

Chapter 7

A Selected History of Social Justice in Education

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Contemporary politicians, teachers, parents, and educational reformers are locked in a heated debate regarding the definition of social justice in education. Is it an education that will give students skills to alter the social order, or is it an education that will enable students to fit themselves into a higher station in that social order? Should the academic achievement of individuals or groups be the unit of analysis used to examine social justice? Can social justice be achieved through an education that promotes assimilation, or must it be an education for cultural maintenance (or something in between)? The debate can be loosely organized in two ideological camps. On one hand, social justice is the promise of equity and mobility through assimilation and the belief that such an agenda will return schools to a time in which they fostered togetherness under the banner of Americanization (Marshall & Parker, n.d.). On the other hand, social justice in education is reflected in a curriculum and school personnel who honor students' languages and cultures, foster appreciation of difference, and engage in a moral use of power that resists discrimination and inequity (American Educational Research Association, Leadership for Social Justice Special Interest Group, n.d.).

This chapter uses the words of historical actors and historians to inform the current debate regarding how social justice should be defined and delivered. A history of social justice in education is useful for at least two reasons. First, these competing notions of social justice in education are not new. Tension between a belief in assimilation and the ability of individuals to climb the meritocratic ladder and the belief in a respect for cultural and linguistic differences and a flattening of the racial, ethnic, and linguistic hierarchy has existed since the start of the common school system (Tyack, 1993). Second, current educational reformers and others appropriate history and memory to justify certain avenues to social justice. As Hom and Yamamoto (2000) state,

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action on justice claims often turns on which memories are acknowledged by decisionmakers. Collective memory thus is always hotly contested by those supporting and those opposing justice claims. Indeed, struggles over memory are often struggles between colliding ideologies, or vastly differing world views. (p. 1765)

Examining the history of social justice in education, therefore, not only illuminates what transpired but also provides a portrait of how, why, and the end to which the history of education is managed for contemporary purposes (Donato & Lazerson, 2000; Franke, 2000).

The first part of the chapter examines the promise of assimilation or the lack thereof in American educational history in order to assess if this promise was genuine, desirable, or fulfilled in the educational experiences of American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans. The focus is on the battle against segregated schooling, but the desire for desegregation and assimilation should not be understood as synonymous. The pairing is used here to highlight how those groups considered assimilable and those considered unassimilable were deliberately segregated by White communities and school boards. The second part of the chapter examines how these racial and ethnic groups created and/or fortified separate schooling experiences that directly contradicted the assimilationist vision of social justice and how their efforts are understood by historians. Historical actors, much like the Leadership for Social Justice Special Interest Group, believed that cultural and linguistic integrity and maintenance form the basis of social justice and that collective rather than individual advancement was the proper marker for gauging success. Historians, however, like other scholars, debate whether the efforts of these historical actors furthered or hindered the pursuit of social justice in education.¹

RACIAL CATEGORIES AND SCHOOLING

Before beginning a discussion of the particular experiences of these different racial and ethnic groups, it is important to understand how conceptions of race and a racial hierarchy influenced their schooling experiences. In the 19th century, Whiteness was a diversified category, with Western and Northern European immigrants at the top of the racial hierarchy and Southern and Eastern European immigrants a notch below. By the 20th century, however, “Whiteness became an abstraction of an American citizenry” in which all persons from Europe were able to enjoy White privilege as long as they forfeited the culture and language of their countries of origin (Palumbo-Liu, 1999, p. 149; see also Harris, 1993; Smedley, 1993). Forfeiting culture and language and assimilating into White American society was not an option for non-White groups. “Non-White,” in this case, meant more than a physical description or a cultural affiliation, particularly because some persons of color could physically pass for White and some willingly surrendered their culture and language in the American context. Instead, “non-White” meant being denied the status, privilege, opportunities, and constitutional protections accessible to Whites on the basis of inherited and immutable traits (Harris, 1993; Takaki, 1998). The science of individual and group differences,

which emerged in the early 20th century, bolstered the racial rankings and provided scientific proof of the intellectual and moral variance between racial and ethnic groups (Kliebard, 1995; Tyack, 1974). According to Gould (1981), American psychologists

assumed that intelligence was largely inherited, and developed a series of specious arguments confusing cultural differences with innate properties. They believed that inherited IQ scores marked people and groups for an inevitable station in life. And they assumed that the average differences between groups were largely the products of heredity, despite manifest and profound variation in quality of life. (p. 157)

This racial hierarchy directly affected the educational opportunities of different groups. Lewis Terman (1916), the father of the intelligence quotient, found differences between American-born Whites and recent European immigrants but also focused his attention on the “extraordinary frequency” with which he found mental defects among “Spanish-Indian and Mexican families of the Southwest and also among negroes” (p. 91). According to Terman, these particular groups of color “should be segregated in special classes. . . . They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers” (p. 92). Other psychologists and educational reformers thought similarly (Cubberley, 1909; Goddard, 1920; Thorndike, 1904) and set about the task of redefining democracy and equality. In the words of the superintendent of schools in Boston in 1908, “Until very recently [the schools] have offered equal opportunity for all to receive *one kind* of education, but what will make them democratic is to provide opportunity for all to receive education as will fit them *equally well* for their particular life work” (cited in Oakes, 1985, p. 34). American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans, therefore, deserved a different and inferior education. This meant that they were not only in separate classes, as Terman suggested, but in separate and often substandard schools.

At times, Whites separated themselves from these groups based on a White versus non-White binary. At others, non-White access to White schools expanded or contracted based on their particular positioning in the racial hierarchy. For instance, in 1863, California education laws lumped “Negroes, Mongolians, and Indians” together as groups that could be barred from attending school with Whites (Wollenberg, 1976, p. 13). However, many reformers considered American Indians higher on the racial hierarchy than Mongolians and Negroes, and therefore assimilable, and often spoke of them becoming fully integrated into American society (Adams, 1995; Ahern, 1976; Pratt, 1882/1973). At certain points, Mexican Americans were considered White (Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848), were juxtaposed against Blacks and allotted a higher status (*Independent School District v. Salvatierra*, 1930), or were classified as non-White to prevent attendance at White schools (Wollenberg, 1976). In California, while the school laws remanded the Chinese and Chinese Americans to segregated schools, Japanese and Japanese American students—who assumed a higher place in the racial hierarchy than the Chinese—sometimes attended schools with Whites (Morimoto, 1997; Palumbo-Lui, 1999; Wollenberg, 1976). Blacks, the consummate “other” at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, sometimes became the foil against which other groups

positioned themselves in an attempt to gain greater status and educational opportunity (*Gong Lum v. Rice*, 1927; *Independent School District v. Salvatierra*, 1930).

