



Government Regulations Block Child from Attending School of Choice Because He's Black

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It's a story that's almost impossible to believe in 2016. Edmund Lee, a third-grader attending a charter school in St. Louis, recently learned that he would no longer be able to attend his school after his family moved to St. Louis County. Their new location isn't the problem — other students from that area are allowed to attend Gateway Science Academy. He can't attend his school of choice because he's black:

Certain rules in place allow some county residents the opportunity to attend a city charter school, but they must live in a district participating in transfer programs, and can not be an African-American.

“When I read the guidelines I was in shock,” said La’Shieka White, Edmund’s mother. “I was crying.”

School officials say their hands are tied because of regulations created decades ago as part of a desegregation settlement.

School officials would like to continue letting Edmund attend, but say there's nothing they can do. Edmund's family started a petition asking state lawmakers to take action. Meanwhile, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued a statement washing their hands of the situation, pointing to a legal settlement following a court ruling decades ago:

Even if the family's new St. Louis County school district participated in the transfer program, the student would still not be able to transfer. This situation stems from the 1980 U.S. Court of Appeals ruling that the St. Louis City and County schools were maintaining segregated systems. In 1983, the schools reached a Desegregation Settlement Agreement allowing African American students to transfer into primarily white suburban school districts and for non-African American students to attend St. Louis schools. The goal was to try to balance the racial makeup of the city and county schools.

You might think little Edmund would find relief from the Obama administration, but don't hold your breath. Although the President leaped at the opportunity to invite Clock Boy to the White House, he's not likely to lend a hand here. You see, the Obama administration has actually tried using a decades-old desegregation case in Louisiana to keep black kids from using vouchers to

escape failing district schools, an action even the Washington Post condemned as “bewildering, if not downright perverse.” Fortunately, the 5th Circuit rejected the Obama administration’s lawsuit, calling it “disingenuous.”

It’s understandable that the government had to take certain actions to reverse decades of vicious racial segregation in schools. But now a combination of bureaucratic inertia and left-wing hostility to parental choice threatens to do what the desegregation orders were intended to prevent: block black students’ access to quality schools.

It’s long past time for the government to stop standing the schoolhouse door.

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