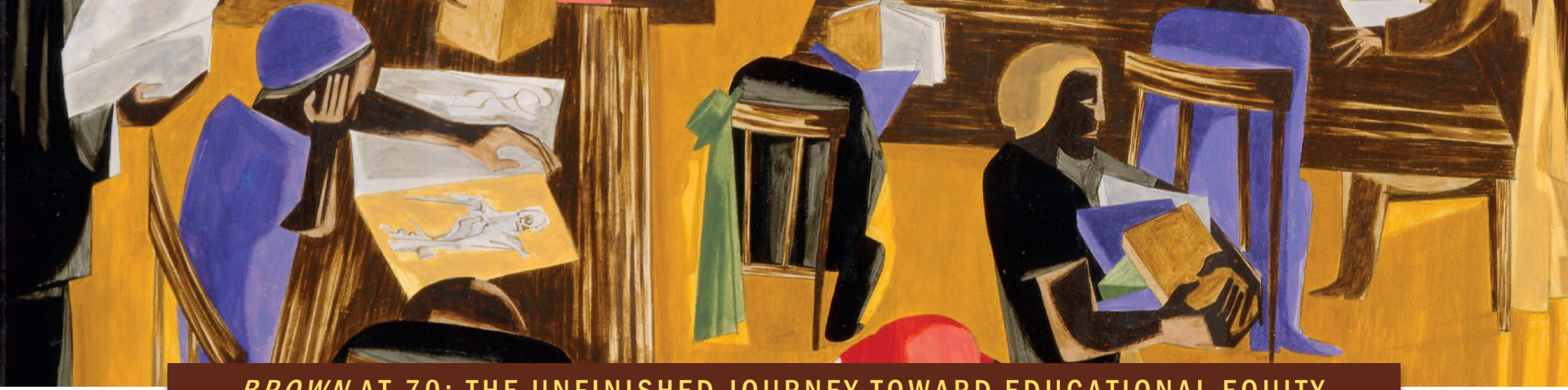

BROWN AT 70: THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY TOWARD EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Progress, Pushback, and Policies That Matter

JANUARY 27, 2025

LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE

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National Coalition On Education Equity

Opening Remarks

Na’ilah Nasir

President
Spencer Foundation

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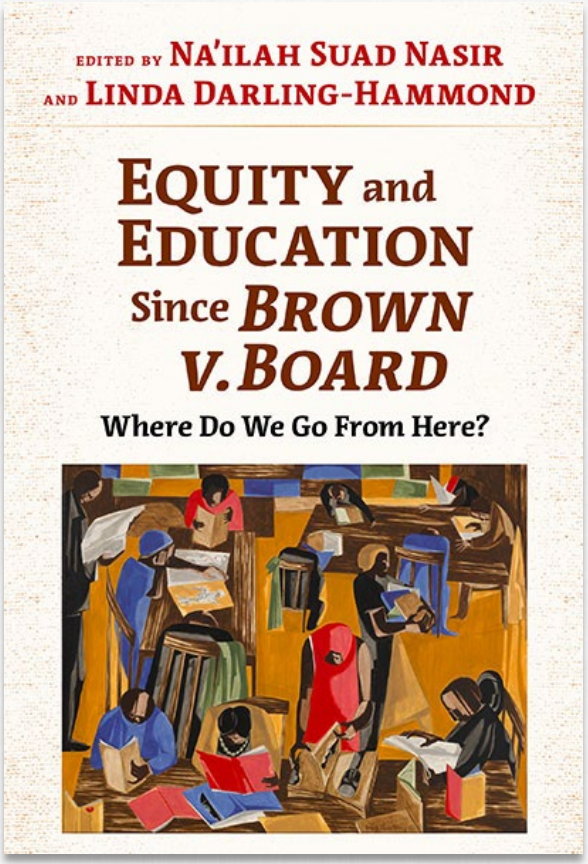

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Panelists

Linda Darling-Hammond

President and CEO
Learning Policy Institute

Professor of Education Emeritus
Stanford University

Sean Darling-Hammond

Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences

University of California, Berkeley

Joaquín Noguera

Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Administration

Loyola Marymount University

Pedro A. Noguera

Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean

University of Southern California Rossier School of Education

Panelist

Linda Darling-Hammond

President and CEO,
Learning Policy Institute

Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus,
Stanford University

Brown at 70

Progress, Pushback, and Policies that Matter

After *Brown* ….

- Massive Resistance
- Closure of Public Schools to Avoid Integration
- Grudging Desegregation
- Firing of Black educators

