

American Renaissance

There is not a truth existing which I fear, or would wish unknown to the whole world.

— Thomas Jefferson

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Catastrophe in Kansas City

The latest colossal failure in forced equality.

by Marian Evans

The effort to integrate the Kansas City public schools is one of the most costly, misguided, and ineffectual programs ever undertaken in America in the name of racial equality. This billion-dollar effort has been so utterly a failure that only good can come of it. Catastrophe as complete as this may shake even a liberal's confidence. This may well be the high-water mark of the astonishing efforts whites have made to build a society in the name of an illusory equality.

Kansas City came to national attention ten years ago, when federal District Judge Russell Clark ordered the school district to build and staff the best, most expensive public schools in the country—perhaps in the world. They were to be so dazzlingly good that they would both lure white students out of their safe suburbs and raise black student achievement to the white level. Judge Clark was even willing to wield dictatorial power to get what he wanted, looting both the city and the state to fund the gold-plated schools that desegregation was thought to require.

Of course, the grand experiment failed. The wondrous schools were duly built but blacks learned no more in them than before. Whites stayed in the suburbs. And now a recent Supreme Court decision will probably cut off massive subsidies from the state, leaving the city with a hugely expensive system to run and no money. If Kansas City cannot dream up new ways to make whites pay for them, the dream schools will slide back into the ramshackled mediocrity from which



Judge Clark thought he had lifted them.

Separate and Equal

The Kansas City, Missouri school district first opened in September 1867, with four schools for whites and one for blacks. The state constitution, like that of sixteen other states at the time, required segregation. A law passed the following year reaffirmed segregation, but required that black schools be equal to white.

Gold-plated schools would lure whites out of the suburbs and raise black achievement to the white level.

Eventually the city was operating one high school and 14 elementary schools for blacks. Almost all of these schools were north of 27th Street, which was the traditional boundary of the Negro quarter. The city also made

a serious effort to make the schools equal. Black teachers were paid the same salaries as white, and in most years the city spent approximately as much on black students as it did on whites. During the 1936-37 school year, for example, it cost \$79.31 to educate each white elementary school pupil (about \$825 in today's money) and \$69.10 to educate a black pupil. In 1940-41, however, the district spent \$118.61 on each black high school student but somewhat less—\$110.43—on whites.

Even if there was rough equality in the operating budget, blacks were sometimes slighted in the capital budget. Their schools were often old and overcrowded. In 1949, parents of students at the all-black Bruce elementary school sued the city to replace rickety buildings. The Missouri Supreme Court upheld a lower-court denial of relief, arguing that although the Bruce school had no auditorium, gymnasium, or cafeteria, there were white schools in the state that were no better off. Moreover, since the curriculum at the Bruce school was equivalent to that of white schools, the black parents had no grounds for complaint.

The 1950s are now acknowledged to have been the salad days for Kansas City public schools. Sixty-nine thousand students (77 percent of them white) got what was, by today's standards, a superb education in their segregated schools. The beginning of the end was, of course, 1954.

That year, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional. Kansas City obediently prepared to desegregate. A color-blind plan was drawn up whereby stu-

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Letters from Readers

Sir — I generally agree with your perspective, but I thought there was an unnecessary touch of dogmatism in your essay about the verdict in the Simpson case. For the purposes of a separatist publication, it is not essential to know whether it was whites or blacks who were right in their opinions about Mr. Simpson's guilt or innocence. The essential point is that opinions were so *different*. There was no need for you to show such fierce confidence in Mr. Simpson's guilt. What is more, after a jury verdict of innocent, to refer to Mr. Simpson as "the man who killed Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman" is probably slander.

Once again, what matters is that although blacks and whites are citizens of the same country, they live in different worlds. It has become fashionable to point out that the top ten television programs watched by the two races are different. It is less common to point out the delusional fantasies common among blacks — that whites invented AIDS as a weapon of extermination, that whites "place" guns and drugs in the ghettos, that whites are constantly scheming to bring down successful black men — but these, too, point to fundamental differences in the ways in which the races think.

Despite the fact that blacks have been in the United States for hundreds of years, they are the *only* group that maintains a distinctive dialect (not just a regional accent), generation after generation. I have never seen an explanation for this. What does it mean?

