

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

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New Research by UCLA Civil Rights Project Finds Decline in School Segregation in Washington D.C.'s Rapidly Gentrifying Neighborhoods

Segregation remains severe. Multiple approaches needed to ensure changes result in integrated schools and inclusive communities

Los Angeles--According to a [new report](#) released today by the UCLA Civil Rights Project, school enrollment patterns in Washington, DC's most rapidly gentrifying areas have seen a decline in racial segregation, more so in traditional public schools than in charter schools. The report's authors caution, however, that while the trend of declining racial segregation in schools in some of the city's most gentrifying areas is promising, a high level of racial segregation remains, and substantial progress is still needed to ensure that these newly integrating neighborhoods result in integrated schools and inclusive communities.

A major force in urban neighborhoods across the country, gentrification is also transforming the nation's capital. In 2011, Washington, DC, reached a non-black majority for the first time in more than a half century, and since 2000, the city's white population has increased from just over a quarter to well over a third of the total population. The UCLA report, [White Growth, Persistent Segregation: Could Gentrification Become Integration?](#), is coauthored by researchers Kfir Mordechay and Jennifer Ayscue for the Civil Rights Project, and examines whether the potential educational and social benefits that could come from greater racial and socioeconomic diversity are being realized in DC's most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

"Gentrification is a growing phenomenon that influences neighborhoods, cities and schools," said Co-author Kfir Mordechay. "It presents both challenges and opportunities. Smart policies and thoughtful leadership can manage neighborhood changes in ways that could potentially keep communities affordable, inclusive, dynamic, and diverse."

"Although we are concerned about the overall high levels of school segregation in Washington, DC, the trend toward declining racial segregation in gentrifying areas is encouraging," adds Co-author Jennifer Ayscue. "Our hope is that schools will continue to become increasingly integrated as neighborhoods grow more diverse."

Key findings of the report include:

- In the city's most rapidly gentrifying census areas, the white population increased from approximately 5% in 2000, to just under 50% in 2015. During this same period, the white school

enrollment in the same areas increased from 1% to 8%. As 17% of the school-aged population in the gentrifying areas is white, the asymmetry between neighborhood and school demographics cannot be explained by age alone. This finding likely suggests that a large share of white gentrifier parents are opting out of neighborhood schools.

- Between 2000 and 2014, a larger number of schools in gentrifying areas (than in non-gentrifying areas) experienced more intense increases in the white share of enrollment. 12% of schools in gentrifying areas -- but no schools in non-gentrifying areas -- had more than a 50-percentage point increase in the white share of enrollment.
- Between 2000 and 2014, schools located in both gentrifying and non-gentrifying areas saw the black share of enrollment decrease while the Hispanic share of enrollment *almost doubled*. But in gentrifying areas, the black share of enrollment in 2000 started at a higher level, and remained higher than in non-gentrifying neighborhoods by 2014. The reverse is true for Hispanics, as the Hispanic share of enrollment began at a lower level in gentrifying neighborhoods in 2000 and remained lower in 2014 than in non-gentrifying neighborhoods.
- In 2014, over three-fourths of schools in gentrifying and non-gentrifying areas were intensely segregated, enrolling 90-100% non-white students. In 2014, a slightly larger share of schools in non-gentrifying areas (63%) than in gentrifying areas (55%) was hypersegregated, enrolling 99-100% non-white students.
- In both gentrifying and non-gentrifying areas, larger shares of charters than traditional public schools (TPS) are majority minority, intensely segregated, and hypersegregated. In 2014, nearly three-fourths of charters were hypersegregated—71% of charters in non-gentrifying areas and 70% of charters in gentrifying areas. In non-gentrifying areas, 54% of traditional public schools were hypersegregated; in gentrifying areas, less than half (41%) were hypersegregated.
- While segregation persists at high levels in both charters and traditional public schools, segregation levels have declined substantially more in traditional public schools than in charters in gentrifying neighborhoods. Between 2007 and 2014, the share of hypersegregated TPS in gentrifying areas fell from 67% to 41%. During the same time, the share of hypersegregated charters in gentrifying areas declined more modestly from 77% to 70%.

This report provides coordinated and targeted recommendations for managing the process of gentrification such that it supports school integration. These recommendations underscore the deep and fundamental relationships between housing, communities, and schools. The recommendations include:

- The federal government should prioritize the production of affordable housing and well-designed mixed-income developments.
- The preservation of existing affordable housing through rental assistance demonstrations, housing choice vouchers, and preservation-friendly incentives should be a major focus of local housing authority.

- Urban magnet programs with strategies and guidelines for racial and economic diversity should be used to create more integrated schools.
- Placing requirements for racial and economic diversity on charter schools in gentrifying areas also presents an opportunity for desegregation.

“This report shows a continuing pattern of intense segregation of students of color even in gentrifying areas, but there are some signs indicating potentially more integration in the future,” says Professor Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA. “Much remains to be done, but it’s not rocket science. It’s about bringing together diverse communities, who share common dreams for their children, and supporting real integration in schools and neighborhoods. But leaders have to decide to do it.”

The report can be found [here](#).

About the Civil Rights Project

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is co-directed by UCLA Professors Gary Orfield and Patricia Gándara. Founded in 1996 at Harvard University by Orfield and Christopher Edley, Jr., CRP’s mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. CRP has commissioned more than 400 studies, published more than 15 books and issued numerous reports monitoring the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity and providing the authoritative source of segregation statistics. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2003 Grutter v. Bollinger decision upholding affirmative action, and in Justice Breyer’s dissent (joined by three other Justices) to its 2007 Parents Involved decision, cited the Civil Rights Project’s research.

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