But Ultimately Equity Policy Made a Difference: 1960s and 1970s

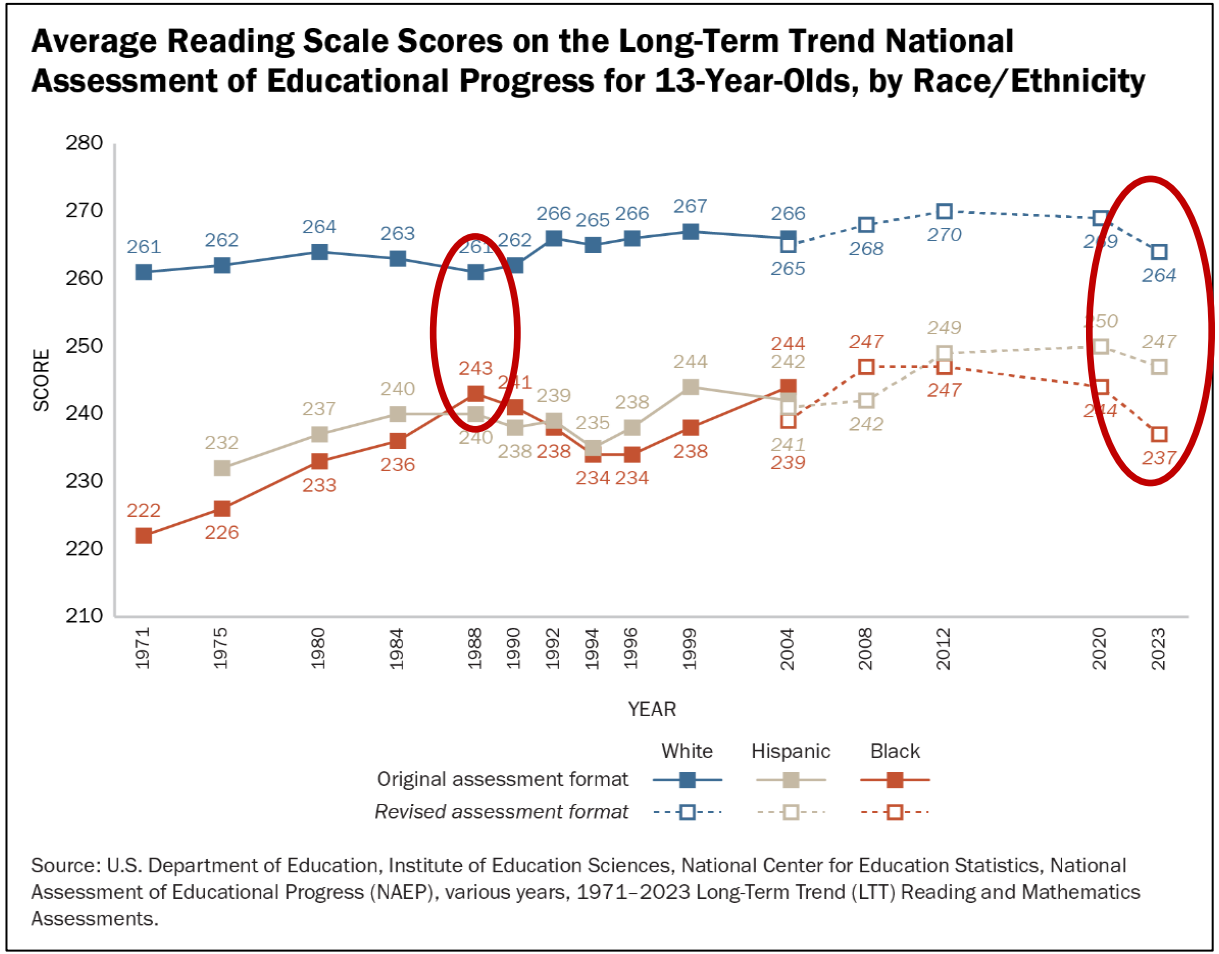
Education Investments

- Desegregation litigation and federal assistance
- State school finance reforms & federal investments
  - Elementary & Secondary Education Act
  - Education for All Handicapped Children Act
  - Teacher corps; Loan forgiveness for teachers
  - Higher education scholarships (Pell and others)

War on Poverty / Great Society Programs:

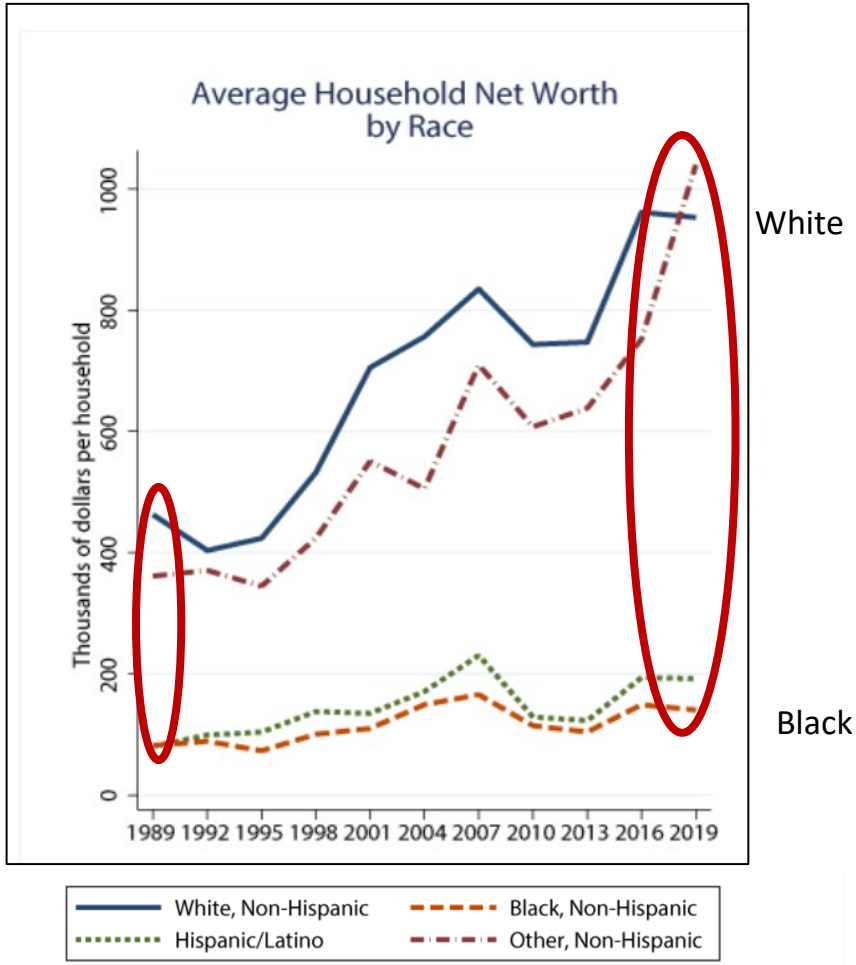
- Health and social services, family and child supports
- Employment and training programs
- Housing and urban renewal investments
- Summer school and jobs for youth