Each of these non-White groups recognized that segregated schools were not merely separate but that such schools fed the existing racial and ethnic hierarchy by deliberately undereducating students of color. And each understood a high-quality education as one lever to improve the social, political, and economic status of the group. Long before *Brown v. Board of Education*, they understood that an education

is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities. . . . It is the very foundation of good citizenship. . . . To set them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community. (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954)

Although Whites sometimes couched their arguments for segregated schools (when they decided to euphemize the arguments at all) as beneficial for all children involved, non-White groups did not accept such a bastardized notion of schooling. Attacking separate schools, therefore, became an important mechanism in their struggle for social justice and in their battle to acquire the privileges of Whiteness.

THE BATTLE FOR THE PRIVILEGES OF WHITENESS THROUGH DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

Scholars who subscribe to the notion of assimilation and individual advancement as social justice confuse the battle to acquire the privileges of Whiteness with the desire to assimilate. They paint a nostalgic picture of the past in which they assume that various immigrants and outsiders actively pursued the opportunity to shed their cultural and linguistic heritage in order to become American. Surely, some immigrants and outsiders did just that. But the rigidity of the racial hierarchy meant that American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans would still have been barred from the privileges of Whiteness even if they would have collectively shed their identities. Therefore, the battle for desegregated schools did not represent a wholesale acceptance of Whiteness as the norm or desired state. Rather, it was the recognition that Whiteness equaled high status and afforded multiple opportunities closed to non-Whites and that attendance at desegregated schools could offer children of color access to a first-rate curriculum that would enable collective racial and ethnic uplift. The pairing of assimilation as social justice and a discussion of the battle against segregated schooling is instructive because it demonstrates what assimilation meant in a historical context, if assimilation profited the groups to which equity was promised, and why those groups who were never offered the alms of assimilation as uplift still fought for the privileges of Whiteness.

PROMISES OF ASSIMILATION DEFERRED: AMERICAN INDIANS AND MEXICAN AMERICANS

Whites held out the promise of equity through assimilation and mimicking Whiteness to American Indians and Mexican Americans. Many policymakers and

politicians opposed and feared including American Indians in American society, but others who considered themselves self-styled friends of the Indian argued that no genetic racial differences existed between American Indians and Whites and believed Indians could be fully integrated into White society after they were educated, civilized, and Christianized (Adams, 1995; Deyhle, 1995; Eastman, 1935; Hoxie, 1984; Prucha, 1973, 1984).² In the words of Richard Henry Pratt, one of the most important White reformers to educate American Indians, "I suppose the end to be gained, however far away it may be, is the complete civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life, with all the rights and privileges guaranteed to every other [White] individual" (Utley, 1964, p. 266, cited in Lomawaima, 1994, p. 5). Similarly, Mexican Americans became citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) at the end of the Mexican–American War. According to Article IX, Mexicans residing in what became United States territory were admitted "to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution."

Despite their honorary status as Whites, both groups were almost entirely relegated to segregated schools. American Indian pupils attended on-reservation schools or off-reservation boarding schools that were exclusively Indian in attendance. Even Pratt, who dreamed of a time when American Indians would melt into White society, was forced to send his charges to a Black school, Hampton Institute, because no White school would have them (Lindsey, 1995). A few elite and light-skinned Mexican Americans did attend school with Whites, but most Mexican American children attended segregated schools, particularly after the population influx following the 1910 Mexican Revolution and the 1920s *bracero* workers program, which increased the number of Mexican immigrants entering the United States (Gonzalez, 1997; Hendrick, 1977; Menchaca, 1999; Sánchez, 1997; Wollenberg, 1974, 1976).³

According to reformers, that assimilation and Americanization should occur in schools separate from Whites was not contradictory. Instead, it was a practical solution that represented the best course of action to achieve those ends. English-language deficiencies necessitated special attention that could not occur for American Indian or Mexican American pupils in classes with English-speaking children, and Americanization programs could be better concentrated and delivered in segregated settings (Adams, 1995; Deyhle, 1995; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990, 1997; Menchaca & Valencia, 1990; Prucha, 1973; Wollenberg, 1974, 1976). Reformers bolstered their arguments with the science of group differences that emerged in the early 20th century by arguing that American Indians and Mexican Americans deserved programs tailored to learning the habits of the majority rather than academic pursuits, that their physical and intellectual distance from Whites would make them feel out of place with White kids, and that White children should be protected from the questionable morals of American Indian and Mexican American youth (Adams, 1995; Alvarez, 1986; Deyhle, 1995; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990, 1997; Hoxie, 1984; Menchaca & Valencia, 1990; Wollenberg, 1974, 1976). Americanization and assimilation were right and good, according to these historical actors and some early historians (Carpenter, 1935; Eastman, 1935; Stanley, 1920,

cited in Wollenberg, 1976), and segregated schools were the best place to achieve those ends.

Historians have critiqued this sympathetic interpretation by examining the paternalistic and racist attitudes of Whites (including Pratt) toward American Indians and Mexican Americans. Recent scholarly work has used the autobiographies and interviews with former American Indian boarding school pupils to document the horrid and oppressive conditions at the boarding schools and to highlight how American Indians resisted the reformers through subterfuge, refusing attendance, and defying White teachers after enrollment (Adams, 1988, 1995; Ahern, 1976; Bass, 1966; Child, 1998, 2000; Coleman, 1987, 1993; Lomawaima, 1994; Senese, 1991; Standing Bear, 1928/1975; 1933; Szasz, 1999; Talayesva; 1942; Trennert, 1988). More important for the purposes of this chapter, the historians who traced American Indian educational experiences after the 1910s—at which time the federal government backpedaled in its interest in American Indian off-reservation boarding schools—found that White reformers reneged on the (some would say disingenuous) promises of equality and upward mobility through education by the 1920s. Reformers shifted the assimilative mission of the boarding schools in response to the fact that American Indian students often returned to reservations and families with their cultural values intact (Hoxie, 1984, 2001; Prucha, 1984; Senese, 1991). According to Hoxie (1984), “The key to assimilation was no longer the act of becoming part of an undifferentiated, ‘civilized’ society; instead, assimilation had come to mean knowing one’s place and fulfilling one’s role” (p. 242). The segregated boarding schools, therefore, trained students to occupy an inferior position in the social, economic, and political order.⁴

So, too, did most Mexican Americans experience a segregated form of schooling that did not groom them to assimilate into American society but prepared them to fill a particular station in the social, economic, and political hierarchy. At times, reformers were, as Gonzalez (1997) put it, “more patronizing than negative, more insensitive than malicious” (p. 164). In other instances, the rhetoric regarding segregated schools was clearly racist and rooted in stereotypes of Mexicans as “dirty, shiftless, lazy, irresponsible, unambitious, thrifless, fatalistic, selfish, promiscuous, and prone to drinking, violence, and criminal behavior” (Carpenter, 1935, cited in Gonzalez, 1997, p. 163). According to San Miguel (2001), schools clashed with communities’ interests in that they advocated subtractive Americanization. In other words, “they supported the learning of American cultural forms and the ‘subtraction’ of the Spanish language and Mexican cultural heritage from the schools (pp. 19–20; see also Donato, 1997; Garcia, 1978; Gonzalez, 1990; Menchaca & Valencia, 1990; Moll & Ruiz, 2002; Sánchez, 1951).

