SEGREGATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND URBAN EDUCATION:

A HISTORY OF ATTAINING RACIAL EQUITY IN THE

HICKMAN MILLS C-1 SCHOOL DISTRICT

A DISSERTATION IN
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by
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SEGREGATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND URBAN EDUCATION:

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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2023

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the history of racial segregation in Kansas City, Missouri, leading to the creation of the Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Policy. The study's six chapters present an analysis of the history of education and schooling in the greater Kansas City metropolitan community from 1902 to 2014; the political, social, and economic climate in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District and community; and the history of the development and implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District's racial equity policy from 2015 to 2018.

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, research questions, methodology, study participants, and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the history of school segregation and racial segregation in Kansas City schools and communities. Chapter 3 explores how *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* impacted Kansas City schools and communities, the district's response, and outcomes for the twenty-first century. Chapter 4 focuses on the Hickman Mills C-1 school consolidation, community growth and expansion struggles, and its shift from a suburban to an urban school district. Chapter 5 introduces the

development and implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy and includes an extensive exploration of the racial equity professional learning and culturally responsive leadership. Finally, Chapter 6 highlights the significance of the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy and work, reinforces the need to address patterns of disciplinary disparities that persist in education, and provides an offering of hope reflected in opportunities for change.

This study adds to an expanding scholarship on race, disparities, and equity in school communities while exploring how schools can address racial inequities and eliminate racial achievement disparities through policy and practice. This study demonstrates how Hickman Mills C-1 eventually embraced its urban school status and focused its efforts on eliminating racial disparities and the racial achievement gap.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, Social

Work and Psychological Sciences, have examined a dissertation proposal titled "Segregation,

Transformation, and Urban Education: A History of Attaining Racial Equity in the Hickman

Mills C-1 School District," presented by LaTanya C. Franklin, candidate for the Doctor of

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To shape God
With wisdom and forethought
To benefit your world,
Your people,
Your life,
Consider consequences,
Minimize harm,
Ask questions,
Seek answers,
Learn,
Teach.[1]
— Octavia Butler

This work is dedicated to my mother, whose infinite love and guidance helped me become the woman I am today. It is my joy to be her daughter. To my late aunt, uncle, and cousin, who left this earth way too soon, I carry their nurturing spirit with me through every journey and find comfort in knowing they were with me through this one. And to the ancestors who paved a path for me, I hope you are proud.

To the beautiful village of women who nurtured me, believed in me, elevated me, poured into me, challenged me, and celebrated me, I am thankful. Linda Williams, Lisa Walker, Dr. Yolanda Cargile, Kelli Washington, and Renna Gordon, I am especially grateful that our paths have crossed, and we are now forever connected. To my extended tribe of friends, colleagues, and peers who offered suggestions, strategies, and a listening ear, every small contribution had a significant impact.

To each individual who willingly lent their voices and experiences to this project, thank you for being a part of this critically important story about Hickman Mills C-1, race,

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[1] Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Talents* (New York: Warner Books, 2000).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> For too long, powerful people have expected the people they have
> mistreated and marginalized to sacrifice themselves to make things whole.
> The burden of working for racial justice is laid on the very people bearing
> the brunt of the injustice, and not the powerful people who maintain it. I say
> to you: I refuse.[1]   —Nikole Hannah-Jones

Figure 1.1. Six-year-old Ruby Bridges is protected by U.S. deputy marshals as she ends her school day at the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in November 1960. She was the first African American student to attend an all-white elementary school in the South. Photo by the Associated Press.

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[1] "Nikole Hannah-Jones Issues Statement on Decision to Decline Tenure Offer at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and to Accept Knight Chair Appointment at Howard University," NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, July 6, 2021, https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/nikole-hannah-jones-issues-statement-on-decision-to-decline-tenure-offer-at-university-of-north-carolina-chapel-hill-and-to-accept-knight-chair-appointment-at-howard-university/.

Since 1850, when the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were permissible under the state's constitution, racial inequality and injustice have permeated the U.S. educational system. Although racial segregation in public education has been illegal for sixty-seven years in the United States, surprisingly, American public schools remain largely separate and unequal, with profound consequence for students, especially students of color.[2] In Kansas City, segregated schools are commonplace and are generally divided by race and income. Although the city's schools were formally segregated until 1955, what followed was limited desegregation, massive white flight, and eventual resegregation.