I recently read that blacks spend three times as many minutes a day on

the telephone as whites. They also consume vastly greater quantities of menthol cigarettes and high-alcohol beer (like Colt 45). Do these differences mean anything? No one knows. However, like the reactions to the Simpson trial, they are part of a constellation of differences, some great some small, that add up to incompatibility between the races.

Sheldon Thomas, Mobile, Ala.

Sir—I read Jared Taylor's book, *Paved With Good Intentions*, when it was first published and I recently read Dinesh D'Souza's book, *The End of Racism*. Even before reading Mr. Taylor's commentary in the November issue, I was so struck by the similarities between the two books that I went back and reread most of Mr. Taylor's book. The unattributed borrowings are obvious. This amounts to plagiarism and, combined with Mr. D'Souza's astonishingly dishonest attempt to discredit the *AR* conference, is inexcusable.

Name Withheld, Boston, Mass.

Sir—I was disappointed but not surprised to learn that Samuel Francis has been fired. If it had been discovered that he was a pederast, or had lied about a criminal record, or had been driving drunk and ran over a pedestrian, he would probably still have his job. All these things are forgivable, but to have unconventional views about race — no matter well defended — is not. In a recent column, Joseph Sobran pointed out that there is greater diversity of opinion in openly liberal publications than in ostensib-

ly conservative ones. The *New Republic* will often surprise you by the variety of views it publishes, but *National Review* and *The Washington Times* can be counted on only for the official, "safe" brand of conservatism. Why are conservatives such cowards?
Gustav Herbst, Culpepper, Va.

Sir — In your October review of Dwight Murphey's pamphlet about lynching, I think you come dangerously close to endorsing vigilante justice. The outcome of the Simpson trial has, of course, created a sympathetic environment for this view, but it is a mistake to lose sight of the distinction between the consequences of multi-racialism and the inherent flaws of an institution. The obstacle to justice in the Simpson case was race, not due process.

Mr. Jackson might then point to all the measures that have been taken in recent years to make it harder to convict the obviously guilty, and argue that these reflect an inherent flaw in due process. But the problem is not due process. To some degree, the codding of criminals is part of liberalism without regard to race. However, in the United States, race has poisoned every institution, including the justice system. If it were not for liberal fretting over high black crime rates, we might not have all the current legal obstacles to convicting criminals.

The same view can be taken of the welfare system. The *AR* position seems to be that welfare is inherently bad. However, can one not argue that welfare, as instituted among whites, has been degraded by the presence of blacks? Three percent of whites are on it and 18 percent of blacks — a huge difference. In New Hampshire, where there are few blacks to serve as bad examples, only one percent of whites are on welfare. One can certainly make a principled, libertarian case against government charity, but in an all-white society it might not be inherently defective.

You see my point. Multiracialism can cause institutional breakdowns that do not necessarily say anything about the institutions themselves — so long as they are operated by the people who built them.

Janet Hollander, Portsmouth, N.H.

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dents would simply attend the schools nearest them, whether they had been all-black or all-white.

Desegregation proceeded so smoothly in 1955 that the *Kansas City Star* did not even write a story about it. There were no disturbances because housing in the city was so segregated that only a handful of students were affected by integration. Moreover, almost 90 percent of the 921 white children who were to have attended formerly-black schools quietly moved out of their neighborhoods over the summer. When the school year began, only 117 of them were left to integrate the black schools. Their numbers dropped very quickly, and soon voluntary desegregation in Kansas City fit the pattern found all over the country: Almost the only people who crossed the color line were the children of ambitious black parents who wanted their children to attend white schools.

Whites began to drift towards the suburbs, and in 1970 the school district lost its white majority for the first time. Most schools, however, were still either overwhelmingly white or overwhelmingly black. By the mid-1970s, two-thirds of the students were black, and the district was showing all the stigmata of a black institution: crumbling buildings, poor discipline, declining test scores.

With so few white students to go around, meaningful integration was no longer possible, and by 1977, the school board was desperate. That year, it sued everyone in sight, in the hope of dragging 18 white, suburban

school districts into a single, huge district. Forced busing would then flush precious white children out of the suburbs to rejuvenate Kansas City; and the suburbs would be taxed to pay for it.

