Race, Residential Segregation, and the Death of Democracy
Education and Myth of Postracialism

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Abstract
Since the 1930s, federal housing policies and individual practices increased the spatial separation of whites and blacks. Practices such as redlining, restrictive covenants, and discrimination in the rental and sale of housing not only led to residential segregation by race but also continue to shape Whiteness and frame narratives about what constitutes Blackness. Despite the judicial and legislative victories of the civil rights movement, including the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, residential segregation persists and in many cases has grown. Claims of a postracial society notwithstanding, the continued segregation of Blacks and Whites exacerbates racial wealth inequality, racial achievement gaps, and racial profiling. Using White racial frame and critical race theory, we explain the persistence of residential segregation amid growing ethnic diversity in the United States. We also demonstrate why current efforts to narrow racial gaps in wealth, education, and the criminal justice system have failed. Finally, we discuss several important tenets that must guide efforts to curb the epidemic of death by residential segregation in America.

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Residential segregation is no accident but is one of a host of expected outcomes of a racially stratified social system that was in place concurrent with the founding of the "democracy" of the United States. Numerous tangible consequences are associated with the forced separation of Blacks and Whites by place, including assaults on Black and Brown bodies, segregated community spaces, and disparate educational offerings for children. The assaults on communities of color (Fasching-Varner et al., 2015) take many forms, which is facilitated in part by the segregation of groups by race and may include heightened exposure to environmental hazards, relegation to underresourced schools, increased contact and surveillance by law enforcement, and even death, hence the term death by residential segregation. Examining segregation in the

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United States and the concurrent persistent racial inequalities, one might argue that the United States is in the midst of a serious crisis. We contend, however, that the phenomenon we describe as death by residential segregation is no crisis. Death by residential segregation and the threat of the endurance of residential segregation as a tool to perpetuate inequality in America poses to the principle of democracy are among the most significant consequences of a legacy of the perpetuation of the myth of White superiority and Black and Brown inferiority.

Federal housing policies and individual practices begun in the 1930s increased the spatial separation of Whites and Blacks. Practices such as redlining, restrictive covenants, and discrimination in the rental and sale of housing not only led to the residential segregation by race but also continue to shape Whiteness while framing narratives about what constitutes Blackness. Despite the judicial and legislative victories of the civil rights movement, including the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court case*, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, and the *Fair Housing Act of 1968*, residential segregation persists and has grown in many cases, creating *de facto* school resegregation in major urban settings. Claims of a postracial society from the neoliberal right and some within the neoliberal left notwithstanding, the continued segregation of Blacks and Whites exacerbates racial wealth inequality, racial achievement gaps, and racial profiling. The consequences of this segregation have lasting impacts not only on the financial state of peoples of color but on educational opportunities and life outcomes.

We use White racial frame, a tenet of systematic racism theory, to explain the persistence of residential segregation amidst growing racial ethnic diversity in the United States and demonstrate why current efforts to narrow racial and ethnic gaps on a host of sociological indicators have failed. It is our aim to show that the effects of segregation remain harmful, especially to communities of color; the effects are perpetuated in modern times by the White racial frame; and adopting a segregatory realism framework can help us shifting policies.

Our discussion begins with the role of public policies and individual practices in segregating Blacks and Whites and how the policies and practices highlighted the contradictory and tenuous state of democracy in America. We address the limited impact of the civil rights movement in bringing about social change and pushing the boundaries of democracy, followed by an analysis of critical theories, such as critical race theory and systematic racism theory, as backdrops for understanding the foundational and enduring nature of residential segregation, as well as the injury and death it causes, particularly for Black and Brown bodies in the United States. Finally, we discuss six important tenets that must guide efforts to curb the epidemic of death by residential segregation in America.

The linkages among race and ethnicity, education, residential segregation, and democracy are clear. Where one lives has far too often been, and is still determined by, one’s race or ethnicity; similarly, where one lives, in conjunction with one’s race, speaks volumes to life experiences and opportunities. People of color continue to face discrimination in the sale and rental of housing units and receive unequal treatment at virtually every stage of the home buying or rental process, including where and how housing units are advertised and where real estate agents are willing to show prospective buyers or renters housing units. Where one lives is highly related to the school one’s child or children attends. Consequently, an expected outcome of residential segregation is a segregated context for learning. Additionally, in the post-*Brown v. Board* environment, where the Supreme Court has recently used cases such as the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* to rebuke efforts at creating racially balanced schools in spite of segregation, White parents have manipulated their resources within the housing sector to ensure that their children receive the benefits of suburban schooling options where higher tax bases provide a significantly more profound investment in schools. Moreover, most teachers in the United States are members of the dominant racial group in America and seldom live in the communities they teach (https://nces.ed.gov). The cultural mismatch between predominately White teachers and their students of color is significant (Fasching-Varner, 2012). The reinvestment of urban resources used to pay teachers, however, that are then funneled into suburban segregated educational tax bases is more significant, problematically suggesting that urban families are literally being preyed upon to provide the funds necessary to maintain segregated communities. The reinvestment of urban resources used to pay teachers also contributes to segregated educational experiences that serve to widen gaps among predominately White, Black, and Brown populations. The nexus between democracy and education is clear. Dalton, Shin, and Jou (2007) have suggested that democracy may be viewed with a lens and understanding of the welfare and well being of the society, stating that “the democratic principles of political equality and participation are meaningless unless individuals have sufficient resources to meet their basic social needs” (p. 144). More directly, Bühlmann, Merkel, and Wessels (2008) have been explicit in stating that they define freedom, equality, and control as the three core principles of democracy. To qualify as a democracy, a given political system has to guarantee freedom and equality. Moreover, it has to optimize the interdependence between these two principles by means of control. Control is understood as control by the government as well as control of the government. (p. 15)