One major byproduct of the segregation that permeated the Kansas City School District was the establishment of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District (HMC-1). Having the historical distinction of being the first consolidated school district in Missouri, Hickman Mills C-1 also had its own transformation journey from being an all-white school system to becoming a district that was predominately Black. While these events of racial segregation are not unique to Kansas City, exploring the local history and the impact of choices that have shaped my hometown has been eye-opening. In this study I examine the complex racial history of schooling and education in greater Kansas City, the consolidation and transformation of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District, and the subsequent development and implementation of the district's racial equity policy.

While the history of Hickman Mills C-1's transformation from a suburban district to an urban district is well documented, this study captures both the historic transformation of

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[2] Keith Meatto, "Still Separate, Still Unequal: Teaching about School Segregation and Educational Inequality," *New York Times*, May 2, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/02/learning/lesson-plans/still-separate-still-unequal-teaching-about-school-segregation-and-educational-inequality.html.

the district and the district's responsive efforts towards achieving racial equity. Specifically, the study examines the development and implementation of the district's racial equity policy designed to help serve its predominately Black demographic of families and students. This historical perspective of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District is holistic, sharing events relevant to the past, present, and future. The issue of race divided the community then and continues to divide much of our nation today.

Telling this story was invigorating and cathartic. Prior to working in the Hickman Mills School C-1 District, I knew very little about the district, and now I am capturing its significance. Over the years, I heard various stories about the district's transformation from suburban to urban, emphasizing the district's decline marked by low academic achievement, discipline concerns, and mounting community challenges that once were non-existent. Rather than feeling deterred, I was energized and eager to change that narrative. My tenure in Hickman Mills C-1 School District was pivotal to my personal and professional development. There were critical "firsts" that I may never experience again in the workplace. I was able to cultivate my own understanding of race and talk about race with others. Displaying emotion at work was encouraged, multiple perspectives were shared, and conversations about race and gender were learning opportunities. I was educated on systemic racism, the racial achievement gap, and had my race and gender not only acknowledged but more significantly, affirmed. As a Black woman, I have encountered isolation, a sense of not belonging, not being "seen" or "heard." Having the tools and the knowledge to address anti-Black or racist behaviors was essential. I was proud to be a part of an organization that was committed to addressing the issue of race in all areas of the institution. The journey to attain

racial equity in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District is a story that is less known but is imperative to share.

As I explore the history of education and the issue of race in Kansas City and Hickman Mills C-1, I am mindful and highly concerned about race relations in our society. As a nation, we are still awaiting the true racial reckoning that, on most days, seems unfathomable and hopelessly unattainable. The killing of teen Trayvon Martin, the suspicious death of Sandra Bland while in police custody, the public and merciless murder of George Floyd, the shooting deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Jacob Blake, and countless others, the insurrection of 2021, and similar horrific events are a consequence of a larger systemic issue. A journal article led by Stanford psychologist Steven O. Roberts articulates the depth to which race impacts the United States.

> Racism is a system of advantage based on race. It is a hierarchy. It is a pandemic. Racism is so deeply embedded within U.S. minds and U.S. society that it is virtually impossible to escape.[3]

The nation's incessant denial of systemic racism contributes to its unrelenting viability and is the reason the journey towards racial equity remains a painful, uphill climb. What affects the larger society similarly impacts local communities, neighborhoods, and school systems. As this historical research unveils, Kansas City's long history of racism permeated every facet of its community.

Research Questions

There are rigorous procedures one must observe in the framing of historical questions, in the selection and interpretation of sources, and in the presentation of one's

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[3] Steven Roberts and Michael Rizzo, "The Psychology of American Racism," OSF Preprints, June 1, 2020, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/w2h73.

findings.[4] The guiding research questions hopefully uncover different and new information. The following research questions provided the context and background for why the racial equity policy was needed and the history of its development and implementation.

- What is the history of education and schooling in the greater KC metropolitan community from 1902 to 2014?

- What is the history of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District? What was the political, social, and economic climate in the region?

- What is the history of the development and implementation of the racial equity policy from 2015 to 2018?

In this research, I discuss how the first consolidated school district in Missouri, Hickman Mills C-1 School District (HMC-1), came to be and the climate that contributed to its development and transformation. Hickman Mills C-1 has a rich and complex history that has been captured in several small publications and a book entitled *The Journey to Our Future*: *The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002*.[5] These resources were utilized to tell this part of the journey. I explore the major events that helped transform the education system in greater Kansas City from 1902 to 1954 and from 1955 to 2018. I document the development and implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy, including related board documents, professional development resources, agendas, and articles. Important demographic, discipline, and student achievement data provide insight into the status of the district at the time the racial equity policy was initiated. In addition, six

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[4]Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018).

[5] Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002),

identified narrators give their personal and professional insights about the racial equity work in the district.