Judge Russell Clark got the case but did not make important decisions until six years later. In 1984, he let the terrified suburbs off the hook. Following a 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision, he argued that since the suburban districts were not responsible for residential segregation they could not be forced into a shotgun marriage with Kansas City.

It was the next year, 1985, that he hit upon the final solution to the segregation problem: urban schools so extraordinary that bigoted whites would voluntarily abandon their suburbs and private schools to flock to the city and sit next to blacks.

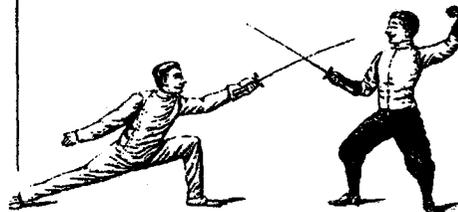
Judge Clark was realistic enough to realize that these schools would have to be spectacular, and spectacular they are. Of the more than \$1.4 billion that has been spent in ten years on this "desegregation" plan, \$418 million has gone for renovation and new construction, though not always wisely. After a \$1 million patch-up of Central High School did not raise it to Judge Clark's standards, the old school was torn down and the district sank \$32 million into a gleaming new one.

Paseo High was another school that Judge Clark pronounced unsalvageable. Built from a type of limestone found nowhere else in the country, it was a cherished architectural landmark. The judge didn't care.

Protesters watched in tears as the school was dynamited on his orders.

The district now has 12 brand new schools—scores of houses had to be bulldozed to make way for some of them—with equipment to make a teacher's head swim: planetariums, olympic-size swimming pools with underwater observation windows, dust-free diesel mechanics rooms, at least one mock-United Nations wired for simultaneous interpretation, radio and television studios capable of real broadcasting, video editing and animation labs, a moot court complete with jury room and judges chambers, a model Greek village to teach participatory democracy, elementary schools with one personal computer for every two children, etc. etc. These are the famed "magnet schools" that were supposed to attract white children like so many iron filings.

Another \$900 million has gone for special staff to operate these wonders, and across-the-board raises for teachers and administrators. There are German- and French-language elementary schools which, of course, must be staffed with native speakers. The former coach of the Soviet Olympic fencing team has been hired—



along with an interpreter—to teach Missouri rubes the finer points of sword play. It has been, in short, an unprecedented orgy of spending, overseen by school superintendent, Walter Marks, who has been pleased to see the salary for his position leap from \$75,000 to \$140,000.

Where did the \$1.4 billion come from? Judge Clark raised it through two astonishing acts of judicial dictatorship. In 1987, he unilaterally raised Kansas City property taxes, first from 2.05 percent to four percent and eventually 4.96 percent—the first time in American history that a federal judge has levied taxes. This breathtaking usurpation of power simply ignored an amendment to the Missouri constitution that requires a *two-thirds supermajority vote* to raise property

taxes past 3.25 percent. Judge Clark even tried to impose a surcharge on income taxes, but an appeals court struck this down as an invasion of the province of the state legislature.

When it became clear that Kansas City could be bled no further, Judge Clark decided to pillage the state—but on what grounds? In a flourish of legal non-reasoning, he decided that the state had contributed to segregation in Kansas City by permitting such things as restrictive covenants in deeds and by doing nothing to mix up the races. In penance for these past

crimes, the state has been forced to pay more than \$800 million to make the city's schools fit for suburban white people. Needless to say, the state attorney general has repeatedly contested this exaction, but until June (see below) had lost every court battle.

The astonishing thing is that ever since 1955 there has been *no school segregation in Kansas City*. By the time of Judge Clark's decisions, no one was even pretending that the city or the state or the school district was discriminating. By no sane reading of civil rights laws can Kansas City be

found guilty. It had bad public schools and two-thirds of the students were black. In the never-never land of Judge Clark's mind, this was unacceptable. It could *only* be the result of racism, and not just any old racism; this was Government-perpetrated racism in violation of the United States Constitution.

