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—JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, James B. Duke Professor of History Emeritus, Duke University

# The Shame of the Nation

## THE RESTORATION OF APARTHEID SCHOOLING IN AMERICA

Jonathan Kozol

THREE RIVERS PRESS
NEW YORK

For Louis Bedrock:

a good teacher who
has stayed the course

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## TO THE READER

In writing this book, I have visited approximately 60 schools in 30 districts, situated in 11 different states. Most of these visits took place in the years from 2000 to 2005, although several of the narratives, as will be noted in the text, go back considerably earlier. The names of most of the children and some principals and teachers are disguised. Certain of the schools described have not been named, in order to protect the privacy of those within these schools who have confided in me. Most schools are identified by name, however, either in the text or in the notes, and no school names are disguised.

Quoted dialogue is drawn from notes, teachers' and children's recollections, and my own, and now and then, although not often, tape recordings of our conversations. Discussions of related topics are sometimes combined, and children's writings and extended conversations are at times resequenced or condensed for narrative economy. Updated information on certain of the schools that are described and documentation for all matters that rely upon the public record are provided in the notes, which begin on page 339.

# Introduction

I began to work among schoolchildren more than 40 years ago, in 1964, when I became a fourth grade teacher in the public schools of Boston, Massachusetts. I had never intended to become a teacher. I had attended Harvard College, where I studied English literature, then spent some years in France and England before coming back to Cambridge, where I planned to study for a graduate degree. In June of that year, three young activists for civil rights, the first contingent of a group of several hundred who had volunteered to venture into Mississippi to run summer freedom schools and organize adults to register to vote, disappeared in a rural area outside a town called Philadelphia. Their bodies were later discovered, buried in the mud beneath a dam beside a cattle pond. As we ultimately learned, they had been killed by law enforcement officers and members of the Ku Klux Klan.

In retrospect, it seems unlikely that it was this one event alone that could have led me all at once to reconsider

r postpone the academic plans that I had made. I had een aware already of the rising fervor of the civil rights ampaigns, the sit-ins and the freedom rides that had been aking place in several southern states, the growing protest novement in some northern cities also, and the dramatic March on Washington nearly a year before. But, perhaps ecause I'd been in Europe, I had been detached to a degree rom the intensity of passions stirred by these developments mong young people of my age. With the murder of these olunteers, that feeling of detachment dissipated quickly. I got in my car one day and drove to Roxbury, the center of he black community of Boston, and signed up to be a read- ng teacher in a freedom school for children taking place within a local church.

Although I felt very shy and hesitant at first about my ole as a white person who had never been in a black neigh- borhood before, I rapidly made friends among the parents who were active in this program and in others like it taking place at other churches and some storefront centers in the neighborhood. More to the point perhaps, I simply got to *like* that group of eight- and nine-year-olds I was assigned o teach and, like any other very insecure young teacher, I was probably flattered that they seemed to like me in return.

The six-week program ended all too soon; so, with the permission of their parents and the pastor, I extended classes with my students for two extra weeks after the sum- mer program ran its course. It was during those more in- formal final weeks that I first saw my amateurish efforts bearing fruit in some of those small ways that a beginning teacher prays for. Even to see those 15 children showing up each day in torrid end-of-August weather in a steamy attic classroom in a musty-smelling church, and struggling hard to write a little essay I'd assigned, seemed like a minor tri- umph, and it made me wish that I could have a lot more time to be with them. As Labor Day arrived, I suddenly



made up my mind to see if I could get a job as a *real* teacher.

It proved much easier to get a teaching job in Boston's schools than I had expected. I had no credentials as a teacher, but I quickly learned this did not matter much so long as I was willing to accept a class within one of the schools that served the city's segregated neighborhoods and did not object to being paid the wages of a temporary teacher even after having been assigned a permanent position.

I remember vividly the sense of shock I felt when I first walked into the elementary school in which I was to spend most of a year: a gloomy-looking, overcrowded building that could not provide my students with a classroom of their own. We shared an undivided auditorium with 35 other children in another fourth grade class, and with a choral group, and with a group rehearsing for a play that somehow never was produced, and with a class of fifth grade girls, all black, who were released from educational instruction to be given sewing lessons several hours every day on old ma- chines like those my grandmothers had used.

One windy afternoon that fall, an entire frame of win- dows in our make-shift class collapsed. I was standing close enough to catch the rotted frame before the glass could shatter on the children sitting just beneath it.

Some of the children seemed to have accepted these conditions or, at least, did not appear to feel they had the right to question them. Others did not suffer these indignities so passively but seemed to simmer with hostility toward many of the teachers and the principal. The anger of these students, which erupted typically when they were not in class but in the corridors or stairways, going to the bathroom for example, was efficiently suppressed. Children who mis- behaved were taken to the basement of the school where whippings were administered by an older teacher who em- ployed a rattan whip which he first dipped in vinegar in

order to intensify the pain that it inflicted on a child's outstretched hands. One of my students landed in the hospital in the preceding year after he'd received a whipping. His forefinger was permanently disfigured.

In the spring, the principal assigned me to another fourth grade class that had a classroom of its own but was in a state of chaos because it had had a string of substitute teachers almost the entire year. Many children in the class, according to their parents, had not had a permanent instructor since their kindergarten year. That year, I was their thirteenth teacher.

On the day I came into their class, most were reading at a second grade level. Their math abilities were at the first grade level. I have never forgotten one of the brightest students in that class, a very tall girl who sat in the back row and for days on end refused to speak to me. She had a look of stony and implacable resistance in her eyes. I tried my best to bring her out of her silence or at least to make her smile now and then, but I could not. I had the sense that she alone, of all those children, seemed to understand what had been done to them.

Sometimes in the afternoons, when I got out of school, I used to drop by at the office of a minister named James Breeden who had come to be a friend during the summer and who filled a very special role within the black community of Boston at the time, both as a leading figure in the fight for civil rights and as a scholarly and gentle mentor to impatient younger activists, or would-be activists, and to beginning teachers like myself. Breeden was only one of several strong and seasoned leaders in the neighborhood to whom I turned for reassurance and for steadying composure in that difficult first year. Over the next two years, after I rented an apartment in the area and made more friendships there, I grew increasingly attached to several of the older parent leaders, women for the most part, some of



whom had been to two-year colleges, some to four-year colleges in Massachusetts, others to traditional black institutions in the South, where they had been immersed in the first stages of the civil rights campaigns and had been shaped by this politically.

