

# *What People are Saying About...*

## **Choice Without Equity:**

### **A Report on Charter School Segregation and the Need for Civil Rights Standards By the Civil Rights Project at UCLA**

#### **Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-PA)**

“I have long admired the work of the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles. This report offers an important perspective on recent education proposals and calls on the Department of Education to use innovation and reform to restore and advance civil rights protections for vulnerable students and to increase diversity in our nation’s schools. We need the data to know where students are and how they’re doing and must continue to reduce the barriers between students of color and high quality educational opportunities. Charter schools should be used as laboratories of innovation which benefit all students, and not silos to further segregate and isolate students based on race and income.”

#### **Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ)**

“A hasty drive to increase the charter school presence across the country is premature. Based on the limited data we currently have on the effectiveness of these schools, such a move may result in unintended negative consequences. The report from the Civil Rights Project highlights the peril in jumping too quickly to expand charter schools.”

#### **Benjamin Jealous, president, NAACP**

“Charter schools use public money and should therefore be run with the same moral commitment as public schools to serve all of America’s children. That means they can't contribute to segregation, choose which students to serve, or deny kids the quality teaching and opportunity to learn all students deserve. The Civil Rights Project’s outstanding work shows that charters are definitely concentrating children of color in segregated schools, far too often denying English Language Learners equal opportunity and failing to even keep records about serving poor students. That is unacceptable. We exempted charters from some of the rules governing other public schools so they could do extraordinary things to help children, not abuse their privileges by isolating kids and lessening their opportunities to learn with a diverse group of peers.”

#### **Barbara R. Arnwine, executive director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**

“Our national policy of promoting equality of opportunity in education demands that the report’s findings of the failure of charter schools to achieve diversity be redressed through strong proactive measures,” said Barbara Arnwine, executive director, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. “Furthermore, I urge the Obama administration and the U.S. Department of Education to take immediate steps to issue new guidance on ensuring civil rights protections and fostering heightened diversity efforts in charter schools.”

**Pedro Noguera, executive director, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, NYU**

“Once again, the Civil Rights Project has called our attention to the growing segregation of schools in the United States. The fact the charter schools are implicated in this trend, and are even more segregated than public schools, should prompt all of us who support charters (and I consider myself a supporter) to reflect on what this means for how we are preparing our children to live in an increasingly diverse society. Those who laud the successes of some charter schools must keep in mind that separate but equal didn't work before and it won't work now. If charters are to serve as genuine models of innovation and change in education they must also demonstrate that it is possible to educate children from diverse backgrounds together.”

- *Noguera is also Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Development*

**Richard D. Kahlenberg, senior fellow, The Century Foundation**

“*Choice without Equity* is a deeply disturbing report. It convincingly shows that charter schools are more likely than regular public schools to be economically and racially segregated – which educators have long known is a recipe for failure. President Obama – who is committed both to reducing the achievement gap and bringing Americans of different backgrounds together – needs to read this devastating study and reconsider his unequivocal support for charters.”

- *Kahlenberg is also author of All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools through Public School Choice*

**Lynn Walker Huntley, president, Southern Education Foundation**

“Federal and state funding policies/programs related to charter school expansion should require such schools to implement practices to extend rather than constrict class and race-based integration of students, faculty and administrators. Without such requirements, if current trends continue, expansion of charter schools will exacerbate race and class-based isolation and inequality of the low income and minority group students and vulnerable communities that need help the most.”

“Demographers project that America will soon be a “majority minority” country. Bringing diverse students by class, race, ethnicity and other such characteristics to learn together in public and charter schools is the best way to ensure that democratic and constitutional values related to equality are honored in substantive practice, not just in empty words. Taxpayer money should be used to expose and prepare students for life in a diverse world, not in segregated enclaves.”

“Southern governments and school systems have fought—many of them—for years to elude race desegregation requirements in public education. Efforts by the federal government to foster expansion of charter schools in the South should not ignore this sad history. Instead, the federal government should require that charter schools, like all other publicly funded schools, adopt policies and practices that foster diversity and inclusiveness, accountability and transparency. The Obama Administration should not betray the promise of Brown v. Board of Education.”

**Chinh Le, Director, Division of Civil Rights, Office of New Jersey Attorney General**

“This report should spur critical rethinking about charter schools – who they should serve and what kind of learning environment they should offer. As the Obama administration grapples with the role of charter schools in education reform, it would be well advised to examine the findings in this report.”

**Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education, Stanford University**

“This report illustrates how critically important it is for all public schools to be held accountable for providing equitable access and support for diversity, as well as sound educational practices. Without this commitment across the entire public education system, America cannot provide a fair and just start in life for all of our children.”

– *Darling-Hammond is also the co-director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education*

**Julius L. Chambers, professor, University of North Carolina Center for Civil Rights, University of North Carolina School of Law, Chapel Hill, NC**

“The resegregation of our nation’s public schools, particularly in the South, threatens to erode the educational and social progress we have achieved since *Brown v. Board of Ed.* Equally troubling is the fact that policymakers have either ignored or dismissed the return to segregation, even as they have focused on school policy and educational improvement. This is most evident in the recent emphasis on charter schools. Despite the promise of charter schools to provide an innovative, publicly-funded learning environment, this report illustrates that charters have in many instances exacerbated and accelerated the resegregation of public education. As federal and state policymakers re-emphasize charter schools as a key component of educational improvement, they must also enact policies that aggressively combat racial and economic isolation in charter schools, rather than allow them to further contribute to this alarming trend.”

**Alfredo J. Artiles, Professor of Special Education, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Arizona State University**

“The evidence reported in *Choice without Equity* reveals the fragility of charter schools’ promise to promote integration. The report’s findings have timely implications for reframing this educational choice model so that it lives up to its equity potential, and strengthens educational access and opportunity for the nation’s increasingly diverse student population.”

**Angela Valenzuela, director, Texas Center for Education Policy and the National Latino Education Research and Policy Project, University of Texas at Austin**

“Aside from reporting and equity concerns underscored in the *Choice without Equity* report issued by the Civil Rights Project, the simple fact that charter schools today only serve 2.5% of all students nationally suggests problems in scalability that vitiate them as a tool for broad-based education reform.”

**Janelle Scott, assistant professor, Education & African American Studies,  
University of California at Berkeley**

“Advocates have long called for an expansion in the scale and levels of public support for charter schools, claiming that charters produce better schooling outcomes and educational experiences, especially for poor students of color. These claims stand in stark contrast to the findings of this important report by the Civil Rights Project/ Proyecto Derecho Civiles. The report is a much-needed analysis of charter school demographics, and shows that as the charter school movement has grown, students within charter schools are even more segregated than their traditional public school counterparts. As evidence of this persistent and growing racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic segregation in the charter school sector continues to mount, so grows the need for policy makers to provide stronger incentives, oversight, and regulations to encourage the creation and stability of diverse, high-quality charter, magnet, and traditional public schools.”