



## **Why are schools still segregated 60 years after Brown v. Board of Education?**

Jason Russell  
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It has been over six decades since the Supreme Court ruled states establishing separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional. Yet school segregation persists today, because most students are assigned schools based on their address, and many neighborhoods are still racially homogeneous.

More than four in five traditional public schools in the country have a student population in which a majority of students are the same race, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Sixty percent of traditional public schools are majority white, while 15 percent are majority Hispanic and 9 percent are majority black.

The libertarian Cato Institute hosted an event Wednesday to bring attention to the ongoing segregation problem and discuss solutions.

Moderator Gerard Robinson, a resident fellow in education policy at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, pointed out that 2014 was the first time a majority of public school students were nonwhite. He added that four out of five public school students attend the school to which they're assigned.

Much of the event focused on the importance of desegregating neighborhoods in order to desegregate schools, with differing ideas on how to accomplish that.

"The only way to address school segregation for the many children ... who live in highly concentrated ghettos and large metropolitan areas in this country is by residential desegregation," said Richard Rothstein from the liberal Economic Policy Institute. Rothstein researched why residential areas are so highly segregated, and found that government policy is mostly to blame. "The segregation of our major metropolitan areas in this country today was created by explicit, racially-conscious, public policy on the part of the federal, state, and local governments."

Rothstein pointed out several examples in history of the federal government building public housing that was explicitly either for whites or blacks. He suggested a radical policy in which the federal government purchases homes at market rates in largely white communities and sells them at a steep discount to black families.

Neal McCluskey, director of Cato's Center for Educational Freedom, was hesitant to endorse any race-based housing subsidies, like those suggested by Rothstein. McCluskey noted that two wrongs don't make a right, and said, "There [are] also many inherent difficulties of saying 'Well, which African-American families should qualify for assistance or lower prices?' ... All African-Americans, like all people of any race, creed, or color, are ultimately individuals with unique backgrounds, unique needs and circumstances. That becomes a problem of how do you justly give out these remedies."

Instead, McCluskey suggested that school choice could be helpful in resolving segregation. "Choice could, and it seems does, help to facilitate urban renewal, and that in turn could begin to transform one's blighted areas, which tend to be overwhelmingly low-income, and there's a correlation between income and race," McCluskey said. "School choice may be able to provide a significant part of the solution to this very vexing, seemingly eternal, American problem."

Bartley Danielsen, a finance and real estate professor at North Carolina State, explained how charter schools and school choice in urban areas would start to roll back segregation by attracting new families to live in previously impoverished areas. "With the right set of policies, change could happen very quickly," Danielsen said.