These were eloquent and straight-talking people who did not equivocate in speaking of the damage done to children by their racial isolation in the poorly staffed and physically offensive schools that served the neighborhood. Many were deeply religious people and they used a Biblical language—"evil," "sin," "abomination"—to encompass the realities their children and the children of their neighbors underwent. Denunciation and excoriation and politically expensive confrontation were the morally demanding social gospel that these leaders preached. Even when, as in the case of Reverend Breeden, they spoke softly and with meditative self-restraint, the message that they gave their youthful followers—many, like myself, were white and were the graduates of local universities and colleges—was luminous and clear in the explicit challenge that it posed to structural arrangements from which some of us had benefited greatly and, in many cases, up to now, with equanimity.

There was a high level of political sophistication among those in leadership positions in the black community; and, in the course of framing goals and analyzing structures, they recognized the multitude of different forces that diminished opportunity for children in the neighborhood. So the struggle they set out before us was not *only* about ending racial segregation in these schools; and yet that struggle was, for them, for all of us, the moral starting-point of all the rest. The goal was not to find a more efficient way of governing a segregated school. The goal was not to find a more ingenious way of teaching vowel sounds and consonant blends to segregated children. The goal was not to find a more inventive way of introducing pieces of "essential knowledge"—

dates of wars, or names of kings, or multiples of nine—into the minds of segregated children. The goal was not to figure out a way to run a more severe and strictly regimented school for segregated children or, at the opposite extreme, a more progressive and more "innovative" school for segregated children. Nor, as welcome as this might have been, was it to build a smaller school or physically more pleasing school for segregated children. The goal was to unlock the chains that held these children within caste-and-color sequestration and divorced them from the mainstream of American society.

I spent, in all, about a decade working with black schoolchildren in Boston, first in the public schools themselves (I also taught for two years in an integrated public school in Newton, a suburban town that pioneered a voluntary integration program that continues to the present day), then in grassroots programs taking place in storefronts and black churches. By the later 1970s and then increasingly during the early 1980s, I began to visit schools in other sections of the nation. I was writing books during this time, and principals and teachers who were reading them would frequently invite me to their schools. Teachers would sometimes let me teach a lesson to their class and, in the upper elementary grades (fourth and fifth, the grades that I had taught), would sometimes organize a class discussion in which I would be invited to take part.

There was a more optimistic mood in many of the urban schools I visited during these years. Some had been desegregated by court order in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education;* other schools had been desegregated voluntarily. Physical conditions in these newly integrated schools were generally more cheerful, the state of mind among the teachers and the children more high-spirited, the atmosphere less desultory, more enlivening, than in the school in which I'd started out



in Boston. Other schools I visited, admittedly, were not so fortunate. Disrepair and overcrowding were familiar still in many districts; and most of the black children I was meeting lived in very poor communities where residential segregation was a permanent reality. As serious cuts in social services and federal assistance for low-income housing took effect during the years when Ronald Reagan was in office, physical conditions in these neighborhoods became appreciably worse.

By the end of the 1980s, the high hopes that I had briefly sensed a decade earlier were hard to find. Many of the schools I visited during this period seemed every bit as grim as those I'd seen in Boston in the 1960s, sometimes a good deal worse. I visited a high school in East St. Louis, Illinois, where the lab stations in the science rooms had empty holes where pipes were once attached. A history teacher who befriended me told me of rooms that were so cold in winter that the students had to wear their coats to class while kids in other classes sweltered in a suffocating heat that could not be turned down. A foul odor filled much of the building because of an overflow of sewage that had forced the city to shut down the school the year before.

I visited, too, the bleak, unhappy schools of Paterson and Camden in New Jersey and similar schools in Washington, D.C., Chicago, San Antonio, and Cincinnati. Back in New England, I spent time with teachers, parents, and their teenage kids in Bridgeport, where the poverty levels, overcrowded public schools, and health conditions of the children, many of whom had been lead-poisoned in the city's public housing, had created a sense of quiet desperation in the all-black and Hispanic neighborhoods I visited. Wherever I could, I started in the schools. Where I could not, I started in the streets. Everywhere I went, I did my best to spend my evenings with schoolteachers.

At the start of the 1990s I began to visit schools in New York City, where I'd come to know a group of children living in a section of the South Bronx called Mott Haven, in which I would end up spending long-extended periods of time in the next 15 years. Yet even in this period in which I grew entangled in my friendships with these children and their parents and with priests and ministers and doctors in the neighborhood (HIV infection ripped its way across the South Bronx in those years, and pediatric and maternal AIDS were added to the routine sorrows many children had to bear), I continued to spend time in schools in other cities too.

And almost everywhere I went from this point on, no matter what the hopes that had been stirred in many cities only a short time before, no matter what the progress that had frequently been made in districts where court-ordered integration programs had been in effect or where a civic leadership had found the moral will to act without court orders in a principled attempt to integrate their neighborhoods and schools, a clear reality was now in place: Virtually all the children of black and Hispanic people in the cities that I visited, both large and small, were now attending schools in which their isolation was as absolute as it had been for children in the school in which I'd started out so many years before.

In Chicago, by the academic year 2000–2001, 87 percent of public school enrollment was black or Hispanic; less than 10 percent of children in the schools were white. In Washington, D.C., 94 percent of children were black or Hispanic; less than 5 percent were white. In St. Louis, 82 percent of the student population was black or Hispanic by this point, in Philadelphia and Cleveland 78 percent, in Los Angeles 84 percent, in Detroit 95 percent, in Baltimore 88 percent. In New York City, nearly three quarters of the students were black or Hispanic in 2001.



Even these statistics, though, could not convey how isolated children in the poorest sections of these cities had become. In the typically colossal high schools of the Bronx, for instance, more than 90 percent of students (in most cases, more than 95 percent) were black or Hispanic. At John F. Kennedy High School, 91 percent of the enrollment of more than 4,000 students was black or Hispanic; only 4.8 percent of students at the school were white. At Harry S. Truman High School, black and Hispanic students represented 96 percent of the enrollment of 2,500 students; less than 2 percent were white. At Adlai Stevenson High School, where enrollment numbers were about the same as those at Truman, blacks and Hispanics made up 97 percent of the student population; a mere five tenths of 1 percent were white.

