

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

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Number 62

August 2016

Still Separate, Still Unequal U.S. and Gulf South School Segregation

by Jeanie Donovan, M.P.A., M.P.H. and Fred Kammer, S.J., J.D.

Feedback?

Send us your thoughts at
jsri@loyno.edu.

Study Faith
Do Justice >>

JSRI Welcomes

Dr. Nicholas Mitchell

Dr. Mitchell received his doctorate from Louisiana State University and will focus his research on issues related to race and racism.

Katie O'Dowd

Ms. O'Dowd is a recent Loyola graduate and is JSRI's new administrative assistant.

JSRI Upcoming Events

August 31

JSRI will host a screening of [The Return](#) followed by a panel discussion on criminal justice reform. [MORE INFO](#)

Sept 8

Fr. Kammer and Ms. Donovan will release the results of the 2016 State of Working MS report.

September 10

Ms. Donovan will present the [JustSouth Index](#) at the Gillespie Memorial Community Breakfast.

September 14

Fr. Kammer will participate in the Christus Health Mission Committee meeting in Dallas.

September 20

Fr. Kammer will preside and preach at the Red Mass for Michigan attorneys and judges at the Gesu Parish at the University of Detroit Mercy.

JSRI Recent Activities

August 11

Dr. Weishar was interviewed by Catholic News Service for [an article](#) on a proposed ban on refugees from the Middle East.

July 27-28

Fr. Kammer led workshops on social analysis and Jesuit justice for the University Leaders' Summit of the Ignatian Solidarity Network.

July 20

Dr. Weishar attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of Seashore Mission in Biloxi, MS.

July 19

Across the country, schools are opening and students returning to their classrooms. Despite the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision to desegregate schools "with all deliberate speed," too many classrooms are still segregated.

School districts made significant progress toward desegregation after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but the trend has shifted back toward race-based school segregation. [\[1\]](#) Following court decisions in the late 1960s and 1970s that required Department of Education officials to oversee implementation of desegregation plans, the rate of black students attending majority-white schools increased dramatically from 1 percent in 1963 to 43 percent in 1983. [\[2\]](#) After federal oversight phased out and schools were left to make "good faith efforts" to maintain integration, significant backsliding followed. In 2012, 74 percent of black students and 80 percent of Latino students attended schools that were 50 to 100 percent minority; and of these, more than 40 percent of black and Latino students attended schools that were 90 to 100 percent minority. [\[3\]](#)

This re-segregation trend often concentrates minorities in schools with fewer resources that face challenges attracting and retaining quality teachers. [\[4\]](#) A mounting body of evidence indicates that school segregation has negative impacts on short-term academic achievement of minority students and their success in later life. [\[5\]](#) Integrated schools have a positive impact on all students through promoting awareness and mutual understanding and ensuring that they have the necessary tools to function in an increasingly multicultural society. [\[6\]](#) Not taking intentional steps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend quality, integrated schools perpetuates injustice, allowing the mistakes of the past to haunt the future.



We analyzed public elementary and secondary school segregation in JSRI's [JustSouth Index 2016](#) by measuring whether a school serves a high proportion of students of a single race and whether the student population of a school is representative of the public school student population in the county. A school was considered segregated if it met two criteria:

1. More than 90 percent of students attending the school were the same race;
2. The racial composition of the school's student population was significantly different (5 percentage points) from that of the county's public school student population.

Using this methodology and the most recent available data [2013], the Index determined that nationally 15.6% of public schools were segregated, with the lowest level of segregation in Hawaii (1.4%) and the highest in the District of Columbia (57.0%). In the Gulf South, 24.1% of Alabama schools, 7.8% of Florida's schools, 22.1% of Louisiana schools, 23.3% of Mississippi schools, and 9.0% of Texas schools were segregated. If comparable data on private and parochial schools were available, the level of school segregation would skyrocket.

To reverse trends toward re-segregation, states and districts must implement policies designed in the same spirit and intentionality as those effective in integrating schools in the 1970s and 1980s. These tools included redrawing of school district boundaries, allowing intra- and inter-district transfers, subsidizing transportation, and increasing school choice through charter and magnet schools. Strategic housing development and community planning also are necessary since housing segregation is a powerful driver of many forms of racial inequality, including segregated schools. [\[7\]](#) States and school districts also

JSRI staff presented at the annual conference of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus.

July 18-19

Fr. Kammer led workshops on social analysis for international Jesuit Volunteers at Scranton U.

should increase resources allocated to schools serving a large percentage of minority students to allow those schools to attract and retain quality teachers and provide critical support for at-risk students. Ultimately, the appropriate policies for increasing integration in public schools depend on the individual district and its students; but, where schools are becoming less diverse, decisive action by local leaders is critical.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

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Published by the Jesuit Social Research Institute
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