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New Research Finds Segregation on the March in Florida

Study for Leroy Collins Institute at Florida State Details Growing Isolation of Black and Hispanic Students in Racially and Economically Segregated Schools.

In the years following the landmark 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* ruling and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the state of Florida made significant progress toward the desegregation of its public schools. With the leadership of Governor Leroy Collins and others, the level of desegregation achieved in Florida was among the highest in the country and the impact of the plans endured for decades.

But new research prepared for the Leroy Collins Institute at Florida State University by *The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (CRP)* at UCLA finds that dramatic changes in enrollment, and court rulings and policy changes in recent decades have undercut desegregation efforts in Florida, leaving black and Latino students increasingly segregated in racially and economically isolated schools. The trend toward school segregation in Florida has increased and is more complex than 50 years ago.

"In many areas Florida came a long way during the time of Leroy Collins, but unfortunately, the integration of its public schools has been forgotten and Florida is paying the costs," says UCLA professor Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project.

Commissioned and published by the Leroy Collins Institute at Florida State University, *Tough Choices Facing Florida's Governments: Patterns of Resegregation in Florida's Schools*, co-authored by Orfield and Jongyeon Ee, examines enrollment trends and racial proportion changes in the states public and charter schools and tracks segregation trends at the state level over time. In doing so, the report makes clear the trend toward the re-segregation of Florida schools and provides a context for Florida's school segregation, including the impact of U.S. Supreme Court decisions and school accountability and choice policies.

The research details significant changes in school enrollment over the last three decades. The proportion of Hispanic students has almost quadrupled since 1980, from 8% to 31% of students in public schools. During that same time period, the proportion of white students declined from 68 % to 40%, with Black enrollment remaining steady at about 22%, and Asian students growing from about 1% to 3% of enrollment. As the racial composition of students in Florida

has become more diverse, segregation trends in Florida public schools have also changed. Today, about one-third of public schools are multiracial schools with at least 10% of students from three or more racial groups.

Enrollment trends show growing racial isolation of Black and Hispanic students on some measures. About one-third of black (35%) and Hispanic (32%) students in Florida currently attend intensely segregated schools where 90-100 percent of students are non-white. And since 1994, the proportion of intensely segregated schools has doubled from about 10 % to 20%. About 4 percent of Florida schools are "apartheid" schools, those where 99-100 percent of students are non-white, a number that fortunately has only slightly increased over the years. The majority of these schools are located in Florida's densely populated urban and suburban areas, particularly in the Miami, Broward and Palm Beach area. However, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando and Tallahassee also have concentrations of intensely segregated and apartheid schools. By contrast, 90-100% white schools are concentrated in the northern region of the state.

During the past two decades, the proportion of low-income students in Florida public schools has grown to almost 60%. Segregation by race and concentrated poverty are strongly related across the nation and in Florida. The report documents "double segregation," with intensely segregated and apartheid schools also enrolling very high percentages of students living in poverty. In 2014, low income students made up 80% of the population of intensely segregated schools with 90-100% nonwhites, and nearly 90% of the student population in apartheid schools. The typical Hispanic and black student attend schools with a share of socioeconomically disadvantaged students almost 1.5 times higher than the share of low-income students attending schools of a typical white or Asian student. Unfortunately these trends are exacerbating over time.

The data also shows that academic achievement in Florida is strongly correlated with the level of poverty in school districts population. Black and Hispanic students are far more likely to be segregated in schools with low achieving students.

"It is important to note that during the past two decades, when much emphasis was placed on testing and accountability, a disproportionate share of these 'double segregation' schools were labeled as failures, and blamed and sanctioned, while ignoring the goals of racial diversity and encouraging the growth of charter schools and vouchers," says Orfield.

Florida has experienced rapid growth of charter schools. The research finds that compared to public schools, the charter system has more segregated schools. Nearly two-thirds of charter schools enrolled more than 50% nonwhite students in 2014. From 2004 to 2014, the percentage of intensely segregated charter schools with 90 to 100% nonwhite students also grew from 25.6% to 31%. The share of apartheid schools with 99 to 100% nonwhite students remained around 8% in the last ten years. About one in four black students attend an intensely segregated charter school in Florida today. The pattern for Hispanic students has exacerbated over time and a higher percentage of Hispanic students (43%) go to intensely segregated charter schools than their black peers (39%). The shares of black and Hispanic students in apartheid charter schools are larger than those of black and Hispanic students in public schools. Nearly 6% of Hispanic students attend 99-100% nonwhite charter schools, and one in eight black students go to an apartheid charter school in Florida.

"In 1968, less than one quarter of black students attended majority white schools, but by 1980, 60% of black students did so. There was remarkable progress, but Supreme Court decisions, beginning with the 1991 *Dowell* decision undercut those efforts," says Orfield, "permitting courts to return schools back to local control and letting local officials restore segregated neighborhood schools. The focus on high stakes testing, charter schools and vouchers, while ignoring goals of racial diversity, has resulted in furthering already widespread segregation."

Florida is facing a critical moment, the researchers conclude, and must decide whether it is going to honor the courage of Governor Leroy Collins and the state's hard earned progress toward desegregation, or move backward and further the isolation of Black and Latino students in racially and economically segregated schools.

Tough Choices Facing Florida's Governments: Patterns of Segregation in Florida's Schools was released by the Leroy Collins Institute at Florida State University on Wednesday, September 27 at 10.00 a.m. (EST). In addition to the analysis of enrollment and segregation trends, the report's authors offer recommendations for the state to consider in addressing segregation. The full report is available on the [Leroy Collins Institute website](#), as well as the Civil Rights Project [here](#) .

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