A teacher at P.S. 65, one of the South Bronx elementary schools I've visited repeatedly, once pointed out to me one of the two white children I had ever seen there. His presence in her class was something of a wonderment to her and to the other pupils. I asked how many white kids she had taught in the South Bronx in her career. "I've been at this school for 18 years," she said. "This is the first white student I have ever taught."

In the district that included P.S. 65, there were 11,000 children in the elementary schools and middle schools in 1997. Of these 11,000, only 26 were white, a segregation rate of 99.8 percent. Two tenths of one percentage point now marked the difference between legally enforced apartheid in the South of 1954 and socially and economically enforced apartheid in this New York City neighborhood.

You go into these deeply segregated schools and do your best—in order to enjoy the kids you meet and to appreciate what's taking place within the classroom here and now—to disconnect the present from the past. Try as I do,

however, as the years go by, I find that act of disconnection very, very hard. I walk into a class of 25 or 30 students and I look around me at the faces of the children, some of whom in New York City I have known since they were born, and look into their eyes, and often see them also searching into mine, and I cannot discern the slightest hint that any vestige of the legal victory embodied in *Brown v. Board of Education* or the moral mandate that a generation of unselfish activists and young idealists lived and sometimes died for has survived within these schools and neighborhoods. I simply never see white children.

"We owe a definite homage to the reality around us," Thomas Merton wrote, "and we are obliged, at certain times, to say what things are and to give them their right names." No matter how complex the reasons that have brought us to the point at which we stand, we have, it seems, been traveling a long way to a place of ultimate surrender that does not look very different from the place where some of us began.

There are those, of course, who see no reason to regret this pattern of reversion to an older order of accepted isolation of the children of minorities and even find it possible to ridicule the notion that apartheid schooling might have any damaging effects upon a child's intellectual development or any other aspect of a child's heart or mind. The supposition that "black students suffer an unspecified psychological harm from segregation . . . ," as Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in an opinion on a case the high court heard in 1995, is not merely incorrect, relying upon "questionable social science research," in his words, but also represents a form of prejudice, reflecting "an assumption of black inferiority." This is not dissimilar to the idea, expressed sometimes by white conservatives as well, that arguments for racial integration of our schools insultingly imply that children of minorities will somehow "become smarter" if they're sitting with white children—an idea, which is indeed



insulting, that no advocate for integrated education I have known has ever entertained. But arguments like these and the debates surrounding them, in any case, have only the most indirect connection with the thoughts that come into my mind when I am sitting with a group of children in a kindergarten class in the South Bronx.

What saddens me the most during these times is simply that these children have no knowledge of the other world in which I've lived most of my life and that the children in that other world have not the slightest notion as to who these children are and will not likely *ever* know them later on, not at least on anything like equal terms, unless a couple of these kids get into college. Even if they meet each other then, it may not be the same, because the sweetness of too many of these inner-city children will have been somewhat corroded by that time. Some of it may be replaced by hardness, some by caution, some by calculation rooted in unspoken fear. I have believed for 40 years, and still believe today, that we would be an infinitely better nation if they knew each other now.

Whether or not it seems to realistic-minded people to be beyond the limits of all plausibility or practicality even to contemplate a serious reversal of the present pattern of intensifying segregation and resegregation is a question that will be examined in the later sections of this book. Certainly, what reasonable people may regard as possible, or even worth consideration in the present political climate of the nation, needs to be addressed; but what is obvious and plain and truthful needs to be addressed as well. If we have agreed to live with this reality essentially unaltered for another generation or for several generations yet to come, I think we need at least to have the honesty to say so. I also think we need to recognize that our acceptance of a dual education system will have consequences that may be no less destructive than those we have seen in the past century.

I don't think you can discern these consequences solely by examination of statistics or the words of education analysts or highly placed officials in school systems. I think you need to go into the schools in which the isolation of our children is the most extreme, do so repeatedly but, where it's possible, informally and not obtrusively, and try to make sure that you are allowed the time to listen carefully to children. I have been criticized throughout the course of my career for placing too much faith in the reliability of children's narratives; but I have almost always found that children are a great deal more reliable in telling us what actually goes on in public school than many of the adult experts who develop policies that shape their destinies. Unlike these powerful grown-ups, children have no ideologies to reinforce, no superstructure of political opinion to promote, no civic equanimity or image to defend, no personal reputation to secure. They may err sometimes about the minuscule particulars but on the big things children rarely have much reason to mislead us. They are, in this respect, pure witnesses, and we will hear their testimony in these pages.

CHAPTER 1

# Dishonoring the Dead

One sunny day in April, I was sitting with my friend Pineapple at a picnic table in St. Mary's Park in the South Bronx. I had met Pineapple six years earlier, in 1994, when I had visited her kindergarten class at P.S. 65. She was a plump and bright-eyed child who had captured my attention when I leaned over her desk and noticed that she wrote her letters in reverse. I met her again a few weeks later at an afterschool program based at St. Ann's Church, which was close to P.S. 65, where Pineapple and a number of her friends came for tutorial instruction and for safety from the dangers of the neighborhood during the afternoons.

The next time I visited her school, it was the spring of 1997. She was in third grade now and she was having a bad year. The school was in a state of chaos because there had been a massive turnover of teachers. Of 50 members of the faculty in the preceding year, 28 had never taught before;

and half of them were fired or did not return the following September. Very little teaching took place in Pineapple's class during the time that I was there. For some reason, children in her class and other classes on her floor had to spend an awful lot of time in forming lines outside the doorways of their rooms, then waiting as long as 30 minutes for their turn to file downstairs to the cafeteria for lunch, then waiting in lines again to get their meals, then to go to recess, then to the bathroom, then return to class. Nearly two hours had elapsed between the time Pineapple's classmates formed their line to go to lunch and finally returned.

On another day when I was visiting, before the children were allowed to have their lunch they were brought into an auditorium where old cartoons like Felix the Cat and Donald Duck and other flickering movies from the past were shown to keep them occupied before their class was called to file down into the cafeteria. The film in the film projector, which must have been very old, kept slipping from its frames. The lights would go on and kids would start to hoot and scream. I sat beside Pineapple and her classmates for three quarters of an hour while a very angry woman with a megaphone stood on a stage and tried to get the room under control by threatening the kids with dire punishments if they did not sit in perfect silence while they waited for the next cartoon.