Because he was springing to the defense of that holy document, he appointed himself school district dictator, with the power to eliminate everything he considered a "vestige" of discrimination. In a crowning act of

Fueling the Folly

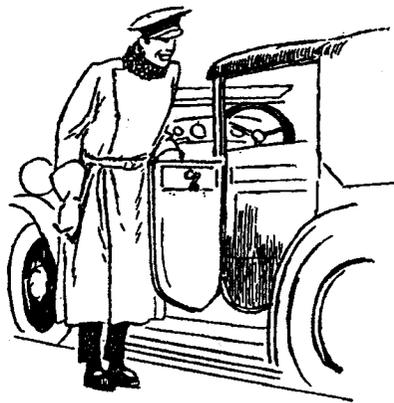
Thanks to Judge Clark's tyrannical whimsies, the state of Missouri spends \$350 million a year, or 6.8 percent of its entire budget, on "desegregation." This is more than annual expenditures on prisons, courts, Highway Patrol, and state fire marshals—combined. Almost all the money goes to the majority-black school districts of Kansas City and St. Louis. Only twelve states spend any money at all on "desegregation" and none devotes as much of its budget to it as Missouri; Arkansas is next at 1.63 percent.

Because what used to be an education budget that was spread around the state now goes mostly to two cities, rural schools that serve whites are scanted. Every other school district has seen an average of \$250,000 clipped from its annual budget. Parents have formed "booster clubs" to raise money for band instruments and athletic uniforms—while the big cities wallow in "desegregation" money. Needless to say, Judge Clark is one of the least popular men in the state and has used federal marshals as body guards.

When hundreds of millions of dollars drop from the sky, there are bound to be interesting runoffs. Lawyers have pocketed more than \$22 million. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, which always gets involved when money is to be taken from whites, has gotten \$3.1 million. From 1990 to 1993, the school found ways to spend \$5.6 million on employee and student travel; Southeast High recently splashed

out \$34,000 to send students on heritage-affirming trips to Mexico and West Africa.

Since Judge Clark couldn't spend all his time checking up on the schools, he appointed a 13-man Desegregation Monitoring Committee with a staff of investigators. The



Kansas City busing.

committee, composed of a racially perfect mix of blacks, whites, and Hispanics, manages to spend half a million dollars a year. And since dream schools somehow do not produce dream students, \$5.6 million has had to be spent on metal detectors and police protection.

Although mandatory busing is not part of the desegregation program, the "magnet" approach must offer ways for students to get to schools not in their neighborhoods. More than 90 percent of the students ride school buses at an annual cost of \$37 million. The buses must be gold-plated, too, since the Atlanta area school district transports nearly

twice as many children at a cost of \$14 million a year.

Now that it looks as though the state will no longer have to hand over more than \$120 million a year, the Kansas City school district is scheming for someone else's money. There is talk of a surcharge on the state income tax or a special tax to be levied only on the region—anything to keep the monster in motion.

Kansas City increasingly covets the white suburbs. One idea would be to break up the city school district into pie-shaped wedges and attach them to the contiguous suburban districts. The old idea of a whacking great district for the entire metropolitan area has resurfaced.

The state legislature has the power to redraw school districts, but the suburbs would put up a terrific fight. They know that absorption by Kansas City would mean death. The city already spends *twice as much money* per student as they do—with miserable results—but wants money from the suburbs, too. "Integration" would mean busing unteachable blacks out of the education palaces in Kansas City into modest schools on the perimeter—which would then have to buy their own metal detectors. This is just the sort of horror that used to thrill liberals, but many suburbanites are now hardened refugees from urban integration who will fight for their children.

The most likely outcome is a return to the pre-Judge Clark days: bad, overwhelmingly non-white neighborhood schools in a district that will not have profited one iota from reckless, extravagant federal intervention. ●

What Nonwhites Think

Most blacks were delighted when the money started pouring in. The original, 1949 law suit had been about substandard facilities, and now blacks were to get the fanciest public schools in the country. The complaints have not stopped.

Today, the most legitimate is that Judge Clark's integration goals put racial quotas on school attendance. At first, he ruled that no more than 60 percent of a magnet school's students could be black. This goal was unreachable, and the figure has crept ever upwards, but in the meantime, since so few whites have come, blacks are turned away to keep their numbers within permitted limits.

