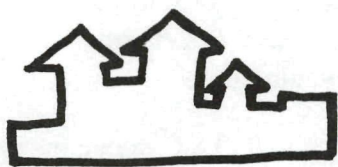


REFLECTIONS ON "THE CASE AGAINST URBAN DESEGREGATION"

By Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward

In 1967 Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven wrote a controversial article, published in *Social Work*, arguing against urban desegregation. Before Richard died, he was asked by Alex Gitterman to write a paper reflecting back on the subject. The following narrative contains those reflections, and is followed by a copy of the article as it originally appeared 35 years ago.

This article generated a good deal of indignation when it was published in 1968, even among our erstwhile allies. And no wonder. We had set out to challenge the longstanding liberal commitment to racial integration. We thought that because policies to improve low-income housing and education had been tied to integration, these initiatives had provoked enormous antagonism from white majorities, with the result that no integration resulted, and efforts to improve housing and schools for ghetto minorities were doomed as well. The interests of Blacks would be better served, we argued, by a shift from a preoccupation with integration to an emphasis on better housing and schools in the black communities of the nation.



We wrote in the midst of the racial turmoil of the 1960s. Black insurgency, from the civil rights movement that began in the south, to the struggles for economic rights in the big cities of the north that culminated in the riots of 1964-8, had brought the question of how the condition of African Americans could be improved to the forefront of American politics. That liberals, including the Kerner Commission, should call for integration at such

a moment was consistent not only with their existing commitments, but also with a deeper creed that emphasized individual mobility as the solution to problems of stratification. Moreover, a host of reform organizations were invested in promoting integration, proclaiming each arduously achieved step, each apartment opened to a black family somewhere, each student admitted to a white school, as a victory in the larger effort. Meanwhile, there was not much attention to the big picture in which small wins were overwhelmed by the large-scale migration of Blacks from the south to the ghettos of the central cities, and the simultaneous outmigration of Whites to the suburbs. Measured against these trends, integration was a steadily receding goal.

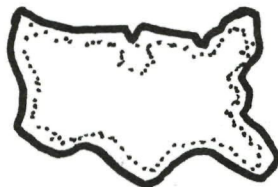
At the beginning of the 1960s, the growing black movement had also demanded integration. The southern civil rights movement was waging a battle against the legal apartheid of segregated public accommodations. And as the movement spread to the north, the early campaigns also demanded integration in schools and in housing. Efforts to achieve school or housing integration, while backed by liberals, were stopped dead by the intensity of opposition from white majorities. Thus foiled, the movement reconnoitered and shifted its demands to "community control," a shift that was consistent with an emerging recognition in the black movement that it was

not only race-based barriers to individual mobility, but the development of collective political and social capacity that were at issue.

We were naturally provoked by these developments. Integration was still the holy grail among liberals, Whites, and many Blacks as well. So, we scrutinized the record of the years-long fight for integration in housing and education, and the record was chastening. We reviewed the cases of public housing projects that were never built because they attempted neighborhood racial integration, with the result that not only was there no integration, but the construction of low-rental housing was virtually halted. And there was no evidence of successful school integration, even while the black movement was at its peak.

We also thought there was another issue that the liberal agenda had ignored. Because the basis of political representation in the United States is territorial, the geographic concentration of Blacks—created, to be sure, by white racism—was beginning to nourish the possibility of black political influence. The movement itself seemed to sense this as it shifted its slogans and targets to community control, black power, or simply black political representation.

Looking back with the benefit of more than three decades of experience, we were surely right, both to think integration unlikely and to emphasize the possibility of black empowerment. True, a good many liberals have not changed their minds. They also point to the overwhelming failure of efforts at



integration, but they seem to think that persistent failure should simply goad us to greater effort.¹ What they are not as likely to acknowledge is that Blacks have indeed

developed a measure of political power, and largely because of their concentration. Not only did Blacks come to control many municipal governments, but minority caucuses in state legislatures sometimes make a difference, and the Black Congressional Caucus (BCC), made up largely of representatives from overwhelmingly black



districts, is the main defender of progressive social policies in the U.S. Congress. This is not simply a matter of the symbolic politics of representation. The BCC has been an important defender of the social programs initiated in the 1960s, programs that did much to reduce poverty in the United States, especially black poverty. Without the BCC, the rollbacks of the past two decades would likely have been even worse. And the political leverage yielded by concentration has given Blacks the power to push for some gains in education and major gains in public employment, especially in city government.²

The socio-economic advances yielded by group empowerment may also, over the long run, move us closer to at least the possibility of an integrated society. Many years ago, W. E. DuBois observed that the rise of race prejudice in Philadelphia at the turn of the 19th century was owed in no small part to the extreme immiseration of the black population.