The Black-White achievement gap was halved during the 1960s and 70s with the War on Poverty & investments in educational equity. Elimination of these policies in the 1980s reopened the achievement gap, which is now > 30% larger than it was 35 years ago.



WEALTH DISPARITIES HAVE GROWN SINCE THE 1980'S

Wealth has grown for white households. Black households have experienced almost no growth in wealth. About 40% of Black children live in poverty, which is accompanied by food and housing insecurity, toxic and unsafe environments, and too often, segregated and underfunded schools.

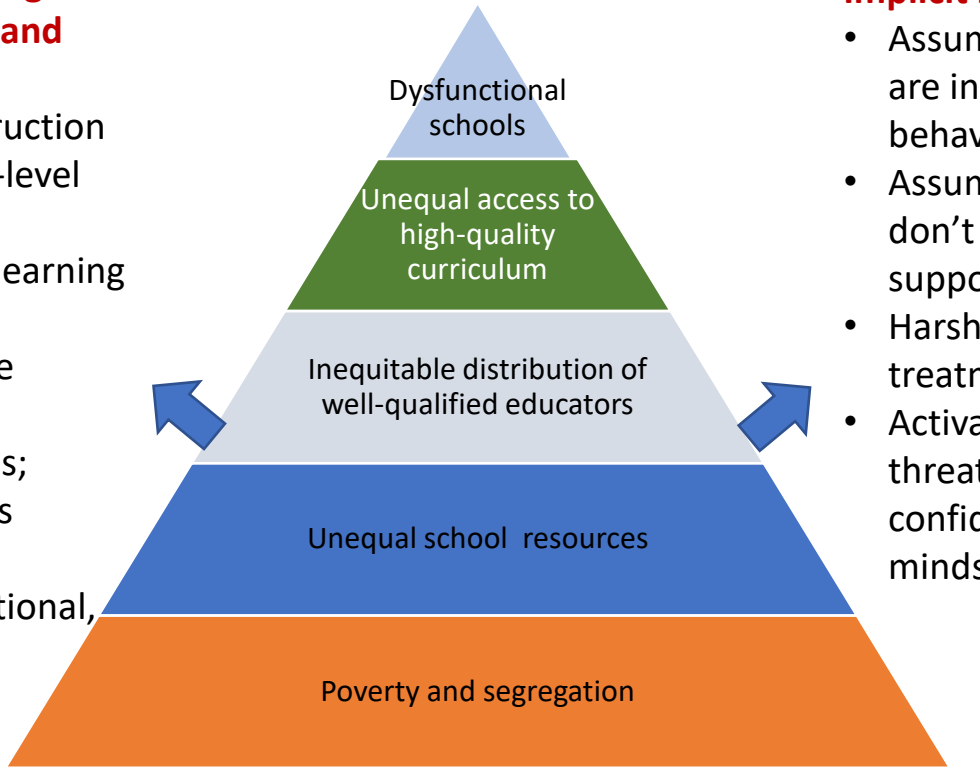


Source: Aladangady, A. & Forde, A. (2021). *Wealth inequality and the racial wealth gap.* FEDS Notes. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve. https://doi.org/10.17016/2380-7172.2861

The Anatomy of Inequality

Inadequate understanding of learning, development, and pedagogy leads to:

- Poorly organized instruction often focused on low-level skills
- Few tools to scaffold learning or respond to needs
- Exclusionary discipline
- Inability to teach heterogeneous classes; hence tracking follows
- Failure to understand students' social, emotional, and academic needs



Implicit bias adds:

- Assumptions that students are incapable and poorly behaved
- Assumptions that families don't care and will not support their children
- Harsh, discriminatory treatment
- Activation of stereotype threat, undermining confidence, growth mindset, & performance

Policies that Matter

- School finance reforms that increase funding for low-income students improve educational attainment, later employment & wages (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico. 2016)
- High-quality preschool boosts achievement and reduces special education placements and grade retention. (Heckman; Wechsler et al.,)
- Having fully prepared, experienced, National Board Certified teachers accounts for larger achievement gains than race & parent education combined. [Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor]
- Having a black teacher for even one year significantly increases achievement, graduation rates, and college going for black students [Dee; Grissom & Egalite]
- Being in a community school with wraparound supports improves achievement & graduation rates [Meier, Oakes, & Daniel, 2017]
- Social-emotional supports & restorative practices improve achievement, graduation, and mental health (Darling-Hammond & Fronius et al.)

In every case, Black students gain most when they have access to these resources.

