



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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The ‘Browning’ of Public Schools

This is the 60th anniversary of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing “separate but equal” schools. And like most major anniversaries, incorrect information surfaces as purported fact, doing a disservice to the accomplishment being celebrated as well as truth itself.

In this instance, some have asserted that because of re-segregation, public schools in the South, where most African Americans live, are more segregated now than when Brown was handed down. That is simply untrue and if you want to read a comprehensive account of what has truly happened in school desegregation over the past 60 years, there is no better source than “Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat and an Uncertain Future,” published by The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

First, let’s dispense with the nonsense.

“The claims that black students in the South are no better off than they were before Brown, in terms of segregation, are obviously wrong,” the report stated. “They are ten times as likely to be in majority-white schools as they were when the Civil Rights Act passed.”

The 42-page report is packed with illuminating facts about progress made in the wake of Brown and the subsequent retrenchment. But to appreciate the significance of Brown, it is necessary to understand what our schools looked like before the court decision.



THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry

“Nine years after Brown, when President John Kennedy called for the first major civil rights act of the 20th century, 99 percent of blacks in the South were still in totally segregated schools,” the report recounted. “Virtually no whites were in historically black schools, nor were black teachers

desegregation of schools. With no progress after a year, the court ordered in 1955, in a ruling sometimes called Brown II, that desegregation had to be carried out “with all deliberate speed.”

But racial segregation was deliberate and speed was missing in action. In fact, nine years after Brown, 99 percent of Blacks in the South were still in segregated schools.

“President Lyndon Johnson powered the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act through Congress with bipartisan support, and he proceeded to enforce civil rights law more forcefully than an Administration before or since,” the report stated. “After he also led the battle

tion in the historically segregated states must be comprehensive and immediate. By 1970 Southern schools became the nation’s most integrated.”

Nationwide, the percent of Blacks attending majority White schools has declined from a high of 43.5 percent in 1988 to 23.2 percent in 2011, about the same level it was 1968. This did not happen by accident.

“Throughout the 1980s there was a strong legal attack on desegregation orders, led by the Reagan and Bush administrations’ Justice Departments and, in 1991, the Supreme Court authorized the termination of desegregation plans in the Oklahoma City (Dowell) decision. The decline in black student access has been continuous since 1991,” the report observed.

The report documents the strong connection between segregated schools and concentrated poverty.

In its recommendations section, the report observes that while education is primarily a state responsibility, the federal government also has an important role to play. Sadly, the report points out, there has not been a major national study on school desegregation, its costs and solutions since Racial Isolation in Public Schools, a report requested in 1967 by President Johnson.

Non-government organizations also have a role to play.

George E. Curry is former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, and editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA)

Some say that re-segregation means public schools in the South, where most African Americans live, are more segregated now than when Brown was handed down. False!

and administrators in white schools. For all practical purposes, it was segregation as usual or ‘segregation forever,’ as some of the South’s politicians promised. In the great majority of the several thousand southern districts nothing had been done.”

Actually, there were two Brown decisions. The first, issued in 1954, outlawed segregated public schools masquerading as “separate but equal.” The court ruled that “segregation is inherently unequal” and ordered the

for the largest federal education aid program in American history, the Southern schools changed. Faced with the dual prospect of losing federal funds if they remained segregated, as well as the threat of a Justice Department lawsuit as a result of the Civil Rights Act, almost all the districts began to desegregate. Strongly backed by the federal courts, federal civil rights officials raised desegregation requirements each year. In 1968 the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that desegrega-

Where Donald Sterling was Right ...

The NBA playoffs, the NFL draft, and elevator music with Jay Z and Beyonce are all distractions in the pursuit of occupying our attention. Among them, I found Donald Sterling’s rants to be the most intriguing. Many people want to dismiss him as a racist, disillusioned old man, but if you listened carefully a few of his points were valid. I’m always bothered by people who criticize our culture, but I think I am more bothered that there is room for criticism than I am about the person criticizing.

I assume Donald Sterling refused a PR team to script his message in his interview with Anderson Cooper or he lost focus and went off on a tangent about Magic Johnson and the Black community. Nevertheless, he seemingly dug a deeper hole for himself by referencing Johnson’s HIV status, questioning his influence in South L.A. and outright dismissing Magic’s role in helping the Black community. Sterling says, “What has he done, can you tell me, big Magic Johnson, what has he done?”

Now, I am sure we are very aware of Magic Johnson’s investments in communities of color and I don’t dispute Magic’s sincere commitment to do business in the urban neighborhoods around the country. But what I heard Donald Sterling say is Jewish people have a company for people that want to



HIP HOP UNION

Jineea Butler

borrow money at no interest, they want to give their people a fishing pole, they want to help people, if people don’t have the money they will loan it to them and if they don’t have interest one day, they will give it back. Wow!

tion? Donald Sterling is one of I’m sure millions who speak negatively about the Black community on a daily basis.

I believe what he and the rest of America are really saying is why is there so much violence and so much unemployment among Black and Brown folks? Why aren’t they spending every dime of their money to create opportunities for their people? Let’s be honest, most wealthy individuals in our community stick their noses up and walk right by if you’re not in the “in” club or if you are not on the PR agenda. They don’t have

Americans that helps other African Americans in business? Magic Johnson provides jobs that we undoubtedly need, but we also need more Magic Johnsons who own businesses to provide more jobs.

All of the wealthy African Americans hob knob with one another throughout the year. When are they going to get together and say, “Let’s just spend some money on rebuilding our community. All of them.” We only make up 14 percent of the population. With the right economic empowerment plan we can convince these young brothers and sisters to walk the path to success. The problem with our people is they know they are on their own. They know that if they are going to make it, they cannot depend on people who look like them.

The Hip Hop Union is working to change this. There are people who are willing to work together for a common goal of building wealth and ensuring that wealth continues to build among ourselves. There are so many Hip Hop Citizens who are opening businesses and if we help these businesses grow, we will have jobs to place people in.

Jineea Butler is founder of the Social Services of Hip Hop and the Hip Hop Union. Tweet her at @flygirljadyjay

What Sterling and the rest of America are really saying is why is there so much violence and so much unemployment among Black and Brown folks?

That is a completely different conversation, one that does not apply in the Black community. Magic Johnson got it right: this whole ordeal really had nothing to do with him. Sterling obviously grasping for straws while trying to lay a foundation for his perspective said something we have got to take a look at.

When the world looks at the state of the Black community, do you think they applaud our posi-

time to hear about your bright idea or how they can potentially help you. Is this because they care so much about the less fortunate and just don’t have time to acknowledge your existence? No one would be able to say such grotesque things if we were a group that looked at each other with love and expectancy in their hearts.

Why isn’t there a nationwide program designed by African