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CHAPTER 1

Less Separate, Still Unequal: Diversity and Equality in "Post-Civil Rights" America

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The Paradox of Diversity, Toleration, and Inequality

It is now a commonplace assertion that the United States will be majority nonwhite in a few decades.¹ But that prediction tells us nothing about what diversity will mean, which identities will be salient and which will fade from significance, or how diversity will shape Americans' lives from where they go to school to where and how they live, where they work, what they are paid, if they are healthy or prone to illness, and whether throughout their lives they are treated with dignity and respect. Throughout American history, racial and ethnic categories have profoundly structured educational opportunities, jobs and financial security or insecurity, access to political representation and public goods, and nearly every aspect of the life course, from birth outcomes to health to mortality.

The relationship between race or ethnicity and opportunity is not fixed, however. It has changed at critical junctures during moments of disruption and possibility. When it comes to

diversity and equality, the United States now stands at one of those critical junctures, a period when new demographic realities have destabilized old racial categories, when the ideal of diversity and inclusion clashes with xenophobia and exclusion, and when many minorities still suffer constricted opportunities as the result of deeply entrenched historical patterns.

The United States is a more diverse and, at least superficially, a more tolerant society today than it was a half century ago. Overt expressions of racism are less common, even if they have yet to disappear, particularly in the anonymous recesses of the Internet. It is a sign of dramatic change that public figures who express racial biases can expect to be exposed and criticized publicly. Americans have come to expect diversity in the top ranks of government, in newsrooms, and on university faculties, even if those expectations are not always met. College admissions websites regularly feature photos of students of different backgrounds. Both major political parties engage in outreach to nonwhites, with varying degrees of success. Diversity, however, is not a precondition for inclusion or equality. "Increasingly the term *diversity* is paired with the term *inclusion* as if both terms imply each other," the demographer Marta Tienda argues, but "the presumption is unwarranted."² Diversity is necessary but far from sufficient to ensure a more just and equal society.

Amidst a shift in professed attitudes and in the public representation of group differences, the United States remains riven by deep patterns of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic separation and inequality. Residential segregation remains a distinctive feature of the American landscape, even if the forms it takes have changed over the past fifty years. Even if American schools are more diverse than ever (only 54 percent of primary and secondary school students in 2010 were white), public education has

resegregated since 1990. Racial and ethnic gaps in education, employment, income and poverty, household wealth, health and access to health care, personal security, and incarceration are deep and persistent. The sociologist Charles Tilly coined the phrase *durable inequalities* to describe the persistence of differences in opportunity across time. Durable inequalities perpetuate social hierarchies. They reinforce advantages for some segments of the population and exacerbate disadvantages for others.³

We must account for the paradox that, despite a growing acceptance of the principle of diversity in the United States, American metropolitan areas remain (with regional variation) quite segregated by race and ethnicity and increasingly segregated by income. Those patterns of segregation affect opportunities at every stage of the life course, including access to a high-quality education from primary school through university, job opportunities, household assets, and life expectancies. Segregation has negative feedback loop effects that reinforce inequalities across generations.⁴ This paradox raises some troubling questions with normative implications: Is toleration irrelevant to inequality? Does the widely accepted celebration of diversity mask inequality? Do spatialized inequalities—the separation of groups spatially by race and income—impinge on the goal of creating a more unified society?

When the Color of America Changed: Civil Rights and Immigration Reform

To understand the entanglement of growing diversity and entrenched inequality requires a look backward to the last critical juncture in American history when notions of race and citizenship, diversity and tolerance shifted—the civil rights revolution.

Within a few years in the mid-1960s, America's long-standing racial order, one that systematically privileged whites, saw its legislative and legal underpinnings crumble. In July 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed landmark civil rights legislation, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, sex, religion, and age. That legislation was a first step. In 1965, Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act; in 1968, he and Congress drafted and enacted a law that forbade discrimination in the sale and rental of housing.

Johnson's civil rights laws were not self-enforcing: their success depended on executive orders, federal regulations, and voluntary efforts to break down racial barriers, not to mention the efforts of civil rights groups and often-disruptive protestors to press for change. Nearly every element of the civil rights revolution met with fierce opposition and resistance, as judges, politicians, and policy makers attempted to weaken or roll back civil rights laws, and as ordinary citizens fought against what many called "forced" integration, whether it be efforts to open housing markets, desegregate public schools, or diversify workplaces and colleges. Still, Johnson's law signaled a robust national commitment to the ideals of formal equality and contributed to unprecedented—if often halting—diversification of labor markets, institutions of higher education, and some neighborhoods and schools.

A half century ago, America's color also began to change. In October 1965, at a ceremony at the base of the Statue of Liberty, Johnson signed the Hart-Cellar Act, which lifted immigration restrictions that favored newcomers from northern and western Europe. That year, close to nine in ten Americans were white. The percentage of foreign-born in the United States was at a near low. Unless you lived in California's Central Valley or

along the Rio Grande, or found yourself in a handful of neighborhoods like New York's East Harlem, Miami's Little Havana, or East Los Angeles, Hispanics were mostly invisible. The Asian-descended population was vanishingly small, clustered in a few Chinatowns, Little Manilas, and a handful of other enclaves, only a few outside of California.