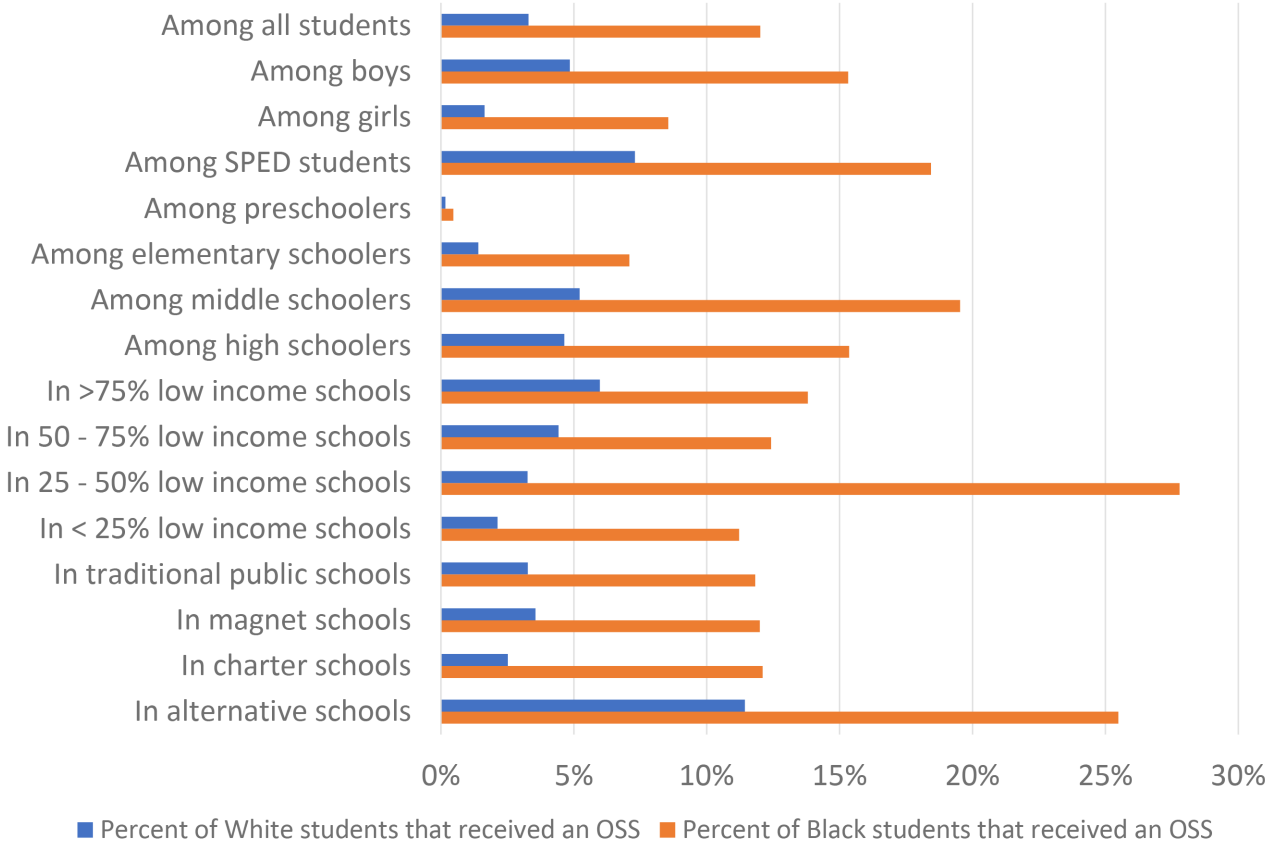
Panelist

Sean Darling-Hammond

Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences,
University of California, Berkeley

"Black students have a higher out-of-school suspension rate than White students. This is true for every kind of student, and in every kind of school."

