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Why Has Segregation Never Disappeared in America?

Integration Was a Phase. Segregation Is the Policy



William Spivey Follow 4 min read · 21 hours ago

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John Vachon, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

American schools are as segregated now as they were in the late 1960s, and in many regions, especially the South and large metro areas, they are more segregated than they were in the 1980s and 1990s. This stems from a combination of housing patterns, district boundaries, school choice policies, and the rollback of federal desegregation oversight.

Brown v. Board of Education was supposed to end segregation in 1954, but it contained no structure to make it happen. The following year, the Supreme Court decided in Brown v. Board II that schools should desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” which still imposed no deadline.

It took until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s for the government to take integration seriously, typically through consent decrees in major cities.

Was Brown v. Board of Education the End of Segregation or the Beginning of a Larger Battle | by William Spivey | The Polis | Medium

1. Federal oversight is collapsing — and segregation rises when oversight disappears

In September 2026, the Department of Justice ended 57 long-standing school desegregation consent decrees, most of them in the Deep South — Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina . These decrees had been the last legal mechanisms requiring districts to:

- maintain racially balanced enrollment
- ensure equal access to AP courses
- prevent boundary changes that re-segregate neighborhoods
- monitor discipline disparities

Ending these decrees removes the only federal guardrails preventing re-segregation.

CBS News confirms the same trend: more than 50 decrees have been dismissed, with the DOJ arguing districts have achieved "unitary status," meaning they supposedly eliminated Jim Crow vestiges.

2. Segregation persists in the 100 largest school districts

The Urban Institute's 2026 analysis shows:

- Racial and ethnic segregation persists across the U.S., even in districts with "integration-friendly" policies.

- Districts with similar boundary and school choice policies can still have wildly different segregation levels, meaning policy design alone doesn't solve the problem.
- Housing segregation remains a major driver, but school choice can worsen segregation when transportation is limited or when charters/magnets cluster by race or income.

3. Where segregation is highest

Based on the sources and long-term national trends, segregation is most severe in:

The Deep South

Because:

- Many districts were under decrees for 60+ years
- Those decrees are now being dismissed
- Housing patterns remain racially stratified
- White flight created fragmented district lines

Large metro areas

Especially:

- New York (not included in the Urban Institute tool because it is too large and uniquely segregated)
- Chicago
- Los Angeles

- Miami
- Atlanta

These cities have:

- highly segregated neighborhoods
- selective enrollment schools
- charter/magnet systems that often stratify by race and income

Fast-growing suburban districts

Where:

- boundary changes can be used to isolate racial groups
- new schools are built in ways that reinforce demographic divides

4. Why segregation is rising again

The search results point to several structural drivers:

A. Rollback of desegregation orders

Federal oversight is disappearing, especially in the South. Once decrees end, districts often redraw boundaries or adjust feeder patterns that increase segregation.

B. Housing segregation

District boundaries often mirror segregated neighborhoods. Without active integration policies, schools simply reproduce housing patterns.

C. School choice policies

Urban Institute notes that:

- Charters and magnets can increase segregation when transportation is limited
- “Choice” without equity design tends to stratify students by race and income

D. District secession movements

Communities attempt to leave larger districts to form whiter, wealthier ones — a trend accelerating nationwide.

E. Judicial limits on race-based integration

Since Parents Involved v. Seattle (2007), districts cannot use race directly in assignment, making integration harder.

5. The current reality: What segregation looks like today

Based on the sources and established national patterns, American schools today exhibit:

High levels of racial isolation

Black and Latino students overwhelmingly attend schools where:

- the majority of students are also Black or Latino
- poverty rates are high
- resources, advanced coursework, and experienced teachers are limited

White students attend disproportionately white schools

Even in diverse cities, white students cluster in:

- selective enrollment schools
- suburban districts
- charters with high barriers to entry

Re-segregation of formerly integrated districts

As decrees end, districts often drift back toward racial separation — a pattern documented in dozens of cases dismissed in 2026.

Segregation within schools

Even “diverse” schools often have:

- segregated gifted programs
- segregated AP tracks
- segregated disciplinary patterns
- segregated extracurricular access

Federal oversight once monitored these disparities; now it largely does not.

6. The bottom line

American schools are still segregated — and becoming more so.

The DOJ’s dismissal of desegregation cases in 2026 removes the last structural protections in many districts, especially in the South. Meanwhile,

national research shows that school choice, boundary policies, and housing patterns continue to produce racially isolated schools.

Segregation today is not accidental. It is policy-driven, boundary-driven, and legally enabled.

Conclusion

America has never been serious about ending segregation, and the evidence is no longer subtle. Our schools are not drifting into separation; they are being steered there. Federal oversight is dissolving, district lines are hardening, and “school choice” has become a policy instrument that reliably sorts children by race and income. At the same time, state legislatures across the country are redrawing political maps with mathematical precision to reduce Black and brown representation, ensuring that the very communities most harmed by segregation have the least power to challenge it. And while the military has long reflected the country’s demographic shifts, it is now entering one of its cyclical phases of becoming whiter, especially in the officer corps, where gatekeeping, legacy networks, and selective promotion pipelines quietly reproduce the same hierarchies visible in civilian institutions. Put plainly: segregation is not a relic we failed to dismantle; it is a system we continue to maintain. The pattern is consistent across schools, politics, and the military. Every arena where opportunity is allocated and authority is produced. America knows how to integrate. It simply chooses not to.