"The land flourished," stated Johnson, "because it was fed from so many sources—because it was nourished by so many cultures and traditions and peoples."⁵ What Johnson had not anticipated was that the nation would be nourished by new cultures and traditions, fewer with European origins. Fifty years after Johnson took office, there were more than 41 million foreign-born people living in the United States, most of them from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

Today, whites comprise only 64 percent of the population of the United States. African Americans make up about 13 percent, a slight increase from the civil rights era, in part because of the growth of immigration from the Caribbean and Africa. About half of black Americans live in the South. Most others are concentrated in large metropolitan areas, mainly in the former industrial belt in the Northeast and Midwest.

Nothing has changed the color of America more than the dramatic increase in the Hispanic population.⁶ In 1970, 9.6 million Hispanics lived in the United States—about 4 percent of the population. In 2010, that population had increased to 51 million—about 16 percent of the population.⁷ It is hard to generalize about Hispanics. The category encompasses people with origins in some twenty countries across three continents and the Caribbean. *Hispanic* (a term that came into official use in the mid-1970s) is not a racial category. Hispanics, by census definition, can be black (like the descendants of enslaved Africans

brought to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, or Cuba), white (Spaniards or the descendants of Spanish colonists), American Indian (like Mayans from Mexico or Honduras), or Asian (including Japanese Peruvians or Chinese Cubans). They can also fall into the category “other race.” A majority of Hispanics consider themselves white, but in the 2010 census, more Hispanics than ever checked the box “other race,” signaling their dissatisfaction with existing racial categories.

Sixty-five percent of Hispanics in the United States today are of Mexican descent and another 9 percent hail from Puerto Rico. The next largest groups—Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, and Guatemalans—together make up another 14 percent. Their reasons for coming to the United States are as diverse as their national origins. Some Mexicans came to the United States as migratory farmworkers and, on a smaller scale, industrial workers in the twentieth century, though many were temporary sojourners in the United States, often part of a circular migration between Mexico and the United States. A small number of Hispanics within the boundaries of the United States descend from families that date back to the Spanish empire (sometimes called *Tejanos*, *Hispanos*, and *Californios*). Cubans almost all came as refugees, some airlifted to the United States, others (more recently) fleeing their homeland by boat or raft. Overall, Hispanic migrants and immigrants tend to be quite heterogeneous in terms of their national origins, their places of arrival, their educational capital, and their place in the racial hierarchy of the United States.⁸

Hispanics live in every state, with some of the fastest growth happening in places remote from the traditional immigrant gateways of California, Texas, and Florida. Guatemalans work in the chicken processing plants of North Carolina; Mexicans

in the meatpacking factories of Iowa and Kansas; Hondurans and Mexicans as landscapers and construction workers in central New Jersey. Hardly any neighborhood on Chicago’s North and West Sides does not have an immigrant-run *taqueria* or a corner *bodega*.

The aggregate statistics do not reflect significant regional variation. The western states (particularly California) are far more diverse than other parts of the United States. Forty-seven percent of residents of that region are nonwhite. The population of the Midwest is the least diverse, but still 22 percent of its population is nonwhite. Between the two are the Northeast (31 percent nonwhite) and the South (40 percent nonwhite). Metropolitan areas with populations of a half million or more are also far more diverse than smaller cities and towns.⁹

Johnson and his contemporaries could not have imagined America’s new polychromatic landscape. Latino, white, and Asian teenagers intermingle in shopping malls in Orange County, California, a place that had been a haven for hundreds of thousands of whites fleeing Los Angeles during the 1950s and 1960s. The sight of black-and-white couples holding hands is no longer scandalous in Atlanta. When a firm in Detroit hires new black workers, whites do not engage in wildcat strikes as they did during and after World War II. Real estate brokers in Seattle can show houses to Chinese American homebuyers without fear of alienating their white customers.

One of the most unexpected changes over the past half century has been the rise of suburban diversity. More than half of all Latin American immigrants reside in suburbs. The diverse Asian population—dominated by immigrants from China, India, and Vietnam—comprises 5 percent of U.S. residents. They too have scattered far and wide, most living in the suburbs. African

American suburbanization has also increased steadily during this period, with 51 percent living in the suburbs today. No one in 1964 could have predicted that postwar suburbs, which had been built on the foundation of white racial exclusivity, would become polychromatic and multilingual.¹⁰

The America that dawned in the 1960s is far more diverse, but it is far from inclusive or equal. Lifting the formal barriers of discrimination did not necessarily make institutions more inclusive, neighborhoods and schools more integrated, or workplaces more representative of the nation's diverse population. The subsequent half century was one of gains and setbacks, of expanding opportunities and still-wrenching injustices, of disadvantages by race and ethnicity sometimes overcome, but just as often intensified and compounded. If the arc of history bent toward justice, it just as often veered off course. To complete the unfinished business of the 1960s means coming to grips with what has changed and what has not, to be attentive to the paradoxes of diversity and inequality, of inclusion and exclusion, of integration and fragmentation.

Where We Live: Still Separate and Unequal

Americans may value diversity as a principle, but in practice they continue to live separate lives. Rates of residential segregation by race and ethnicity have remained stubbornly high in most American metropolitan areas, particularly in areas with large populations of African Americans. Sixty years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, public schools are resegregating by black and white. Latinos face less residential segregation than African Americans, but are now more likely to be concentrated in separate schools, unequal and impoverished.

By nearly every measure, educational and residential segregation ensures that racial inequality in the United States has remained durable.