Methodology

This historical research explores the history of education and schooling in greater Kansas City, which led to the development and implementation of the racial equity policy in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District in 2015. Schrag suggests that history is not about the past but rather about people; history is the study of people and the choices they made:

- Ask not what happened. Ask what choices people made.

- Answer questions by telling stories.

- Understand your work as part of an ongoing search for knowledge that began before you and will continue after you.[6]

I illuminate the choices that were made through the analysis of archival documents, including board minutes reflecting the approval of the racial equity policy, related notes, and a discussion with a sitting board member who approved the racial equity policy. The Missouri Valley Special Collections located in the Central Branch of the Kansas City Public Library provided primary documents regarding the history of public education in Kansas City. Individual stories and recollections are also utilized to understand the experiences of community members and staff during specific events that shaped the educational landscape in Kansas City and the Hickman Mills C-1 School District.

Oral history is utilized to tell the story of Hickman Mills C-1 and the implementation of its racial equity policy. Oral history consists of two main approaches: dialogue with elite

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[6] Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 9.

figures—the same kinds of people whose lives we might expect to be documented in archives and publications—and people whose lives are generally not documented, or whose documents are not preserved.[7] Oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded conversations. Oral histories generally consist of a well-prepared questioning session and recordings of the exchange in audio or video format.[8] In this study, the individual perspectives personalize and humanize the journey while serving as a balance to the traditional documentation utilized.

This historical research reflects the accounts of several individuals who experienced the demographic shift in the Hickman Mills community or school district and those who engaged in the racial equity work between 2015 and 2018. Fundamental rules and principles apply to all types of oral history conversations: do your homework; be prepared; construct meaningful but open-ended questions; do not interrupt responses; follow up on what you have heard; know your equipment thoroughly; promptly process your recordings; and always keep in mind the practice and ethics of interviewing.[9]

Individual Perspectives

I engaged in conversations with a diverse group of individuals to intentionally capture each person's personal and professional experiences and perspectives. Sharing everyone's self-identified race and gender illuminated commonalities and differences across race and gender lines and how experiences may be compounded both positively and negatively by the intersection of race and gender.

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[7] Schrag, *The Princeton Guide,* 184.

[8] Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19.

[9] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 83–4.

Cheryl Farris, who identifies as a white female, has lived in the Hickman Mills community during its expansion and change. She has worked in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District during its transformative years and has been a long-time resident of south Kansas City. Mrs. Farris is very active in the community and in the district and offered a perspective as a community stakeholder and former staff member.

Another perspective referenced is that of a sitting board member who voted to approve the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy. Former board member Eric Lowe, who identifies as a Black male, served as the vice president of the Hickman Mills C-1 Board of Education during the 2014–2015 school year, when the racial equity policy was implemented. In addition to his perspective as a board member, Mr. Lowe was also one of few Black males outside of the Superintendent who participated in the racial equity work and trainings. It is also important to note that while there were several Black males serving in leadership roles in the district who were expected to lead racial equity work, their willingness and individual commitment to do so was noticeably inconsistent.

The next group of individuals are current and former district staff members who engaged in the racial equity work in various capacities. Casey Klapmeyer, who identifies as a white male, served as a district level administrator and led various racial equity professional development sessions for staff in the district. Mr. Klapmeyer has extensive knowledge of the racial equity work and was willing to share his racialized perspective.

The following women worked in the district for over ten years and had a history with the district before and during the implementation of the racial equity policy. The women seemed receptive to sharing their experiences and wanted their voices included. Kelli

Washington, who identifies as a Black female, worked in the school district when the racial equity policy was implemented and was responsible for leading racial equity training district-wide. Connie Moore, building level administrator, identifies as a white female and led racial work at the building level upon implementation of the racial equity policy. Mrs. Moore was one of the white administrators invited to lead racial equity trainings, which required her to complete a series of sessions and coursework to receive an "affiliate" certification. Her perspective as a building level administrator provides insight into the implementation of racial equity work in schools and the impact on staff and students. The purpose of the racial equity work was to focus on educating district and building leaders as well as teachers to help them better educate students of color.

Finally, I engaged Dr. Yolanda Cargile, who served as the Hickman Mills C-1 superintendent from 2017 to 2020. Dr. Cargile, who identifies as a Black female, decided to continue with the racial equity work and follow the board-adopted policy during her three-year tenure as superintendent. I attempted to capture her unique experiences with the racial equity work as a Black woman in leadership and as the professional responsible for continuing the work initiated by the previous superintendent.