"A curious comment on human nature is this change in public opinion between 1790 and 1837. No one thing explains it—it arose from a combination of circumstances. If, as in 1790, the new freedmen had been given peace and quiet and abundant work...the end would have been different; but a mass of

poverty-stricken, ignorant fugitives and ill-trained freedmen... swarmed in the vile slums which the rapidly growing city furnished...."³

So, if DuBois is right, it may well be that a measure of prosperity and decent public services in ghetto communities would pave the way to a more integrated society in the future.

¹ See for example Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.

² On this point, see Linda Williams, *The Constraints of Race: Legacies of White Skin Privilege and the Politics of American Social Policy*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001.

³ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 30-31.

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The Case Against Urban Desegregation

■ Although efforts at integration have produced significant gains in some areas, they have worked against the interests of urban Negro poor in housing and education. The authors discuss various approaches to housing and education desegregation that have been ineffective as well as measures that, in effect, have worsened ghetto conditions. The need is stressed for an improvement in ghetto conditions and the development of separatist institutions that can be the bases for developing political power and ethnic identity and advancing the specific interests of the Negro poor in our society. ■

FOR YEARS THE chief efforts of a broad coalition of liberals and reformers, in dealing with the problems of the Negro, have been directed against segregation. Some significant gains have been made, particularly in the laws governing Negro rights in certain institutional spheres, such as voting and the use of public accommodations. But in some areas the thrust for integration seems to have worked against Negro interests. This is especially true with regard to housing and education of the Negro poor in large cities.

There are two main reasons for this: (1) Efforts to ameliorate basic social inequities, such as deteriorated ghetto housing and inferior educational facilities, have been closely linked to the goal of integration and, since integration measures arouse fierce resistance, proposals to redress these social inequities have usually failed. It is for this reason that, after several decades of civil rights struggle, the lot of the Negro urban poor has actually worsened in some respects. (2) If the Negro is to develop the power to enter the mainstream of American

life, it is separatism—not integration—that will be essential to achieve results in certain institutional arenas. Both of these points have implications for both public policy and political action.

DESEGREGATING HOUSING

Reformers oriented to the urban ghetto have generally sought two objectives that they have seen as closely linked—to promote desegregation and to obtain better housing and education for the poor. Restricted housing, they have contended, is the key factor in creating and maintaining racial barriers and, in turn, racial barriers force Negroes into deteriorated slums.

Efforts to desegregate housing, however, have been roundly defeated by massive white opposition. Indeed, residential segregation is increasing rapidly.¹ Moreover,

¹ The proportion of nonwhites living in segregated census tracts in New York City rose from 49 to 53 percent between 1940 and 1950. In 1910 60 percent of the Negroes in that city lived in assembly districts that were less than 5 percent Negro. By 1960 62 percent were in districts that were over 50 percent Negro. "The Program for an Open City: Summary Report" (New York: Department of City Planning, May 1963). (Mimeographed.) See also Davis McEntire, *Residence and Race: Final and Comprehensive Report to the Commission on*

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because provision of decent housing for the poor has been tied to desegregation, this end also has been defeated.

Over the next decade or two many central cities could well become predominantly Negro, if the movement of Negroes into the city and the exodus of whites to the suburbs continue, and if the higher Negro birthrate persists.² Against these trends, the task of maintaining racial balance in the cities seems insuperable. To offset them, huge numbers of families would have to be shuffled about by desegregation programs. This point has been spelled out by George Schermer who provides estimates of the number of people who would have to be moved each year in order to insure that a 50-50 population balance would exist in Washington, D.C., in the year 2000. (Washington is now 63 percent Negro.) Assuming that migration trends and birthrates remain constant, twelve thousand non-white families would have to be dispersed to suburban areas and four thousand white families induced to return to the District of Columbia every year until 2000.³ Segregation between the suburbs and the central city is only part of the story. Even if whites could be induced to return to the city and Negroes could be accommodated in suburbs, residential integration would not result because Negroes and whites tend to live separately within the city itself. Any

public program that would undertake to disperse growing concentrations of Negroes from the ghettos would have to shift formidable numbers to white neighborhoods and resettle whites in present ghetto areas.⁴

Approaches to desegregation have had little effect when the magnitude of the problem is considered. The most popular approach involves legal reforms coupled with education and information programs—legislation is sought to prohibit prejudicial treatment of Negroes, whether by deed restrictions, discriminatory actions of private realtors and landlords, or such governmental policies as the early FHA mortgage underwriting policy, which prescribed racially homogeneous housing developments. It is sobering to note, however, that many such reforms were won years before the civil rights movement but have failed completely to retard segregation.⁵ Racial zoning ordinances, for example, were struck down by the courts in 1917.