Despite the rhetoric of assimilation, American Indians and Mexican Americans were, for the most part, not only barred from White schools but also relegated to substandard institutions. And despite their supposed proximity to Whiteness, they did not experience the benefits of such status and were forced to litigate for the opportunity to receive a high-quality education through desegregated schooling. American Indian plaintiffs brought suit to end school segregation in the early 20th

century in Oregon (*State v. Wolf*, 1907) and North Carolina (*Crawford v. District School Board for District No. 7*, 1913) but lost. It was not until 1924 that American Indians won a legal challenge against forced attendance at federally supported reservation boarding schools. In *Piper v. Big Pine School District* (1924), the California Supreme Court found for the plaintiffs on the grounds that the district violated the state constitution by denying American Indian pupils access to state-supported schools. The decision was only a partial victory because the court did not prevent school districts from creating *segregated* state-supported schools for Indians. It was not until 1947 that the California legislature prohibited racial segregation in public schools (Wollenberg, 1976, p. 132).

Mexican American parents, supported by newly formed Mexican American advocacy organizations, filed legal challenges against segregated schools as early as 1930 with *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (Texas) and 1931 with *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* (California). In both cases, state courts found that local school boards illegally segregated Mexican American students on racial grounds, though *Salvatierra* allowed the district to segregate students for language reasons. Federal court decisions with a wider impact struck dead racial and linguistic profiling in the 1940s (*Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District, Texas*, 1948; *Mendez v. Westminster School District, California*, 1946). Litigation against segregated schools took another turn in 1970 with *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* (Texas) as White districts used the Mexican-as-White argument as a way around the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. In this case, the court invalidated district attempts to achieve desegregation by placing Mexican American children in schools with Black children. Social justice in the form of a high-quality schooling experience, according to the litigants in the different cases, could not occur in a segregated and substandard environment.

As can be seen through the experiences of these two groups, the promise of assimilation as an opportunity to become part of an undifferentiated American mass was disingenuous. Forfeiting culture and language, for American Indians and Mexican Americans, was not enough to erase the racial and ethnic status they carried. The White versus non-White binary trumped their proximity to Whiteness in the racial hierarchy and led to the denial of equal educational opportunity. They remained outsiders who were to be assimilated into a particular and inferior position in American society.

CONSUMMATE OUTSIDERS: ASIAN AMERICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

Even the disingenuous promise of assimilation and Americanization held out to American Indians and Mexican Americans did not exist for Asian Americans or African Americans. The institution of slavery, the equation of Black personhood with property, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, legal decisions, and legislative acts relegated African Americans to the margins of American society before and after the Civil War (J. H.

Franklin, 1974). Asian Americans, too, were specifically targeted by Whites. In 1882, the United States government adopted "An Act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese," which prohibited further immigration, making it the first such act to specify a particularly undesirable country of origin. In 1907, the federal government extended the act to include Japanese immigrants as a way to stem the Mongolian tide (Daniels, 1997; Takaki, 1998). Their place in the racial hierarchy left them at a distinct disadvantage, but Asian Americans and African Americans agitated for access to desegregated schools and the privileges of Whiteness.

Although conflated in everything from census reports to scholarly work (Tamura, 2001), the rights denied to or gained by Chinese Americans or Japanese Americans were highly contingent on local politics and international relations (Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Weinberg, 1997). China, weakened by the dynastic wars of the middle 19th century, held little political clout on the world stage when Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans came under siege in the late 19th century in American schools. Japan's military might, as demonstrated through its victory in the Russo-Japanese War and its industrialized economy, on the other hand, made it a powerful international rival and a formidable advocate for Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans (Katznelson & Weir, 1985; Odo, 2002; Takaki, 1998; Weinberg, 1997; Wollenberg, 1976). Local school boards also alternately conflated or disaggregated the Asian label as attitudes toward them softened or hardened (Palumbo-Lui, 1999).

For African Americans, regional differences dictated the extent of their outsider status. Prior to 1865, social justice was impossible on a political, social, or economic scale, but enslaved southern Blacks experienced personal fulfillment and psychological liberation through Sabbath schools (Douglass, 1845/1968; Webber, 1978; Woodson 1919/1968). At the end of the Civil War, Blacks pursued education with a vengeance and made communal sacrifices to educate Black youth, though they did so within the confines of a segregated system in which Whites refused to allow them the possibility to enter mainstream society (J. D. Anderson, 1988; Du Bois, 1901; Woodson, 1919/1968). Blacks in the North were not automatically prohibited from attending schools with Whites. In fact, Blacks and Whites attended school together in some locations prior to and immediately after the Civil War (Douglas, 2005; Du Bois, 1899/1996; V. P. Franklin, 1979; McCaul, 1987; Meier & Rudwick, 1967). The fear of a massive Black exodus from the South to the North and West at the end of the war prompted some legislatures and school boards to enact stiff segregation policies. The population influx did not occur, but the segregation policies remained. Some newly enacted laws, like one in California in 1864, barred Black students from attending school with Whites and threatened districts with financial sanction if they did not comply (Wollenberg, 1976). In 1872, the Illinois legislature gave local districts the power of pupil assignment, which resulted in Black students in one school and White students in another (McCaul, 1987). Other districts in a variety of northern cities created annexes to White schools, which meant that Black and White children attended the same school but different classes (Douglas, 2005; Mabee, 1979; McCaul, 1987). Other school boards simply flouted the law and refused to educate Black children altogether (Douglas, 2005; Mabee, 1979).

These groups—with different racial status, different levels of international clout, and completely different histories in the United States—found themselves bedfellows as they battled White communities and school boards over the segregated school system. In *People v. Hall* (1854), the California Supreme Court ruled that the definition of Black “as contradistinguished from white” included “all races other than the Caucasian,” a decision that legally denied Chinese Americans the right to testify, vote, or otherwise participate in government (Aarim-Heriot, 2003; Beck, 1975; Caldwell, 1971; Chang, 2001; Gotanda, 2001; Harris, 1993; Kim, 2001; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Takaki, 1998). Similarly, by 1863, the California legislature adopted school laws that barred Negro, Indian, and Mongolian students from attending White schools by ordering districts to create separate schools for non-Whites (Beck, 1975; Wollenberg, 1976).