Any Way You Slice it: Black Students are Excluded at Higher Rates

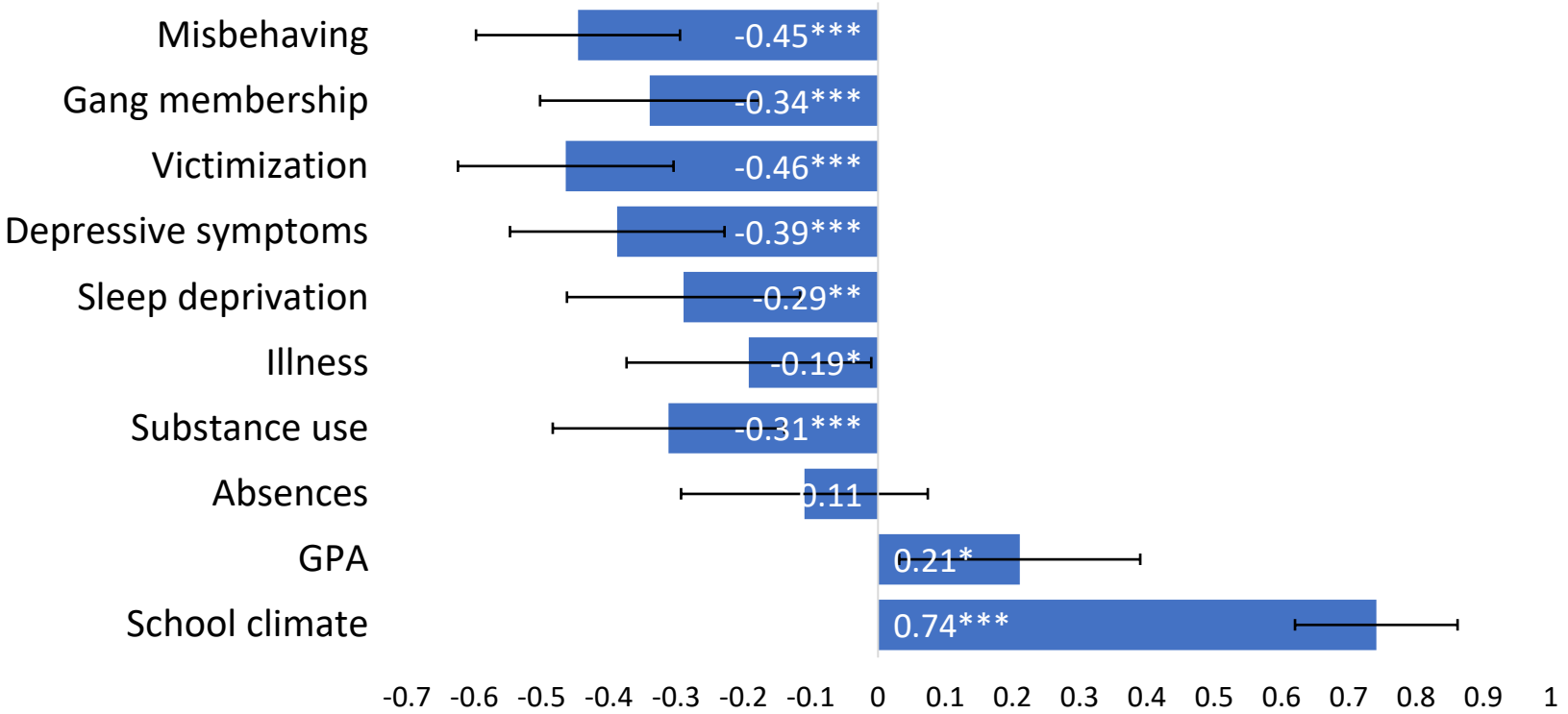


“What are restorative practices?”

- Community building circles
- Learning introspection, communication, and conflict resolution skills
- Re-entry circles

- Informal repair conversations
- Formal restorative conferences where community members collaborate to resolve conflicts and repair harm

"Schools that adopt restorative practices, like conflict resolution, see improvements in mental health, behavioral, academic, and school climate outcomes, for *all* students and particularly for Blacks students."



Panelist

Pedro Noguera

Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean,
University of Southern California
Rossier School of Education

Where do we go from here:

Assessing the landscape of education and prospects for the future, 70 years after Brown

Pedro A. Noguera
Dean and Distinguished Professor
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California

70 years after Brown: Still separate and unequal

Today, the average Black student is most likely to attend a school where 49 percent of the students are Black. For Latinx students, the patterns are even more extreme, with 57 percent of Latinx students attending schools where the majority of students are Latinx (UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2014)

"School segregation levels are not at pre-*Brown* levels, but they are high and have been rising steadily since the late 1980s...In most large districts, school segregation has increased while residential segregation and racial economic inequality have declined, and our findings indicate that policy choices – not demographic changes – are driving the increase." **Sean Reardon**, the Professor of Poverty and Inequality in Education, Stanford University

Education is more likely to reproduce inequality than to expand opportunity.

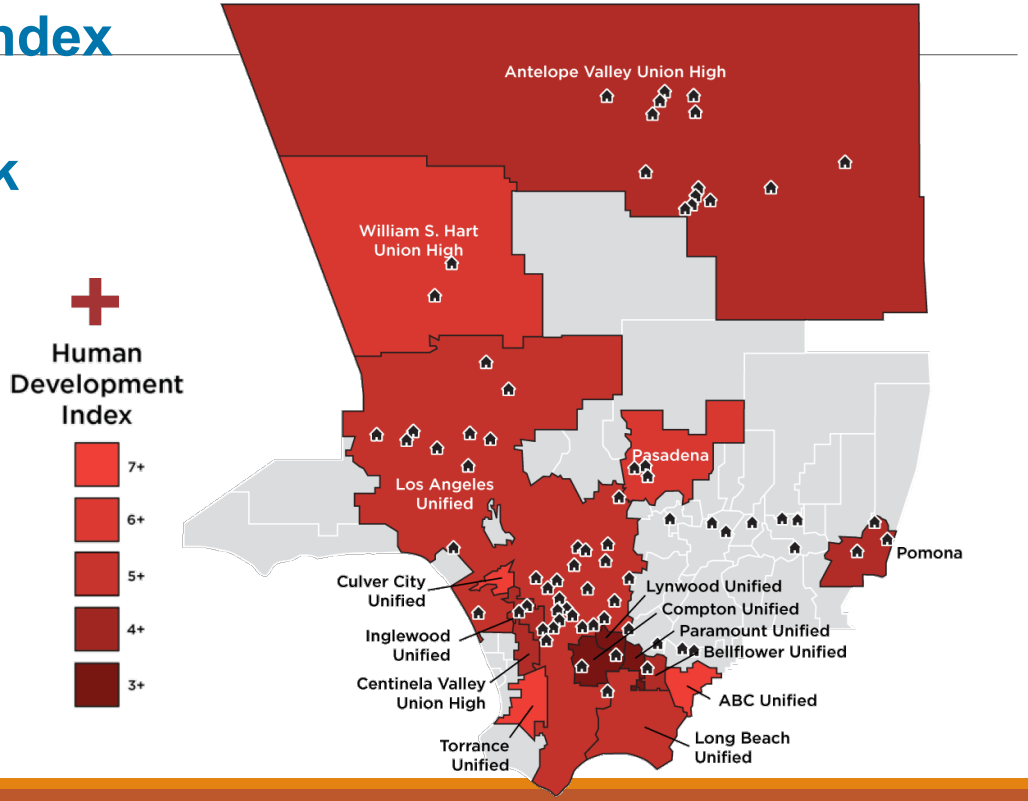
The murder of George Floyd Triggered a Movement. We are now in the midst of a backlash.