In addition to these accounts, I explored a vast array of books, articles, and newspaper clippings related to the history of education in Kansas City and Hickman Mills C-1. I discovered that the scholarship surrounding the history of desegregation, boundary changes, redlining, and the racial divide in Kansas City, Missouri is expansive and very pertinent. I was able to access both digital and print resources from the Kansas City Public Library's Missouri Valley Collection that were relevant and added value to this story. Historical

information and documents related to Hickman Mills C-1 were also available in a book

solely about the district, *The Journey to our Future* by Jami Parkison. Developed as a part of

the Centennial Celebration Project, the book tells the extensive and compelling history of the

Hickman Mills C-1 School District from 1902 to 2002. I examined Hickman Mills C-1

school board minutes and agendas between 2014 and 2018, when the racial equity policy was

being developed. Lastly, agendas, literature, and other artifacts from the racial equity

professional developments sessions were also explored.

Ethical Considerations

For the purpose of this study, I acknowledge my race and gender, my role as a district

level administrator in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District, and my beliefs about racial

equity in schools could engender potential bias. According to the American Historical

Association, "Professional integrity in the practice of history requires awareness of one's

own biases and a readiness to follow sound method and analysis wherever they may lead."[10] I

anticipated my role as a district administrator in Hickman Mills C-1 could influence

responses, but the reflections included appear to be open and honest accounts of the racial

equity work in the district as each person encountered it.

I am mindful that my personal and professional influence in the district, relationships

with staff, and my support of the racial equity work could have been challenging to those

who were giving their perspectives, especially if they ran counter to my own interpretations. I

remained cognizant and receptive to this possibility and worked to counter any impact by

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[10] "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct," American Historical Association, updated 2023, https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct.

ensuring each participant felt comfortable enough to speak freely. I relied upon specific historical events, photos, and other artifacts to elicit authentic thoughts, recollections, and experiences.

Regulations and guidelines concerning the use of human research participants in the U.S. and UMKC's Institutional Board of Review guided my actions related to my research study. The Belmont Report provides a detailed account of the mandate for review of research involving human research participants.[11] Regulations and guidelines concerning the use of human research participants in the U.S. are based on these fundamental components: respect for persons—participants must understand and voluntarily agree to participate once the research goals have been clearly articulated; benefice—the researcher has a responsibility to consider all risks associated with participation and seek to minimize any harm while maximizing any benefits that may occur as a result of participation; and justice—the researcher should determine participants based on a set of fair procedures and outcomes rather than convenience.[12]

The purpose of this study is to explore the history of how and why the Hickman Mills C-1 School District was created and its transition from suburban to urban, provide a historical record of specific personal events and experiences related to the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy, and to provide a venue for people associated with the development and implementation of the policy to tell their stories. There is no intent to draw conclusions or generalize findings.

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[11] "Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research," National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, Office for Human Research Protections, April 18, 1979, https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report.
[12] "Belmont Report."

In compliance with UMKC's Institutional Board of Review, I obtained written consent from participants to signify their willingness to participate in the study and knowledge of the research purpose, procedures, goals, and risks. Additionally, their participation was strictly voluntary and could be retracted at any time. The ethical considerations of participants and their involvement included an assurance of privacy and confidentiality and an effort to develop positive relationships to foster trust and confidence as it related to the research. All documents have been stored properly, meeting required security and confidentiality measures.

CHAPTER 2

NOT IN MY BACKYARD: RACIAL SEGREGATION, PUBLIC SCHOOL

EXPANSION, AND WHITE FLIGHT IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, 1900–1954

> Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5000
> years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental. We must insist
> upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them
> with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have
> a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have
> thought it might be! [1]   —W.E.B DuBois

Separate But Equal

Figure 2.1. Artwork by E. B. Lewis from the picture book, Susan E. Goodman, *The First Step: How One Girl Put Segregation on Trial* (New York, Bloomsbury USA Children, 2016). The story is about five-year-old African American girl Sarah Roberts, who was forced to walk past five white schools to attend the poor and densely crowded all-Black Abiel Smith School on Boston's Beacon Hill. Photo courtesy of Zinn Education Project.

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[1] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Freedom to Learn." In *W.E.B. Dubois Speaks*, ed. P. S Foner (New York: Pathfinder, 1970). Original work published 1949.