Although *People v. Hall* (1854) and the California state school code subordinated all non-Whites to second-class citizenry, these groups rarely worked in tandem to fight for social justice. In fact, they sometimes worked against each other. The tension between Chinese/Chinese Americans and African Americans presents a twist to the notion of social justice in education. To fight for social justice, each group directly confronted White supremacy by refuting racist stereotypes and challenging discriminatory laws. But, to advance their positions, one group affirmed the racist stereotypes Whites used to describe the other (De Leon, 2002; Johnsen, 1980; Loewen, 1988; Shankman, 1978). For instance, as part of a political strategy to gain access to a high-quality education, Black Californians argued that they, more than the Chinese, deserved the right to attend desegregated schools. Black leaders contrasted the fact that Asians were permanent foreigners and held cultural values and religious beliefs alien to America with the fact that African Americans had successfully assimilated in that they spoke English, were Christian, and were therefore more likely to be productive contributors to society. Editorials written in the *Elevator*, one of San Francisco’s most notable Black newspapers, claimed that for 300 years, the Chinese had “maintained a wall of superstition and error against our revealed religion” and concluded that Asians were culturally at odds with America (cited in Shankman, 1978, p. 3; see also Beck, 1975; De Leon, 2002; Johnsen, 1980).

Likewise, the Chinese/Chinese American community sought to distance itself from the African American community. When Chinese parents petitioned San Francisco’s board of education for their children’s right to attend public schools in 1857, the board offered to place Chinese students in schools opened for Black students. Chinese leaders were angered by the school board’s attempt to classify them as anything close to Black, rejected the offer, and demanded a separate Chinese/Chinese American school in lieu of attending Black schools (Low, 1982; Weinberg, 1997).⁵ In a similar flattening of the racial hierarchy, Chinese American parents in Mississippi brought suit on the basis that a Chinese American pupil had been incorrectly classified as colored. The United States Supreme Court (as the California Supreme Court had done in *People v. Hall*) ruled against the parents by expanding the definition of colored to include all non-Whites rather than only Blacks, thereby allowing the district to force Chinese

American pupils (or any non-White pupil, for that matter) to attend segregated Black schools (*Gong Lum v. Rice*, 1927; Loewen, 1988; Quan, 1982). In *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), lawyers for the plaintiff argued that

if there is a danger associated [with Negroes], it is a danger from which one race is entitled to protection just as the same as another . . . the white race creates for itself a privilege that it denies to other races; exposes the children of other races to risks and dangers to which it would not expose its own children. This is discrimination. (cited in Loewen, 1988, p. 67)

Although Loewen (1988) insisted Gong Lum and his attorneys did not believe Blacks were dangerous and used the argument only as a legal tactic, he conceded that the case is an example where “good use was made of the white racist rationale for segregated schools” (p. 67).

Even when they were successful in court, White school boards, legislatures, and other entities forced Asian American and African American pupils into segregated and often substandard schools. Chinese Americans in California won a temporary victory in 1885 in *Tape v. Hurley*. Joseph and Mary Tape, who resided outside of Chinatown, sued the San Francisco school board to allow their American-born, Christian, and English-speaking daughter, Mamie, to attend a local White school. According to Takaki (1998), the Tapes, like many other first-generation Chinese immigrants, believed that the academic achievement, Americanization, and assimilation-as-mimicking-Whiteness of the second generation could prove to White America that Chinese immigrants had been unjustly denied citizenship. The second generation, of which Mamie was a part, would be a bridge between the first generation and White America (Takaki, 1998). The California Supreme Court found in favor of the Tapes because the ever-evolving California school laws excluded only Indian and Negro children after the term Mongolian was dropped from the school code in 1871 (*Tape v. Hurley*, 1885). One day after the court ruling, however, the legislature revised the school code to once again include Mongolian students and mandated that districts establish separate schools for Chinese students. Soon thereafter, the San Francisco school board created a new public school for Chinese students that Mamie was forced to attend. Here, like with other racial and ethnic groups, the Chinese American attempt to desegregate schools as a way to achieve social justice and equal educational opportunity—despite Mamie’s assimilated status—was thwarted and redirected toward separate schooling (Beck, 1975; Hendrick, 1977, 1980; Low, 1982; Weinberg, 1997; Wollenberg, 1976).

Although the Japanese, like the Chinese, were denied citizenship, they attended neighborhood schools with Whites because they were fewer in number, they enjoyed a higher status in the racial hierarchy, and Japan had the political clout to ensure that immigrants were treated fairly (Daniels, 1992; Wollenberg, 1976). Still, Whites in San Francisco flattened the racial hierarchy and broadened the Mongolian category to include the Japanese as a way to exclude them from schools as their numbers increased. In 1893, several years after the *Tape* case, the school board adopted a resolution remanding Japanese students to the Chinese public schools. Japanese immigrants

refused to comply, stating that segregation “constituted an act of discrimination carrying with it the stigma and odium which is impossible to overlook” (cited in Wollenberg, 1976, p. 56). The board of education reiterated its order to have Japanese students transferred to the Chinese public school in 1905 (Morimoto, 1997), and the following year, the legislature amended the school code to include Japanese students as Mongolians and, therefore, a group that could be legally segregated (Low, 1982). Japanese American parents refused to comply, filed suit (*Aoki v. Deane*, 1907), and appealed to their homeland by reporting their mistreatment to Japanese newspapers and the consulate (Wollenberg, 1976). Interested in maintaining healthy relations with the Empire of Japan, President Theodore Roosevelt intervened on behalf of the Japanese and forced the school board to relent (Daniels, 1992; Wollenberg, 1976).

As the group at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, Blacks waged the most public, aggressive, and long-lasting attack on separate schools, and it is with the Black community that the link between education and social justice as collective racial advancement is most clearly articulated in the historiography (for instance, see J. D. Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1934/1966; Bullock, 1967; Butchart, 1988; Du Bois, 1901, 1903/1990; Harlan, 1958; Woodson, 1919/1968).⁶ Reminiscent of Frederick Douglass’s (1845/1968) proclamation that education was the “pathway from slavery to freedom” (p. 49), early historians such as Carter G. Woodson (1919/1968, 1933/1990) and W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/1990) couched their advocacy of education less in the language of academic knowledge and more in the language of citizenship, racial uplift, and political access. In the words of Du Bois (1906/1973), “never in God’s world is this Negro race going to hold its place in the world, until it shows by its fully developed and carefully trained powers its undoubted ability to do so” (p. 14).

