

FORUM

Jim Crow Revisited

In the era of Brown vs. Board of Education, the landmark Supreme Court decision of May, 1954, which finally abolished the "separate but equal" principle in our public schools, liberal educators and social reformers argued that Jim Crow segregation was designed to perpetuate inequality.

A half century ago, the most glaring examples of inequality in the public school were the sharply different material conditions which separated the races, in terms of teachers' salaries, instructional materials, and the basic conditions of learning. In many Southern states, the expenditures per pupil ratio between white and black students was four to one, or even greater. Black teachers would normally receive one-half or one-third the annual salaries of white public school teachers. High schools in the Northern major cities such as Chicago or St. Louis frequently denied admission to African-Americans students, at least up to the Great Depression. Older textbooks which had been used for years by white students, were filled with outdated and even erroneous information, were distributed to black elementary and secondary school children. Black high schools, when they did exist, frequently did not have courses in physics, calculus, chemistry or foreign language. The equipment in the biological sciences was inadequate and often nonexistent. It is hardly surprising that with in this Jim Crow learning environments many African-American students lagged behind their white counterpart.

We are frequently told that Jim Crow education is a thing of the past. But a recently released study by the Harvard Project on School desegregation illustrates how far we have retreated as a society from the vision of equality and social justice articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement. In academic year 1991-92, 66 percent of all African-American students and 73 percent of all Latino students were in predominantly minority schools. This was the highest concentration of black people in segregated schools in nearly a quarter century. The largest increases in racially polarized public schools were found in Michigan, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, Tennessee, and Alabama. The lowest proportion of whites in schools attended by African-American was found in New York State. Gary Orfield, the chief researcher in the Harvard Project, was pessimistic about his findings. Orfield declared, "The civil rights impulse from the 1960s is dead in the water."

But problems surfaced almost immediately. Project Concern soon encountered severe budgetary problems. By the late 1970s, Project Concern reached 1,175 children in twelve grades. But by 1992, its enrollment had fallen to 680 children. Critics correctly called it an example of racial "tokenism." Creating a one-way street for black children into the white suburbs perpetuated the illusion that integration in the classroom was identical with academic excellence. It did nothing to transform the curriculum or dynamics of learning.

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One example of the continuing burden of racial inequality in our schools is found in Connecticut, the nation's wealthiest state. Today, the enrollment in 140 of Connecticut's 166 school districts remains 90 percent white, with 80 percent of the African-American and Latino students concentrated in 10 percent of all school systems. As of October, 1992, Hartford, the state capital and largest city, had 93.1 percent minority students in its public schools. Across the Connecticut River, East Hartford's public schools were 38.1 percent non white. But the racial percentages in Hartford's other suburbs' public schools were strikingly different: only 7.6 percent nonwhite student in New-

ington, 6.7 percent in Wethersfield, 17.2 percent in West Hartford, and 8.3 percent in Glastonbury. Statewide, African American and Latino students comprise more than one-fourth of the state's total public school enrollment.

For nearly thirty years, there were efforts to deracialize Connecticut's public schools. In 1966, a voluntary desegregation plan called "Project Concern" was initiated, with 266 black inner city students transported into the white suburbs. Project Concern sent counselors to answer the questions of black parents whose children participated in the program. By 1969, 690 children took part in Project Concern, which received Federal, state and foundation funding.

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(Manning Marable is Professor of History and Political Science, and Director of African American Studies Institute, Columbia University, New York City.)

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

By MANNING MARABLE



A Step Toward True Equality

When it comes to higher education in America, true equality between black and white students is a goal we have yet to attain. While college graduation rates among 25- to 29- year-olds nearly doubled from 1965 to 1989 for both blacks and whites, blacks remain only about half as likely as whites to have completed college. In 1989, 13 percent of blacks in this age group had graduated from college, compared with 24 percent of whites.

Our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) play a vital role in educating African Americans. While they enroll 20 percent of black college students overall, HBCUs graduate some 40 percent of all black undergraduate students in the United States.

But, for the majority of black college students who attend predominantly white college and university, there are major gaps to be bridged and obstacles to be overcome. While desegregation opened doors for many black students, we must continue to find ways to improving the educational playing field for our young people.