The fight for equitable access to education has been an arduous and tenacious battle for African Americans since the nineteenth century. The stories of persistence and acts of resilience exhibited by African Americans to attain basic rights are as much heart-wrenching as they are extraordinary. These unrelenting struggles, which continue today, are a testament to the power of racism and systemic racism. Racism is defined as harmful or unfair things that people say, do, or think based on the belief that their own race makes them more intelligent, good, and moral than people of other races. Systemic racism comprises policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race.[2] Although slavery was abolished in Massachusetts by the late 1700s and Boston schools were not segregated, African Americans felt they were at a disadvantage and that white teachers and students in the integrated schools harassed and mistreated their children.[3] Parents petitioned for segregated schools for their children but were denied by the state legislature. Subsequently, the first segregated school for African American children was established in 1798, but by 1840, there was growing concern about the prejudice fostered by separate schools. African American parents expressed resentment because they were taxed to support schools their children were not allowed to attend. They began petitions to close the segregated schools in 1845, 1846, 1847, and 1848 without success.[4]

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[2] Cambridge Dictionary, s.v., "Racism," accessed March 20, 2023, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/racism.

[3] "Prelude to Brown-1849: Roberts v. The City of Boston," The Brown Foundation, brownvboard.org/content/prelude-brown-1849-roberts-v-city-boston.

[4] "Prelude to Brown-1849."

In 1848, Benjamin Roberts, a Black local printer, applied to the Boston Primary

School Committee to have his daughter, five-year-old Sarah Roberts, attend a school close to

their house, but the school educated only white children. The Committee denied his request

four times, citing that Sarah could attend the local school for Black children instead.

Undoubtedly frustrated by the fact that Sarah had to pass five schools for white children on

her walk to the Abiel Smith School, the closest school for Black children, Roberts entered

Sarah into the school closest to their house (see Figure 2.1). After the school ejected her,

Benjamin Roberts filed a suit against the city. *Roberts v. City of Boston* was one of the

earliest court cases seeking to end racial discrimination in Boston public schools. In 1849,

Charles Sumner and Robert Morris, one of the first Black lawyers in United States,

represented Sarah Roberts, arguing that Massachusetts law guaranteed equal education

regardless of race and that requiring Black children to attend separate schools was

unconstitutional (see Figure 2.2).[5]

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[5] Marilyn Morgan, "Divided Schools and Neighborhoods: Students Explore De Facto Segregation in Boston," Archives and Public History at UMass Boston, February 11, 2017, https://www.archivespublichistory.org/?tag=roberts-v-city-of-boston.
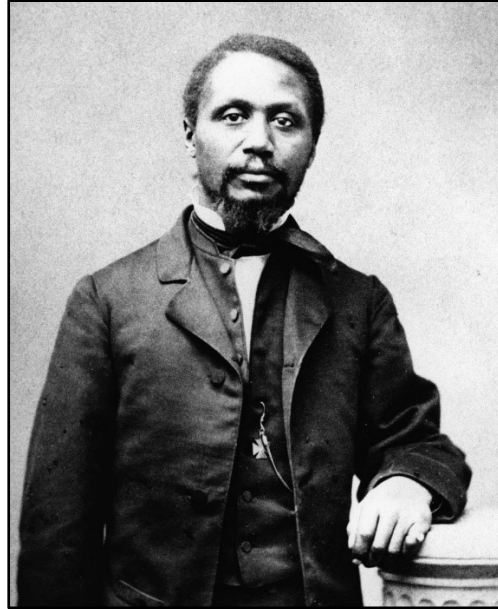
Figure 2.2. A pillar in the legal community, Robert Morris (1823–1882) took on the Roberts case when he was only 25 years old. Social Law Library, Boston.

In April 1850, Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw decided in favor of the Boston Board and concluded that the Boston Primary School Committee had the power to designate schools for children to attend, and he even supported the notion of school segregation:

> The committee … have come to the conclusion, that the good of both classes of school will be best promoted, by maintaining the separate primary schools for colored and for white children, and we can perceive no ground to doubt, that this is the honest result of their experience and judgement.[6]

This monumental decision provided precedent to the "separate but equal" argument seen in later legal cases, most notably *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which helped solidify Jim Crow segregation throughout the country. It would take another 58 years, until May 17, 1954, for the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn *Plessy* and unanimously rule in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. This tremendous victory

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[6] Sarah C. Roberts vs. The City of Boston 59 Mass. 198, 5 Cush. 198 (1849).

was led by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorney Thurgood Marshall, who also became the first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice.

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation symbolically established a national intent to eradicate slavery in the United States. Decades of state and federal legislation about civil rights followed. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865 in the aftermath of the Civil War, abolished slavery in the United States (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Image of the United States Constitution. Delayed almost a year after its passing due to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolished American slavery in 1865. Image courtesy of University of Michigan Center for Social Solutions.

