for you, **don't**.

**Building sustainable, youth-led spaces requires trust, strong relationships, and intentional practice.**

trust, strong relationships, and intentional practice.

We find the Ladder of Youth Participation created by Hart (1992) to be a valuable tool when considering what types of youth engagement you desire. We strongly discourage any activities that fall toward the bottom of the ladder (manipulation, tokenism, and decoration). We also want to acknowledge that it takes significant work, time, and relationships to build adult and student capacity for the higher levels of the ladder, and this might mean building capacity slowly. We also remind readers that if you find your engagements fall toward the bottom of the ladder it doesn't make you a bad person or malicious. Many of the educational structures and adult-youth power dynamics reinforce the bottom of the ladder because, as stated above, our society does not actually want young people to have agency and autonomy.

We encourage readers to explore the Adult Allyship 101 resource as a starting point for how adults can use their privilege to support youth power, and how adults should commit to showing up in youth spaces. We also encourage adults to engage their younger selves in their lives. Too often we are not encouraged to tap into the things we found joy in as kids and teenagers, like art, music, and crafts. While these activities are mostly seen as "hobbies" and are less encouraged as you grow up, these are the activities that ground us and connect us to ourselves and the world around us.

**Youth Voice, Youth-led, and Youth Power:** We invite readers to deeply consider their perceptions of these words. Adults often claim to want "student voice" in their work or movement, but simply including student voice is the bare minimum of engagement and often leads to students being used as decoration or tokens for an event. We also often hear about "youth-led" organizations and movements, but we have seen this quickly revert to adult decision-making structures, especially when under organizational stress or transition. Building sustainable, youth-led spaces requires

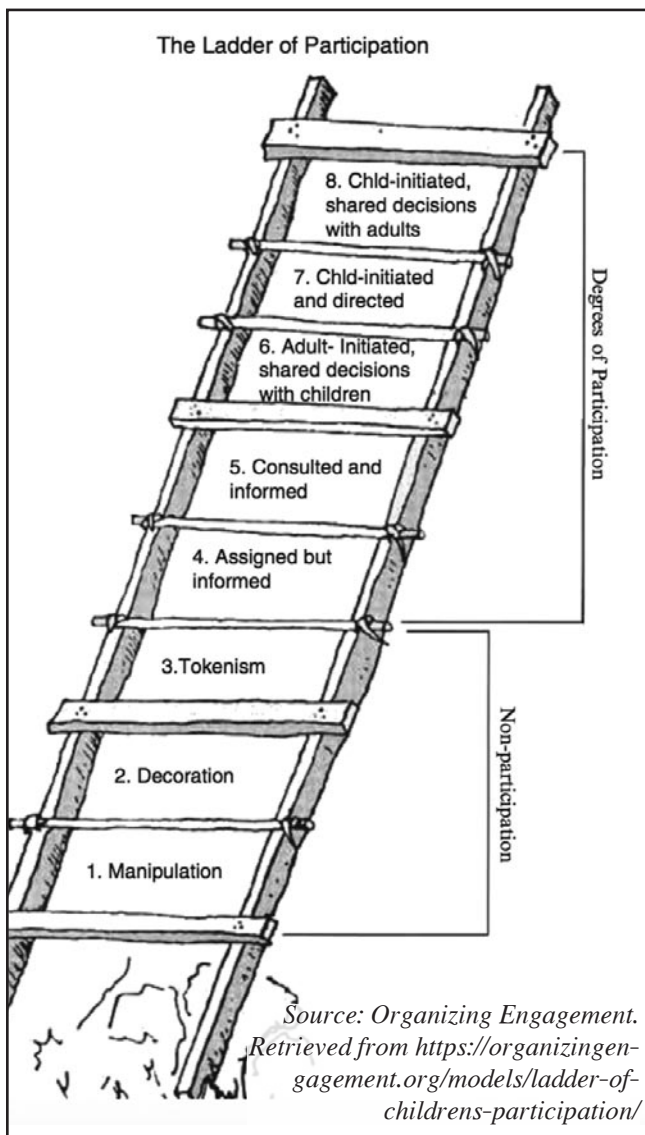
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We encourage readers to review the ladder of participation and consider where your engagement activities with youth fit into this ladder, and where you could make changes to your practice to move you and the youth in your movement up the ladder. Ultimately, we seek to move beyond the ladder of participation and youth-led structure to developing sustainable and authentic youth power. This goes beyond adult-initiated activities and events and seeks a future where young people have political and legal rights and power—and adults are able to follow their lead. Building youth power is a necessary element for strong intergenerational spaces.

**We Keep Us Safe:** Abolition is necessary for the movement. We understand this term and the associated policy implications can often intimidate adults who find discomfort in radical shifts in the status quo. We encourage readers to be curious about those tensions, explore the origins or roots of those tensions, and embrace the possibility of an alternative

future. We argue that abolition is the only rational political and framework to transform our society and our movements. Young people are deeply attuned to the concepts and ideas of abolition, and adults wishing to be stronger allies should familiarize themselves with these ideas. Abolition traces back to the origins of resistance in this country and has always been at the center of Black liberatory thought. There are countless resources to explore, but we will share a few to get started: *We Do This, 'Till We Free Us*, by Mariame Kaba; *Abolition*, by Angela Davis; *Let This Radicalize You*, by Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba; *All About Love*, by bell hooks; and *Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom*, by Derecka Purnell.

After a global pandemic, a white nationalist attempt to overthrow the government, almost daily mass shootings, climate crisis, and multiple genocides taking place before everyone's eyes, youth are hyper-aware of what is and isn't working as intended and what is and isn't serving them. Short-term, incremental, neoliberal solutions are unacceptable or unsustainable. We continue to live in a society of mass incarceration, persistent segregation, and continued exclusion and criminalization of young people. We encourage an abolitionist mindset to apply to all our movements and spaces, and believe without this adults will always be out of step with youth. Lastly, we cannot say we care about young people here, without caring about the young people everywhere, including in Palestine, Congo, and Sudan. We can't forget their voices in the movement for youth power everywhere. ■



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