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New Research by UCLA Civil Rights Project Finds Decline in School Segregation in New York City's Rapidly Gentrifying Neighborhoods

Los Angeles--Elementary school enrollment patterns in New York City's most rapidly gentrifying areas have seen a decline in racial segregation, according to a new report released today by the UCLA Civil Rights Project. And the declines are more evident in traditional public schools (TPS) than in charter schools.

Gentrification in the nation's urban centers has surged over the past couple of decades and is transforming New York City neighborhoods. The report, [*School Integration in Gentrifying Neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City*](#), finds the White population has increased almost threefold in the city's most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods, from 11% in 2000 to over 30% in 2016.

In these same rapidly gentrifying areas, the share of White and Asian enrollment in public elementary schools increased by almost five percentage points between 2001 and 2015, rising from 5.7% to 10.4%. In 2015, nine of ten elementary charter schools in the city's most rapidly gentrifying areas were intensely segregated, and three of four charters were hypersegregated, enrolling 99-100% non-White students. For elementary TPS, 79.5% were intensely segregated, but a much smaller share (28.2%) was hypersegregated compared to charters.

Neighborhoods undergoing massive urban-core redevelopment have an opportunity to harness the upsides of community change and alleviate the stark racial and economic isolation that is so pervasive in urban centers across the United States. But real and significant steps to prevent the displacement of long standing residents must be part of the solution.

"A gentrification wave is sweeping across many of the nation's largest cities," says co-author Kfir Mordechay, an assistant professor at Pepperdine University. "As this plays out in New York City and elsewhere, it raises the possibility – albeit a very challenging one – that long-segregated schools could become more diverse with the right policies.

Research shows that diverse schools have significant advantages, not only for learning but also for preparing all groups to live and work successfully in an increasingly diverse society. The Civil Rights Project has consistently argued for policies fostering integrated communities with

integrated schools. The report examines whether the potential educational and social benefits that could come from greater racial and socioeconomic diversity are being realized in New York City's most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods.

However, housing market pressures associated with gentrification also have the potential to force longtime, low-income residents and residents of color to move out of gentrifying neighborhoods, thus leading to the resegregation of communities and schools. In a [previous study of Washington, DC](#), the authors found, however, that gentrification has had a long-term profound impact on the city, and the population of nonwhites in gentrifying areas was actually increasing. Gentrification tends to play out over a long period, allowing time for policy changes.

The report cautions that a high level of racial segregation remains in New York City schools and that much more progress is needed.

"While the trend toward declining racial segregation in some of New York City's elementary schools is promising, we remain concerned about the persistently high levels of school segregation in other areas, especially in charter schools," adds co-author Jennifer Ayscue, an assistant professor at North Carolina State.

In order to create stable and diverse neighborhoods and schools, policy responses that link housing and schools are essential.

On the level of housing, the report recommends the strengthening of community organizations, the building and preservation of affordable housing, the development of neighborhood commercial corridors as job centers for local residents, as well as a strategic collection of data to better understand issues related to displacement with the purpose of mitigating it and increasing access to opportunity for city's vulnerable residents.

At the school level, the co-authors recommend using magnet programs with strategies and guidelines for racial and economic diversity as well as placing requirements for racial and economic diversity on charter schools in gentrifying areas.

Civil Rights Project Co-Director Gary Orfield, who has been studying changes in segregation patterns for more than 40 years, commented, "Gentrification can cause real harm for poor families, even as it creates the possibility of integrated schools in those areas for the first time in many years. It is a challenge to local educational and housing policy leaders to minimize the damage and to create stronger integrated schools and bring all families into the public schools."

Key findings include:

- In the city's most rapidly gentrifying census areas, the White population has increased almost threefold, from 11% in 2000 to over 30% in 2016. Among the school-aged population (5-17 years old), the White share increased from 10% to 29% during the

same time period while the share of Black and Latino school-aged children declined from 87% to 64%.

- In these same rapidly gentrifying areas, the share of White and Asian elementary school enrollment also increased between 2001 and 2015, rising from 5.7% to 10.4%.
- While close to four-fifths of all the elementary schools in gentrifying neighborhoods had less than 5% White enrollment in 2015, nearly one out of 10 schools had more than 25% White enrollment.
- Between 2000 and 2015, shares of intensely segregated (90-100% non-White) and hypersegregated (99-100% non-White) elementary schools *declined* in gentrifying areas of New York City, while the portion of intensely segregated and hypersegregated elementary schools *increased* in the non-rapidly gentrifying areas.
- The share of White students increased in both elementary charter schools and elementary TPS between 2000 and 2015 in gentrifying areas; however, a larger share of White students attended TPS than charter schools in 2015 (8.1% and 2.0%, respectively).
- Both elementary charter and TPS in gentrifying areas experienced a decrease in the share of intensely segregated and hypersegregated schools between 2000 and 2015. However, the overwhelming majority of charter schools remained intensely segregated or hypersegregated in 2015.
- In 2015, nine out of 10 elementary charter schools in gentrifying areas were intensely segregated, and at the most extreme level of segregation—hypersegregation—three out of four charters remained hypersegregated, enrolling 99-100% non-White students. In 2015, 79.5% of elementary TPS were intensely segregated, but at the most extreme level of segregation, a substantially smaller share of TPS (28.2%) was hypersegregated.

[This report](#) is produced in coordination with the UCLA Civil Rights Project and can be found online [here](#).

About the Civil Rights Project

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is co-directed by UCLA Professors Gary Orfield and Patricia Gándara. Founded in 1996 at Harvard University by Orfield and Christopher Edley, Jr., CRP's mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. CRP has commissioned more than 400 studies, published more than 15 books and issued numerous reports monitoring the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity and providing the authoritative source of segregation statistics. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision upholding affirmative action, and in Justice Breyer's dissent (joined by three other Justices) to its 2007 *Parents Involved* decision, cited the Civil Rights Project's research.

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