The segregation of populations by race and income reinforces inequalities through the uneven distribution of public goods, economic resources, hazards, and political power across space. In the United States, where you live determines your access to jobs, your transit options, the quality of public services and how much you pay for them in the form of taxes, your health, and your personal security. Residential segregation by race has contributed to the most durable of inequalities in modern America: the huge racial gaps in household wealth. The result is durable inequalities in academic achievement. Segregation and separation can sometimes be a communal resource, solidifying group bonds and fostering a sense of commonality, but they also exacerbate intergroup conflict, misinformation, and distrust.

Black and White: Enduring Residential Segregation

Blacks and whites in the United States still live largely separate lives. Between the 1920s and the 1990s, the residential segregation of blacks and whites worsened in nearly every American metropolitan area, despite the passage of federal, state, and local laws that forbade discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, and even though public opinion surveys since the 1960s have shown significant, positive shifts in every measure of racial "toleration," including the willingness to live in racially mixed neighborhoods, to support racially diverse schools, and to accept interracial marriage. Since the 1960s, it has become commonplace for Americans to express support for the ideal of "color-blindness," but when it comes to housing and neighborhoods, color still matters greatly.

Segregation did not have a single cause. In the postwar years, it resulted from a combination of public policy and private practices. Federal homeownership programs—the Home Owners Loan Corporation, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Veterans Administration—made insured mortgages available at a low cost to whites, but discouraged lending in neighborhoods that had even a small number of nonwhites. Real estate brokers openly discriminated against people of color. After 1968, civil rights legislation forbade discrimination in home sales, rentals, and lending, but dozens of studies showed that minorities and whites had very different experiences with the real estate market.

African American homebuyers were likely to be steered to neighborhoods of older housing stock, often in declining central cities or fading suburbs, places where housing values often stagnated or depreciated. Since the 1970s, audit studies (with matched pairs of white and minority testers) have shown that steering has remained a persistent issue. Explicit discrimination—being turned away by brokers or landlords—is less common, but a recent Department of Housing and Urban Development study shows that about one in four African Americans report that they have faced discrimination in the rental or purchase of a home.¹¹ African Americans inquiring about homes or apartments are sometimes rebuffed because of their accents.¹²

African Americans, if they were lucky enough to be homeowners, remained confined to neighborhoods on the margins, economically and politically. One of the legacies of discriminatory real estate and home finance policies was that both whites and minorities came to see the racial separation of metropolitan areas as natural, as the sum of individual choices rather than the deliberate result of prosegregative policies and practices. Racial

segregation seemed simply to be the natural order of things: “birds of a feather flock together.”

Still, between 1990 and 2010, black-white residential segregation declined modestly in most metropolitan areas. This is a hopeful sign, but it is far too soon to predict whether the trend will continue. The most commonly used metric of segregation—the index of dissimilarity—shows that about six in ten black Americans would have to move for the black and white population to be dispersed evenly across American metropolitan areas. The least segregated areas are those with small black populations, particularly in the Mountain West. Those places are less likely to be scarred by a long history of black-white hostility. And there, the black population is too small for whites to perceive it as threatening. By contrast, black-white segregation has fallen most slowly in the metropolitan areas with the largest black populations—particularly in the Northeast and Midwest. The sociologist Douglas Massey writes that, of African Americans living in metropolitan areas, nearly half live in conditions of hypersegregation, in homogeneous neighborhoods where contact with members of other groups is uncommon.¹³

Of all racial groups, whites are most likely to live in racially homogeneous communities and least likely to come into contact with people unlike themselves. In 2010, the average white lived in a neighborhood that was three-quarters white. One widely used index of segregation measures isolation—that is, the unlikelihood of intergroup contact within neighborhoods. By this measure, whites are the most isolated of racial groups. As a result, write Massey and Rugh, “the vast majority of whites do not experience the rising racial-ethnic diversity of contemporary America.”¹⁴

It is telling that cities that are home to military bases and universities are the most integrated, in large part because they

are home to the only two truly diverse American institutions. Their histories are instructive. In the aftermath of President Truman's 1948 executive order desegregating the armed services, the military became the most racially heterogeneous institution in the United States. By the 1960s, the Army, and to a lesser extent the Navy and Air Force, put a priority on diversifying the ranks of its officers. By the 1980s, the military academies and officer training schools aggressively groomed minorities for leadership positions. The relatively equal interaction of blacks and whites in the military and around military bases also led to higher rates of interracial marriage.¹⁵ Universities in most of the country also made efforts, beginning in the 1960s, to diversity their student bodies. Some—mostly in the South—were compelled to do so to remedy past discrimination in the aftermath of the 1960s civil rights legislation and civil rights litigation. Other institutions developed voluntary programs to consider race and ethnicity as plus factors in admissions. Prodiversity initiatives changed the color of many universities and their surrounding communities, but those gains were fragile, and did not necessarily accomplish the goal of full incorporation and inclusion.¹⁶

Hispanics: Rising and Falling Segregation

In the most comprehensive overview of Hispanic residential patterns, Mary Fischer and Marta Tienda describe the “paradox of rising and falling segregation across metropolitan areas.”¹⁷ In the aggregate, whites and Hispanics are less likely to live apart than whites and African Americans, reflecting the ways that native-born Americans have long seen Hispanics as an “in-between group.” Residential segregation is lower for those who arrive in parts of the country with relatively few Hispanics, and for those who arrive in cities with only small African American

populations. Rates of segregation are generally lower for second- and third-generation Hispanics, and in those metropolitan areas that have longer-established Hispanic populations.