"The Inclusive University: A New Environment for Education" is an intriguing new essay by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' Committee on Policy for Racial Justice. This 28-person committee says the answer lies with the colleges and universities themselves. "We became convinced," they write, "that what is required is nothing less than the transformation of our universities into truly inclusive institutions, able to create and maintain an environment that is supportive of all students in search of academic attainment."

They write that the inclusive university "must not be defined merely by such concepts as multiculturalism, diversity, or openness, all subjects currently being debated inside and outside the academy. For us, the inclusive university must be an institution which accepts the responsibility of proving equal access and opportunity an accommodating environment

for all members of the academic community, regardless of racial, ethnic, social, or economic background.

The essay explores such issues as affirmative action: the role of black houses on predominantly white campuses; the exploitation of black athletes; "hate speech"; the tendency of black students toward self-segregation, and the lack of black faculty and black graduate students at white colleges and universities.

The Inclusive University also examines public and private financial assistance; community colleges and the military as access route to higher education; the importance of mentors and other support systems for black students, and the role of multicultural curricula in preparing ALL students to compete success-

CHILDWATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN



fully in our increasingly diverse society.

The blueprint described for the Inclusive University seems especially relevant today as Americans of all kinds are struggling for identity and equality while trying to understand what diversity means in their lives.

As the essay says, the black community has a vital role to play in developing a new environment for higher education and "must commit itself wholeheartedly to the mission of assuring black youth that they will have the opportunity to acquire a college education and to reap its benefits."

"Once again we must pledge ourselves jointly and individually to provide our youth who aspire to educational achievement with unequivocal support. We call on the black community to reaffirm its heritage of commitments to education and respect for learning."

(Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund, a national voice for children and a leaders of the Black Community Crusade for Children.)

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

Tony Brown's Last Column — For Awhile

This column is a hello to 1994 and a goodbye for a short time to the readers who respond to it each week. Of course, I hope you will keep up with me on public TV (PBS) each week.

I have had to make a number of changes in order to finish the manuscript for my first book. The title is No White Lies, No Black Lies, Only the Truth, and my publisher and I hope to have it in the book stores by February 1995.

That's why I must finish it by April (or May?), and I am now going around the clock — thinking, researching, writing, etc.

When I resume the column, I'll tell you all about the contents. Be assured that the readers of this column will know first-hand the who's and what's of the book and why time is running out on all of us.

I leave you at a time when another of President Clinton's sexual escapades is on the front pages of the nation's newspapers and on the lips of voters who once again are forced to questions his character and integrity.

What might really get him in legal trouble, however, is not his sex life, which to some extent is his own business, but the Whitewater S&L scandal.

The suspicion, of course, is that "in return for campaign contributions and other financial favors, Clinton used political influence to keep a shaky savings and loan afloat while it was milked of money, sticking taxpayers with the tab through federal deposit insurance." The Wall Street Journal reported, "We're talking about a \$60 million "tab" — a heist of federal money."

Of course, Bill and Hillary's actions back in Arkansas will be closely scrutinized to find out if they are the crooks it is being whispered they are. On the sex front, the American Spectator

magazine and the Los Angeles Times are not leaving much to our imagination — especially the Spectator.

By now you've heard the salacious details of oral car sex and around-the-clock sex with judge's wives, singers, TV reporters and department store clerks in David Brock's story. But a couple of items from the story never repeated in the media deal with Clinton's alleged comments on blacks.

According to the story, Clinton bragged to his Arkansas state



TONY BROWN

Syndicated Columnist

trooper security guard that it was simple to get elected and reelected governor. His strategy, Clinton is reported to have said, was simply to keep the blacks on the plantation. The rest would take care of itself.

Blacks gave him all of their votes, that amounts to 18 percent in an Arkansas state election. That automatically seals the election because "that means his (Clinton's) opponent had to get his 51 percent out of 82 percent of the white vote, the state trooper said. Clinton learned well because he manipulated the black vote nationally, and it put him into the White House."

For the more rabid details, you can write The American Spectator, P.O. Box 549, Arlington, Va. 22216-0549 for reprints of "Living with the Clintons" (\$5 each).