Black historical actors sought to disabuse Whites of the notion that the desire to attend desegregated schools meant Blacks yearned to be White or that Blacks abhorred their own race. Writing in 1915, William Pickens explained,

The Negroes in Northern communities are generally opposed to the separate school idea and face the usual accusation that they ‘do not want to associate with their own people,’ which ignores the more positive reason the Negro himself advances—the universal temptation and tendency of the school authorities to degrade the Negro schools wherever they have been successfully segregated. . . . He knows that where black and white attend the same school this discrimination is forever impossible. (p. 83)

The argument, according to Pickens, was not

that colored children simply enjoy going to school with white children, where in fact they are often woe-fully ostracized, but it is rather to be supposed that the white school attracts colored people for the same reason why it would attract any people, because of its superior location and equipment. (Pickens, 1915, cited in Aptheker, 1993, p. 84)

In 1954, the Supreme Court declared racially segregated schools unconstitutional in its famous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. African Americans initiated the case, but the decision affected all other racial and ethnic groups similarly situated. The plaintiffs argued that

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system. (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954)

The tenor of the decision mirrored the arguments made by American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, and Japanese Americans who recognized education as a lever for upward mobility and citizenship status and desegregated schools as the best means to achieve those ends. Historical actors interested in social justice concerns celebrated the decision as a springboard for equality and upward mobility in the economic, social, and political spheres as well (Breathett, 1983).

Still, *Brown*, like the other legal decisions regarding segregated schooling, has a complicated legacy. According to J. D. Anderson (2006), *Brown* “redeemed promises of constitutional equality that remained excluded or underdeveloped since the Declaration of Independence, its legal significance is national in scope, and its meaning extends beyond the interest of any particular ethnicity, class or gender” (p. 15). The decision was a pivotal moment in the pursuit of human equality and dignity, made the principle of racial equality a fundamental doctrine in the American legal corpus, and provided legal precedent on which democratic rights expanded (J. D. Anderson, 2006). At the same time, Anderson and other scholars lament the fact that Black students and other students of color continue to languish in segregated schools, receive a poor quality education, and experience isolation and cultural and linguistic alienation when they are in desegregated contexts (J. A. Anderson, Byrne, & Smiley, 2004; Irons, 2002; Menchaca, 1995; Moreno, 1999; Ogletree, 2004; Patterson, 2001; Valencia, 2000). Some even debate whether compelling White schools to desegregate was the correct course of action (Balkin, 2001; Bell, 2004).

Examining the educational experiences of these racial and ethnic groups demonstrates that the good old days were not so good for a large segment of the American population. It also demonstrates that the mythic past to which some contemporary scholars allude did not exist. Assimilation as equality became the perennial carrot dangled in front of immigrants and outsiders who were encouraged to shed their cultural and linguistic heritage and to mimic Whiteness. If they did so wholly and without rancor, they were told by White reformers, they would be rewarded with the privileges of Whiteness, citizenship, and upward mobility. What assimilation actually meant, however, was the opportunity to occupy an inferior status in the American order. Even when groups attended schools created and controlled by Whites with a distinctly assimilative purpose, non-White groups were denied the fruits assimilation promised. To create an image of a past when people of color actively sought assimilation misses the nuances of the term in a historical context.

Similarly, to equate the battle to desegregate schools with a desire for assimilation is ahistorical. Contemporary conservative pundits have reduced the *Brown* decision to the desire for a color-blind society, twisted the decision into an argument against racial classification, and appropriated the language of the decision to position

race-conscious policies against meritocracy (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; Ravitch, 1983; Schlesinger, 1992; Steinberg, 1995; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). But people of color did not litigate, agitate, boycott, petition, and demonstrate for access to White schools merely so their children could sit next to Whites and, therefore, become White. Nor did they seek to forfeit their culture for the possibility to do so, although White reformers often hoped they would. They pursued desegregation as a manifestation of equality. When understood as such, the demand for high-quality *separate* schools, which is discussed in the next section, cannot be construed as anti-thetical or contradictory to the fight for desegregated schools.

FORTIFYING AND CREATING SEPARATE SCHOOLS

American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans did not sit idly by as they fought for desegregated schools but created liberatory experiences within segregated schools. Lomawaima (1994) details how American Indian boarding school pupils created a pan-Indian identity in defiance of White intentions to the contrary and used the confines of the boarding school to strengthen tribal identity rather than dissolve it. And McCarty (2002) chronicles how the Navajo transformed a federally supported school into an institution organized around kinship and community that mixed academics with Navajo language classes, cultural activities, and community economic development projects. Without denying the often horrid conditions of many segregated Black schools, Sowell (1974), Cecelski (1994), and Siddle Walker (1996) examine how certain Black schools provided students with an invigorating and nurturing environment in which their talents and interests were rewarded and in which they excelled academically. Similarly, countless historians have chronicled how Black colleges and universities, particularly the liberal arts colleges, included the notion of racial uplift in their mission statements and educated Black students to become race leaders (for instance, see J. D. Anderson, 1988).

James (1987), Pak (2002), Riley (2002), and Daniels (1988, 1999) examined the Japanese American experience in internment camps during World War II as a unique example with regard to the fortification of separate schools and the appropriation of education and schools in the pursuit of social justice. According to James (1987), when the War Relocation Authority issued a set of curricular and pedagogical guides that offered an experimental curriculum with nonacademic subjects and called for a child-centered pedagogical style, Japanese American parents and teachers successfully campaigned for a more rigorous curriculum and a teacher-centered pedagogy that would prepare students for a postsecondary education. With regard to students, many Nisei (second generation) experienced segregated schooling for the first time in the camp schools (Daniels, 1988). In such spaces, the children were able to shed their minority status and, according to Kitano (1969), all of the typical

high school activities—a yearbook, football, and basketball teams, cheerleaders, student body organizations, scholarship society—were available, and, for the first time, young Nisei were able to feel themselves in the majority, and to run things. They became student body leaders, athletic, political, and social heroes—roles usually reserved for Caucasians in the everyday world. (cited in Daniels, 1988, p. 232)

Historians universally laud these instances in which historical actors made the best of a segregated situation in the pre-*Brown* era. Where historians differ is in their interpretations of the worth of schools created by racial and ethnic groups for racial and ethnic fortification in the post-*Brown* era. One way to distill the debate is to examine the tension between *segregated* and *separate*. Some scholars draw a distinction between the two. Whites created segregated schools as a mechanism to keep the races apart in order to sustain the racial, political, social, and economic hierarchy. Segregated schools did not prepare students to compete, excel, or advance but were designed to keep the entire racial and ethnic group oppressed. Separate schools such as Japanese language schools (Hawkins, 1978; Tamura, 1993), Chinese language schools (Low, 1982; Morimoto, 1997; Wollenberg, 1976), Afrocentric schools (Asante, 1991a, 1991b; Banks, 1995; Shujaa, 1992), and Jewish day schools (Rauch, 1984), on the other hand, were created by racial and ethnic groups for racial and ethnic group fortification and uplift. These schools would be places in which students would be respected, supported, encouraged, and nourished. To other scholars, segregated and separate schools yield the same results: the death of the common school ideal and the rise of racially chauvinist agendas that precipitated the “disuniting of America” (Schlesinger, 1992; see also Bloom, 1987; D’Souza, 2001; Ravitch, 1990).