Consequently, we argue that residential segregation disproportionately punishes communities of color while privileging predominately White communities and threatens democracies and democratic interests with a lack of equilibrium between freedom (à la neoliberal capitalist market) and equality with little government intervention (regulating the outcomes and experiences of schooling). Given the role of residential segregation in shaping the racial and ethnic composition of schools, a focus on residential segregation is both timely and necessary. Such a focus works to help those interested in understanding and dismantling the inequities that so often manifest in a variety of sectors such as the
legal system, workforce and workforce development, health, housing, and education. From our perspective, the educational sector may be most telling, given that despite evidence to the contrary, education is still viewed as essential to attaining the proverbial—albeit illusive—American Dream.

**Public Policies, Individual Practices, and Racial Segregation**

How did America’s landscape become a patchwork of neighborhoods and schools segregated by race and ethnicity in the first place? Public policies and individual practices contributed to the segregation of neighborhoods and schools, particularly during the early part of the 20th century. Control of the democratic process and the continued marginalization of people of color by members of the dominant group in positions of power and influence made the segregation of neighborhoods and schools possible.

Chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs are terms that have been used to describe racially segregated geographically areas throughout the United States, particularly since the 1930s and 1940s (Farley, Schuman, Bianchi, Colasanto, & Hatchett, 1978). Prior to that time, according to Hernandez (2009),

Real estate professionals tied property values to color as a means of legitimizing racial exclusion and protecting racial boundaries. Realtors used racial categories in property valuation and promoted differential treatment as an industry standard during an early and critical stage of US suburban growth. Working from the notions that the racial integration of a neighborhood can lead to a very rapid decline in property value, and that the value of land partially depends on the racial heritage of the people living on it. New Deed housing finance programs institutionalized the use of racial categories in assigning space and allocating social goods. (p. 294)

Although Blacks and Whites lived in segregated communities prior to the 1930s, the neighborhoods were not contiguous and as concentrated as in contemporary times. Federal policies created by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) played important roles in the formation of majority minority-inner-city neighborhoods and majority-white suburban areas. The average American could not afford to own a home prior to the 1930s, as home ownership required a hefty down payment and a relatively short period of time to pay the remaining balance. FHA and HOLC made owning a home a reality for many Americans as the federal government engaged in underwriting loans, which allowed homeowners to put down about one-tenth of the value of the home and then pay the balance over several decades. FHA also created a rating system that assessed the risk level of financially investing in neighborhoods based upon the racial composition of those areas. Communities that were majority minority, or changing from majority to minority, were deemed risky investments and given the color red, hence the term redlining. Other financial institutions adopted the practice of redlining and kept hundreds of thousands of people of color from owning homes and out of the single largest period of mass asset accumulation in the 20th century. Falck (2012) described redlining as “the practice of refusing to lend because of race or other protected trait” (p. 104). The FHA’s manual explicitly stated that stable neighborhoods must be racially homogeneous.

A 1973 document from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Understanding Fair Housing, detailed the roles of state, local, and federal government in the creation of residential segregation in America. Zoning ordinances were passed in many localities in the early part of the 20th century and, despite challenges to the contrary “these racial zoning ordinances requiring block-by-block racial segregation,” were upheld in more than a dozen state courts (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1973, p. 4). By 1917, racially discriminatory zoning ordinances were declared unconstitutional with the Buchanan v. Warley ruling, but they were “maintained in many communities and legal attempts to enforce them in the courts were still being made late into the 1950s” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1973, p. 4). Racially restrictive covenants followed the practice of racial zoning ordinances.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1973) also described restrictive covenants as agreements “in which the buyer of a house promised not to see, rent, or transfer his property to families of a specific race, ethnic group, or religion” (p. 4). By 1940, over 75% of cities, such as Chicago and Los Angeles, “carried restrictive covenants barring black families” (p. 4). Covenants were enforced for decades and supported by the formation of neighborhood associations, until the Shelley v. Kraemer ruling made such covenants unconstitutional. “The patterns of residence they helped create during their heyday still persist” (p. 4). The commission’s report found that FHA was responsible for the popularization of restrictive racial covenants and noted that “as late as 1959, it was estimated that less than 2 percent of the FHA-insured housing built in the post-war housing boom had been available to minorities” (p. 5).

