



*Legacies of Brown: Multiracial Equity in American Education.* Carter, Dorinda J., Stella M. Flores, Richard J. Reddick, eds. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Review, 2004. 321 pp.

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In *Legacies of Brown: Multiracial Equity in American Education*, the editors draw together articles published over the last 30 years in *Harvard Educational Review* (HER) that have examined issues related to desegregating and integrating U.S. schools. The book's primary aim is to examine the impact that *Brown vs. Board of Education* has had on the vastly diverse student population in our schools. While *Brown* focused on ending de jure racial segregation in America's schools, its effects, indeed its *legacy*, has been the attempt to desegregate all public spaces and end exclusionary practices beyond just race. The persistent challenge, as the editors aptly note in their introduction, and as the selected articles deftly illustrate, is full integration (in public schools).

*Legacies* is divided into two major sections. Part One, "Desegregation Policy and the Law," features four articles that examine school desegregation in San Francisco, the development of bilingual education, segregated education and Mexican American students and literacy as a property right that its author argues was legally restricted from African Americans. Part Two, "The Practice of Integration," features five articles that examine efforts by African Americans, Native Americans and Puerto Ricans to resist exclusionary educational practices and policies and create more equitable spaces for themselves in schools. The editors provide thorough introductions for each section that help to situate the readings within the context of *Brown*.

The text is strong in several ways. First, Martha Minow, a Harvard Law Professor and former law clerk for the late Justice Thurgood Marshall, provides an important discussion of the far-reaching effects of *Brown* in terms of the various groups who have benefited it. Minow's essay reveals and underscores the myriad ways in which being "different" has been an impediment to an equitable education. She outlines the ways in which *Brown* has been used to address discrimination and exclusion related to linguistic difference, ableism, sexism, heterosexism and national origin/citizenship. Through Minow's introductory essay readers will gain a stronger appreciation for and a deeper understanding of the irony that education has been touted as the "great equalizer." While *Brown* brought a legal end to the inhumane system of American apartheid, the instantiation of the court case and the legislation that emanated from it has proven to be "more than a notion." Furthermore, while many historically marginalized groups have found some relief in light of *Brown*, the battles that were waged (and in some cases continue) decades after the landmark decision highlight the fact that perhaps the road to equality is still a long one.

Secondly, the editors address one of the challenges of language customarily used in reference to *Brown*—the conflation of the terms, *desegregation* and *integration*. Typically, as



the editors rightly point out, the terms are erroneously used interchangeably. Desegregation, they argue, is the coexistence of different racial and ethnic groups in a common space. Integration, on the other hand, suggests that constituents will address power dynamics to enable equitable status among and between “different” groups of people. Achieving equity requires more than just co-existence. Integration requires that the purpose of schooling begin with the notion that schools are public spaces that must be multicultural. Secondly, as multicultural public spaces, the very nature and premise of schooling must be rethought to achieve equity and equality.

As a critical race theorist (CRT), I was pleased to find Catherine Pendergrast’s article, “The Economy of Literacy: How the Supreme Court Stalled the Civil Rights Movement.” Pendergrast uses the CRT constructs of Whiteness as Property and Interest-Convergence to examine the ways in which literacy functioned as a property right and one that has historically been withheld from African Americans specifically. From my perspective, no discussion on *Brown* is complete without analyzing the ubiquitous role of race in both the *Brown* decision and its enactment. Pendergrast’s analysis of the role of the U.S. Supreme Court as a gatekeeper (or gatecloser) to a fundamental aspect of what it means to be educated is provocative and thorough.

Despite the strengths outlined above, the text has a minor limitation with respect to the articles that provide a historical overview of bilingual education and other significant school desegregation efforts. While the editors provide helpful introductory and concluding essays, an epilogue of sorts to update readers on some of the articles published in the 1970s would have been helpful to understand the reverberating effects of *Brown*. For instance, it might have been useful for the editors to provide recent data on San Francisco’s schools for readers unfamiliar with the past and present condition of the school district. Moreover, a contemporary examination of San Francisco’s schools some 30 years after Kirp’s important article would be a way of measuring not only the impact of *Brown*, but also the success of the district’s efforts to desegregate. Similarly, a contemporary examination of bilingual education, in light of Teitelbaum and Hiller’s article might also explicate the resistance to addressing exclusionary racist practices that are quite often masked as concerns about citizenship and national identity. However, Imani Perry’s chapter is helpful as she offers a follow-up to her 1988 essay published in *HER* when she was only 15 years old. Perry, now a law professor at Rutgers University, reflects on the notions of equal protection, holistic integration and cultural capital. Perry’s chapter is insightful as she addresses the interlocking relationship between race and social and cultural capital.

In spite of the lack of contemporary analyses of the instantiations of and resistances to *Brown*, as illustrated in the text’s articles, *Legacies* will be useful for a broad range of courses. Professors and students (both undergraduate and graduate) in foundations of education, history of education, law and education and equity, diversity and education courses, will find it a staple text for their courses. Given the depth of the articles and the significant topics covered therein, both students and researchers will find it an invaluable resource. *Legacies of Brown* is an important contribution to the literature on equity and diversity in education. I encourage scholars interested in these issues to add it to their libraries.



# Anthropology & Education

QUARTERLY

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