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*Radio BC: Uncle Sam's Haiti Thugocracy*

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A study of the No Child Left Behind program shows that "behind" means different things at Black schools than at white schools. Harvard University's Civil Rights Project has found that the supposedly strict guidelines of No Child Left Behind are being applied unequally, that schools in mostly white regions are allowed to get waivers that keep them from falling into the below standard category, while schools in Black and brown districts face the full weight of punishment for being substandard.

This story is much weightier than it might seem. The first thing that one must understand is that the Bush administration intended No Child Left Behind as a wedge to undermine public education as an institution. It was designed to make private education seem to be a great alternative – one that should be funded with public dollars. Liberals like Senator Ted Kennedy bought into the language of the bill, when they should have known that the Bush regime would interpret the language any way they saw fit. And they saw fit to punish upscale white, suburban schools as well as Black, urban schools. The white schools fought back, and got waivers from compliance with aspects of No Child Left Behind. The Black districts lacked the political power to do so, and found their facilities condemned as substandard. Thus, the inequality in the application of No Child Left Behind.

But this takes us to a more fundamental argument, one that goes back to 1954, the year that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school segregation was inherently unequal and unconstitutional. Many people fail to remember – or choose to incorrectly recall – that the thrust of the argument against segregation was that racial isolation allows whites to discriminate against Blacks without materially harming themselves. It was not that all-Black classrooms were inherently inferior, but that, once whites could put all Black children in separate schools, they could make those schools inferior. When whites chose to

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flee the cities, they were enabled to starve the school systems that were left behind – in racial isolation.

The current No Child Left Behind controversy is really about what happens in situations of racial isolation. White regions have the political clout to insulate themselves against the most egregious effects of what the Bush administration has turned into an anti-public schools weapon, the No Child Left Behind Act. Black districts don't have that kind of power. They are isolated, and cannot obtain the waivers that whites get. But it's the same old problem.

Racial isolation was the goal of segregation when it had the force of law, and remains the rule under the de facto regime that whites chose to impose after the 1954 Supreme Court ruling. Black kids don't have to go to school with white kids to learn. But if they go to all Black schools, white America has proven that they will ensure that Black children will not have an opportunity to learn, well. They remain the children who are left behind. For Radio BC, I'm Glen Ford.

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