The Thirteenth Amendment states: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution officially abolished slavery in this country, and the Fourteenth Amendment, passed in 1866, set forth three principles:

- All persons born or naturalized in the U.S. were citizens of the nation, and no state could make or enforce any law that would abridge their rights of citizenship.

- No state could deny any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

- No state could deny any person equal protection of the laws.

Finally, the Fifteenth Amendment, passed in 1869, outlawed the denial of voting rights due to race, color, or past servitude. After the United States abolished slavery, Black Americans continued to be marginalized through enforced segregation and diminished access to facilities, housing, education, and opportunities through Jim Crow laws. Named after a Black minstrel show character, the laws existed for about one hundred years, from the post-Civil War era until 1968. Defying Jim Crow laws often led to arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence, and death.

Over a century since the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the fight to achieve full equality and guarantee the civil rights of all Americans continues. In March of 1995, one hundred thirty years after the state rejected the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, Mississippi finally ratified it. But failure to inform the National Archives of the ratification meant that Mississippi did not "officially" ratify the Thirteenth Amendment until February 2013.[7]

Additionally, over the last twenty years, states have actively put barriers in front of ballot boxes by imposing strict voter ID laws, cutting voting times, restricting registration,

[7] Eyder Peralta, "After Snafu, Mississippi Ratifies Amendment Abolishing Slavery," National Public Radio (NPR), February 19, 2013, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/02/19/172432523/after-snafu-mississippi-ratifies-amendment-abolishing-slavery.

and purging voter rolls (see Figure 2.4).[8] In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down key protections within the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Section 5 of the law that required states with a history of racial discrimination in voting to get certification in advance that any election change they wanted to make would not be discriminatory was viewed as "outdated" by the Court. In 2021 alone, more than four hundred anti-voter measures were introduced by states across the country, many of which will disproportionately burden voters of color.[9]

Figure 2.4. Georgia voters protesting election measures targeting restricting access and suppressing Black voters and voters of color from participating in future elections. Photo courtesy of Michael Fleshman /Flickr.

On June 24, 2022, after nearly fifty years, the U.S Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade,* the landmark legislation that made access to an abortion a federal right in the United States (see Figure 2.5). As we watch these pivotal decisions being made, we do so knowing the potential for grave consequences will disproportionately impact marginalized groups.

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[8] "Vote Suppression," Brennan Center for Justice, 2023, Brennancenter.org.
[9] Sofia L. Lakin, "Fifty-Seven Years After Its Enactment, the Voting Rights Act Is in Peril," American Civil Liberties Union, August 5, 2022, https://www.aclu.org/news/voting-rights/fifty-seven-years-after-its-enactment-the-voting-rights-act-is-in-peril.

These decisions being made in the twenty-first century are present day testaments to our nation's unwillingness to uphold democracy for all and dismantle inequities at every turn.

Figure 2.5. Anti-abortion rights activists protest outside of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images.

During the era of Reconstruction, the political rights of Black Americans were secured by the three constitutional amendments and numerous laws passed by Congress. Racial discrimination was attacked on a particularly broad front by the Civil Rights Act of 1875. This legislation made it a crime for an individual to deny:

> the full and equal enjoyment of any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color.[10]

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[10] "Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)." The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, last reviewed February 28, 2022, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/plessy-v-ferguson.

In 1883, the Supreme Court struck down the 1875 act and ruled that the Fourteenth
Amendment did not give Congress authority to prevent discrimination by private individuals.
Simultaneously, state governments were passing laws requiring the establishment of separate
schools for children of each race, and ultimately segregation was extended to most public and
semi-public facilities through Jim Crow laws. Beginning with the passage of an 1887 Florida
law, states began to require that railroads furnish separate accommodations for each race.
Black citizens strongly objected to the segregation of the railroads, seeing it as another step
toward the total rejection of three constitutional amendments.

Led by a group of concerned Black men from New Orleans, in 1891 the "Citizens'
Committee to Test the Constitutionality of the Separate Car Law" was formed. They raised
money and hired a prominent attorney to devise a test case to prove the unconstitutionality of
the law. Homer Plessy purchased a train ticket and took a seat in the whites-only car. Plessy
refused to move and was arrested. The case ascended to the U.S. Supreme Court, which
denied Plessy's challenges to the law.[11] The background of how this case came to be
underscores the deep roots of racism in our country and how every fight for equal rights
matters (see 2.6).

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[11] "Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)."