Special agencies have been developed to hear complaints of violations of antidiscrimination laws.⁶ The procedures for achieving redress, however, ordinarily require knowledge and patience on the part of the plaintiff that cannot in fairness be

Race and Housing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 41.

² Between 1950 and 1960—for the United States as a whole—the percentage gain in population was 17.5 for whites and 26.7 for nonwhites. The increase in the urban population was 27 percent for whites but 49 percent for nonwhites. In the same decade, the nonwhite population in central cities increased 63 percent while the white population continued to decrease. See *Our Nonwhite Population and Its Housing* (Washington, D.C.: Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1963), pp. 1-3. The nonwhite population in central cities reached 10.3 million in 1960 and may exceed 16 million by 1975, according to McEntire, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, 21-24.

³ George Schermer, "Desegregating the Metropolitan Area." Paper presented at the National Housing Workshop, National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, West Point, N.Y., April 1966.

⁴ One report on desegregation concluded that housing and redevelopment programs directed to the goal of desegregation could at best only halt the spread of ghettoization. New York City's non-white population went from 9.5 percent in 1950 to 14 percent in 1960 and is expected to be more than 20 percent by 1975. (In 1900 it was 1.76 percent.) See "The Program for an Open City: Summary Report."

⁵ The very proliferation of legal reform measures may account for the prevalent view among liberals that there has been progress in desegregation.

⁶ In New York City there are two such agencies: the New York State Commission on Human Rights and a parallel city commission. Both agencies recently announced a "great increase" in the number of complaints received. This increase, it turned out, resulted in a total of only 528 complaints over a six-month period. Needless to say, a complaint received is some distance from being acted on. "More Negro Families Are Utilizing Fair Housing Law Here and in Suburbs," *New York Times*, October 23, 1966, p. 117.

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expected of someone merely looking for a decent place to live. Moreover, these agencies are typically charged to negotiate grievances without sanctioning the landlord. Thus, although one apartment may be "opened" after torturous procedures, there is no deterrence to further violations—no carry-over effect. Each negotiated enforcement of the law remains an isolated event.

There are many programs that are designed to supplement the antidiscrimination laws by attempting to change the white community's discriminatory attitudes. Thus, "fair housing committees" have been established in receiving communities to overcome community hostility toward entering Negroes. Information and broker services are designed to overcome barriers to the movement of Negroes that result from communication gaps, such as a lack of information regarding housing opportunities outside the ghetto or difficulties in gaining access for inspection. Such programs as the Urban League's Operation Open City combine all these strategies to help Negro families find housing.

However, these efforts tend to reach only middle-class Negroes, because housing in outlying communities generally requires at least a lower-middle income. Moreover, even for the Negro middle class such measures do not result in broad-scale desegregation. Resistance in the receiving community varies directly with the number of Negro families who are likely to invade it. More important, the majority of housing opportunities are still controlled by the regular institutions of the private real estate market, and these agencies distribute information concerning available housing and provide access for inspection in accordance with class and racial neighborhood patterns that reflect the inclinations of the majority of housing consumers.⁷

⁷ A recent large-scale demographic study of the United States concluded, "Residential segregation prevails regardless of the relative economic status of the white and Negro resident." Karl E. Taeuber and Alma F. Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965).

HOUSING SUBSIDIES

Another general approach to desegregation takes the form of housing subsidies. Both the public housing program and the recent rent supplement program are intended, at least by some of their proponents, to promote integration as a by-product of rehousing the poor. However, it is found that when large numbers of tenants are Negro, low-income whites desert the projects or are reluctant to apply. Projects thus tend to become high-rise brick ghettos rather than outposts of integrated living. Programs to further integration by locating projects in outlying white communities have provoked even more serious opposition. Only when white tenants predominate has any degree of community tolerance resulted.⁸ The political tension produced by this issue has contributed to the shaky political life of public housing. Indeed, this form of housing subsidy seems to be expiring in many cities.