In addition to the federal policies, there were also other practices that limited Blacks’ access to various housing markets and concentrated far too many into a largely rental market in vertical ghettos across America’s urban landscape (Aalbers, 2006; Pager & Shepard, 2008). Hagedorn (n.d., 2006, 2008) described the use of physical violence in the formation of ghettos in Chicago during the 20th century, addressing several key periods in Chicago’s history of racial residential segregation. This discussion includes the origins of the ghetto in the first part of the 20th century, the construction of the second ghetto in the 1950s and 1960s, and the reconstruction of the Black ghetto with the creation of the Super Loop (Hagedorn, n.d.; Wilson, 2007), in addition to neoliberal economic policies which facilitated this process (Lipman, 2013).

In the first phase of what Hagedorn (n.d) described as “redivisions of space” (p. 5), Black ghettos were accomplished “by extreme violence from whites.” The Chicago race riots that occurred in 1919 were as much about contestations over space as they were about competition for jobs and the perceived threat Blacks posed as many migrated northward. Armstrong (n.d.) of Chicago Tribune explained the origins of the 1919 Chicago race riots. Armstrong observed the many ways of segregating of Blacks and Whites. Blacks and Whites in Chicago could not attend the same beaches. When Black teenager Eugene Williams crossed the
incredible boundary between the Black and White beaches, some Whites responded by throwing stones. Williams drowned, and the event set off days of rioting.

Thirty-eight people died—23 blacks and 15 whites. By the time the National Guard and a rainstorm brought the riots to an end, more than 500 people had been injured, wounded blacks outnumbering whites by a ratio of about 2–1. Several factors had heightened tension between the races. Drawn by the promise of employment and dignity, Chicago’s black population more than doubled from 1916 to 1918. Blacks had balked at joining white-controlled unions, and in the face of violence, black leaders had begun preaching self-defense instead of self-control. But, most important of all, housing in the city’s narrow “Black Belt,” which stretched south of the Loop, had not kept pace. When blacks began moving into white neighborhoods, whites responded violently, bombing 26 homes in the two years preceding the riot. (Armstrong, n.d., p. 1)

The immediate result was “the forcible containment of African Americans into a physical ghetto, sanctioned by official policy. One rationale for segregation was the prevention of crime and disorder in white ethnic neighborhoods, by keeping out ‘invading’ African Americans” (Hagedorn, n.d., p. 5). Over time, Whites in Chicago and beyond used “both legal means (variants of restrictive covenants) and illegal means (naked violence) to contain the Black Belt” (Hagedorn, n.d., p.5). Clearly, the dominant group played an important role in the creation and persistence of segregated communities directly and indirectly. Members of the dominant group with the greatest levels of power and influence were able to directly impact public policies that privileged Whites with less power and less influence over and disadvantaged people of color. Whites granted privileges by virtue of their birth into the dominant racial group in America also assisted in the creation and perpetuation of segregated communities through individual and collective practices.