The debate in educational history mirrors a wider split in the historiography of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. Conventional scholars portray it as the beginning of the Black freedom movement (thereby giving credit to the federal government for igniting the struggle) and as the codification of the movement’s desire for desegregation (Fairclough, 2001; Lawson, 1998; Schlesinger, 1965; Weisbrot, 1990). Revisionists position the decision in a broader and longer freedom struggle that did not begin in 1954 and whose primary aim was not racial integration but political power and human dignity (Carson, 1995; A. D. Morris, 1984; Payne, 1998).

These interpretive frames for understanding *Brown’s* position in history have implications for how historians convey an understanding of racism and democracy to the American populous. In the conventional interpretation, legal channels are the most legitimate recourse for grievances, the federal government is a friend to aggrieved parties, and the United States is the Mecca of opportunity. Just be patient, these historians say, the democratic ideal is near. According to Schlesinger (1992),

Our democratic principles contemplate an open society founded on tolerance of differences and on mutual respect. In practice, America has been more open to some than to others. But it is more open to all today than it was yesterday and is likely to be even more open tomorrow than today. The steady movement of American life has been from exclusion to inclusion. (p. 134)

An essentialized and mischaracterized *Brown* decision plays a central role in this narrative and is treated as the judicial embodiment of all that is good with America.

If, on the other hand, we understand *Brown* from the vantage point of the revisionists, a different picture emerges: The decision represents a step toward equal opportunity, not merely a color-blind society, and political pressure, not moral suasion, motivates federal intervention. As Payne (1998) states,

Far from being the solution, American institutions have always played important roles in the creation and maintenance of racism. What happened in the movement was that civil rights activists were able to maneuver around those institutions to alleviate some of the system's worst features. (p. 99)

The movement toward a democratic ideal exists, these scholars believe, but it has moved at a glacial and fitful pace and has been motivated by oppressed groups, not the goodwill of the American government or general populous. The past is far from rosy, and the struggle is far from over.

So, too, do contemporary educational scholars use their discussions of educational history to tell a broader story about American progress, democracy, and the proper path to achieve social justice. Some, such as Orfield and Eaton (1996) and Kozol (2005), concur with *Brown* (1954) that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and argue that a continued battle for desegregation, rather than the creation of separate schools or entities, will guarantee students of color the highest quality education (see also Wilkins, 1969). Other scholars take the argument a step further by damning separate institutions as antithetical to the common school mission and the American credo, "e pluribus unum" (Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1991; Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1992). This latter set of scholars recognizes that students of color do not yet achieve educational outcomes equal to Whites, but they hold out the hope that racial categorization will run its course in the not so distant future (see *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Separate schools were unfortunate necessities in the pre-*Brown* era, these scholars believe, but they are no longer appropriate in the contemporary context.

Still other scholars more closely match Du Bois's (1935) interpretation of desegregated schools and his argument in favor of fortifying separate schools (see also Woodson, 1919/1968). According to Du Bois (1935), "there are many public school systems in the North where Negroes are admitted and tolerated, but they are not educated; they are crucified" (p. 329). Instead, Du Bois saw hope that

a separate Negro school, where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be black in the year of salvation 1935, is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to by ignorant social climbers, whose sole claim to superiority is ability to kick 'niggers' when they are down. (p. 335)

He cautioned that separate schools were a temporary solution, held out hope for school desegregation, and recognized that White racists would construe his support for separate schools as support for segregated schools. But, in his view, the damage done to Black students in the meanwhile forced him to support separate schools for Black youth (Du Bois, 1929, 1935). Du Bois was out of step with several of his contemporaries (Maskin, 1973; Pickins, 1915/1993), but for him, as "[f]or a number of Negro leaders, the prime question was not whether the Negro needed a good education, but whether or not he was willing to trust the white man to give it to him" (Maskin, 1973, p. 32).

Multicultural Education

The debate over multicultural education provides an example of how educational history is appropriated for contemporary purposes.⁷ Both those who support it and those who oppose it couch their arguments in the language of democracy and equality, though they disagree on how best to achieve the *unum* out of the *pluribus*. Those who oppose multicultural education describe it as a racially and ethnically based reform that derailed the communal and relentless pursuit of assimilation and a common culture that had been present in education since the common schools of the early 1800s. As one of the most vocal critics, Ravitch (1990) laments, “Alas, these painstaking efforts to expand the understanding of American culture into a richer and more varied tapestry have taken a new turn, and not for the better” (p. 340).

Including American Indian, Mexican American, Chinese American, Japanese American, and African American information in classes is not inherently bad, according to these critics, but their inclusion should not be used to highlight the differences between groups. Instead, Ravitch (1990) explains, the point

is to demonstrate that neither race nor gender is an obstacle to high achievement. They teach all children that everyone, regardless of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or family origin, can achieve self-fulfillment, honor, and dignity in society if they aim high and work hard (p. 340).

Such an assimilationist perspective does not allow for what she calls “an ethnocentric curriculum to raise the self-esteem and academic achievement of children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds” because, in her words, it

implies that those who are neither white nor European are alienated from American culture by virtue of their race or ethnicity; it implies that the only culture they do belong to or can ever belong to is the culture of their ancestors, even if their families have lived in this country for generations. (pp. 340, 341)

To Ravitch and others, a racially and ethnically based curriculum is a politically motivated school reform that hinders group advancement by marking the group as an entity separate from the rest of America and by undereducating them in the name of cultural relevance (Glazer, 1997; Hacker, 1992; Hollinger, 1995; Ravitch, 1974; Schlesinger, 1992).

These same critics also oppose the ethnic studies programs that emerged on college campuses during the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Bloom (1987), the era was an “unmitigated disaster” that was “the source of the collapse of the entire educational structure” (pp. 320, 321). Critics reserve special antipathy for the diversification of the curriculum. Like the attack on multiculturalism, the opposition to a diversified canon is based on an assimilationist framework that celebrates common values and a “unity of knowledge” as the pathway to social justice (Bloom, 1987, p. 320). These critics make no apologies for the White male-dominated curriculum. “It may be too bad that dead white European males have played so large a role in shaping our culture,” Schlesinger (1992) states, “but that’s the way it is. One

cannot erase history. These humdrum facts, and not some dastardly imperialist conspiracy, explain the Eurocentric slant in American schools” (p. 128). Focusing on group rights rather than individual rights flies in the face of democratic principles and the American Dream, which “envisages a nation composed of individuals making their own choices and accountable to themselves, not a nation based on inviolable ethnic communities” (p. 142). Sadly, these critics say, the focus on ethnicity and race has created a segregated society and turned education from an intellectual into a political endeavor (Bloom, 1987; D’Souza, 1991; Hirsch, 1988; Ravitch, 1983, 1990; Schlesinger, 1992).