The new rent supplement legislation so far also shows signs of accommodation in its provisions that enable outlying communities to veto a proposed invasion by low-income and minority groups. In any case, current appropriations are adequate only for a few showpiece programs throughout the nation and are likely to be decreased in the next session of Congress. If experience with public housing is any predictor, the opposition that the rent supplement program aroused in Congress, which almost defeated it, will be repeated more fiercely in local communities as efforts are made to implement the plan. Public subsidies, in short, have failed to reverse the trend toward segregation in urban areas.

⁸ In the city of Newark, N.J., the racial balance in projects is regularly graded from over 90 percent Negro for projects located in the central ghetto ward to over 90 percent white in outlying "country club" projects. Coincidentally, Newark has been able to obtain much more public support for public housing and to build more units per capita than most other cities.

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EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING

A third general approach to desegregation is based on this country's hallowed belief in individual mobility. Once Negroes have better jobs and higher incomes, it is asserted, they will be able to bid competitively for housing beyond the ghetto.

However, programs intended to advance Negroes economically by education and job training have only tenuous bearing on their housing. These programs currently reach merely one poor person in ten. But even if the scope of these programs was vastly expanded, millions of today's poor would not be helped by attempts to equip them for better jobs. Of the 35 million people below the federal poverty line (i.e., an annual income of \$3,100 for an urban family of four), several million are aged; they are permanently out of the labor force and can be lifted out of poverty only by the direct redistribution of income. One-third of the poor are in families headed by females, and it does not seem reasonable to expect this group to raise itself out of poverty by entering the labor force. Many of the remaining poor are ill and others are permanently unable to compete for a host of additional reasons.⁹

It must also be recognized that a strategy of enhancing economic mobility—even if it succeeded in lifting large numbers of people somewhat above the poverty line—would not greatly improve their capacity to procure decent housing. In urban areas, adequate housing is difficult to obtain for families with annual incomes of less than \$7,000.¹⁰ Indeed, even middle-class whites have required and obtained huge governmental subsidies to bring adequate housing within their reach (e.g., urban renewal, low-

cost government-insured mortgages such as FHA, special tax advantages allowed by federal law for builders and realtors, and real estate tax abatements allowed by local governments).

Finally, it should be noted that because of discriminatory patterns, Negroes pay more for housing. They now occupy housing inferior to that of whites with comparable incomes at every income level.¹¹ For all these reasons it seems unlikely that a strategy predicated on individual mobility will have much effect on the Negro's housing conditions—and surely not on ghettoization—at least not for many decades.

WORSENING OF GHETTO HOUSING

While efforts to get people out of the ghetto have been ineffective, a variety of other measures put forward in the name of desegregation have substantially worsened housing conditions within the ghetto itself. Most of the recent housing and redevelopment programs touted as attempts to serve "the city as a whole" by clearing slums, improving the tax base, or retrieving the middle class from the suburbs, have had the effect of intensifying ghetto deterioration. Under the general public mandate of meeting the nation's housing needs and redeveloping the urban core, huge subsidies have found their way into the middle-class market and the business community, and have had widespread and devastating effects on low-income residential areas. Urban redevelopment has resulted in the destruction of low-rental housing and low-income communities, so that many poor people are pushed farther into the ghetto.¹² Moreover,

⁹ See Mollic Orshansky, "Counting the Poor: Another Look at the Poverty Profile," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 1965), pp. 3-29.

¹⁰ Nationally, it is estimated that an income of over \$7,000 (which only 3.4 percent of nonwhites possess) is required to purchase new, privately constructed housing. Housing costs are much higher in urban areas. Schermer, *op. cit.*

¹¹ In most metropolitan areas nonwhites pay slightly lower rentals than whites in each income group but get vastly inferior housing. McEntire, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-147. In New York City, for example, there are three times as many substandard units occupied by nonwhites as whites at each income level.