The Civil Rights Movements: Legacy and Limitations
The civil rights movement was one of the most important social and demographic occurrences of the 20th century. Participants in the movement held up a mirror to the nation and challenged the leadership and citizens to live up to the values professed in some of the nation’s founding documents. Hundreds of thousands of Americans continued the struggle for human dignity and constitutional protections (Morris, 1984). The need to organize men, women, and children from virtually every corner of the nation during the 20th century should not have been necessary. The abolition of slavery and the adoption of the 14th Amendment should have been sufficient to ensure that Blacks would no longer live in bondage nor would they be treated as second-class citizens. Unfortunately, Blacks still endured slavery by another name and continued to experience unequal treatment in all areas of life, including with respect to the neighborhoods and schools to which they had access (Blackmon, 2008). Between the end of the Civil War and the early part of the 20th century, thousands of Blacks were lynched (Equal Justice Initiative, n.d.). Black males, and later Black women, continued to face barriers to voting, which ranged from literacy tests to poll taxes to threats of and actual violence (Cascio & Washington, 2014). Blacks were kept out of good paying union jobs and relegated to urban ghettos as many moved from the South to the North and points westward (Trotter, 1991). Black parents sent their children to underresourced schools because there were few alternatives. As the nation was dragged into an economic depression in the 1920s and the 1930s, Blacks were not only hit harder than their White counterparts but kept out of “New Deals” aimed at pulling the nation out of an economic ditch (Gordon, 2005). Nonetheless, blacks fought valiantly against discrimination at home and abroad, often in segregated units (Vanderpool, 2008). Blacks entertained the nation as musicians before segregated audiences or as athletes in segregated sports (Martin, 2015b). Even after Jackie Robinson integrated modern-day baseball, he and Blacks throughout the nation continued to face the degradation that came along with living in a society that was separate and unequal (Martin, 2014). Blacks fought to integrate schools and declared victory with the landmark Brown v. Board of Education v. Topeka, Kansas (Kinshasa, 2006). Thousands joined in protest at the senseless killing of 14-year-old Emmett Till, who was accused of and killed for whistling at a White woman (Beauchamp, 2005). Blacks throughout the country, especially in places like Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Montgomery, Alabama, organized and participated in boycotts that forced the integration of public transportation in many cities (Kenrick, 2009). A quarter of a million people marched on Washington for jobs and freedom and listened to a young leader deliver a powerful speech about America reneging on a 100-year-old promise and celebrated as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed into law (Jones, 2013). People from all walks of life set out to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, named for a confederate soldier and member of the Ku Klux Klan, only to be met with a display of hate unimaginable (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2006). Bloody Sunday paved the way for the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Rodriguez, 2003). Efforts to curb discrimination in the renting and selling of housing led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Brumfield, 2009). Critiques of the dominant nonviolent strategy were ongoing and came from individuals and organizations within and outside the movement (Ryan, 2002). In general, the movement focused on using the courts to secure what some have called a second Reconstruction and to change the hearts and minds of ardent segregationist like George Wallace, Strom Thurman, and Bull Connor (Kalk, 1994).

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s had a profound impact on society. The legislative victories changed how some individuals and institutions operated relative to race. Signs and acts explicitly marginalizing people of color were replaced by seemingly race-neutral measures. Bonilla-Silva described the more covert manifestations of racism that replaced overt acts of racial antagonism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). In short, the civil rights movement changed the manifestations of racism but not the racialized social structure, thus the institutionalization of inequality persists (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Martin, 2013). Evidence of the symbolic victories of the civil rights movement is found in comparisons of
Blacks and Whites on a host of indicators, including with respect to voting rights, racial differences in mass incarceration, racial wealth inequality, black asset poverty, the achievement and educational attainment gaps, and racial profiling, just to name a few (Alexander, 2012; Bankston & Caldas, 2002; Bell, 1992; Davis, 2014; Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014; Feagin, 2010; Wheary, Shapiro, Draut, & Meschede, 2008).

Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 put measures into place to make “one man, one vote” a reality, sections of the act are under attack today and efforts to disenfranchise black voters and other voters of color continue (Liptak, 2013). Study after study reveals that Blacks continue to face discrimination in mortgage lending and are victims of predatory lending, reverse redlining, and other financial schemes (Carey, 2010; Chen 2012; Gallagher, 2014). Jails and prisons are bursting at the seams with Black and Brown men, some of whom were ushered into the criminal justice system by what some scholars have called a school-to-prison pipeline (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014; Gary, 2013; Horsford & Powell, 2016; Noguera, 2003). Schools are still racially segregated more than 60 years after the landmark Supreme Court decision involving Linda Brown and several other defendants, and in the age of “educational reform,” majority-minority schools are deemed failing, and philanthrocapitalists see such goals as an opportunity to increase their bottom line and feel good about themselves (Martin, 2015a). While the number of largely Black men found hanging from trees declined over the years, the number of unarmed Black men killed by White officers, or by others with membership in the dominant racial groups, few of whom rarely see the inside of a courtroom or a jail, is far too great (Fasching-Varner, et al., 2014; Fasching-Varner, et al., 2015).

The names of Black males, most of whom were unarmed, such as Trayvon Martin, Ramarley Graham, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, John Crawford, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Kevin Matthews, Leroy Browning, Cornelius Brown, Philando Castile, Terence Crutcher, are all too familiar (Sands, 2014). These males were clearly judged by the color of their skin and not by the content of their character as King and others hoped; even in death, the character of these unarmed men was questioned and often (mis)represented in such a way as to justify their deaths—even blame them for causing their own deaths—in the court of public opinion and in the eyes of the largely White judiciary (Bouie, 2014).