Those who support multicultural education, ethnic studies, and a diversified canon argue that in the words of Asante (1991a), “There is no common American culture as is claimed by the defenders of the status quo. There is a hegemonic culture to be sure, pushed as if it were a common culture” (p. 270). Such a Eurocentric curriculum harms *all* students by providing a narrow and one-dimensional lens with which to understand themselves and the world. Rather than ignoring difference or appealing to a common (White) culture, these theorists argue that attention to diversity “enriches a society by providing all citizens with more opportunities to experience other cultures and thus to become more fulfilled as human beings” (Banks, 1999, p. 1). Such curricula do not exacerbate cleavages in American society because the idea of a common culture and a common identity is merely a myth. Instead,

Multicultural education is designed to help unify a deeply divided nation rather than to divide a highly cohesive one. Multicultural education supports the notion of *e pluribus unum*. . . . The multiculturalists and the Western traditionalists, however, often differ about how the *unum* can best be achieved. Traditionally, the larger U.S. society as well as the schools have tried to create the *unum* by assimilating students from diverse racial and ethnic groups into a mythical Anglo American culture that required them to experience a process of self-alienation and harsh assimilation. However, even when students of color became culturally assimilated, they were often structurally excluded from mainstream institutions. Multicultural educators view *e pluribus unum* as the appropriate national goal but believe that the *unum* must be negotiated, discussed, and restructured to reflect the nation’s ethnic and cultural diversity. The reformulation of the *unum* must be a process and must involve the participation by diverse groups within the nation, such as people of color, women, straights, gays, the powerful, the powerless, the young, and the old. The reformulation of the *unum* must also involve power sharing and participation by people from many different cultural communities. (Banks, 1999, p. 8)

Much like the historical actors who advocated for increased access to the privileges of Whiteness, these scholars advocate a flattening of the existing social, economic, and political hierarchy in a way that racial and ethnic minorities can participate equally (Asante, 1991a, 1991b; Banks, 1995, 1999; Gay, 2000; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Sleeter, 1996; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Assimilation as becoming White, to these scholars, is neither necessary nor profitable. Here, social justice is not realized in an undifferentiated American populous but in an America that truly allows racial and ethnic minorities the ability to prosper without having to forfeit their cultural and linguistic identities.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Theorists, politicians, and the public also debate how social justice is best achieved for non-English-speaking students. Although many non-White students participate in bilingual education,⁸ most of the literature has focused on the debate with regard to Spanish-speaking students. Crawford (1999, 2000, 2004), Delgado Bernal (1999), San Miguel (1987, 1996), and Trueba (1974) categorize the poles in the debate as assimilationist and pluralist, categories that directly mirror the multicultural debate. For assimilationists, social justice is achieved by following mandates that restrict bilingual instruction to as few years as possible so that children can be mainstreamed in English-only classrooms as soon as possible. According to this line of reasoning, keeping English-speaking and non-English-speaking students in separate classrooms perpetuates social divisions, underequips non-English-speaking students to compete academically, and denies them the opportunity “to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement” (California Proposition 227, 1998; see also Hayakawa, 1985). Pluralists, on the other hand, believe social justice is achieved when bilingual instruction is provided throughout a student’s primary and secondary education. This group argues that bilingual classrooms bolster academic progress, equip students to compete in a globalized economy, and provide an opportunity “to build up personal pride, self-identity, and a more meaningful and sensitive school system that recognizes the reality of our pluralistic American society” (Trueba, 1974, p. 8; see also Delgado Bernal, 1999).

Delgado Bernal (1999) cautions that the categories of assimilationist and pluralist cannot be easily mapped onto White and non-White/non-English-speaking groups.⁹ Instead, the issue of bilingual education split the Latino community, particularly during the civil rights era. According to Trueba (1974), many Latinos who identified as White wanted no part of the compensatory actions of the federal and local governments mandated by the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) decision and fought to mainstream non-English-speaking students, whereas other Latinos opposed mainstreaming for fear it would eliminate the bilingual and bicultural programs established in their schools. According to Garcia (1989) and San Miguel (1996), the split was also a generational one, with older Mexican American middle-class organizations agitating for inclusion and younger Mexican Americans imbued with the social reform spirit of the late 1960s and early 1970s seeking community control and separate bilingual programs to achieve equal educational opportunities and social justice for past discriminatory actions and institutions.

The concept of social justice is further complicated by the tension between the right to a bilingual education in separate schools and classrooms (as mandated in *Lau*) and desegregation (as mandated in *Brown*). Although Mexican Americans of earlier generations used their status as “White” to argue for desegregation, litigation in the late 1960s and early 1970s hinged on Mexican Americans as a protected ethnic minority group who had been denied their 14th amendment rights by being forced into segregated schools (*Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*,

1970; *Keyes v. School District Number 1*, 1973). The decision meant school districts had to create desegregation programs that provided Mexican Americans and African Americans access to White schools. Many Mexican Americans, however, “were suspicious of desegregation efforts that might disperse Chicana/o students without considering their need for bilingual education. Parents and policymakers argued that bilingual education and desegregation might not be fully compatible” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 90; see also Donato, Menchaca, & Valencia, 1991).

Likewise, Wollenberg (1976), Low (1982), and Kirp (1982) have documented how the Chinese American community in San Francisco revolted against a 1971 desegregation order issued on behalf of African American students in monolithically Black schools. The Chinese American parents argued that schools outside of Chinatown were not equipped to teach non-English-speaking students and were insensitive to their needs. Rather than follow the order and allow their children to be bussed out of the local area, parents created “freedom schools” as a temporary measure. In these cases, fortifying separate schooling and classroom experiences conflicted not only with demands to desegregate schools but with the aims of African Americans seeking social justice through access to the resources at White schools. As in the pre-*Brown* era, the debate over what was best for a particular community sometimes pitted racial and ethnic groups against one another.