¹² Criticism of urban renewal has been launched from both the right and the left. See Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965); Herbert J. Gans, "The Failure

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in the process of redevelopment, owners and tenants on sites scheduled for clearance are placed in a prolonged state of uncertainty and often become either the agents or the victims of quick exploitation. Relocation programs designed to mitigate the effects of redevelopment on low-income people and small businesses are ordinarily inadequate.¹³ The stalemate now seen in some urban renewal programs may be considered as an achievement in that the poor have finally been spurred by the accumulated abuses of years of dislocation to protest against the further destruction of their homes and communities.¹⁴

In the housing act of 1949 Congress asserted a national responsibility to provide a decent dwelling for every family. This, however, has not progressed very far. In New York City, for example, Mayor Lindsay's housing task force recently reported that there were half a million unsound units currently occupied (roughly the same number reported through years of new public assaults on the slums) and that the number was on the increase even though the number of low-rental units has decreased more than 30 percent since 1960.¹⁵ In Boston, the last family-size public housing unit was built in 1954; the city's nationally acclaimed urban renewal effort diminished by 12 percent the supply of low-rental housing (less than \$50.00 a month) between

1960 and 1965.¹⁶ The federal public housing program has produced only 600,000 low-income dwelling units in the three decades since it was initiated. The federal urban renewal program and the federal highway program have together demolished close to 700,000 units, most of which were low rental, in less than half that time. Meanwhile, private builders, spurred on by federal tax incentives and mortgage programs designed to encourage construction, have made still further inroads on the supply of low-income housing by reclaiming land to erect middle- and upper-income units. The cheap accommodations that remain in large cities are in buildings that have been permitted to run down without maintenance and repairs or in which rents are pushed to the limit the captive market can afford. High-minded public policies notwithstanding, the dimensions of housing needs among the nonwhites in big cities have, in fact, enlarged.

In summary, attempts to provide better housing for the Negro have failed not because anyone has denied the moral imperative of desegregation. Rather, they have failed under the auspices of this moral imperative. It seems clear, therefore, that if the poor are to obtain decent housing, massive subsidies must be granted for new and rehabilitated housing in the ghettos and slums. The Negro is far from possessing the political power to gain subsidies for integrated low-income housing. The more relevant question is whether he can even mobilize sufficient pressure to house himself decently wherever he does live.

DESEGREGATING EDUCATION

To emphasize the importance of upgrading ghetto housing is also to accept racially homogeneous elementary schools in large cities, at least for the foreseeable future.

¹⁶ Michael D. Appleby, "Logue's Record in Boston: An Analysis of His Renewal and Planning Activities" (New York: Council for New York Housing and Planning Policy, May 1966), p. 43. (Mimeographed.)

of Urban Renewal," *Commentary*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (April 1965), pp. 29-37; and the replies to Gans by George M. Raymond and Malcolm D. Rivkin, "Urban Renewal," *Commentary*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (July 1965), pp. 72-80.

¹³ For a review of experience with relocation see Chester Hartman, "The Housing of Relocated Families," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (November 1964), pp. 266-268.

¹⁴ James Q. Wilson analyzes the political dilemmas created by renewal programs in "Planning and Politics: Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November 1963), pp. 242-249.

¹⁵ "An Analysis of Current City-Wide Housing Needs" (New York: Department of City Planning, Community Renewal Program, December 1965), p. 67. (Mimeographed.)

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Integrated education has been one of the central goals of reformers, and few seem prepared to relinquish this objective. However, the demographic and political realities in large cities cast grave doubts on the feasibility of achieving anything resembling integrated education at the early grade levels.

As a result of the housing patterns described earlier, Negroes are rapidly becoming the largest group (in some cases, the majority) in the central areas of many large cities. Furthermore, they represent an even greater proportion of the school-age population because Negro families are usually younger, larger, and without the resources to place their children in private schools.¹⁷ The white youngsters with whom Negro children presumably are to be integrated are slowly vanishing from inner-city areas, and there is every reason to expect that these demographic trends will continue.

The issue of integrated education is also complicated by socioeconomic factors, particularly in the cities. Recent evidence suggests that diverse economic backgrounds of pupils may be more important than racial diversity in the education of the Negro student. One study of American education, for example, shows that mixing middle-class students (either Negro or white) with lower-class students (either Negro or white) usually has a decidedly beneficial effect on the achievement of the lower-class student and does not usually diminish the middle-class student's achievement.¹⁸ By contrast, the integration of poor whites and poor Negroes does not seem to yield an improved achievement of either group.¹⁹

¹⁷ Negroes already comprise over 50 percent of the school-age populations in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. (where they comprise more than 80 percent). In other cities they are rapidly approaching the majority—Detroit, for example, has well over a 40 percent population of school-age Negroes.

¹⁸ James R. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

¹⁹ Several studies show that by no means do Negroes do uniformly better in integrated schools.