Structural Racism Perpetuates Racial Inequality

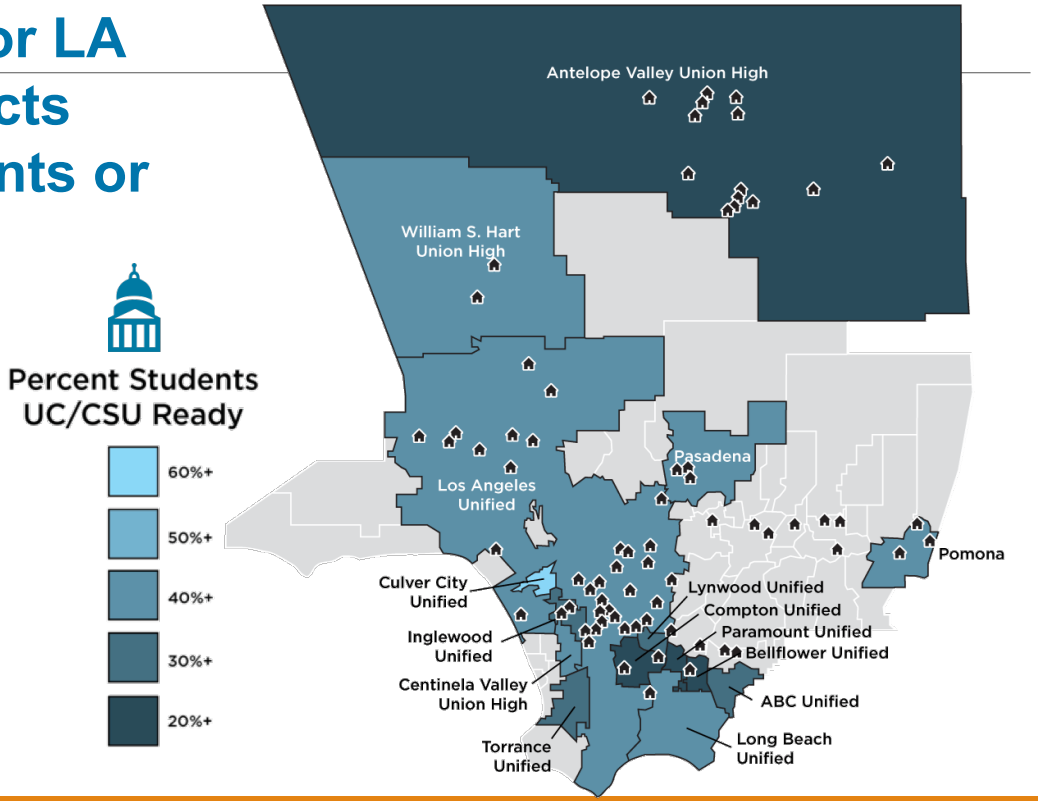
- Structural racism is rooted in the history of racial domination, discrimination and ongoing marginalization of people of color
- Our economy reinforces racial disparities in education, health, income, etc.
- Environmental racism is a byproduct of structural racism and often results in racial disparities in health outcomes
- Racism without racists – even operative in institutions when people of color and liberals hold positions of authority, intention is irrelevant.

The Geography of Opportunity: Place Matters

Human Development Index for LA County School Districts with 800 Black Students or More



UC/CSU Readiness for LA County School Districts with 800 Black Students or More



Troubling Signs for Black Students in LA

- Despite significant decline in Black student population several indicators show stagnant achievement and increased risks. Why?
- Rising graduation rates but no improvement in college eligibility. Why?
- Why has education and social policy failed to address this problem?

Education policy has ignored environmental factors that shape academic outcomes

- Adverse childhood experiences
  - Homelessness
  - Foster care placement
  - Incarcerated parent
  - Asthma
  - Trauma

Schools and colleges can't address extreme disadvantage without a strategy

- Schools and colleges that serve Black students and others who are vulnerable must have resources and partnerships to respond to needs.
  - Health, childcare, employment, transportation
- Educators must tap into and cultivate collective agency to make a difference.

3 schools show us how: King-Drew, GALA and Compton Early College

Where do we go from here?

In the Trump era we will need a variety of strategies to address the educational needs of our communities:

- Legal challenges when civil rights are curtailed

- Grassroots strategies to support families and schools, to build alliances with other groups

- Institution building strategies aimed at furthering our interests during period of overt hostility

- Black think tanks aimed at promoting resistance and self-reliance

We must learn from the post-Reconstruction period to devise a strategy

Thank You!

Pedro A. Noguera
Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean

Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California

https://rossier.usc.edu/
@PedroANoguera | @USCRossier

Panelist

Joaquín Noguera

Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Administration, Loyola Marymount University

Where do we go from here?

Assessing the limits and possibilities of education for Black people in the U.S., 70 years after *Brown*.

Dr. Joaquín M.S. Noguera

Loyola Marymount University

Department of Educational Leadership & Administration

01.27.25

SCHOOL BEGINS. 1899

UNCLE SAM *(to his new class in Civilization)*.— Now, children, you've got to learn these lessons whether you want to or no!

