



The Pursuit of Racial and Ethnic Equality in American Public Schools: Mendez, Brown, and Beyond

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In 1954 the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education*; ten years later, Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act. These monumental changes in American law dramatically expanded educational opportunities for racial and ethnic minority children across the country. They also changed the experiences of white children, who have learned in increasingly diverse classrooms. The authors of this commemorative volume include leading scholars in law, education, and public policy, as well as important historical figures. Taken together, the chapters trace the narrative arc of school desegregation in the United States, beginning in California in the 1940s, continuing through *Brown v. Board*, the Civil Rights Act, and three important Supreme Court decisions about school desegregation and voluntary integration in 1974, 1995, and 2007. The authors also assess the status of racial and ethnic equality in education today and consider the viability of future legal and policy reform in pursuit of the goals of *Brown v. Board*. This remarkable collection of voices in conversation with one another lays the groundwork for future discussions about the relationship between law and educational equality, and ultimately for the creation of new public policy. A valuable reference for scholars and students alike, this dynamic text is an important contribution to the literature by an outstanding group of authors.

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Editorial Review

Review

In this important new collection, 26 authors reflect on the racial and ethnic discrimination that infects our public schools, some sharing their own powerful stories. Their moving first-person narratives are interwoven with commentary by some of the nation's most prominent scholars. Many books have been written about school inequality, and this volume is among the best. It is a must-read for anyone who genuinely cares about the racial and ethnic disparities that continue to plague our public schools.

—Morris Dees, Founder and Chief Trial Attorney, Southern Poverty Law Center

As the nation reflects on the state of its schools 60 years after the *Brown* decision and 50 years after the Civil Rights Act, this timely and important book will serve as a poignant reminder of the limits of the law in securing civil rights in education and why the pursuit of equity, integration, and social justice in education are goals that we must not forsake. Despite public education's many flaws, it continues to be America's most democratic and accessible institution. This book illuminates why race and racial inequality continue to determine the kind of education our children receive and what it might take to transform schools so that they truly embody and advance our democratic ideals.

—Pedro A. Noguera, Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education, New York University, and Executive Director, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

The Pursuit of Racial and Ethnic Equality in American Public Schools focuses on the landmark *Brown* decision, the federal Civil Rights Act, and the subsequent decades of struggle for equality of opportunity. Several significant themes emerge from this extraordinary, cross-disciplinary book: the contributors largely lament the rejection of metropolitan desegregation remedies, insightfully analyze the lowering of the bar to achieve unitary status, and impress upon us the significance of most voluntary desegregation plans being invalidated. The authors engage many challenging legal and policy issues, and a particular strength of the book is its emphasis on the contemporary conundrum of meeting the needs of students in majority-minority urban centers.

—Mark G. Yudof, President Emeritus and Professor of Law, University of California

This book reminds us that to address the racial and ethnic inequality that exists in schools today, we must understand the social and legal foundation on which we stand. The book's exceptional contributors trace that significant and complex history, which includes not only African American but also Latino plaintiffs, and which involves courts as well as the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. They then look to the future, carefully evaluating creative litigation and policymaking possibilities. Lawyers, educators, and policymakers all have much to learn from this remarkable book.

—Charlie Rose, former General Counsel, U.S. Department of Education

About the Author

Kristi L. Bowman is Professor of Law at Michigan State University's College of Law and a faculty associate at the MSU College of Education's Education Policy Center.

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