Likewise, some black parents are simply tired of putting their children on buses, no matter how wonderful the destination. Local schools build local communities, and many blacks see the value of this.

Less legitimate is the complaint that it was all very well to build fancy buildings, but that the district should have put more effort into promoting parent participation—a factor that almost all analysts consider far more important than money. In its usual, dunderheaded way, the district was studying a plan to *pay parents to attend PTA meetings* when the Supreme Court spoiled the party.

Another complaint is that all the fancy programs that were supposed

to reel in white students—Latin Grammar, French and German—are of no interest to nonwhites. Blacks and Hispanics have responded by giving explicitly ethnic themes to the schools where their numbers predominate. There is



much irony here, because Judge Clark's theory was that all schools should be equally attractive to all races. Inevitably, the pressure to make exceptions for nonwhites has been too great to resist.

The Chick Elementary School, for example, has kicked over the traces and gone all-black. The curriculum is larded with Swahili mumbo-jumbo: "kuumba" (creativity), "im-aani" (faith), "harambee" (coming together). The children memorize poems praising Martin Luther King. There are moves to promote an

Afro-centric curriculum throughout the district.

The 1,700 Hispanic students in the system are beginning to carve out empires, too. A heavily Hispanic school came up for a name change, and activists succeeded in naming it Primitivo Garcia Elementary School—despite official school board disapproval of an openly Hispanic identification. "Hey, this is in our community," explained one Latino activist.

Race relations in the schools that are still "integrated" are poor, as they are everywhere. Black students routinely push whites around and declare areas off-limits to them. When one school tried to have a "racial harmony festival" on Martin Luther King's birthday, black students showed their support for harmony by walking out. They were insulted that the occasion not be devoted exclusively to King.

As usual, a few clear-headed blacks have realized that a billion dollars changes nothing; the best schools are the ones that whites attend. The Hickman Mills district, just outside of town, still has a bare majority of white students, but not for long. During the 1980s, Hickman Mills lost one-third of its white school-age population while the number of nonwhite children increased 83 percent. For every black child who moved in, three white children moved out. Over and over, the process repeats itself. ●

folly, he decreed that he would continue to run the schools until the test scores of black children were appreciably the same as those of whites. So long as blacks did not do as well as whites, the segregation of ages past was still doing its evil work.

Complete Failure

What have been the results of this grand experiment? Instructional costs, *not* including costs of the building program, have more than doubled from \$3,094 per pupil per year to \$8,000 (during the same period, the state average rose from \$2,470 to \$3,760). Average classroom size has decreased from 38-47 to 22-27, and the number of school librarians has shot

up from 13 to 56. Ten years ago the district had no "counselors" for elementary school students. Now it has 53 of them. All this luxury is lavished on only 36,350 students as opposed to a high of 69,000 in the 1950s. The overall operating budget has leapt in seven years from \$142 million to \$500 million while the number of students *has stayed the same*.

Whites have not behaved like iron filings. A comparison of the 1985-1986 school year—the first year of the "magnet" program—with that of 1992-93 shows that white attendance has continued to drop slightly, from 26.4 percent to 25.2 percent. Every year some 1,400 suburban students take the bus into town, but the white turnover rate is very high; most whites

go back to suburbia after one or two years. The district has an annual "marketing and recruitment" budget of \$1.8 million to lure other whites into town to take their places. Martin Luther King Middle School, which requires uniforms for all students and emphasizes the study of Latin grammar (!), has the best reputation among whites—and manages to attract only 55 students from the suburbs.

The small number of Kansas City whites who send their children to public schools have developed a recognizable pattern of patronizing only the lower grades. The racial performance gap is narrower at these ages and adolescence has not yet turned many blacks into predators and trouble-makers. When it is time to

enter four or fifth grade, most white children go to the suburbs or to private school.

What effect has more than a billion dollars had on school performance? During the seven years of Judge Clark's dictatorship, the dropout rate has climbed from 6.5 percent to 11.4 percent and the average daily senior high school attendance rate has dropped from 81.5 percent to 76.2 percent. The racial gap in achievement levels has remained unchanged, starting with a gap of several months in first grade and growing to two or three years by graduation. Test scores on standardized tests—essentially unchanged—are highest in the elementary grades, which have the most whites.

