

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

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## **Desegregation, Again - or the Old Assimilation/Genocidal Strategy Represent Our Resistance**

**By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD**

**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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We were like the blind  
stumbling on the stones of ignorance  
comrades!  
that's how they wanted us  
the bishop  
the companies  
the mineowners!  
heads of blacks  
empty  
and head and shoulders ready to carry a mountain.  
Ignorant  
looking at written words  
when in them  
our price was written!  
Sergio Vieira (Mozambique)  
"Four Parts for a Poem on Education"

Monsieur Dupont calls you uneducated  
because you don't know which was

the favorite grandchild of Victor Hugo.

Herr Muller has started shouting  
because you don't know the day  
(the exact one) when Bismarck died.

Your friend Mr. Smith,  
English or Yankee, I don't know,  
becomes incensed when you write *Shell*.  
(It seems that you hold back an "l"  
and that besides you pronounce it *chel*.)

O.K. So what?  
When it's your turn,  
have them say *cacarajicara*,  
and where is the Aconcagua  
and who was Sucre,  
and where on this planet  
did Marti die.

And please:  
make them always talk to you in Spanish.

-Nicolas Guillen, "problems of underdevelopment"

Poor and elderly Black residents of New Orleans *failed* to leave the city before Katrina hit town. The residents *failed* to behave responsibly and *looted* for water and food. They *failed* to survive flood waters and neglect killed almost 2,000 thousand residents of the city. In fine print, on the back page of corporate newspapers, deteriorated and neglected canal levees created the catastrophe which, no surprise, has allowed the good people, good government, and good corporations of New Orleans to *look forward, not backward* toward a *better* New Orleans!

The Wall Street crisis reflects the *failure* of predominantly Black and Brown poor and working class homeowners who purchased homes they could not afford. These citizens *failed* to be responsible and *failed* to survive the swindle of the banking industry that preyed on the working class and the elderly homeowners. And who allowed the banking industry to run amok without regulation? *Okay-sorry! Let's just move on!*

The *failure* of education in the U.S. reflects the inability of Black and Brown children to learn. A passing glance at the statistics (and what government agency prepares these statistics?) reveals a prevalence of poor health, lack of insurance, inadequate housing conditions, high incarceration rates, high murder rates, and the lowest test scores among K-12 Black and Brown American children. Many citizens believe the U.S. government has done everything in the last fifty years to help these "minorities" become successful U.S. citizens. Blacks and Browns are just simply susceptible to failure.

American schools, resegregating gradually for almost two decades, are now experiencing accelerating isolation and this will doubtless be intensified by the recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court.

So begins the *Civil Rights Project* report, "Historic Reversals, Accelerating Resegregation, and the Need for New Integration Strategies," compiled by Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee in August 2007 - and not up for an honest debate on government's mouth boxes through the U.S.

In June 2007, in the U.S. Supreme Court "handed down its first major decision on school desegregation in 12 years," according to the report. The goal of integrated schools remains of "compelling importance" *but* the means now used "voluntarily" by schools is "unconstitutional." According to the Court's decision, schools must change or abandon voluntary desegregation actions, writes Orfield. In addition, writes Orfield in the *Civil Rights Project* report, the Supreme Court struck down two voluntary desegregation plans with a majority of Justices holding that individual students may not be assigned or denied a school assignment on the basis of race in voluntary plans even if the intent is to achieve integrated schools - and despite the fact that the locally designed plans actually fostered integration.

The Court's concluding argument permits the "school districts" to "develop other plans or abandon their efforts to maintain integrated schools." Orfield continues, the Court's basic conclusion, that it was unconstitutional to take race into account in order to end segregation represented a dramatic reversal of the rulings of the civil rights era which held that race must be taken into account to the extent necessary to end racial separation.

With the Court's decision, "local and state educators have far less freedom to foster integration than they have had for the last four decades."

As Orfield argues, the trends shown in the *Civil Rights Project* report are "those of increasing isolation and profound inequality" for populations of Black and Brown children. We are talking about a U.S. Supreme Court decision - just 2 years ago!

It may be that U.S. schools were intended to remain segregated and, therefore, ultimately isolated - neglected. Incredible effort has been made in the last 20 years to *integrate* the minds of Black and Brown youth with a clutter of corporate buddies from Adidas to Wal-Mart. Along with white youths, Black and Brown students learn to text, twitter, purchase and program Blackberries, burn music for I Pods, capture images on cell phones, transfer information from one high-tech program to another. In addition, they are knowledgeable about the best in jeans, shoes, hair and nail designs. Black and Brown students have no trouble memorizing lyrics to countless rap and hip-hop tunes, and countless more young Black and Brown high school and college students file applications for positions at McDonald's and Wal-Mart where they work part-time if not full-time. Yet, these same students are *failures* in school! It may be intentional for the Court to arrive at 2007 and announce to the world that *desegregation* has been a *failure*. With a "growing number and percentage of nonwhite and impoverished students" increasing every year, maybe the Supreme Court decision is another Mission Accomplishment statement: We, the U.S. government, no longer need to worry about *pretending to educate* Black and Brown children! These young people and their chump change are no longer needed to fuel the U.S. economy.