In the following year, when she was in fourth grade, Pineapple had four different teachers in a row. One of them was apparently a maladjusted person who, Pineapple said, "used swear words" to subdue the children. ("A-S-S-E-S!" Pineapple said politely, since she did not want to speak the word itself.) One was fired for smoking in the building. Another was "only a helper-teacher," Pineapple reported, which, a member of the faculty explained, might have been a reference to an unprepared young teacher who was not



yet certified. Pineapple, who had always been a lively and resilient little girl, grew quite depressed that year.

When Pineapple used to talk to me about her school she rarely, if ever, spoke in racial terms. Going to a school in which all of her classmates were black or Hispanic must have seemed quite natural to her—"the way things are," perhaps the way that they had always been. Since she had only the slightest knowledge of what schools were like outside her neighborhood, there would have been no reason why she would remark upon the fact that there were no white children in her class. This, at least, is how I had interpreted her silence on the matter in the past.

So it surprised me, on that pleasant day in April as the two of us were sitting in St. Mary's Park, while Pineapple's little sister, who is named Briana, wandered off at a slight distance from us following a squirrel that was running on the grass, when Pineapple asked me something that no other child of her age in the South Bronx had ever asked of me before. Leaning on her elbows on the picnic table, with a sudden look of serious consideration in her eyes, she seemed to hesitate a moment as if she was not quite sure whether the question in her mind might somehow be a question you are not supposed to ask, then plowed right on and asked it anyway.

"What's it like," she asked me, peering through the strands of beaded cornrows that came down over her eyes, "over there where you live?"

"Over where?" I asked.

"Over—*you* know . . . ," she said with another bit of awkwardness and hesitation in her eyes.

I asked her, "Do you mean in Massachusetts?"

She looked at me with more determination and a bit impatiently, I thought, but maybe also recognized that I was feeling slightly awkward too.

"You know . . . ," she said.

"I *don't* know," I replied.

"Over there—where other people are," she finally said.

Pineapple was usually very blunt and clear—she sometimes inadvertently hurt other children's feelings by her tendency to make unsparingly direct remarks—so her use of that ambiguous and imprecise expression "other people" didn't seem like her at all.

I asked her if she could explain which "other people" she was thinking of. At that point a wall went up. "*You* know," was all she said—"where *you* live . . . where the other people are. . . ."

I didn't try to press her further about who she meant by "other people" after that. I think she felt it would be rude to say "white people," which is what I was convinced she meant, and I have no memory of whether, or how, I tried to answer her. She and I have since had many talks in which she posed the racial question more explicitly. Pineapple is a shrewd teenager now and she has seen a good deal of the world beyond the Bronx and doesn't feel she has to mince her words in talking to a grown-up friend whom she has known now for so many years.

That evening, however, I repeated what Pineapple said to Martha Overall, the pastor of St. Ann's, who pointed out to me how little contact with white people, other than the principal and teachers at the school and some of the grown-ups working at the church, most of these children ever had. "They don't have any friends who are white children. When I take them with me sometimes to Manhattan to go shopping at a store for something special that they want or to a movie maybe on one of their birthdays, and they find themselves surrounded by a lot of white kids, many of the younger ones get very scared. It's an utterly



different world for them. In racial terms, they're almost totally cut off."

One of the consequences of their isolation, as the pastor has observed, is that they have little knowledge of the ordinary reference points that are familiar to most children in the world that Pineapple described as "over there." In talking with adolescents, for example, who were doing relatively well in school and said they hoped to go to college, I have sometimes mentioned colleges such as Columbia, Manhattanville, Cornell, or New York University, and found that references like these were virtually unknown to them. The state university system of New York was generally beyond their recognition too. The name of a community college in the Bronx might be familiar to them—or, for the boys, perhaps a college that was known for its athletic teams.

Now and then, in an effort to expand their reference points, the pastor takes a group of children to an interracial gathering that may be sponsored by one of the more progressive churches in New York or to a similar gathering held in New England, for example. I have accompanied the St. Ann's children on a couple of these trips. The travel involved is usually fun, and simply getting outside the neighborhood in which they live is an adventure for most of the children in itself. But the younger children tend to hold back from attempting to make friends with the white children whom they meet, and many of the teenage kids behave with a defensive edginess, even a hint of mockery, not of the white kids themselves but of a situation that seems slightly artificial and contrived to them and is also, as they surely recognize, a one-time shot that will not change the lives they lead when they return to the South Bronx.

It might be very different if these kids had known white children early in their lives, not only on unusual

occasions but in all the ordinary ways that children come to know each other when they go to school together and play games with one another and share secrets with each other and grow bonded to each other by those thousands of small pieces of perplexity and fantasy and sorrow and frivolity of which a child's daily life is actually made. I don't think that you change these things substantially by organizing staged events like "Inter-racial Days." Even the talks that certain of the children are selected to deliver on these rare occasions often have a rather wooden sound, like pieties that have been carefully rehearsed, no matter how sincere the children are. Not that it's not worth holding such events. They energize politically the adults who are present and sometimes, although frankly not too often, long-term friendships may be made. But token days are not the ebb and flow of life. They ease our feelings of regret about the way things have to be for the remainder of the year. They do not really change the way things are.

Many Americans I meet who live far from our major cities and who have no first-hand knowledge of realities in urban public schools seem to have a rather vague and general impression that the great extremes of racial isolation they recall as matters of grave national significance some 35 or 40 years ago have gradually, but steadily, diminished in more recent years. The truth, unhappily, is that the trend, for well over a decade now, has been precisely the reverse. Schools that were already deeply segregated 25 or 30 years ago, like most of the schools I visit in the Bronx, are no less segregated now, while thousands of other schools that had been integrated either voluntarily or by the force of law have since been rapidly resegregating both in northern districts and in broad expanses of the South.

"At the beginning of the twenty-first century," according



to Professor Gary Orfield and his colleagues at the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "American public schools are now 12 years into the process of continuous resegregation. The desegregation of black students, which increased continuously from the 1950s to the late 1980s, has now receded to levels not seen in three decades. . . . During the 1990s, the proportion of black students in majority white schools has decreased . . . to a level lower than in any year since 1968. . . . Almost three fourths of black and Latino students attend schools that are predominantly minority," and more than two million, including more than a quarter of black students in the Northeast and Midwest, "attend schools which we call apartheid schools" in which 99 to 100 percent of students are nonwhite. The four most segregated states for black students, according to the Civil Rights Project, are New York, Michigan, Illinois, and California. In California and New York, only one black student in seven goes to a predominantly white school.