The very skin they lived in impacted the outcome of their encounters with members of the dominant racial group and the reactions to each of their killings highlighted the continued existence of two nations: one White and one Black. While we highlight and exemplify our point here through the discussion of Black unarmed males given the sheer volume and seemingly never ending list of names, the same has been true for women and transgendered people of color. Also to consider are the names and stories we do not know because they have not ended in death at police and quasi-police hands. The point here, however, is that living in segregated communities and attending segregated schools often means that there is little contact between members of the dominant group and members of subordinate groups. Sadly, the only exposure that some Americans have to other groups, especially people of color, is what they see in the mass media and mass media representations often follow a narrative that is not reflective of the full spectrum of experiences of people of color; rather, the dominant narrative often tells a story of a race of Black people who lack motivation, have a propensity toward violence, and are looking for a handout.

The backlash against the civil rights movement and the coopting of the language of the movement by Reagan Republicans led to the perpetuation of the myth of postracialism and the adoption of color blind coded language into the contemporary American lexicon (Lum, 2009; Tesler & Sears, 2010). The divisions of space and schools by race across the country allowed for the continued use of the law as a critical form of social control that has ensured the death of the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of Black and Brown people, as well as the literal death of Black and Brown bodies in contemporary times and into the foreseeable future (Jones, 2014).

Racial residential segregation continues to play a central role in explaining the likelihood of death and violence against black and brown bodies in America. The continued association of space with race that increased in the years following the Civil War directly and indirectly leads to fewer life chances and opportunities for people of color and leads to violence against and the death of Black and Brown bodies through exposure to environmental factors (Acevedo-Garcia, 2001; Morello-Frosch & Jesdale, 2006); unfair police policies, which are made possible by the segregation of groups by race and often by race and class (Capers, 2004); limited access to the wealth accumulation processes (Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, 2013); and relegation to schools that lead to the underground economy, correctional facilities, or low-wage work (Martin, 2015a).

**Systematic Racism: White Racial Frame**

We draw on Feagin’s (2010) systematic racism theory with a particular focus on the tenet: *white racial frame*. White racial frame provides an analytic by which we might understand the nature of racial privilege and marginalization with respect to the role of the dominant racial group in creating and perpetuating racial residential segregation and consequently school segregation as well as to identify some tenets for forward movement that could stop or at least curb the figurative and literal deaths experienced by people of color in America. White racial frame (Feagin, 2010) is a three-tiered framework for understanding Whiteness with particular attention to the beliefs that White people have in their virtuousity, White people’s use of stereotypes, and the role that narratives from within communities of color play in addressing the previously mentioned aspects.

According to Feagin (2010), White people deploy a number of self-ascribed markers in framing themselves, and their Whiteness, as virtuous with the perception that racism and its ills should slide off of them much like water off a well-oiled pan. Understanding one’s self as moral, just, kind, and incapable of being racist, consequently, leads to a perception that racism is the problem of a select few and not a systemic and systematic approach to being. We understand that some White people have been willing to
acknowledge that racism exists and is a significant problem, but very few White people will take responsibility for, or acknowledge how they benefit, a phenomenon that Bonilla-Silva (2014) called racism without racists. Part of the challenge is that members of the dominant racial group in America can look to the racially charged comments of people like former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling or David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan as examples of racism but not see the privileges outlined by scholar Peggy McIntosh in “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” in a similar light. In Louisiana, this allows many Whites to disavow David Duke on the one hand and on the other attend a popular prison rodeo at the state penitentiary, Angola, where inmates of the former slave plantation carry Confederate flags and provide entertainment for the largely White audience.

Relative to residential and school segregation, many Whites point to legislative and legal actions, such as Brown v. Board, to demonstrate the de jure principle that, effectively, segregation is illegal, and consequently any appearance of segregation or separation in modern times is simply coincidence and not a product of racism. Drawing on this first aspect of White racial frame, many Whites justify the purchase of housing in suburban settings and the gentrification of urban settings creating exclusionary housing that literally prices out people from historically marginalized groups. Similarly, members of the dominant group justify sending their children to private and parochial schools or the overrepresentation of their children in programs for gifted students that extract resources from traditional public schools, which are often majority-minority or where children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds attend because they have few alternatives. We understand that financial resources, including inheritance, ability to obtain high salary jobs, and manipulation of the higher educational market, allow Whites to effectively leverage resources to avoid cohabitating near Black and Brown people who do not meet the financial profile of comfort created to embed their beliefs about minorities, without having to articulate those beliefs directly. That is, White people need not say they engage in housing or school segregation or articulate any direct belief against people of color, hence maintaining their virtue as Whites, while cleverly manipulating their resources to live out the belief they do not wish to articulate. And the consequences are significant as Whites use their living situation segregated from people of color to provide better schooling situations and to draw higher tax bases to re-invest. One market sector where this is particularly true is among teachers. Many teachers in urban settings live in suburban and/or segregated areas, thus reinvesting their tax contributions from their urban employment into their suburban settings. Failing to recognize that racism’s continuing impact creates disparities in opportunities, manifested in the housing choices and practices in which whites engage, creates differences that work to segregate (Fasching-Varner, 2012). The failure to recognize the continuing impact of racism creates and perpetuates a climate and an ideology that literally puts Black and Brown bodies at risk for an early death and places limits on available opportunity structures. This climate and ideology are particularly evident in the effort (by a group made up predominately of middle-class Whites) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, of unincorporated areas of the city to secede and form their own city for the purpose of circumventing laws regarding the creation of school districts. The East Baton Rouge School District is predominately Black, and many students qualify for free or reduced lunch; the proposed City of St. George would be predominately White with a resident base from more affluent backgrounds.