*Are educational institutions being used to isolate feared populations for extermination?*

Extreme?

Orfield offers a vision of a future U.S.: when today's children become adults, we will be a multiracial society with no majority group." There is a far larger population of "minority" children now than there was during the Civil Rights era. According to Orfield, the birth rates among Black and Brown families have increased while, for white families, "the baby boom gave way to the baby bust."

The "major decline in the number of white students" is a frightful image to that facet of the American psyche worried that the world's *most powerful people* will be submerged in a *multiracial* U.S. *Miscegenation writ large!* As Orfield writes, "the reality is that the next generation is much less white because of the aging and small family sizes of white families and the trend is deeply affected by immigration from Latin America and Asia." It is no wonder Sheriff Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona, who does not "take orders from anyone," engages racial profiling to arrest at will Mexicans and Haitians who might be anywhere in the vicinity. Have fun humiliating *them*, then send them back to Mexico or Haiti. Power requires such demonstrations of reality!

The fear of "less white students," a no-majority-racial-hierarchy-U.S., is behind the recent campaign promoting the *failure* of Black and Brown students. The U.S. Supreme Court is just accelerating the process of isolation Black and Brown populations whose experiences with inequality reflects the repressed history of the United States. Orfield seems to have forgotten that history of repression and its link to the Manifest Destiny narrative. In Orfield's preface to the Civil Rights Project report is this statement: the U.S.'s future, he writes, depends on finding ways to prepare groups of students who have traditionally fared badly in American schools to perform at much higher levels and to prepare all young Americans to live and work in a society vastly more diverse than ever in our past.

Save the U.S. from imploding! Work to assure opportunities for Black and Brown students! Educate all children and provide resources for all to fulfill their potential in preparation for a multiracial U.S.!

*Kum Bi Ya!*

We should try *desegregation*, Orfield argues. From the Reagan era to the Clinton administration to Bush's No Child Left Behind, the government's focus is to improve "inferior segregated schools" by assuring that the "achievement of minority children in segregated schools" is equal to predominantly white schools.

This does not mean that desegregation solves all problems or that it always works...but it does mean that desegregation normally connects minority students with schools which have many potential advantages over segregated ghetto and barrio schools especially if the children are not segregated at the classroom level.

Astonishing! This is, I repeat, a report completed by the *Civil Rights Project!*

If Black and Brown children had the opportunity to be in contact with white children, if only Black and Brown children could escape their unqualified teachers and poor curriculum (according to Orfield), if only the Black and Brown children had the resources and decent school buildings, all of which is available to white children in the

U.S., then, too, Black and Brown children would achieve - what? - better test results? White life is ideal. White children are ideal. White teachers are even better! If only these children could escape the "ghettos" and the "barrios," what? - the U.S. would become a better place for all of its citizens? Well, in 2009, Black and Brown children have certainly learned they are second-class citizens!

We live in a country that boasts its ability to do anything. It designs and then sends high-tech fighter planes to bomb Iraq and Afghanistan while drones fall over the western border of Pakistan, but the U.S. cannot disappear "ghettos" and "barrios" unless it is to disappear Black and Brown residents. Kill 2 birds with one stone: Disappear the inhabitants of those dark corners and replace them with citizens living in brightly colored luxury condominiums because money cannot be spent designing high-tech schools for Black and Brown children in the "ghettos" and "barrios" nor can it be spent adequately supporting teachers at predominantly Black and Brown schools and making sure these teachers will have the same resources as those available to teachers across the tracks.

How silly the thought!

Yet, Orfield, on the other hand, cannot believe that the U.S. has not "discovered a way to make segregated schools equal" since it's "future," he argues, "will depend on the education of its surging nonwhite enrollment which already accounts for more than two students of every five." If only that "decision" by bad guys in black, a decision that "would compound educational inequality" among what Orfield calls "nonwhites," would somehow disappear!

But who believes the Supreme Court is out of step with the U.S. Empire's strategy - for *non-whites*?

What was/is the underlying strategy of *desegregated* schools? Would the goal be to "connect" a chosen few Black and Brown students with their white counterparts to work as "widget managers," to use journalist Chris Hedges term? Well-behaved widgets with no memory of their cultural heritage are without animosity toward the U.S. government and the familiar corporations.

Is this the old assimilation program in need a just a *few good* Black and Brown widget managers? "The fact of resegregation does not mean that desegregation failed and was rejected by Americans who experienced it," writes Orfield. No. *Desegregation* has worked and continues to work! Before the U.S. banking crisis, the Black middle class had been fairly faithful servants of the Empire. *Not a few "Americans" know a good Black or Brown friend, thanks to education.* A certain kind of education has been a success, for it has produced an *integrated* population among Blacks and Browns. Bush Jr. had no problems locating them! Corporations operating in Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New Orleans would insist that business before the Wall Street bust had been profitable thanks to successful Black mayors.

*Resegregation* is not the way to go if the U.S. wants a future! Not a toss up, this time and not the buses. But an intensified assimilation program may be a useful if not a necessary step to cope with a nonwhite majority!

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has

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