Figure 2.6. African American man stands below a sign for a segregated waiting room at a train station in Durham, North Carolina. The U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that separate but equal facilities were constitutional. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

On May 18, 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities were constitutional and upheld the principle of racial segregation. Homer Adolph Plessy, who agreed to be the plaintiff in the case aimed at testing the law's constitutionality, was of mixed race; he described himself as "seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth African blood." On June 7, 1892, Plessy bought a ticket on a train from New Orleans bound for Covington, Louisiana, and took a vacant seat in a whites-only car. When he refused to leave the car at the conductor's insistence, he was arrested and jailed. Convicted by a New Orleans court of violating the 1890 law, Plessy eventually filed a petition, claiming that the law violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.[12] The final ruling provided legal justification for segregation on trains and buses and in public facilities such as hotels, theaters, and schools. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* verdict enshrined the doctrine of "separate but equal" as a constitutional justification for segregation, ensuring the survival of the Jim Crow South for the next half-century (see Figure 2.7).[13]

Post-*Plessy*, the State of Missouri imposed a racially segregated school system on a widely dispersed and largely rural African American population.[14] Until 1929, the state of Missouri exempted school districts from providing schools for African American children

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[12] "Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)."
[13] "Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)."
[14] Kevin F. Gotham, "Missed Opportunities, Enduring Legacies: School Segregation and Desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri," *American Studies* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 5–42.

whose enumeration dropped to below fifteen and required school districts to eliminate

African American schools if attendance fell below eight.
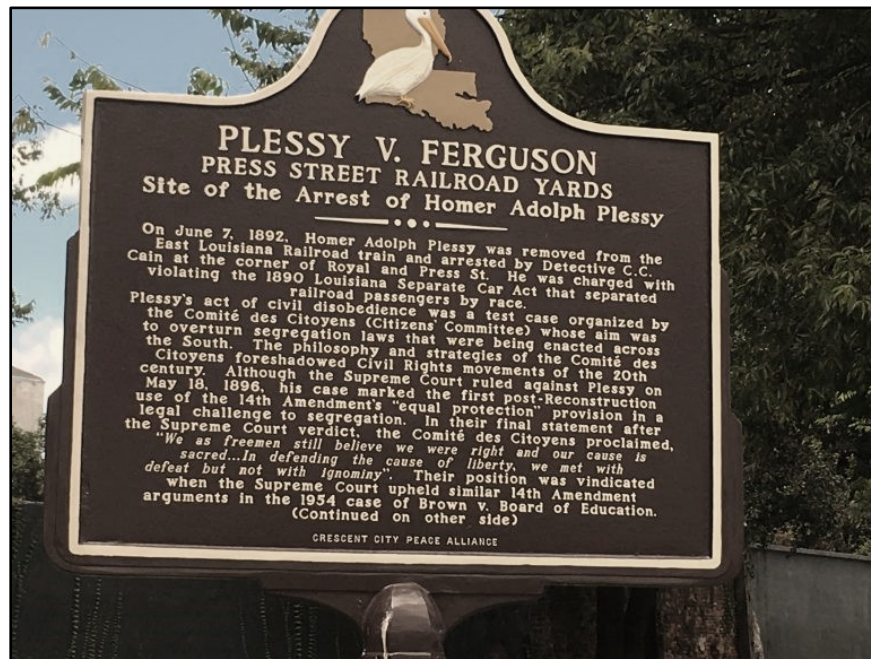
Figure 2.7. Marker placed at Press and Royal Streets in New Orleans in 2009
commemorating the arrest of Homer Adolph Plessy. Chris Boyette and Claudio Dominguez,
"Pardon for Homer Plessy, of Plessy v. Ferguson's 'Separate But Equal' Ruling, Heads to
Louisiana Governor's Desk," CNN, November 12, 2021,
https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/12/us/homer-plessy-pardon/index.html. Photo courtesy of
John Zada/Alamy Stock Photo.

After 1929, the state gave school districts the option to discontinue schools for Black

students, no matter what their enumeration.[15] In the city of Kansas City, a series of actions

that literally divided a community ensued. For decades, school officials provided separate

education facilities for Black and white students, and the city and metropolitan area

developed clearly defined patterns of racial segregation. This chapter describes how racism

and segregation permeated Kansas City, Missouri, prior to the passage of *Brown v. Board of*

Education in 1954.

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[15] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities, Enduring Legacies."

Racial Segregation in Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 2.8. Map, State of Missouri. Image courtesy of Lane Whitten, "Campus Reform. Campus Profile: College of the Ozarks," Leadership Institute, September 2, 2022, campusreform.org/article?id=20088.