During the past 25 years, the Harvard study notes, "there has been no significant leadership towards the goal of creating a successfully integrated society built on integrated schools and neighborhoods." The last constructive act by Congress was the 1972 enactment of a federal program to provide financial aid to districts undertaking efforts at desegregation, which, however, was "repealed by the Reagan administration in 1981." The Supreme Court "began limiting desegregation in key ways in 1974"—and actively dismantling existing integration programs in 1991.

"Desegregation did not fail. In spite of a very brief period of serious enforcement . . . , the desegregation era was a period in which minority high school graduates increased sharply and the racial test score gaps narrowed substantially until they began to widen again in the 1990s. . . . In the two largest educational innovations of the past two decades—standards-based reform and school choice—the

issue of racial segregation and its consequences has been ignored."

"To give up on integration, while aware of its benefits," write Orfield and his former Harvard colleague Susan Eaton, "requires us to consciously and deliberately accept segregation, while aware of its harms. . . . Segregation, rarely discussed, scarcely even acknowledged by elected officials and school leaders"—an "exercise in denial," they observe, "reminiscent of the South" before the integration era—"is incompatible with the healthy functioning of a multiracial generation."

Racial isolation and the concentrated poverty of children in a public school go hand in hand, moreover, as the Harvard project notes. Only 15 percent of the intensely segregated white schools in the nation have student populations in which more than half are poor enough to be receiving free meals or reduced price meals. "By contrast, a staggering 86 percent of intensely segregated black and Latino schools" have student enrollments in which more than half are poor by the same standards. A segregated inner-city school is "almost six times as likely" to be a school of concentrated poverty as is a school that has an overwhelmingly white population.

"So deep is our resistance to acknowledging what is taking place," Professor Orfield notes, that when a district that has been desegregated in preceding decades now abandons integrated education, "the actual word 'segregation' hardly ever comes up. Proposals for racially separate schools are usually promoted as new educational improvement plans or efforts to increase parental involvement. . . . In the new era of 'separate but equal,' segregation has somehow come to be viewed as a type of school reform"—"something progressive and new," he writes—rather than as what it is: an unconceded throwback to the status quo of 1954. But no matter by what new name segregated



education may be known, whether it be "neighborhood schools, community schools, targeted schools, priority schools," or whatever other currently accepted term, "segregation is not new . . . and neither is the idea of making separate schools equal. It is one of the oldest and extensively tried ideas in U.S. educational history" and one, writes Orfield, that has "never had a systematic effect in a century of trials."

Perhaps most damaging to any effort to address this subject openly is the refusal of most of the major arbiters of culture in our northern cities to confront or even clearly name an obvious reality they would have castigated with a passionate determination in another section of the nation 50 years before and which, moreover, they still castigate today in retrospective writings that assign it to a comfortably distant and allegedly concluded era of the past. There is, indeed, a seemingly agreed-upon convention in much of the media today not even to use an accurate descriptor such as "racial segregation" in a narrative description of a segregated school. Linguistic sweeteners, semantic somersaults, and surrogate vocabularies are repeatedly employed. Schools in which as few as three or four percent of students may be white or Southeast Asian or of Middle Eastern origin, for instance—and where *every other child* in the building is black or Hispanic—are referred to, in a commonly misleading usage, as "diverse." Visitors to schools like these discover quickly the eviscerated meaning of the word, which is no longer a descriptor but a euphemism for a plainer word that has apparently become unspeakable.

School systems themselves repeatedly employ this euphemism in descriptions of the composition of their student populations. In a school I visited in fall 2004 in Kansas City, Missouri, for example, a document distributed to visitors reports that the school's curriculum "addresses the needs of children from diverse backgrounds." But as I went

rom class to class I did not encounter any children who were white or Asian—or Hispanic, for that matter—and when I later was provided with the demographics of the school, I learned that 99.6 percent of students there were African-American. In a similar document, the school board of another district, this one in New York State, referred to "the diversity" of its student population and "the rich variations of ethnic backgrounds. . . ." But when I looked at the racial numbers that the district had reported to the state, I learned that there were 2,800 black and Hispanic children in the system, one Asian child, and three whites. Words, in these cases, cease to have real meaning; or, rather, they mean the opposite of what they say.

One of the most disheartening experiences for those who grew up in the years when Martin Luther King and Thurgood Marshall were alive is to visit public schools today that bear their names, or names of other honored leaders of the integration struggles that produced the temporary progress that took place in the three decades after *Brown*, and to find how many of these schools are bastions of contemporary segregation. It is even more disheartening when schools like these are not in segregated neighborhoods but in racially mixed areas in which the integration of a public school would seem to be most natural and where, indeed, it takes a conscious effort on the part of parents or of school officials in these districts to *avoid* the integration option that is often right at their front door.

In a Seattle neighborhood, for instance, where approximately half the families were Caucasian, 95 percent of students at the Thurgood Marshall Elementary School were black, Hispanic, Native American, or of Asian origin. An African-American teacher at the school told me of seeing clusters of white parents and their children on the corner of a street close to the school each morning waiting for a bus that took the children to a school in which she



believed that the enrollment was predominantly white. She did not speak of the white families waiting for the bus to take their children to another public school with bitterness, but wistfully.

"At Thurgood Marshall," according to a big wall-poster in the lobby of the school, "the dream is alive." But school assignment practices and federal court decisions that have countermanded long-established policies that previously fostered integration in Seattle's schools make the realization of the dream identified with Justice Marshall all but unattainable today.

"Thurgood Marshall must be turning over in his grave," one of the teachers at the school had told the principal, as he reported this to me. The principal, understandably, believed he had no choice but to reject the teacher's observation out of hand. "No, sister," he had told the teacher. "If Justice Marshall was still roamin' nowadays and saw what's goin' on here in this school, he would say 'Hallelujah' and 'Amen!'" Legal scholars may demur at this, but he had a school to run and he could not allow the ironies of names, or history, to undermine the passionate resolve he brought to winning victories for children in the only terms he was allowed.

In the course of two visits to the school, I had a chance to talk with a number of teachers and to spend time in their classrooms. In one class, a teacher had posted a brief summation of the *Brown* decision on the wall; but it was in an inconspicuous corner of the room and, with that one exception, I could find no references to Marshall's struggle against racial segregation in the building.