There are, however, two noteworthy exceptions to the pattern of lower rates of segregation among Hispanics, and they are revealing. Afro-Hispanics, mostly Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Colombian, tend to live in highly segregated neighborhoods, often in close proximity to African Americans.¹⁸ New Hispanic immigrants are also likely to live in highly segregated communities. Segregation rates are highest in gateway cities with large Hispanic populations. Nearly 20 percent of Hispanics living in metropolitan areas live in hypersegregated neighborhoods, most of them in New York City (where much of the Hispanic population is of African descent) and in Los Angeles (the metropolitan area with both the largest number of Hispanics and the greatest number of new arrivals).¹⁹

In some cities, Hispanics serve as “buffers” between black and white neighborhoods, diversifying both. But there is also substantial evidence that Hispanics are reluctant to move to predominantly African American neighborhoods. In their study of ethnic neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Lawrence Bobo and Camille Charles found that newly arriving immigrants from Latin America quickly define themselves as “not black.” They are attracted to neighborhoods with substantial white populations and view the presence of even a modest number of African Americans as a sign that a neighborhood is troubled or in decline.²⁰ William Julius Wilson and Richard Taub have found similar patterns in Chicago.²¹

It is difficult to predict the future direction of Hispanic residential segregation. If Latin American, Caribbean, and South American immigration slows, it is likely that segregation rates

will drop. And if current patterns hold, Hispanic-white residential segregation should continue to decline as the native-born Hispanic population grows.²² Rising intermarriage rates between Hispanics and whites may also result in a blurring of ethnoracial distinctions and a decline in residential segregation.²³ But the growing hypersegregation in New York and Los Angeles serves as a cautionary tale: residential integration is not inevitable.²⁴

Unequal Education

In 1965, less than a year after he signed the Civil Rights Act, and just months before he signed the voting rights and immigration reform legislation, Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. That landmark legislation substantially stepped up federal investment in public education, but with three overriding purposes. First was to bolster the role of schools in providing students with the intellectual tools to adapt to a rapidly evolving labor market that put a premium on high degrees of literacy, numeracy, and technical knowledge. Second was to level the playing field between rich and poor students. The third was to break down the long-standing barriers of race that had confined African Americans, and to a lesser degree Hispanics, to second-class schools.

A half century later, public schools remain divided by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Many children leave school ill-prepared for higher education and without the skill sets necessary for success in an increasingly high-tech economy. Education research has shown consistently that majority-minority schools face one of several problems. They are almost always underfunded in comparison to schools in nearby majority-white

districts. They face high teacher turnover and have a harder time attracting credentialed teachers. They are more likely to have superannuated facilities and outdated classroom materials. Most significantly, their students tend to be disproportionately poor, lacking the familial resources and the cultural capital to do well in the classroom.

The Resegregation of African American Education

While rates of black-white residential segregation have fallen modestly since 1990, over the same period, American public schools have resegregated. The process of resegregation has unraveled many of the gains of the civil rights era. By the 1950s, most northern states had outlawed separate “Negro” or “colored” schools, but new patterns of segregation that were even more effective took their place. Within districts, school attendance zones usually corresponded closely to a neighborhood’s racial composition. As “neighborhood schools” came under legal challenge in dozens of court cases and voluntary desegregation plans in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, many white parents voted with their feet and moved across school district boundaries, leading to an increase in interdistrict segregation at the same time that intradistrict segregation was declining.

Until 1954, racially separate schools were required by law throughout the former Confederacy (in South Texas, schools separated whites from both African Americans and Mexican Americans). In the wake of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, many southern school districts introduced neighborhood schools as part of a strategy to resist school desegregation by making the case that school attendance zones were race neutral in design.

Efforts to break down segregation *within* school districts throughout the country were most successful in the period

between 1970 and 1990. In many northern states, departments of education required districts to implement “racial balance” plans to break down long-standing patterns of racial segregation. Some districts also implemented their own voluntary desegregation plans, in part to avoid civil rights lawsuits. Many districts, particularly in the South, were under court order to desegregate. Whether by administrative fiat or court order, districts slowly integrated by shifting school attendance zones, creating citywide magnet schools, or consolidating racially segregated schools. As a result, school districts across the country grew less segregated.²⁵

School districts that spanned whole counties, nearly all of them in the Sun Belt, most successfully integrated.²⁶ By the 1980s, Southern public schools that spanned whole counties (including Nashville, Jacksonville, and Raleigh) were among the most racially diverse in the country. In these school districts, educational segregation fell sharply, in large part because whites lacked the opportunity to jump across municipal boundaries to towns with better-funded white-majority schools. In Charlotte, North Carolina, to take a prominent example, the school district spanned a central city, historically segregated black and white urban neighborhoods, public housing projects, postwar suburbs, and even semirural areas. After the Supreme Court’s 1972 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* ruling, Charlotte’s schools desegregated rapidly and racial gaps in achievement narrowed considerably.²⁷

Interdistrict segregation—particularly in the fragmented metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest—proved to be far more resistant to change. Black-white segregation between districts had risen steadily during the postwar period, largely because of white flight from racially mixed central cities to homogeneous suburban school districts. The U.S. Supreme

Court also put up a nearly insuperable hurdle to interdistrict desegregation in its 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* decision, which struck down a fifty-three-district desegregation plan in metropolitan Detroit on the grounds that suburban school districts had not engaged in intentional racial segregation and hence could not be responsible for remedying it.²⁸