Negative stereotyping of people of color, the second aspect of White racial frame, is important as a mechanism to understand the inner workings of Whiteness and the roles the dominant group plays in the creation and perpetuation of residential and school segregation. Interactions, practices, and policies are informed by beliefs (Martin, Fasching-Varner, & Quinn, Jackson, 2014). So while White people justify their housing and schooling, for example, as personal choices and not manifestations of racism, the underlayer reveals a harsher surface embedded with racist ideology and stereotypes. Stereotypes become informed over many years through implicitly and explicitly based interactions with those in the circle of influence over White people (friends, family, colleagues, etc.). As Feagin (2010) highlighted, “everyday interactions of friends and relatives . . . to . . . make up the ‘muscles and tendons that make the bones of structural racism move’” (p. 94).

Based on stereotypes about people and communities of color, many White people lay, or attempt to lay, influence over each other with respect to the framing of so-called White or black spaces within communities. The approach is to draw on stereotypes of the “aggressive black male,” out-of-control violence within communities of color, and “bad schools” as mechanisms to motivate White people to buy and invest resources in already affluent communities or in spaces where gentrification is taking place. A real, simple set of examples happened to one of the authors of this piece, a white male, in each and every academic job he has had. During the search processes and upon hire, White colleagues worked to lay influence over where he should live and used coded racists mechanisms to communicate stereotypes. One White female colleague—we will call her Fanny—said to him, “Look, I know those zip codes have affordable property, but do you really want be around ‘that’ type of environment?” The White male colleague said, “What do you mean?” and Fanny responded, “Well, there are lots of, uhmmm, well there is a lot of crime, and people that aren’t like us, you know, I mean people that do lots of bad things.” The two zip codes, ironically, were the first two places where one of the authors of this article lived, and one of those zip codes is where another author currently lives. To understand the media and community discourse about those neighborhoods, the demographics are significantly shaped by people of color, the average income is significantly lower than those in other parts of the city, and it seems that the police, newspapers, and media outlets have intentionally identified those zip codes as crime riddled and dangerous. As a result, few White people are willing to move into the nongentrified parts of those zip codes, creating racial isolation. Interestingly, those neighborhoods also lack good public transportation, and many spaces lack sidewalks and safe passages for residents, suggesting that the community itself wants to keep the people in those neighborhoods homebound and contained to smaller areas of influence, manifesting particular stereotypes that
keep predominately White and predominately Black communities apart. For those moving to the community with children, these narratives are intensified by statements such as “the neighborhood school is ‘failing,’ so you should really think twice about moving in.” In urban neighborhoods, the concept of failing schools is used as a mechanism of segregation as those with resources would not willingly send their children to a school framed as failing.

Feagin (2010) identified counter-story as one mechanism that might address the perniciousness of Whiteness and, in our case, as it relates to housing and schooling. Counter-narrative positions, for example, may frame people of color positively by highlighting their accomplishments while also creating a space to acknowledge unjust practices. Counter-narratives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) frame common-sense understandings of phenomenon shrouded within racist ideologies by exposing the absurdity of the dominant narrative to begin with—when done well, the surrealistic nature of the counter-narrative exposes the absurdity inherent to the default ideological position of domination. To exply a strong counter-narrative, we might posit, as an example, a type of counter-narrative that flips the common-narrative that exists about people and communities of color toward a new narrative understanding framed around White lenders, White police, White educators, and White politicians as particularly dangerous and threatening to the life and vitality of communities. As a side note, the narrative associated with needing to fear police is in fact not much of a counter-narrative but the de facto reality for many urban communities. To continue our counter-narrative example, we might—instead of criminalizing behavior within communities of color and locking many Black males behind bars and thus creating a negative financial impact for families of color—seek to arrest, prosecute, and hold accountable predatory lenders who use redlining to hike interest rates on people of color, White police who have made the killing of Black males sport, White educators such as state superintendents who use predatory testing and false accountability to threaten students and teachers, and white politicians who refuse to invest across communities in ways that ensure the health and happiness of all of the residents. Segregation of people of color in the post-Brown era has created a wealth market for those employed in the educational, housing, and prison industrial complexes (Fasching-Varnier et al., 2014); at the same time, when people of color are suffering from economic hardships created by segregated schooling, housing, and law enforcements, White people across a variety of sectors are getting rich. A counter-narrative might speculate on what would happen if those responsible for the segregation had their assets seized and reinvested into the communities that have been the victims of their profiteering. In the mythical postracial world in which we live, communities of color are blamed for the very plight whose creation they had little influence over. Counter-narrative, while not opening up a necessarily viable pathway, does in fact open a space for dialogue about how to move forward in a less absurd way not centered on holding people of color accountable for the systems their White oppressors have created, as was suggested by Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign.