But the number of middle-class whites available to be mixed educationally with lower-class Negroes is rapidly declining, and of the whites left in the city with children who attend public schools, an increasing proportion is poor. (As for middle-class Negroes, their numbers are very small to begin with, and many send their children to private schools.) If mixing along class lines is to be achieved, therefore, educational arrangements in which suburban and ghetto children are brought together will be required. Such arrangements are improbable. The defense of the neighborhood school is ardent; it reflects both racial and class cleavages in American society. Efforts to bring about racial mixing, especially when coupled with the more meaningful demand for economic class mixing, run head-on into some of the most firmly rooted and passionately defended attitudes of white families.

Busing versus "educational parks." Two schemes have been advocated for achieving racial integration while minimizing political resistance. One involves reshuffling children to achieve a racial balance by busing them to distant schools. Aside from the enormous logistical problems this poses, busing usually has met violent opposition from all sides.²⁰ The second scheme is

They either do better or worse than in segregated schools. One intervening variable appears to be the degree of bigotry exhibited by whites: the greater the bigotry, the more likely that Negroes will achieve less than in segregated schools. Poor and working-class whites have traditionally held the most prejudiced attitudes: integrating them with poor Negroes may actually hurt Negroes. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 330-333. See also Irwin Katz, "Review of Evidence Relating to Effects of Desegregation in the Intellectual Performance of Negroes," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 19 (June 1964), pp. 581-399.

²⁰ There seems to be a somewhat easier acceptance when numbers of Negro children are assigned to white schools than when white children are assigned to ghetto schools. This has not been tried on a sufficient scale to put white tolerance to a genuine test, however. It is also true that Negro parents do not want their children to travel far, either.

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the development of massive "educational parks," which would centralize upper-grade facilities for children from a wide area. The superiority of these new plants, it is argued, will help to overcome the opposition of white parents to integration. However, even in such plants segregation is likely to persist on the classroom level as a result of the "tracking system," particularly because educational parks are intended only for older children, whose academic levels already reflect wide inequalities in home environment and early schooling. Equally important is the fact that the cost of such educational parks would be enormous. It is improbable that many such parks would be built, and the merits of such an investment must be weighed against alternative uses of funds for the direct improvement of program and staff in ghetto schools.

Improving ghetto schools. The lower-class school, particularly in the large-city ghetto, has always been an inferior institution. Recently the physical facilities in many ghetto schools have improved because of new building programs, but the lower-class Negro school still reflects significant inequalities when it is compared to its white middle-class counterpart. For example, the quality of the teachers has been shown to have a critical influence on the child's learning—lower-class schools, however (especially ghetto schools in large cities), have inferior teachers and are generally characterized by higher staff turnover. To overcome historic inequalities of this kind would be no small achievement.²¹

²¹ There have been many studies—including the work of Allison Davis and subsequent studies by August B. Hollingshead—on class biases in the intelligence test and the differential response of the school system to children of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Many other studies document the sharp differences between the low-income school and its middle-class counterpart. For a recent study of inequalities by class in a large northern urban school system, see Patricia Cayo Sexton, *Education and Income: Inequalities in Our Public Schools* (New York: Viking Press, 1961). See also Coleman *et al.*, *op. cit.*

The authors conclude, in short, that although schools that are racially and economically heterogeneous are probably superior, removing class inequities in the quality of teachers and programs is also an important goal—and a far more realistic one. Such educational improvements in the ghetto will require public action and expenditure, and these are likely to be achieved only if massive political opposition to demands for class and racial mixing is avoided. As in the case of housing, the coupling of measures for integration of education with measures to improve existing conditions in large-city ghettos must lead to the defeat of both. The choice is between total defeat and partial victory; to many, it may appear a difficult choice—but at least it is a choice.

**PRIVATE SOCIAL WELFARE:
SEPARATIST INSTITUTIONS**

In discussing housing and educational reforms for the urban ghetto, the authors have stressed the political futility of integration measures. It is not only the feasibility of integration that is open to question; it is also far from clear that integration is always desirable.

Liberals are inclined to take a "melting pot" view of American communities and to stress the enriching qualities of heterogeneous living—however, the history of ethnic groups in American society belies this view. There have always been ethnic institutions, and these, as has been widely observed, have served important functions in the advancement of different groups. An important precondition for the establishment of such separatist institutions—particularly when the members of the ethnic group are poor—has been the existence of substantial aggregations of people in residential proximity. The current emphasis on integrating people physically in schools and neighborhoods thus deflects attention from a fundamental problem confronting the Negro—the lack of organizational vehicles to enable him to compete with whites for con-

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trol of major institutions that shape the destiny of the ghetto (housing and educational systems, governmental bureaucracies, corporate economic complexes, political parties, and so forth). Without separatist institutions the Negro is not likely to come to share control in these various spheres, and the powerlessness of the ghetto's population will persist.