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Written by William Spivey

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Tom Mitchell

What are your thoughts?

Elwood Watson, Ph.D.
15 hours ago (edited)

The truth is that we have never been an intergrated nation. We are a desegregated nation.

2 Reply

Debbie-Ann smith
21 hours ago

Segregation persists because the white collective wants it to persist. Racial inequality, including segregation, rests on the shoulders of white America. Nothing changes because they haven't changed. They remain as bigoted as they ever were.

2 1 reply Reply

Dr. Cynthia Alease Smith
2 hours ago

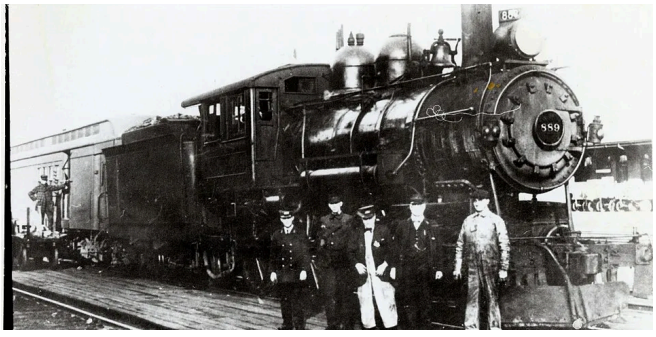
> Segregation today is not accidental. It is policy-driven, boundary-driven, and legally enabled.

Actually always was. They just neutralized the wording.

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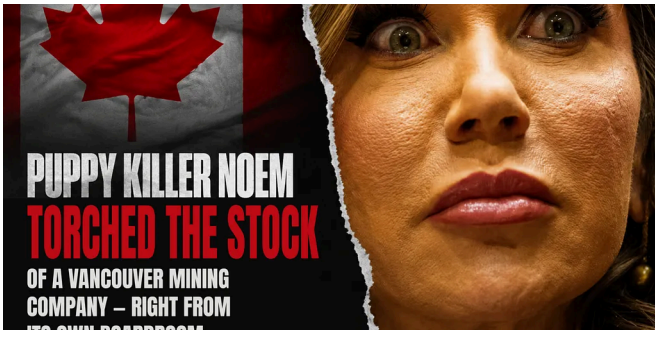
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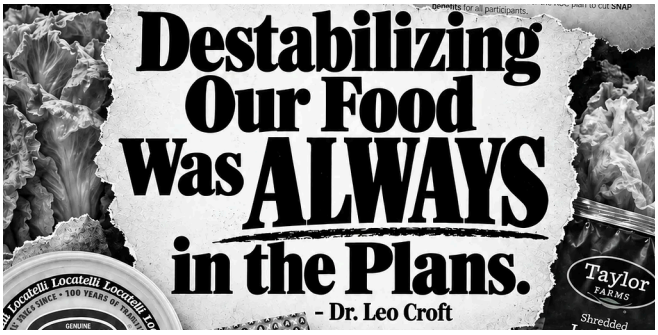


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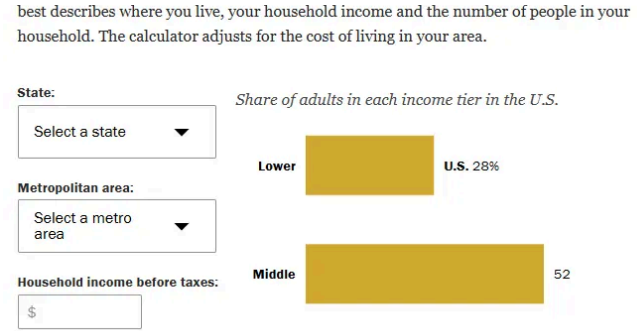


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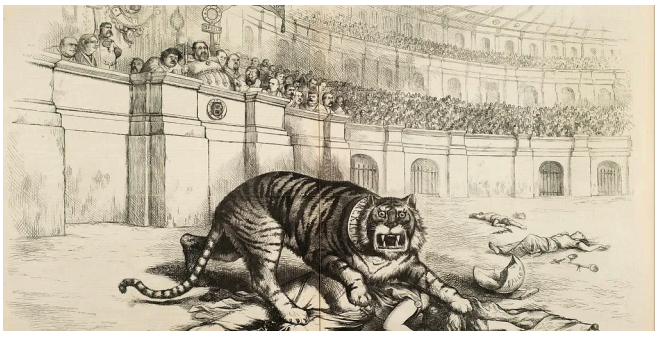


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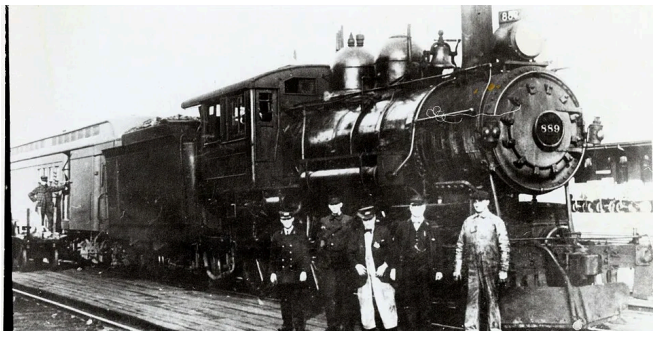


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