“Segregatory Realism”: Some Working Tenets

We conclude this article with working tenets of “segregatory realism,” a realism that may address the segregation across sectors, especially housing and education, and that might serve thought interested in conceptualizing and renegotiating the ways in which reform is approached. Previously we, along with other colleagues (Fasching-Varnier et al., 2014; Fasching-Varnier, Martin, Mitchell, Bennett-Haron, & Daneshdaseh, 2017), called for an “educational and penal realism” to approach education and legal reforms’ failures to address inequity. Segregatory realism, a concept we are developing here below, draws in earnest from the same constructs and we might understand these tenets as principles to move the conversation forward. We offer that keeping the following tenets at the forefront of our understanding of race relations, both past and present, is a pathway that might help the nation move closer toward achieving the robust democracy that is in the imagination of many Americans, especially members of the dominant group, but eludes us as a nation and is far from what people of color have historically experienced and is still far from what people of color experience in contemporary times. Articulating that we live in a democracy or insisting upon a belief that we live in a democracy does not explicate the realities of oppression experienced by so many in this country. These tenets of segregatory realism are, therefore, foundational and important within the larger context that questions the very concept of democracy. While we present these in a linear order, they are not intended to be read, understood, or enacted in a linear manner.

a. Residential segregation is in line with the design and the demands of the society. There is, consequently, no crisis in housing or education. In the post–civil rights era, the dominant racial group needed to find new mechanisms to continue reaping benefits gained by segregation while complying with the law. The creation of suburbs and their later expansion—coupled with gentrification (or buying up property in an undesirable area, redoing the housing, and reselling beyond the community members means); predatory lending practices in the housing sector; magnet schools; suburban schooling systems; and schools-within-schools designed to segregate populations of students while holding true to the letter of desegregation laws—is a mechanism by which we might understand that segregation is the desire of White people, who control the economic and social structures in the United States.

Wells (2015) concurred with our assessment of the connectedness of residential segregation and school segregation and the dangers associated with justifications for decisions made by members of the dominant group that appear race-neutral but are in actuality turning the clock back with respect to racial progress. Wells (2015) stated:

The irony is that we know from our scholarly research that White gentrifiers state that they choose the city over the suburbs in order to raise their children in more multicultural communities and enroll them in racially and socioeconomically diverse schools. But if current housing trends continue, urban schools in certain gentrifying pockets will come to more closely resemble suburban
Those of us with social justice lenses see the inequities, inequities that are intentional. We are in a better position to fight against segregation when we can be honest that segregation is the desire among majority populations.

b. Community spaces where segregation occurs, such as housing and schools, will never serve or properly address the interests of the most marginalized and underrepresented of society, but they will do so for those from dominant and overrepresented factions of society. There is scant evidence that lenders, police, politicians, and others in the dominant group with both power and influence have any intention of rebalancing the distribution and organization of communities to empower communities of color. On the contrary, there are volumes of evidence to suggest that when given the opportunity, investment in “reforming” community spaces is only done when the “reform” stands to financially or socially benefit white communities. The destruction of largely low-income communities and communities of color, including the destruction that has occurred in communities that serve White interests as evidenced in the historic construction of highways, commercial property development, lack of access to supermarkets, gas stations, and public transport have continued despite a Supreme Court mandate to end segregation in housing and in education, for examples.

c. Economic imperatives are the central driving force in decisions to sort and separate the marginalized from the oppressors in housing and in schools. The economy is the driving force behind the maintenance of oppression through segregation. The existence of poverty in many urban centers that affects many communities of color is not without beneficiaries. The “problems” and “dangers” in those communities have created increased police forces, social workers, school psychologists, and legal networks to intimidate residents of color and “development” projects that seek to widen the pockets of those in power without materially changing the conditions by which people of color live. All “reform” efforts can be traced to money trails that support already dominant groups.

d. Segregation and profiting from segregation allow for human sacrifice; populations of color and those of poor socio-economic standing, consequently, are continually offered up in service to benefit the economic interests of Whites. So long as those in power can, and do, benefit (particularly financially) from segregation in such areas as housing and in education, we must seriously consider the threat that targets people of color, or in other words, we must seriously consider the threat of death by residential segregation. We have seen an onslaught of people of color in predominately segregated neighborhoods killed in cold blood by police officers or placed in segregated schools subject to disciplinary policies that mean a visit to the principal’s office but now lead to handcuffs and the courthouse. These extrajudicial killings and policing of majority-minority schools are among the occurrences that signal a particular disposability approach that White communities enact toward people of color. In the business of profiting from misery (Martin et al., 2014), White communities have repeatedly sacrificed the well being and, as we see it, too often the lives of people of color.