The value of separatist institutions is revealed clearly in the field of social welfare. There is, of course, considerable precedent for ethnically based social welfare institutions, which symbolize for many the highest values of self-help. Networks of agencies have been formed by Jews and white Catholics; even Protestants—under the impact of a pluralism that has made them act like a minority as well—have formed essentially white ethnic welfare institutions to advance their interests. Throughout the country these voluntary agencies raise a huge amount of money, which is directed to the less fortunate in their respective ethnic and religious communities (and sometimes to those in other communities as well).

POLITICAL INTERESTS

The point that is not generally recognized about private agencies, however, is that they are as much political as they are social welfare institutions; they serve as organizational vehicles for the expression of the ethnic group's viewpoints on social welfare policy and also as the institutional means for other forms of political association and influence. Religio-ethnic welfare institutions—from hospitals to child care facilities—command enormous amounts of tax money. In New York City, for example, they are now routinely paid over \$100 million annually from the municipal budget (exclusive of antipoverty funds). Thus, these agencies are important political interest groups that, in acting upon their own organizational needs, serve the interests of their controlling ethnic and religious constituencies as well.

Exerting pressure for various forms of

public subsidy is only one of the political functions of private agencies. They maintain a deep interest in many forms of governmental policy and actively seek to influence the shaping of policy in ways consistent with their interests. These political activities tend to be overlooked because private agencies exert power chiefly at the municipal level—not at the more visible level of national politics. However, large areas of public service are controlled locally and, even when programs are initiated and supervised by federal or state authorities, it is primarily at the municipal level that services are organized and delivered to their intended consumers. Public welfare, education, urban renewal, housing code enforcement, fair employment, law enforcement, and correctional practices—all of these are, in large part, shaped by local government.

Nowhere is there a Negro federation of philanthropy—and there are few Negro private social welfare institutions. Consequently, the Negro is not only without an important communal form but also lacks the opportunity to gain the vast public subsidies given for staff and services that flow into the institutions of white communities. In effect, to advocate separatism in this area means to insist that the Negro be given the prerogatives and benefits that other ethnic and religious communities have enjoyed for some decades.

If the Negro expects to influence the proliferating social welfare activities of government, he will need his own organizational apparatus, including a stable cadre of technical and professional personnel who can examine the merits of alternative public policies, survey the practices of governmental agencies, and activate their ethnic constituencies on behalf of needed changes.

COMMUNAL ASSOCIATIONS

Ethnic social welfare institutions serve another important function. This country has faced the problem of assimilating poverty-stricken minority groups into its ec-

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conomic bloodstream many times in the past, and religio-ethnic institutions of various kinds have played a significant part in that process. One of the ways by which such groups effect their rise from deprivation is to develop communal associations, ranging from fraternal and religious bodies to political machines. These communal associations provide a base from which to convert ethnic solidarity into the political force required to overcome various forms of class inequality. They are, therefore, an important device by which the legitimate interests of particular groups are put forward to compete with those of other groups.

The Negro community lacks an institutional framework in private social welfare (as well as in other institutional areas), and the separatist agencies of other ethnic and religious communities are not eager to see this deficiency overcome. When the Negro is concerned, they resist the emergence of new separatist institutions on the grounds that such a "color conscious" development represents a new form of "segregation." This view has frequently been expressed or implied in behind-the-scenes struggles over the allocation of antipoverty funds. In one city after another private agencies have either fought against the development of Negro-sponsored programs or have sat by while Negro groups argued in vain with municipal, county, or federal officials over their right to form autonomous, ethnic institutions to receive public funds.²²

By and large, private agencies have contended that race is an irrelevant issue in deciding who should mount programs in a ghetto. Existing agencies, it is argued, have the proved professional and organizational competence to operate new programs, and many have succeeded in obtaining pub-

lic funds to do so. In the end, however, this form of "desegregation" is destructive of Negro interests. Although coalitions of existing ethnic and religious agencies may provide services to the ghetto (especially with the financial incentives of the anti-poverty program), these services do not strengthen the ghetto's capacity to deal with its own problems. Rather, they weaken it. Through the "integration" of Negroes as clients in service structures operated by others, political control by outside institutions is extended to one more aspect of ghetto life. Furthermore, the ghetto is deprived of the resources that could encourage the development of its own institutions or bolster them. Existing voluntary agencies could serve the ghetto far better if they lent political, technical, and financial aid to the development of new social welfare institutions that would be under Negro management and control.