The gains of the post-civil rights years proved to be very fragile. Beginning in the 1990s, American schools began to re-segregate by race and grow more stratified by class.²⁹ That process accelerated—particularly in the South—at the turn of the century, as parents (many migrants from the hypersegregated North) began to lobby for homogeneous neighborhood schools and because federal courts began to roll back metropolitan-wide school desegregation plans.³⁰ The Charlotte experiment in desegregation, for example, ended after a 1999 federal court ruling that the district was “unitary” and no longer needed to implement its desegregation plan. Charlotte quickly re-segregated. More recently, in the 2007 *Parents Involved* case, the conservative majority on the Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional voluntary school desegregation programs in Louisville, Kentucky, and Seattle, Washington, and threatened similar programs elsewhere.³¹ A small number of districts, like Wake County (Raleigh), North Carolina, have attempted to replace race-sensitive enrollment policies with programs to foster socioeconomic integration. But such efforts to break down class-stratified school districts have also met with fierce resistance from better-off parents, most of them white.³²

The consequence is that nearly three-quarters of African American students today attend majority-nonwhite schools, and 38 percent attend schools with student bodies that are 10 percent or less white.³³ Black students are also far more likely

than whites to attend schools where many of their classmates live in poverty. Black students attended schools where 64 percent of their classmates were eligible for reduced-price or free lunch programs (a proxy for poverty). The combination of racial isolation and concentrated poverty has negative impacts on educational outcomes.³⁴

Within public schools, particularly those that are highly segregated by race, black students (especially young men) have been subject to new, punitive forms of discipline. Even though juvenile crime rates have fallen steadily since the mid-1990s, school disciplinary procedures have grown increasingly harsh. The use of suspensions to punish students has skyrocketed in the past forty years, disproportionately affecting black students. In 2011–2012, black students made up 16 percent of those enrolled in schools nationwide, but 32 percent of those who received in-school suspensions, 33 percent of those who received out-of-school suspensions, 42 percent of those suspended more than once, and 34 percent of those expelled. Black students are also disproportionately subject to “zero tolerance” policies that require schools to report even minor fights and other disciplinary infractions to law enforcement officials; 27 percent of students referred to law enforcement officials are blacks, twice their representation in the population of enrolled students. Suspensions and zero tolerance have had perverse effects on educational outcomes: students who are suspended or expelled are less likely to graduate and more likely to be incarcerated later. Disciplinary policies also contribute to a growing gender imbalance in high school completion rates among black students, leading to a sizable gender gap in college enrollments and growing disparities in labor force participation between black men and women.

Overall, African Americans are still less likely than whites to attend institutions of higher education and, even when they do attend college, less likely to graduate. In 2010, only a little more than 19 percent of blacks had college degrees.³⁵

Hispanic Education: Growing Segregation

More than a quarter of all K–12 students in the United States today are Hispanic, with the greatest percentages in the states that border Mexico; 60 percent of students enrolled in New Mexico’s schools are Hispanic; in California, more than 50 percent; in Texas, almost 49 percent; and in Arizona, 41 percent. Across the country, Hispanic students face more segregation than ever; indeed, Hispanic students are more likely today than even African Americans to attend racially segregated schools. As William Frey points out in this volume, 80 percent of Hispanic students attend schools where half or more of their classmates are nonwhite; 43 percent attend schools where less than 10 percent of their fellow students are white. In addition, schools that serve Hispanic students tend to be disproportionately poor: the average Hispanic student attends a school in which nearly two-thirds of students are in poverty.³⁶

Court-ordered and voluntary school desegregation programs seldom affected Hispanics. The *Keyes* case (a 1973 Supreme Court ruling that ordered the desegregation of the Denver public schools) was one of the few educational civil rights cases to consider Hispanics at all, and it had little influence beyond that district.³⁷ The dramatic growth of the Hispanic school-age population after 1990 coincided with federal courts’ rollback of court-ordered and voluntary desegregation efforts. Because Hispanic children are more likely than blacks or whites to attend

schools in countywide districts, they experience more intradistrict segregation (confined to neighborhood schools) than interdistrict segregation.³⁸

Many school districts, particularly in suburbs and smaller towns, have struggled to adapt to shifting demographics and the distinctive educational needs of nonnative students. Eighty-three percent of foreign-born Hispanic children speak Spanish solely or primarily at home, and 54 percent of native-born Hispanic children with immigrant parents speak Spanish at home.³⁹ But many teachers (especially in schools that transitioned quickly from white to Hispanic) lack the training to meet their students' linguistic needs. In parts of the country that are part of the far-flung "New Latino diaspora," receiving new immigrants for the first time, many school districts have inadequate resources or lack the political will to develop bilingual education programs, to incorporate immigrant parents into decisions involving their students, to train teachers about the culture of newcomers, and to refine curricula to meet the needs of a multicultural student body. Anti-immigrant sentiment on school boards, among teachers, and among native-born parents can compound Hispanic students' educational disadvantages.⁴⁰

Educational data show positive changes in recent years, particularly in school attendance and completion rates. Students of all backgrounds are much more likely to graduate from high school than ever before. The decline in dropouts has been particularly pronounced for Hispanic students. Between 1972 (the first year that data were compiled) through 2002, between 25 and 35 percent of Hispanic students ages 16–24 dropped out of high school. That figure plummeted between 2003 and 2013, when 13 percent of Hispanic students ages 16–24 dropped out.