The argument for desegregation, on one hand, and the creation and fortification of separate schools and multicultural and/or bilingual education, on the other, are not polar opposites when both are understood as strategies to achieve the best chance at social justice in education. Examining litigation like *Tape v. Hurley* (1885), *Aoki v. Deane* (1907), *Piper v. Big Pine* (1924), *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as a desire for physical desegregation, assimilation, and the manifestation of the “clear and unambiguous goal . . . [of making] America a color-blind society” (Ravitch, 1983, p. 114) limits and distorts the reasons the suits were brought by the different communities. Rather, both desegregation and the creation and fortification of separate schools and culturally and linguistically appropriate schooling experiences were a response to White supremacy as each group sought racial and ethnic uplift and a flattening of the racial and ethnic hierarchy. In short, these groups demanded and continue to demand a high-quality education, however that could happen. Du Bois (1935) distilled the issue for African Americans, in particular, but his words have resonance for American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, and Japanese Americans seeking social justice: “The Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education” (p. 335).

CONCLUSION

Historians have a role to play in the contemporary debate over the definition of social justice in education. First, they can deepen and inform the discussion, particularly because those on both sides of the issue have not paid enough attention to the historical evidence and rich historical sources that can add much needed perspective on

how and the end to which people of color have used education and schooling for social justice aims. Those in the assimilationist/individualist camp are ahistorical in their portrayal of a rosy past, a unified American populous, and a consensus on the worth of subtractive assimilation. “Historical error” may be “a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” (Renan, 1990, p. 11, cited in Franke, 2000, p. 1681), but it is destructive, dishonest, and ultimately divisive. Those in the cultural integrity/collectivist camp often subscribe to what Hom and Yamamoto (2000) call “a nice two step dance” in which they “first, dig historically to find out ‘what really happened,’ and second, describe how those ‘facts’ show a violation of established rights norms” (p. 1764). Similarly, Donato and Lazerson (2000) caution against the perpetuation of deterministic history in which there is immediate connection between the past and the present arising from an unbroken chain of prior events (see also Franke, 2000). An examination of history provides a more nuanced and complicated story than either side allows.

Second, there are policy lessons that can be drawn from educational history. Policymakers have a tendency to marshal historical perspectives to fortify their own positions. Historians act similarly, but with wider implications in the policy arena. According to Donato and Lazerson (2000),

When the historical evidence is reduced to simplistic conclusions, the existence of multiple and often competing or contradictory interpretations of historical data—the very stuff of sophisticated historical scholarship—gets converted into policymakers choosing the history that best suits their goals. (p. 9)

The duty of educational historians, then, is

to thrust their stories into the policy arena for if they do not, the stories that become the common view will be told by others who often have little stake in the integrity of historical scholarship. Or, even worse, their stories will go unnoticed altogether. (Donato & Lazerson, 2000, p. 10)

Third, historians have a duty to enter the battle over our national collective memory more forcefully. As shapers of the way we view the past, historians must work to fill the void of research on American Indians, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese American, and African Americans in history and education. For instance, a few studies examine how teachers and administrators of color understood social justice and translated it into a classroom and schooling experience (Fultz, 1995; Gere, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005; V. G. Morris & Morris, 2002; Perkins, 1987; Siddle Walker, 1996; Wilson & Seagall, 2001), but a fuller picture of their position in desegregated, segregated, and separate schools can illuminate how liberatory ideology was and was not translated into practice. Also, cross-ethnic or cross-racial examinations can deepen the current literature on social justice in education (Vaca, 2004). These groups were acutely aware of each other, as evidenced in the tension between African Americans, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, and Japanese Americans at different points in history. What does it mean when one group seeks social justice through desegregated and, therefore, higher quality schooling, by positioning itself against another group? What does it mean when one group argues that

desegregation harms students whereas another group believes it is the only option for equal opportunity? Does it matter that a group, while fighting for its rights (or social justice), argues for those rights on the basis of not wanting to integrate with other groups? By investigating these and other questions, historical scholarship can provide nuance to the conversation regarding how to achieve social justice for all American students.

Last, historical scholarship can provide a more thorough and grounded understanding of how racial and ethnic groups sought to shape their own futures, how they defined social justice for themselves, and how their actions influenced American schooling writ large. Ignoring such evidence leads to several assumptions that dog these racial and ethnic groups in the current context. For instance, African Americans are portrayed as accepting their own fates, anti-intellectual, and not interested in education (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 1978, 2003). Asians are considered a model minority pursuing assimilation and Whiteness (Chang, 2001; Gotanda, 2001; Kim, 2001). And attempts to use the schools to maintain cultural integrity are considered anti-American (Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1991; Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1992). A close examination of the early educational experiences and demands of different racial and ethnic groups, however, demonstrates that they pursued a high-quality education for the same reasons Horace Mann (1848) marketed the common school: "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origins, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the great balance wheel of the social machinery" (p. 87). These groups' cumulative beliefs in learning and self-improvement as a means to collective dignity and advancement persist in the present. Anchoring an understanding of them in the past can offer insight into current disputes regarding the definition and delivery of social justice in education.

NOTES

¹ The purpose of this chapter is not to position Whites against non-Whites in the assimilation/cultural integrity framework. White historical actors and historians fit in both camps as do historical actors and historians of color.

² Their small numbers (most had died from war, famine, or disease) also made the concept of assimilation through whitening American Indians less risky for Whites (Adams, 1995; Ahern, 1976; Hoxie, 1984).

³ Menchaca (1999) discusses this difference as rooted in economic class with poor, darker Mexicans in California and Texas not gaining the same "White" status as wealthy and light-skinned Mexicans in New Mexico. According to her, the Treaty marked the beginning of the racialization of the Mexican population by giving full citizenship to Mexicans who were considered White and ascribing inferior legal status to people of color based on race (p. 19).

⁴ Deyhle and Swisher (1997) also examine how Indians placed in White schools experienced alienation and substandard education.

⁵ Beck (1975) argues that the Chinese did not want to attend African American schools because of the negative treatment they received in the Black press.

⁶ Blacks, like other groups, filed several legal challenges to segregation. They include (but are not limited to) *Roberts v. The City of Boston*, 5 Cushing 209 (1850); *Cumming v. County Board of Education*, 175 U.S. 528 (1899); *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 305 U.S. 337

(1938); *Sipuel v. University of Oklahoma*, 332 U.S. 631 (1948); and *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950). In the California case *Ward v. Flood*, the State Supreme Court upheld the segregation of Black students, but most districts enrolled Black students rather than fund two separate school systems (*Ward v. Flood*, 48 Cal. 36 [1872]).

⁷ Although multicultural education advocates argue for a diversified curriculum and pedagogy based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability, our focus will remain on its uses for racial and ethnic groups.

⁸ For instance, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the case that defined bilingual education as a civil rights issue, was brought on behalf of Mandarin Chinese-speaking pupils.

⁹ Trueba (1974) and Roos (1978) portray the Mexican American community as united in its support for bilingual education.

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