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The Resegregation of Schools: Race and Education in the Twenty-First Century

Jamel K. Donnor

College of William and Mary, jkdonnor@wm.edu

Adrienne D. Dixson

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ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

The Resegregation of Schools

Education and Race in
the Twenty-First Century

Edited by
Jamel K. Donnor and
Adrienne D. Dixson

ROUTLEDGE



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Education and Race in
the Twenty-First Century

**Edited by Jamel K. Donnor
and Adrienne D. Dixon**

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Introduction

Jamel K. Donnor and Adrienne D. Dixson

The historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 not only ushered in a great deal of change regarding inequality in America's public schools, but its supporters also hoped that *Brown* would lead to the abolishment of Jim Crow. Indeed, *Brown* formally ended *de jure* racial segregation in public spaces, however, the massive opposition by southern Whites and their political allies ensured that the complete dismantling of Jim Crow would not occur. For those individuals who described themselves as “post-*Brown* babies”—the first generation of students to attend “fully” desegregated schools—the vestiges of Jim Crow remain, albeit subtly. As the editors of this volume and self-identified “post-*Brown* babies,” we, along with the contributing authors, have witnessed first-hand experiences on how America's public schools have failed to live up to the hope and promise of the *Brown* decision. As such, the impetus of this book is not only inspired by our scholarly and research interests on educational equity, race, and education policy, but also our commitment to making public schools adhere to the promise of *Brown* and ensure education is the “great equalizer.”

Taking a more nuanced approach, this book seeks to expand the discourse on racial inequality in education beyond where and with whom students should attend school. Because access to a quality education remains the primary mechanism for improving one's life chances in the United States, a “good education,” particularly for children of color, is essential to individual and collective well-being. Far from being neutral sites, public schools are reflections of American society. The product of a constellation of factors, including institutionalized practices, disparate experiences, and biased policy decisions; opportunities; resources; and outcomes in education, unfortunately, are inextricably linked to race, ability, gender, and class, or what we describe as “the new resegregation.” In short, the resegregation of America's public schools is best understood as a cumulative process and multilayered phenomenon. Hence, we believe that the discourse on education, equity, and race must explain what access to a quality education *means* in the 21st century.

For many, the election of Barack Obama as the first African American President of the United States signifies that the United States has entered a “post-racial” epoch, where race is no longer a determinant in shaping one’s access to productive opportunities and quality resources. As a way to speak back to this popular narrative, we wanted to examine the ways that inequality in education reflects a confluence of factors, i.e., race, class and gender (among others) that creates disparate experiences and outcomes for students of color. Indeed, it is only by situating public schools and the students who attend them within a larger sociopolitical context that a more nuanced perspective can be offered that not only addresses the cumulative interplay among ideological, spatial, and organizational barriers impacting education, but more importantly, provides innovative and meaningful solutions.

From our perspective, critical theories of race and social inequality, such as Critical Race Theory (CRT), offer a meaningful way to explore the aforementioned complexities without minimizing the central role race continues to play in American society at large, and education in particular. It is our hope that this book, like the *Brown* decision, contributes to the field of education and the understanding of the public at large, of the contemporary challenges facing schools and students of color. Along with explaining the complex ways education programs, policies, and opportunities for students of color are resisted, thwarted, or appropriated by some to maintain the status quo, the chapters in this edited volume consider the ways material and immaterial variables such as ideology, power, gender, and place of residence influence decisions in public education that disproportionately affect the learning opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for students of color.

Lastly, by explaining the sophisticated ways in which education is impacted by race, geography, class, gender, and social policy, the contributors to this edited volume not only interrogate why the education quality for the majority of students of color in America remains fundamentally unequal, these chapters also remind us that America has failed to fully realize the potential of the *Brown* decision.