Still, that figure is high compared to the 4 percent of whites and 8 percent of blacks who leave high school without a diploma.⁴¹

The disadvantages of attending segregated, poorly resourced public schools, often with teachers ill-trained to respond to immigrant children, leaves Hispanics at a disadvantage in postsecondary education: on average their test scores and grade point averages are lower. Hispanics are underrepresented among those attending college (in part because of barriers to admission and financial aid, especially for undocumented immigrants). Hispanic students are more likely than other groups to attend non-selective colleges. From the community colleges to research universities, many institutions of higher education lack support services for Hispanic students. They are more likely to drop out of college, for a mix of personal reasons (including working to pay for tuition or provide financial support to their families) and academic reasons (failing to thrive in college-level classes). Overall, Hispanics are less likely to earn college degrees than other ethnic groups. In 2010, only 13.2 percent of Hispanics had graduated from college. Over time, the lack of college degrees could be a severe impediment to Hispanics' economic advancement. The economic returns to higher education have increased substantially in the past half century and most of the best-paying jobs are closed to those without college degrees.⁴²

Making Ends Meet: Persistent Income Inequality

For most of American history, minorities have remained concentrated in the poorest-paying, least secure, and most dangerous or unpleasant jobs. They have also been most vulnerable to unemployment and underemployment. The gap in educational

attainment is a particularly important factor in explaining these patterns: those with less education are most likely to be concentrated at the bottom of the occupational ladder. As a consequence, African American and Hispanic incomes remain lower than those of whites. And since the 1970s, there has been very little change in the black-white and black-Hispanic income ratios. Minorities are also particularly vulnerable to falling into poverty. Low income, persistent gaps in the minority-white income ratios, and higher rates of poverty all contribute to greater disadvantages for African Americans and Hispanics at all stages of the life course, but particularly for minority children who are especially likely to spend their formative years in poverty and, over time, to bear the costs of impoverishment. Narrowing the income gap is essential for the full incorporation and inclusion of nonwhite groups in American society.

The Ongoing Black Employment Crisis

Blacks were far more likely than whites to be unemployed. Black unemployment rates have remained one-and-a-half to two times that of whites since the 1950s—regardless of the state of the economy, in part because of their residential concentration in places that have been most ravaged by macroeconomic changes.⁴³ Rural southern blacks are concentrated in places that have weak economies, where agricultural jobs disappeared long ago. Many industrial employers that moved southward concentrated facilities in places with substantial white populations but relatively few African Americans (such as the South Carolina Piedmont or central Tennessee). The northern cities that attracted the largest African American populations were those most ravaged by deindustrialization. The suburbanization of employment—but not of minority housing and transportation—further hindered

job opportunities for blacks. The notion of the “spatial mismatch,” first developed in the 1960s to describe the gap between prospective workers and jobs, still has salience, particularly in sprawling metropolitan areas where job growth has been most robust on the periphery but housing choices remain constrained and public transit systems weak or underfunded. The only bright light in many places—particularly in the urban north—was the expansion of public-sector employment in the post-1960s period. By the best available estimate, 40 percent of the African American middle class worked for government or for firms that relied on government contracts.

African American men have the lowest rates of labor force participation of any group. There is no single explanation for the enormous racial disparities in employment prospects. Despite decades of antidiscrimination legislation, race and ethnicity still matter greatly in the hiring process. Interviews and surveys with employers conducted over the past twenty years consistently show that employers consider race, gender, ethnicity, and place of residence when making hiring decisions.⁴⁴ For many employers race is a “signal” of a potential employee’s personal character. Drawing from racial stereotypes, employers make assumptions about individuals’ work ethic, promptness, self-discipline, and productivity. In one study, economists found that job applicants with names like Emily and Greg were more likely to be hired than those with comparable credentials named Lakisha and Jamal.⁴⁵

Huge racial disparities in incarceration also play a key role in constricting job opportunities, especially for African American men. Since 1970, the number of Americans imprisoned has quadrupled. Today, six in ten prisoners are African American or Hispanic. A major reason for the growth in the carceral state was

the war on drugs. In 1970, about 322,300 Americans were arrested on drug-related charges, compared to more than 1,375,600 in 2000.⁴⁶ That war was fought most intensely in minority communities. Black males are incarcerated at 6.5 times the rate of white males. Hispanic males are 2.6 times more likely than whites to be incarcerated.⁴⁷ Many employers are unwilling to hire men with a criminal record, and some jobs, particularly involving personal care, are closed to felons. It is now commonplace for firms to conduct criminal background checks on job applicants. The sociologist Devah Pager found that ex-offenders were 60 percent less likely than those without a criminal record to be called back after a job interview. The mark of race doubly stigmatizes black ex-offenders: they are far less likely than their white counterparts to be considered for a job.⁴⁸

Hispanics: Employed, but in Dead-End Jobs

By contrast, Hispanic labor force participation rates are high. The same employers who are often skeptical of hiring African Americans are often attracted to Latin American immigrants, imputing to them the qualities of hard work and the willingness to work long hours. Latinos tend to be concentrated in unskilled jobs, especially in construction, maintenance and household work, low-level health and personal care jobs, and repair work. In old industrial cities, like Chicago and Philadelphia, where the number of manufacturing jobs has steadily declined, the proportion of Hispanic workers holding those jobs has increased. Employers in low-wage industries, especially food processing, also rely extensively on undocumented workers to keep wages low. Those employers frequently disregard laws that require immigrants to provide proof of their work eligibility, taking advantage of the fact that undocumented workers are unlikely to

jeopardize their employment and immigration status by demanding better wages and working conditions.