e. Even if equality were achievable, the term suggests that the dominant group is still the valued people. Equality is a ruse aimed at distracting the populous by furthering assimilationist principles geared toward the privileged. Some might argue that the way forward for people of color is through assimilation. An assimilation perspective suggests that equality be based in likeness to Whiteness, or achieved by acting like Whites, and that it is the pathway to work against the conditions by which people of color currently live. We ask, “What likeness are we trying to achieve?” If likeness to the people who have perpetrated systematic marginalization is the goal, we are in real danger, as it never acknowledges the pain and misery caused by dominant groups. Equality is both insulting and assaultive as “equality only serves as an imaginative allure—a fantasy, and this is the reality that must be conceptually disengaged” (Curry, 2008, p. 42).

f. Equity is the only course of action that can counterbalance the racist underpinnings of segregation. Equity creates solutions that intentionally engage differences to remedy past treatment. Any solution forward cannot simply involve walking away from hundreds of years of oppression based on the simplistic notion of equality. Equity is unapologetic in working to divert and reinvest financial, emotional, and collective resources, in disproportion, to counteract what had already been in place. As suggested earlier, what if the federal government systematically targeted those who have profited from the misery of communities of color relative to segregation and the seized assets of those involved, while imprisoning them for lengthy sentences for their actions against communities of color? What if communities of color then used the seized assets, autonomous of White interests, to effect changes in their communities that benefitted them and brought us, through equity, toward the ideal of equality one day? Without equity, however, equality is a childish illusion. Communities of color should not be asked to ignore their intentional abuse and mistreatment. A counter-narrative here suggests that it is time to take from those in power and redistribute resources, opportunities, and experiences to those without power as a means of addressing the common concern we should have as social justice engaged scholars; we believe it is time to imagine a new society without the oppression and marginalization of those in power and with privilege. Acknowledging our actions will do little until we experience first hand the misery we have created for others. Similarly, those who have been marginalized by segregation practices need to experience the power and benefits of privilege. While marginalized peoples have had a great vantage point to see what privilege looks like, no new societal bargain of resource distribution is likely.

Conclusion

Residential segregation is arguably one of the most misunderstood concepts in our society and, at the same time, is one of the most deadly for people of color and to the principle and structure of democracy in the United States. Persistent residential segregation places communities of colors at risk for physical harm,
discriminatory public policies, and private practices. The isolation of communities of color from members of the dominant group often means that communities of color are subject to more environmental hazards, aggressive policing tactics, underresourced schools, greater stressors that lead to lower life expectancies as well as the exacerbation of existing chronic health issues, limited life chances and opportunities, and ultimately even greater premature death, relative to Whites. Where Black and Brown people and Whites live does not occur by happenstance, nor is it primarily the result of personal or group preferences. The implications of where one lives affects and impacts access to services, food, safety, and most important educational opportunities; the impact on educational opportunities is an aspect we hope to see lively engagement with in response to this article, particularly as it relates to White supremacy and Black/Brown marginalization. Where we live is symbolic of how we define and how we defend Whiteness and the ways in which we dehumanize, criminalize, and engage in assaults on Brown and Black bodies.

One of the greatest features of any democracy can also serve as the greatest threat to any democracy. The ability of the majority to determine the life chances and life opportunities of minority or subordinate groups can lead to the creation of institutional and individual policies such as residential segregation that can result in enormous benefits for members of the dominant group and enormous disadvantages for members of minority groups. Within a democracy often lie the values, rights, and privileges that, if leveraged, can result in a sea change. Sadly, the revolutionary and transformative changes that are required are rarely achieved, and instead, minority groups must instead live with what scholar Bell called “peaks of progress,” which in the end only occur because they serve the interest of those in positions of power and authority (Bell, 1992, p.373). Bell’s discussion of interest convergence reminds us that change or reform only occurs when it benefits those in positions of power and influence.

We are quite aware that what we are arguing and advocating for requires imagining our society quite differently than the current reality of our racial contract (Mills, 1997). We remain convinced, though, that being unapologetic and persistent in articulating counter-approaches may help us work toward an equitable end. Our articulation of a democracy, of our society, as it should be and not as it is will likely annoy and bother some people, but “continued struggle can bring about unexpected benefits and gains that in themselves justify continued endeavor. The fight in itself has meaning and should give us hope for the future” (Bell, 1992, 378).

References