When I asked a group of fifth grade boys who Thurgood Marshall was and what he did to have deserved to have a school named after him, most of the boys had no idea at all. One said that he used to run "a summer camp." Another said he was "a manager"—I had no chance to ask

him what he meant by this, or how he'd gotten this impression. Of the three who knew that he had been a lawyer, only one, and only after several questions on my part, replied that he had "tried to change what was unfair"—and, after a moment's hesitation, "wanted to let black kids go to the same schools that white kids did." He said he was "pretty sure" that this school was not segregated because, in one of the other classrooms on the same floor, there were two white children.

There is a bit of painful humor that I've heard from black schoolteachers who grew up during the era of the integration movement and have subsequently seen its goals abandoned and its early victories reversed. "If you want to see a *really* segregated school in the United States today, start by looking for a school that's named for Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks." In San Diego, there is a school that bears the name of Rosa Parks in which 86 percent of students are black and Hispanic and less than 2 percent are white. In Los Angeles, there is a school that bears the name of Dr. King, 99 percent black and Hispanic, and another in Milwaukee where black children also make up 99 percent of the enrollment. There is a high school in Cleveland named for Dr. King in which black students make up 99 percent of the student body, and the graduation rate is only 38 percent. In Philadelphia, 98 percent of children at a high school named for Dr. King are black. At a middle school named for Dr. King in Boston, black and Hispanic children make up 98 percent of the enrollment.

In New York City, there's a primary school that's named for Langston Hughes (99 percent black and Hispanic), a middle school that's named for Jackie Robinson (96 percent black and Hispanic), and a high school named for Fannie Lou Hamer, one of the great heroes of the integration movement in the South, in which 98 percent of students are black or Hispanic. In Harlem, there is yet another segregated Thurgood Marshall School (also 98 percent black and Hispanic), and in the South Bronx dozens of children I have known, including Pineapple's older sister and her cousin, went to a middle school named in honor of Paul Robeson in which less than half of 1 percent of the enrollment was Caucasian.



There is a well-known high school named for Martin Luther King in New York City too. The school, in which I've had the chance to visit classes many times, is like Seattle's Marshall School in that it isn't sited in a deeply segregated inner-city section of the city but is, in this instance, in an upper-middle-class white neighborhood where it was built in the belief, or hope, that it would attract white students by permitting them to walk to school while only their black and Hispanic classmates would be asked to ride the bus or come by train. When the school was opened in 1975, less than a block from Lincoln Center in Manhattan, as The New York Times observes, "it was seen as a promising effort to integrate white, black and Hispanic students in a thriving neighborhood that held one of the city's cultural gems." Even from the start, however, parents of the neighborhood showed great reluctance to permit their children to enroll at Martin Luther King and, despite "its prime location and its name, which itself creates the highest of expectations," notes The Times, the school before long came to be a destination for black and Hispanic students who could not obtain admission into more successful schools. It stands today as one of the most visible and problematic symbols in the nation of an expectation rapidly receding and a legacy substantially betrayed.

The principal of Martin Luther King in autumn of 2000, which was the first time I visited the school, was Ronald Wells, a tall, distinguished-looking man who had grown up during the civil rights campaigns and whose commitment to the values of that era had not wavered with

the years. A religious man who was ordained in the United Church of Christ and was, in the year we met, the only black male principal in the Manhattan high school district, he told me that his family roots were in the South and that his mother came from Charlotte, where the *Brown* decision was successfully enforced for many years and where the integration of the public schools became a fact of life for an entire generation.

From the moment that one walks into the school, one is compelled to look into the heart of history. "I have a dream," read the words of Dr. King that are displayed across the rear wall of the lobby, "that one day . . . the sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood." But, at the time of my initial visit, student enrollment at the school was 54 percent African-American and 42 percent Hispanic. Only 3.8 percent of the 2,600 students in the building were Asian, white, or "other."

"We used to have more Vietnamese and Polish students . . . , a few Russian immigrants as well," the principal informed me. "Now almost none." A growing portion of the student population was Dominican, he said, and traveled to the school from Washington Heights, a neighborhood to the north of Harlem, which is a long ride for a teenager to take out of a neighborhood with countless segregated schools in order to attend another segregated school—"busing," it turns out, for purposes entirely different from the one with which the word, derided frequently today as an unwelcome strategy for racial integration, is historically identified.

Segregated schools like Martin Luther King are often tense, disorderly, and socially unhappy places, and when episodes of student violence occur, the inclination of the parents of white children to avoid such schools is obviously reinforced. Martin Luther King has had its share of violence across the years, and it was in the news again in January 2002 when two of its students were the victims of a shooting in a hallway of the building on the anniversary of the day when Dr. King was born. The mayor of New York noted the irony of timing and some of the media reminded readers that the legacy of Dr. King had been one of peace. He had been a "man of peace," "preached peace," "taught about peace," as the city's newspapers observed. There was less reference to the "other" important legacy of Dr. King. Although some press accounts alluded to the unsuccessful efforts to attract white students to the school, no headlines pointed to the segregated status of the school as a dishonor to *that* portion of his legacy.



The media discussed some of the strategies that might reduce the likelihood of violence recurring at the school. An advocate for small schools argued that a large school in itself, where students' "personal circumstances" are not known to teachers, makes it harder to keep weapons out of a building. ("Small schools are safer because people get to know the kids and have relationships with them," he said.) Architectural aspects of the school were mentioned as potential problems too. The school had "numerous nooks and crannies," which might have encouraged misbehavior, said one news account, and "its twelve doors make it easier for people to sneak in."

The impression one derived from much of this was that a smaller segregated and unequal school, if better designed, perhaps with fewer doors, might represent a practical solution to the problems that had led to shootings at the school. All this is true to some degree. The school *was* subsequently broken up into a number of much smaller schools, and some of the tensions in the corridors and other common areas diminished as a consequence. Still, reading these reflections on the violence that had erupted at the King, one might have hoped that there had been some reference to

the fact of virtual apartheid in itself as one, at least, of many governmentally determined forces that contribute to the social turbulence of adolescents in so many schools like this.

Almost all reflections of this nature tend to be dispatched quite easily these days (this is "victim-thinking," we are sometimes told), and almost everything that we have learned from empathetic social scientists who have examined the direct and indirect emotional and psychological effects of segregated schooling through the course of many years is pretty much dismissed as well. Only rarely are considerations of the possible distortions wrought upon the spirits of these children by the fact of concentrated poverty and racial isolation in themselves admitted to the table of acceptable deliberations when a strategy for overcoming student anguish and controlling student desperation is pursued. That which can't be named as a potential cause cannot be touched upon in looking for a plausible solution. The search for less provocative solutions makes it possible perhaps for those who shepherd the debate to stay away from problematic places.