The concentration of Hispanics in bottom-tier jobs has three significant effects. First, few of these jobs offer ladders for advancement. They offer few opportunities for income growth, skill enhancement, and upward mobility. Second, many Hispanic households must rely on the income of more than one family member to make ends meet, a decision that sometimes encourages college-aged children to forgo further education because their families depend on their income. Third, those jobs do not usually offer long-term benefits and insurance, meaning that disabled and elderly workers are particularly vulnerable economically.

Income Gaps and Poverty

Both African Americans and Hispanics earn significantly less than whites. The income gap between black and white households narrowed during the decade following the passage of civil rights legislation. Black households earned 55 percent of white households in 1967; in 2013, they earned 59 percent of white households. The .59 income ratio between blacks and whites has remained constant since 1973. The gap in household income reflects, in large part, the large number of single-earner African American households.⁴⁹

For all of the media attention lavished on black celebrities and on black urban professionals and suburbanizing middle-class blacks, even the best-off African Americans are not as rich as whites. As Patrick Sharkey has shown, the share of blacks in the top quintile of American income earners has barely changed over the past forty years, from 8 percent in 1970 to 9 percent in 2011. By contrast, blacks have remained overrepresented among the poorest Americans. At the beginning of the 1970s, 39

percent of African Americans were in the poorest quintile of income earners; forty years later, 33 percent were. Over the same period, the percentage of African Americans in the poorest two quintiles only fell from 65 to 58 percent.⁵⁰

The civil rights era witnessed dramatic drops in poverty, in particular for African Americans. The rate of black poverty fell by half between 1959 and 2013, with the sharpest declines in the 1960s, a combination of the strong national economy, the gains attendant on civil rights legislation, and the expansion of eligibility for federal income support programs. In 1959, 55 percent of blacks lived below the poverty line. Ten years later, only 33 percent were poor. Between 1970 and 1994, black poverty rates hovered around one-third. They dropped below 30 percent for the first time in 1995, falling to a record low of 22 percent in 2001. Black poverty rates slowly crept back upward, and exceeded 27 percent in 2013.⁵¹

The socioeconomic status of Hispanics is, in some respects, better than that of African Americans. Hispanic household income is higher than that of blacks (it reached \$40,963 in 2013, compared to \$34,598 for African Americans, \$58,270 for non-Hispanic whites, and \$67,065 for Asians). The difference between black and Hispanic household income reflects in part the fact that many Hispanic households rely on the wages of more than one worker, whereas African American households are more likely to have a single income earner. Still, the white-Hispanic income gap has remained persistently large. The ratio of Hispanic to white household income was .74 in 1972. It fell by 2013 to .70.⁵²

Hispanic household income varies by place of origin. Using data from the late 1990s and early 2000s, Cordelia Reimers found that Dominicans had the lowest annual household income,

followed by Mexicans, other Central Americans, and Puerto Ricans. But second- and third-generation Hispanics of all groups saw their household incomes and per capita incomes increase significantly. Non-Hispanic whites earned more at the household and individual levels than did Hispanics of any origin, but by the second generation, both the household and per capita income of all Hispanics surpassed that of African Americans and moved closer to that of whites.⁵³

Poverty also remains a problem for Hispanics across the life course. In 2013, 23.5 percent of Hispanics lived below the poverty line. While they constituted 16 percent of the U.S. population in 2013, more than 28 percent of the poor in the United States were Hispanic. Poverty among Hispanics is particularly high among two groups: children (about 30 percent of whom live beneath the poverty line) and the elderly (about 20 percent of those over 65 are poor), in large part because citizenship or work status excluded them from Social Security or Medicare, which have played a crucial role in lifting many older Americans out of poverty.⁵⁴

Growing Wealth Gaps

No racial gap is more pronounced than that in household wealth. The black-white wealth gap offers the clearest example of the impact of history on the present, what sociologists Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro call the “sedimentation of racial inequality.” They conclude that “blacks’ socioeconomic status results from a socially layered accumulation of disadvantages passed on from generation to generation.”⁵⁵

A household’s wealth might include bank accounts, stocks, securities, and bonds, retirement plans, ownership of a small

business, and items of rapidly depreciating value like cars. For most households, real estate is the largest asset. Homeowners can use the equity in their real estate to get access to home improvement loans, to refinance at beneficial terms, to pay for college tuition, and to pass on inheritances to their children. Historical wealth gaps, in particular, have cumulative impacts. As Oliver and Shapiro write, “whites in general, but well-off whites in particular, were able to amass assets and use their secure financial status to pass their wealth from generation to generation.”

Blacks and Hispanics are less likely to own their own homes than whites (currently 43 percent of blacks, 46 percent of Hispanics, and 73 percent of whites are homeowners).⁵⁶ Those minorities who do own homes are more likely to have less equity in their properties, pay higher interest rates, and own properties in communities where property values have remained low.

The gaps in homeownership and real estate values are both the long-term results of discriminatory real estate practices dating back to the New Deal; the long-term process of institutional and commercial disinvestment in minority neighborhoods; formal and informal restrictions that closed minorities out of conventional and federal government-backed mortgage markets; discrimination by real estate brokers; and, most recently, predatory lending practices.

