Integrated Housing = Integrated Schools

Integration, quality education, and attending a school near home should not be mutually exclusive goals but strict residential segregation in most parts of the country presents a formidable barrier. While a number of court cases have noted the linkage between residential segregation and segregated schools, until recently no remedies linked the two.

In 1985, a federal judge in New York concluded that the city of Yonkers had built 97.7 percent of its public housing in one corner of the city in order to keep its neighborhoods and schools segregated. He ordered the city to build 200 units of subsidized housing in predominantly white neighborhoods as a corrective measure. When the city failed to comply, the judge barred any city action to advance commercial or residential development until the new public housing is initiated.

The ruling was upheld by a federal appeals court last December which found the housing remedies "well within the proper bounds" of the court's discretion. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the case.

In Pulaski County, Arkansas, under a federal court order to achieve desegregation without extensive busing, school officials have adopted a plan to reduce residential segregation as one means of integrating the schools. They have instituted a freeze on school construction and expansion in segregated areas, including new subdivisions.

Real estate developers must attract at least 10 percent minorities to a new subdivision before the district will consider building a new school or expanding an existing one to accommodate the students moving in. To achieve the 10 percent minimum, the school district suggests that developers build a mix of housing, including homes and apartments affordable to a range of income levels, and that they advertise aggressively to minority audiences.

It is too soon to tell what effect the new policy will have. For now, the school situation is so chaotic that it has put a damper on development. The school district has also proposed that HUD reallocate $10 million earmarked for refurbishing the county's largest housing project to scattered site housing in other neighborhoods.

Michael Sussman, the attorney who represented the NAACP in the Yonkers case, suggests that cases linking segregation in schools and housing could have an "extraordinary impact." But, he cautions: "The school-housing nexus as a legal matter is as strong or as weak as the amount of community work that's gone on before you bring a lawsuit." In Yonkers, he said, there were petitions, boycotts, and "all sorts of activities that, in turn, engendered a racist response, all of which was very usable" in pressing the case.

"Another truism," he added, "is that litigation can solve some problems but not very many and unless, in fact, there is intense community organizing going along with it, you have very little chance of following up and making real whatever marginal gains you make through litigation."

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SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL from page 5

for educational improvement will reach the most neglected low-income and minority students.

Rather than perpetuate inequalities as the Reagan-backed reforms do, a strategy to truly achieve excellence in the schools would strive to:

- Equalize resources among schools and accompany the implementation of new policies or programs with adequate resources.
- Provide strong role models who demonstrate a commitment to minority achievement.
- Eliminate unnecessary ability groupings in which poor and minority students are relegated to the bottom rungs.
- Actively involve parents and community in the educational process.
- Establish an academically rigorous curriculum which addresses cultural diversity and includes the contributions and perspectives of people of color.
- Implement strong bilingual programs for all limited English proficiency students.

Beth Bernstein, Melia Franklin, Madeleine Adamson

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PRISONS AND RACIAL (IN)JUSTICE

In his recent book, *Black Robes, White Justice*, New York State Supreme Court Justice Bruce Wright recounts this incident. A police officer who shot and killed a 10 year old Black boy was asked why he considered such a young child a dangerous suspect. The officer testified: "All I saw was the color of his skin."

Across the criminal justice system, the color of one's skin appears to account not only for individual outrages but for a number of pervasive tendencies. For example, when prison reform advocate Walter Nagel examined variables that might affect state imprisonment rates, he came to some startling conclusions. He found no relationship between crime rates and imprisonment rates and no relationship between the proportion of people of color in a state and the crime rate. But he did find that states with large non-white populations have large prison populations—even if they have low crime rates. In other words, crime rates don't affect incarceration rates but race does.

While white Americans were incarcerated at a rate of about 130 per 100,000 people in 1985, the rate for Blacks was close to 800 per 100,000. Blacks comprise about 12 percent of the general population but 45 percent of the federal and state prison population (nearly double the 23 percent Blacks comprised when statistics were first kept in 1925). In addition, Blacks now make up 61 percent of incarcerated juveniles, 42 percent of the nation's prisoners on death row, 30 percent of those on probation or parole, and 41 percent of those in local jails.

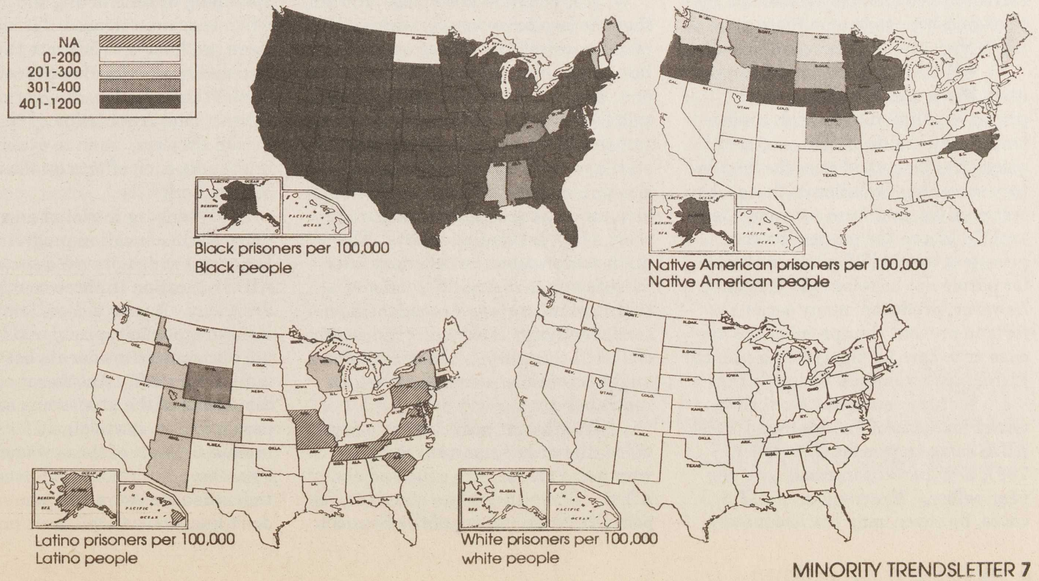
In 1986, there were more than 234,000 Black men and more than 12,000 Black women in state and federal prisons. One in 20 Black adults was in jail or prison, on probation or parole. And with an incarceration rate 25 times higher than the general population, nearly 4.5 percent of Black men in their twenties is incarcerated on any given day.

Incarceration rates for other people of color are lower than for Blacks but still severely disproportionate compared to white rates. In 1985, Latinos were imprisoned at a rate of roughly 300 per 100,000 and Native Americans at a rate of roughly 350 per 100,000—more than two-and-a-half times the rate for whites.

What explains these disproportionate figures? Crimonologist Richard Quinney advances the position that the criminal justice system is a deliberate mechanism of social control used against the lower classes. As such, the system would inevitably have a disproportionate effect on low-income communities of color. Conrad Worrill, chair of the National Black United Front, states the case in starker terms. "It's clear to me that this society has declared war on Black men," he said. "This new emphasis on imprisonment and capital punishment is just another escalation of the tactics."

Looking to the actual workings of the system for an explanation, Walter Collins, former Atlanta Coordinator of the National Moratorium on Prison Construction, argues that "Racism is inherent in a situation wherein most judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys are white, and the subjects of their maneuverings

WHAT COLOR ARE AMERICA'S PRISONS ?



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