High school students with whom I get to talk in deeply segregated neighborhoods seem far less circumspect and far more open in their willingness to look into those problematic places. "It's like we're being hidden," said a fifteen-year-old girl named Isabel I met some years ago in Harlem, in attempting to explain to me the ways in which she and her classmates understood the racial segregation of their neighborhoods and schools. "It's as if you have been put in a garage where, if they don't have room for something but aren't sure if they should throw it out, they put it there where they don't need to think of it again."

I asked her if she truly thought America did not "have room" for her or other children of her race. "Think of it this way," said a sixteen-year-old girl sitting beside her. "If people in New York woke up one day and learned that we were gone, that we had simply died or left for somewhere else, how would they feel?"



"How do you think they'd feel?" I asked.

"I think they'd be relieved," this very solemn girl replied.

The name above the doorway of a school has little power to revise these sensitive perceptions. Still, we have these many schools bearing distinguished names that cannot fail to resonate with history. For visitors, the name of Thurgood Marshall on the doorway of a school inevitably stirs a certain expectation and reminds us of the court decision with which Marshall's name is linked forever in our memory. No matter how the meaning of *Brown v. Board of Education* may be retroactively revised, or blurred, or rendered indistinct, which seems to be almost obligatory in the speeches that are given at events commemorating the decision, the question it addressed and the resounding answer it delivered are a part of our collective memory as well.

"Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal," asked the court in 1954, "deprive the children of the minority race of equal educational opportunities? We believe it does." To separate black children from white children of their age and qualifications on the basis of their race, the court went on, "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. . . . In the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. . . . Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Like it or not—and many sectors of opinion in our northern cities that applauded this decision 50 years ago appear to like it less and less, or not at all—the court made no accommodation for the possibilities of a redemptive version of apartheid education. Some of us, exhausted by

the battle or attempting to allay the disappointment that we feel, may look for almost any way by which to squirm around this. Some hard-nosed intellectuals may counsel us to "reconsider" it. Conservative appointees to the courts may openly deride it, as does Justice Clarence Thomas, and do what they can in order to dismantle the remaining efforts that derive from that decision. But ethicists and theologians and most pastors of our synagogues and churches make it clear that they respect it. Textbooks still, in general, extol it as a symbol of our nation's onward stride to ethical advancement. And students at good high schools read these words in classes about government or history and are not likely to be told by teachers that they represent merely an inconvenient, if sincere, intention which the nation now rejects but are more often taught to view the words of *Brown* as evidence of something good, progressive, and enlightened in our social history.

So we are obliged, in this respect, to live with the ideals and names of heroes and with words of court decisions that official culture honors but official actions and the policies of school boards and the preferences of highly influential sectors of our urban populations fiercely disavow. From coast to coast, indeed, in recent years, middle-class white city-dwellers have not merely fled from schools in which large numbers of black and Hispanic children are enrolled but sometimes openly demanded that their school officials carve out new domains of pedagogic isolation to provide their children with exclusive opportunities which they believe that they deserve.

"Well-organized parent groups" in New York City, noted The New York Times in an account of this phenomenon published five years ago, are asking school officials for permission "to exclude thousands of poor black and Hispanic students who travel long distances" in order to attend schools in their neighborhoods. "The wealthier parents," said The Times, "covet" these buildings as potential sites in which they can create new schools of higher quality to serve their own immediate communities. "The proposed new schools are intended," said the paper, to provide the residents of "upscale New York City neighborhoods" an opportunity to give their children "an education on [a] par with the best suburban high schools."



In the 1960s and 1970s, noted The Times, the boundaries of school attendance zones had sometimes been redrawn "to promote racial integration," but the schools where this had taken place, the paper said, had "lost their distinct neighborhood character" and many "produced lackluster academic results"—which, if this seemingly direct connection was correct, appeared to indicate that school desegregation had not been in the best interests of the children of New York. As carefully as this final point was handled in The Times' account, it seemed to validate the gravitation of the relatively privileged to schools that represent protected enclaves, whether they are newly founded schools or simply public schools that are reserved for children of a middle-class or affluent community. In words that have been heard time and again from those who have defended class and racial insularity in urban schools while managing to make it seem that race and class were not involved, parents in these neighborhoods, according to another story in The Times, indicated they were simply "searching for an old-fashioned sense of community, in which their children walk to school together, learn together and play together, almost as if they lived in a small town instead of a huge city."

Some of the New York City neighborhoods in which these trends have been observed were bastions of progressive thinking 35 or 40 years ago. Some of the white activists who went to Mississippi and to other southern states during the 1960s to participate in civil rights campaigns to

uproot segregation grew up in these neighborhoods. The press and clergy in New York were proud of these young people. They are honored sometimes even now at the commemorations of the anniversaries of certain demonstrations, certain marches, certain confrontations in the South and, sometimes, on the anniversaries of *Brown*. There are ironies like these in many other cities of our nation.

"How did New York, with its image as a pioneer in civil rights," ask Orfield and Eaton, "become the epicenter of segregated public education?" Segregation in the schools of New York City and its suburbs, they reply, has been accomplished by a number of forces that include discrimination, court decisions, immigration trends, and government-enforced school boundaries, but most specifically by "one of the nation's highest levels of housing segregation." Residential segregation in the New York City area, they note, remains today at about the same level as in 1960, a remarkable statistic that belies the myth of gradual but steady progress that is frequently suggested by the media. Segregation, moreover, whether in cities or in suburbs, "does not stem primarily [from] preferences" of segregated people. A Gallup poll for Newsday, they observe, showed that only one in ten black people in the suburbs of Long Island, just to the east of New York City, "wanted to live in all-black areas," although the overwhelming number do live in such areas. But, they continue, there have been "no serious government proposals" in New York or in the nation that address the spread of segregation to the suburbs and, "outside the South," states "do little to enforce fair-housing laws."

In suburban Roosevelt on Long Island, as a consequence, nearly 100 percent of students at the high school



are black or Hispanic. A twenty-minute drive away, at Plainview High, black and Hispanic students make up only 1 percent of the enrollment while 97 percent of students at the school are white. In numerous other districts in the areas surrounding New York City, black and Hispanic children go to public schools in which they find themselves as isolated as are children of their color in the Bronx.