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, there sprang up a huge new industry of predatory lenders that targeted members of minority groups, including those who already owned their homes and who were persuaded to refinance on what turned out to be usurious terms. In 2006, more than half of subprime loans went to African Americans, who comprised only 13 percent of the population. And a recent study of data from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act found that 32.1 percent of blacks, but only

10.5 percent of whites, got higher-priced mortgages—those with an interest rate three or more points higher than the rate of a Treasury security of the same length.

Economist Carolina Reid estimates that nearly 25 percent of African Americans and Latinos who bought or refinanced their homes during the last years of the housing bubble, between 2004 and 2008, have already or will end up losing their homes to foreclosure. Gaps between white and minority borrowers persisted even among the wealthiest borrowers. Only 4.6 percent of higher-income white borrowers lost their homes to foreclosures, compared to 10 percent of higher-income African Americans and 15 percent of higher-income Hispanics.⁵⁷

Data about race, ethnicity, and wealth tell a disheartening story. Between 1984 and 2009, racial gaps between whites and both African Americans and Latinos remained large, but the gaps narrowed, particularly during the mid-1990s. In 1984, whites held a 12–1 wealth advantage over blacks, and an 8–1 advantage over Hispanics. In 1995, the wealth gap between whites and both blacks and Hispanics narrowed to a low of 7–1. The gap, however, widened again, in part because of racial disparities in indebtedness exacerbated by the loosening of credit and the expansion of predatory lending practices beginning in the late 1990s.⁵⁸

The economic crisis beginning in 2007 had a particularly pronounced effect on Latinos and African Americans. A report by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that Hispanic households saw a 66 percent decline in median household wealth between 2005 and 2009; blacks saw a 53 percent decline; and whites a 16 percent decline. The typical black household had only \$5,677 in wealth; Hispanics had \$6,325. Whites, by contrast, had household wealth of \$113,149. In other words, the typical white

household was twenty times wealthier than the typical black or Hispanic household.⁵⁹

Assets matter at every stage of the life cycle. They can serve as collateral for car and home loans. They provide parents with resources to help pay for their children's college educations. They can be tapped as seed money to launch a small business, or to pay for costly health care, or retirement expenses. And they can, of course, be passed down to the next generation in the form of inheritances (36 percent of whites but only 7 percent of blacks receive any inheritance, with whites receiving ten times the amount of inheritance).⁶⁰ The result is the intergenerational transmission of advantage in the case of whites, and disadvantage among minorities.

The Future of Diversity and Inequality

Will America really be a majority minority country in twenty-five or thirty years? The answer ultimately depends on whether or not the category "majority" remains stable. It depends on the extent to which groups currently categorized as nonwhite are incorporated into the nation's economy and polity. It depends on whether or not current patterns of racialized inequality harden or soften. It depends on whether residential segregation declines, remains stable, or increases. It depends on whether American schools encourage diversity and reflect it in their enrollments, or whether education in the United States remains separate and unequal. It depends on whether sharp racial disparities in income, wealth, employment, and education remain in place, or whether those gaps narrow.

Scholars of race, ethnicity, and immigration suggest several possibilities. Some racial optimists argue that the United States

is moving toward a "postethnic" regime, where assimilation rather than racialization is the norm. Some optimists point to the small but steady growth in black-white intermarriage rates since the 1960s as a portent of the blurring of the black-white divide. High rates of intermarriage between second- and third-generation Hispanics and whites may lead to a decline in the power of Hispanicity as a category. Perhaps Hispanics will become white, in a process of assimilation analogous to that of Italians or other southern and eastern European immigrants, once perceived as less than white, in the 1890–1950 period.⁶¹

Other scholars suggest that persistent educational and residential segregation, as well as wealth and income gaps between blacks, Hispanics, and whites will perpetuate racial and ethnic division and fragmentation, hardening group differences over time. Perhaps the United States is witnessing the rise of a "new Jim Crow," evidenced by the overrepresentation of African Americans among the poor, educationally disadvantaged, and incarcerated.⁶² Pessimists also point to the deep anti-immigrant sentiment in American politics, the growth in Hispanic hypersegregation, and the increase in the number of Hispanics attending segregated schools to predict that Hispanics will not soon, if ever, be incorporated into the American majority. As Tienda and Fuentes suggest, "Hispanics' metropolitan profile has evolved in profound ways that call into question initial optimism that spatial assimilation is ineluctable."⁶³

Others suggest, extrapolating from the growing number of Hispanics who select "other race" on the U.S. Census, that Hispanics will emerge as a third racial category in the United States, remaining perpetually in between African Americans and whites. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva suggests that a Latinized scheme of racialization—with a more elaborate system of color gradation

than has prevailed in most of the United States—will supplant the “one drop rule” of racial classification, with darker-skinned racial minorities remaining stigmatized and overrepresented among the socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁶⁴

The color of America will certainly continue to change, but the meaning of race and ethnicity in the future will depend to a great extent on policy decisions made today. The inequitable distribution of resources across metropolitan space and by race and ethnicity has created durable inequalities. To challenge those inequalities requires greater attentiveness to equal access to institutions and networks, particularly to high-quality education. Inclusion and incorporation are imperatives. There is nothing inevitable about the segregation of African Americans, the marginalization of Hispanics, and the fragmentation of American public education by race and ethnicity, and the mutually reinforcing processes of ethnoracial and socioeconomic stratification. The fundamental challenge of the next half century is uncoupling diversity and inequality.