Class power in the United States is intimately connected with the strength of ethnic institutions. Powerlessness and poverty are disproportionately concentrated among minority groups—Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and so forth. The success of traditional ethnic and religious social agencies in resisting the emergence of Negro institutions is a reflection of class power differentials. But it also reveals that class power is produced and maintained in part by racial and ethnic power differentials.

NEED FOR SEPARATIST ORGANIZATIONS

A new system of voluntary social welfare agencies in the ghetto can hardly be expected to produce the collective force to overcome the deep inequalities in our society. Ethnic identity, solidarity, and power must be forged through a series of organized communal experiences in a variety of institutional areas. In housing, for example, energy should be directed not only toward improving ghetto conditions, but also toward creating within the ghetto

²² Some OEO funds have been used to stimulate the growth of Negro welfare institutions. Bitter conflicts have inevitably followed—as in the case of New York's HARYOU-ACT and the Child Development Group of Mississippi. Neither of these embattled agencies has received appreciable support from established social agencies.

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the organizational vehicles for renovating buildings and, more important, for managing them.²³ Similarly, educational reforms should mean not only improvements in facilities and staff but also arrangements under which the local community can participate in and influence the administration of the schools.²⁴

What the Negro needs, in short, are the means to organize separately and a heightened awareness of the distinctive goals to which his organizations must be directed. The Negro poor in our society do have interests distinct from and, more often than not, in conflict with those of other groups. Unless they organize along separatist lines, it is unlikely that they will have much success in advancing these interests. Judging from the history of those ethnic groups that have succeeded in gaining a foothold in our pluralistic society, it seems clear that ethnic separatism is a precondition for eventual penetration of the ruling circles and the achievement of full economic integration. Minority groups will win acceptance from the majority by developing their own bases

of power, not by submerging their unorganized and leaderless numbers in coalitions dominated by other and more solidary groups. Once they have formed separatist organizations, participation in coalitions (whether councils of social agencies or political parties) can then be a meaningful tactic in bargaining for a share of power over crucial institutional processes in the broader society.

In a recent essay David Danzig observed:

It is, to be sure, a long step from the recognition of the need for power to the building and strengthening of indigenous social and political institutions within the ghetto from which power can be drawn. The Negro as yet has few such institutions. Unlike most of the other religio-ethnic minorities, he lacks a network of unifying social traditions, and this is why he must depend on political action through color consciousness as his main instrument of solidarity. That solidarity entails a certain degree of "separatism" goes without saying, but the separatism of a strengthened and enriched Negro community need be no more absolute than that, say, of the Jewish community. There is no reason, after all, why the Negro should not be able to live, as most Americans do, in two worlds at once—one of them largely integrated and the other primarily separated.²⁵

In these terms, then, physical desegregation is not only irrelevant to the ghetto but can actually prevent the eventual integration of the Negro in the institutional life of this society. For integration must be understood, not as the mingling of bodies in school and neighborhood, but as participation in and shared control over the major institutional spheres of American life. And that is a question of developing communal associations that can be bases for power—not of dispersing a community that is powerless.

²³ In a tentative way, this possibility is now being explored by some groups (e.g., churches), which are receiving loans to rehabilitate ghetto buildings under the federal low-cost mortgage program. These groups form local corporations to rehabilitate and later to manage houses.

²⁴ Parent groups in East Harlem recently boycotted a new school (P. S. 201); they abandoned earlier demands for school integration to insist that the Board of Education cede a large measure of control to the local community. The ensuing controversy brought to the fore certain issues in professional and community control. As of this writing, a final resolution has not been reached. Without some administrative arrangement to insure greater involvement by the ghetto community, the schools will continue to be responsive to other, better-organized religious, ethnic, and class groupings that traditionally have been powerful enough to assert the superiority of their claims for educational services and resources over that of the ghetto. There is some indication that such arrangements may also bring educational benefits. A recent study showed a high correlation between the achievement of Negro children and their feeling that they can control their own destinies. See Coleman *et al.*, *op. cit.*

²⁵ "In Defense of 'Black Power,'" *Commentary*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (September 1966), pp. 45-46.

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