Schools as Sites of Possibility, but also Institutions of Injustice

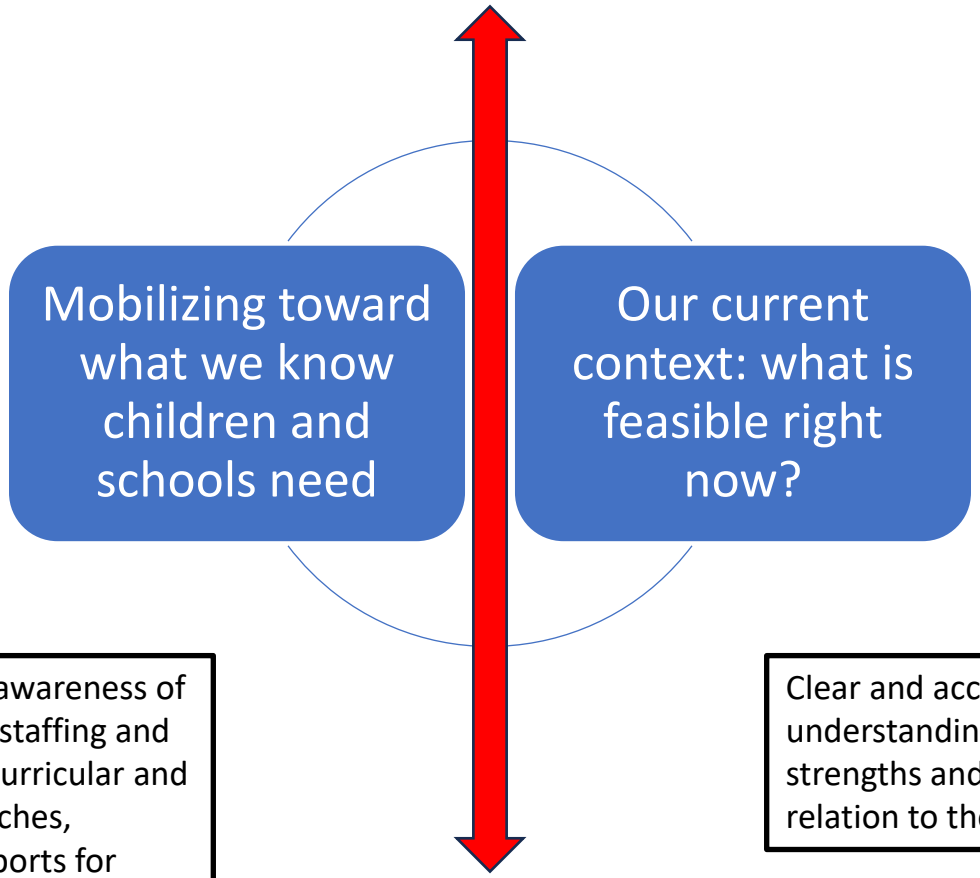
"The **paradox of education** is precisely this--that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated" (Baldwin, 1963).

- Structural Violence does not exist in a vacuum. It co-exists with other forms of violence (Galtung, 1969).

  - **Structural Violence**: The systematic ways in which some groups are hindered from equal access to opportunities to goods and services that enable the fulfillment of basic human needs
  - **Cultural Violence**: The existence of prevailing or prominent social norms that make direct or structural violence seem natural, right, or at least acceptable
  - **Direct Violence**: Behaviors that serve to threaten life itself and/or diminish one's ability to meet basic human needs

All three shape schools and manifest within them. **What does protection from each look like for schools?**

What should we be doing and what should we expect?



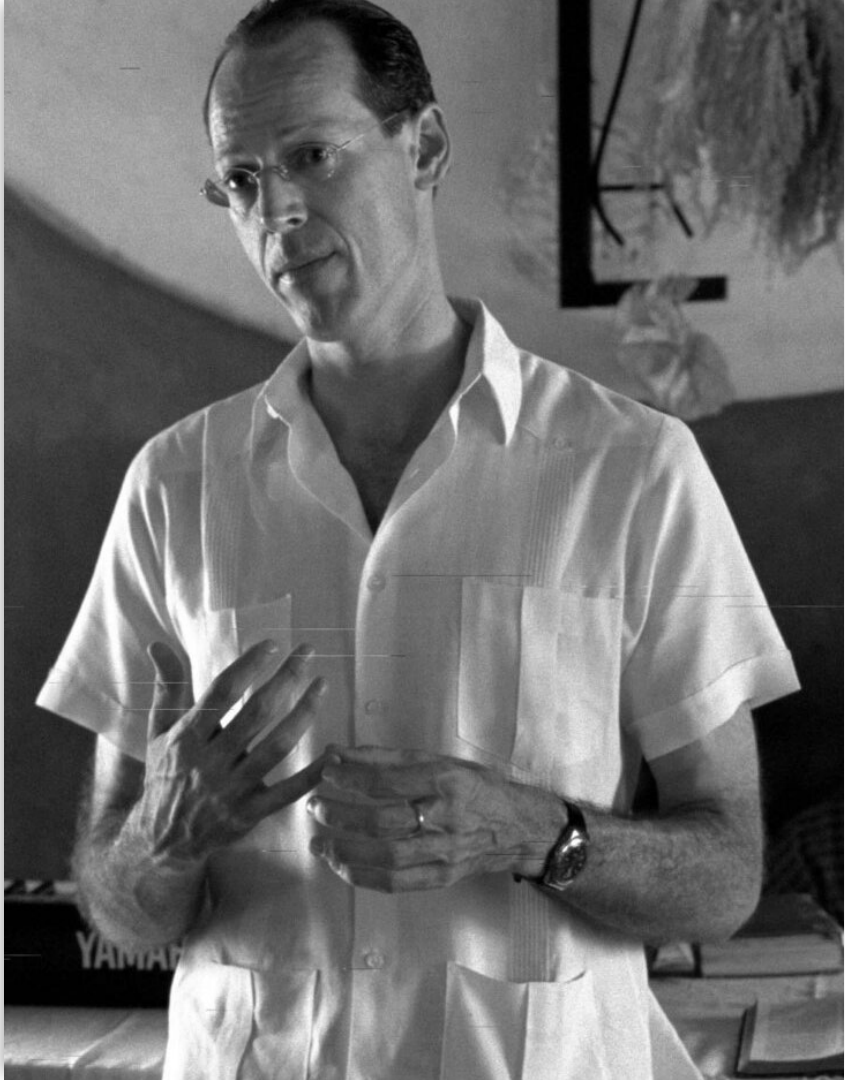
Focus on and build awareness of material resources, staffing and educator capacity, curricular and pedagogical approaches, developmental supports for students and families.