In short, *nothing* has turned out as Judge Clark hoped. It is probably true, as the district lamely argues, that even more whites would have fled the district were it not for fencing coaches and planetariums. The district is nevertheless more nonwhite than ever and the racial performance gap continues to yawn, just as it does in every school in every district in every city in every state.

In the white suburbs, in places like Raytown and Lee's Summit, schools spend less than half the money Kansas City does on each student and get much better results. The Blue Springs district, for example, spends \$3,403 per pupil compared to \$8,000 per pupil in Kansas city. By the third grade, its students are already 70 to 80 points ahead of Kansas City on the Missouri standardized test (graded from 200 points to 595).

If anything, the school district faces its worst crisis ever. Superintendent Walter Marks, who happily spent hundreds of millions during his three

years on the job, was fired in February. In 1994 he managed to find 14 reasons to leave town on school business. Worse still, during a paid leave of absence for back problems, he was filmed by a hidden Kansas City television crew carrying lumber into his new home in Florida. The crew also caught him bounding onto the airplane to come home, but by the time it got to Missouri he had to hobble off with a cane.

The search for a replacement has been hampered by a June decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that finally reins in Judge Clark, and may end the annual tribute from the state. In a 5-4 decision, in which the Clinton administration entered a motion in support of the status quo, the court invalidated most of Judge Clark's efforts to fight "segregation." Since the suburban school districts were not drawn along racial lines and cannot be blamed for "segregation" in Kansas City, Judge Clark did not have the authority to consider them as part of his solution. The actions he took to make the city schools more attractive to suburban students were therefore improper.

No one is going to make him tear down the luxury schools. However, he bypassed the collective bargaining procedure to grant raises to school employees in the hope of making the schools more attractive to suburban whites. The raises may be rolled back.

In a remarkable fit of common sense, the Supreme Court ruled that scores on standardized tests are a ridiculous measure of integration, and that the state of Missouri cannot be held financial hostage to poor black performance. After pouring over \$800 million into this colossal blunder, the state may finally be off the hook.

Of course, Kansas City has become addicted to the \$100 million or so every year that Judge Clark made the state hand over in *operating expenses*. The city is in a panic at the prospect of running the schools without state money. Once that money is gone, who is going to fix the video editing machine when it breaks down? Who is going to pay the security guards who keep the personal computers and machine shop tools from walking out the door? Who is even going to do simple maintenance on the huge, new, fancy school buildings?

To hazard a prediction, unless Kansas City can find fresh whites to bleed (see sidebar), in 10 years its public schools will be worse than ever. About the time the fencing coaches are laid off, the few remaining whites will lose their taste for the exotic and will clear out. The schools will become grimmer and more savage. As they do in Chicago, Newark, and the Bronx, exhausted teachers will maintain the barest facade of scholarship in what will come to resemble holding pens for young blacks and Hispanics. The only difference will be that in Kansas City, this familiar chaos will reign in what was once the most costly and ambitious school district in the country.

Of course, the Kansas City debacle has been a valuable experiment that has yielded fine data. Anyone but a dreamer could have predicted the results perfectly, but now they are clear enough to startle a liberal: (1) Not even the most opulent schools will tempt more than a handful of whites voluntarily to attend classes that are majority black, and (2) no amount of money can bridge the racial gap in academic performance. ●

The Children's Crusade

David Armor, *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law*
Oxford University Press, 1995, 271 pp., \$35.00.

School integration has been 30 years of wasted effort.

reviewed by Thomas Jackson

Forced Justice, written by a sociologist and former member of the

Los Angeles school board, is a relentlessly factual account of the effects of school integration. Although its tone is dry and understated, it would be difficult to find, between the covers of a single book, more hard data on the failure of desegregation. David

Armor systematically blows to bits every one of the assumptions that underlay federal schools policy, exposes the flimsy legal reasoning on which it was based, and cites devastating data to show that it has failed to achieve a single one of its goals.