"We cannot be satisfied," said Dr. King in perhaps his best-remembered speech, delivered on the mall in Washington in August 1963, "as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one." He was speaking of the movement of black people from small towns to urban areas and made a specific reference to New York in nearly the next sentence. What might not have been easily conceivable to Dr. King or any of his colleagues on that hopeful day in Washington was that a time would come before too long when a reverse mobility—from larger ghettos into smaller ghettos—would become the rule of order in large sections of the North and South alike, as hundreds of thousands of black people moved from inner-city districts to the promised land of a suburban life, only to find their children and themselves entrapped again in the same isolation they had fled.

Many educators make the argument today that, given the demographics of large cities like New York and their suburban areas, our only realistic goal should be the nurturing of strong, empowered, and well-funded schools in segregated neighborhoods—an argument with which, in any given and specific local situation, it would seem impossible to disagree. Even if we have to doubt the likelihood that genuine empowerment and anything approaching full equality will ever be achieved on a broad scale, or long sustained, in the dynamics of the dual system as it stands, one also feels compelled to hope these reservations will be

proven wrong and, therefore, to do everything we can to reinforce the efforts of the principals and teachers who devote their lives to working in these schools.

Black school officials in these situations have sometimes conveyed to me a bitter and clear-sighted recognition that they're being asked, essentially, to mediate and render functional an uncontested separation between children of their race and children of white people living sometimes in a distant section of their town and sometimes in almost their own immediate communities. Implicit in this mediation is a willingness to set aside the promises of *Brown* and, perhaps while never stating this or even thinking of it clearly in these terms, to settle for the promise made more than a century ago in *Plessy v. Ferguson,* the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in which "separate but equal" was accepted as a tolerable rationale for the perpetuation of a dual system in American society.

Equality itself—equality alone—is now, it seems, the article of faith to which increasing numbers of the principals of inner-city public schools subscribe. And some who are perhaps most realistic do not even ask for, or expect, complete equality, which seems beyond the realm of probability for many years to come, but look instead for only a sufficiency of means—"adequacy" is the legal term most often used today—by which to win those practical and finite victories that may appear to be within their reach. Higher standards, higher expectations, are insistently demanded of these urban principals, and of their teachers and the students in their schools, but far lower standards certainly in ethical respects appear to be expected of the dominant society that isolates these children in unequal institutions.

At an early-morning assembly at Seattle's Thurgood Marshall School, the entire student body stood and chanted, "I have confidence that I can learn!" exactly 30 times. Similar sessions of self-exhortation are familiar at innumerable



inner-city schools: "Yes, I can! I know I can!" "If it is to be, it's up to me." In some schools, these chantings are accompanied by rhythmic clapping of the hands or snapping of the fingers or by stamping on the floor. It usually seems like an invigorating way to start the day. At the same time, politically conservative white people visiting these schools often seem to be almost too gratified to hear black and Hispanic children speaking in these terms. If it's up to "them," the message seems to be, it isn't up to "us," which appears to sweep the deck of many pressing and potentially disruptive and expensive obligations we may otherwise believe our nation needs to contemplate.

And, in plain honesty, when we invite these children to repeat in unison that "if it is to be, it's up to me," we are asking them to say something which, while they have no way of knowing this, is simply not the truth. It is, indeed, an odd thing, when one thinks of it, to ask a six- or seven-year-old child to believe. Does a school board or school system have no role in what this child is to be? Do taxpayers have no role in this? Do Congress and the courts and local legislators have no role in setting up the possibilities of what is "to be," or not to be, within these children's opportunities to learn? Why are the debates about state distribution of resources for our schools so heated, and the opposition to a fairer distribution on the part of wealthy districts so intense, if citizens do not believe that fiscal policies enacted by the government have a decisive role in the determination of the destinies of children?

One of the reasons for these incantations in the schools that serve black and Hispanic children is what is believed to be the children's loss of willingness "to try," their failure to believe they have the same abilities as do white children in more privileged communities. It is this attribution of a loss of faith in their potential and, as an adaptive consequence, a seeming "will to fail"—a psychological pathology—that

justifies the hortatory slogans they are asked to chant and the multitude of posters, loaded with ambitious verbs such as "succeed," "attain," "achieve," that are found on classroom walls and sometimes even painted on the outside of a school.

Few teachers that I know who work with kids in inner-city schools question whether this self-doubt is real—nor whether, especially among pre-teens and adolescents, and particularly boys, this sense of doubt is reinforced by pressure from those of their peers who have succumbed already to the cynicism that is commonly a cover-up for fear. Auto-hypnotic slogans that attempt to counter these peer pressures—"I'm smart! I know that I'm smart," which I have heard repeatedly in urban elementary schools, but rarely in suburban schools where the potential of most children is assumed—have come to be the modern mantras of self-help for children in these segregated institutions.

"This is not to say," as the tough-minded and insightful author Ellis Cose observes, "that self-help programs don't work. Some work stunningly well." At the same time, he writes, "effective solutions to ghetto pathologies cannot be crafted by blacks walled off from a larger America." It is notable in this respect that, in all the many writings and proposals dedicated to the alteration of self-image among inner-city youth and the reversal of debilitating pressures from their peers, the suggestion is virtually never made that one of the most direct ways to reduce the damage done to children by peer pressure is to change the *make-up* of their peers by letting them go to schools where all their classmates are not black and brown and poor, and children and grandchildren of the poor, but where a healthy confidence that one can learn is rooted in the natural assumptions of Americans who haven't been laid waste by history.

When I was standing with the children at the Thurgood Marshall School and counting the number of times



they chanted the word "confidence," I remember looking at the faces of the boys who stood the closest to me in the gym in which the morning chants were taking place and wondering what impact this was having on them inwardly. When you're among a group of children, you inevitably want to hope that rituals like these might really do some good, that they may make a difference that will last beyond the hour of exhilaration and hand-clapping. Still, these exercises are place-markers. They tell us we are in a world where hope must be constructed therapeutically because so much of it has been destroyed by the conditions of internment in which we have placed these children. It is harder to convince young people they "can learn" when they are cordoned off by a society that isn't sure they really can. That is, I am afraid, one of the most destructive and long-lasting messages a nation possibly could give its children.