Clear and accurate understanding of our strengths and limitations in relation to those needs.

Paul Farmer on Structural Violence and Forgetting

(from *An Anthropology of Structural Violence* (Farmer, 2004)

"Erasing history is perhaps the most common explanatory sleight-of-hand relied upon by the architects of structural violence. Erasure or distortion of history is part of the process of desocialization necessary for the emergence of hegemonic accounts of what happened and why" (p. 308)



What is on the horizon

- Masters level educational leadership students in a DEI course:
  - 9 out of 12 students did not know what Brown v Board was
  - 1 of the 3 who had was comfortable explaining its significance.

- DEI and Affirmative Action are only properly understood when viewed as outcomes of the civil rights movement, and therefore inherently tied to our civil rights and the need to correct our rights not being honored, not some sort of hand-out.

"Rescinding a 60-year-old executive order prohibiting discrimination in federal hiring and federal contracting is not anti-DEI, it is anti-civil rights."

A Case for Repurposing Schools

What is needed to ***repurpose*** our schools into **community responsive** learning centers of growth and **well-being**?

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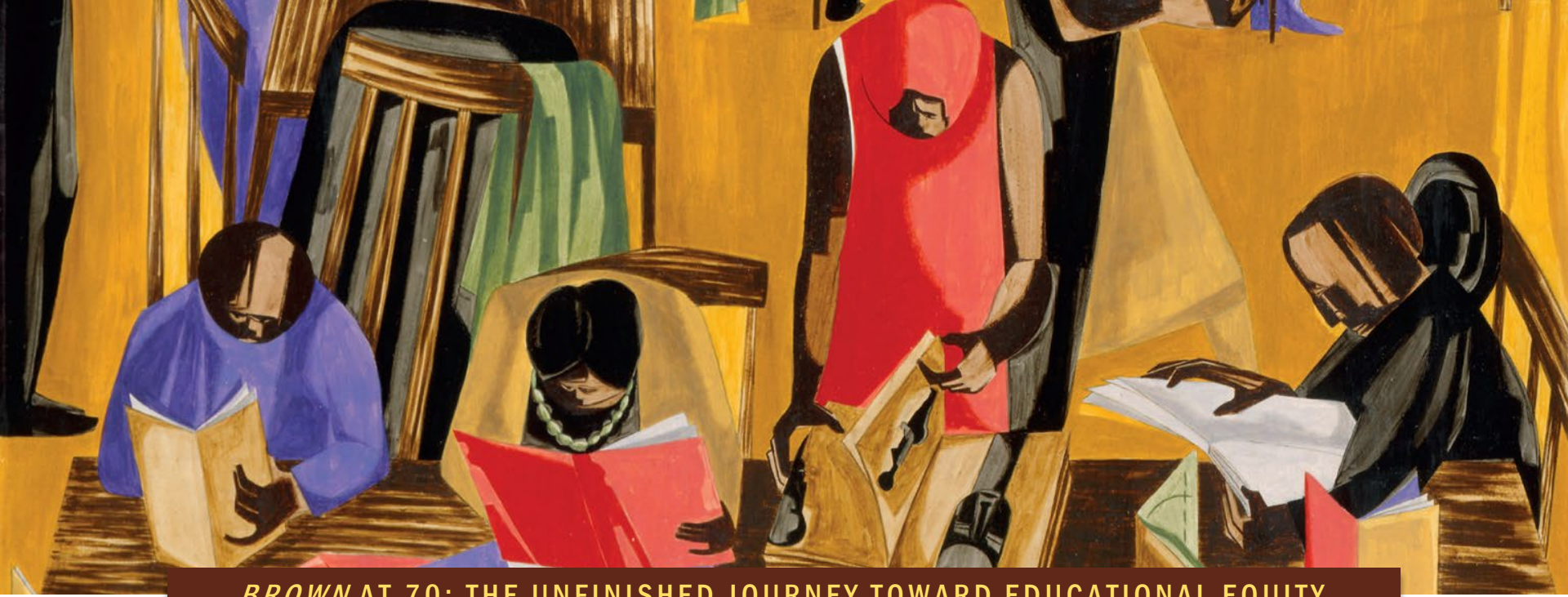

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