Missouri is one of twelve states in the north central United States that make up the Midwestern United States or the Midwest. The other states include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The small towns in this region form what is often referred to as "America's Heartland," known for its industry, farming, and residents with friendly, down-to-earth attitudes. Missouri mirrors the demographic, economic, and political makeup of the nation, with a mixture of urban and rural culture. While it has long been considered a political bellwether state, Missourians can generally be described as politically, socially, and religiously

conservative. Population estimates from July 2022 reflect 6,177,955 residents, with less than

twelve percent identifying as Black or African American. Recent attention to the "Show-Me-

State" has reflected the opposite of friendly, down-to-earth attitudes. Since 2015, the

following is just a sampling of the headlines depicting the racial tension that continues to

exist in the state:

- **Why Missouri Has Become the Heart of Racial Tension In America**: One
  state, Missouri, stands out as the site of two of the most pivotal moments in the
  resurgent national discussion on race: the unrest in Ferguson and the protests at
  the University of Missouri.[16]

- **NAACP Warns Black Travelers to Use "Extreme Caution" When Visiting
  Missouri:** The state NAACP first issued an advisory in June. It described
  "looming danger" and recommended that "each individual should pay special
  attention while in the state of Missouri and certainly if contemplating spending
  time in Missouri."[17]

- **Missouri Bill Would Ban Critical Race Theory in Schools and Offer Teacher
  Training in "Patriotism":** Missouri lawmakers are considering new legislation
  aimed at prohibiting the teaching of so-called critical race theory in its public
  grade schools—even though the state's largest teachers' union says the concept is

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[16] Daniel Marans and Mariah Stewart, "Why Missouri Has Become the Heart of Racial Tension in America," Huffpost, November 16, 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ferguson-mizzou-missouri-racial-tension_n_564736e2e4b08cda3488f34d.
[17] Camila Domonoske, "NAACP Warns Black Travelers to Use 'Extreme Caution' When Visiting Missouri," National Public Radio (NPR), August 3, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/03/541382961/naacp-warns-black-travelers-to-use-extreme-caution-when-visiting-missouri.

not presently a part of schools' curricula—and requiring the state to develop a training program to teach American patriotism.[18]

Those most broadly impacted by these racial tensions are situated in Missouri's two largest cities, St. Louis and Kansas City. Both cities remain as deeply segregated as the overall state itself. Kansas City, the largest city in Missouri, is well known for its barbeque, beautiful fountains, jazz traditions, and love of sports (see Figure 2.9). According to Visit KC, the city's official visitors guide, the Kansas City area boasts more than 100 barbecue restaurants, set the Guinness World Record for the loudest stadium on the planet at 142.2 decibels at Arrowhead Stadium, touts 220 parks, 134 miles of trails and bikeways, 29 lakes, 103 playgrounds and 119 monuments, the origin of the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails, and is connected to well-known celebrities and important global companies.[19]

Just beneath the surface of the city's welcoming and communal disposition, however, is its long-standing history of racially segregated communities and school systems. Racial segregation in housing and schools have been defining features of the Kansas City metropolitan area for over a century. The development of racially segregated schools in Kansas City stemmed from a series of discriminatory government actions, U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and dramatic demographic shifts during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[20]

[18] Shawna Mizelle, "Missouri Bill Would Ban Critical Race Theory in Schools and Offer Teacher Training in 'Patriotism,'" CNN Politics, January 20, 2023, https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/20/politics/missouri-critical-race-theory-ban/index.html.
[19] "Kansas City Trivia," Visit KC, https://www.visitkc.com/visitors/things-do/trip-ideas-tools/discover/kc-overview/kansas-city-trivia.
[20] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

Figure 2.9. On November 1, 2015, the Kansas City Royals defeated the Mets in Game 5 of the World Series, winning a second world championship. The team received a hero's welcome during their championship parade through Kansas City, symbolizing togetherness and unity. Photo courtesy of the *Kansas City Star.*

Expanding Black Communities and the Beginning of White Flight

Before 1900, average Black families and individuals in Kansas City, Missouri, lived in small, diverse residential clusters and had white neighbors. By the early 1900s, complete segregation was the custom and was widely enforced in Missouri. Efforts to justify and maintain segregated spaces, included whites portraying African Americans as inferior,

disorderly, and as a direct correlation to the deterioration of property.[21] Sherry describes how

the white middle class in Kansas City "began to construct its perpetual framework about

race":

> Prominent people, using their access to public media, raised issues that touched deep
> and fundamental sentiments, then linked them to race in the public arena. They
> portrayed Black men as sexual aggressors, warned that immorality could penetrate to
> the very doorstep of the home, and claimed to show how badly a neighborhood could
> deteriorate with a mixture of Black residents. Together, these four phenomena raised
> alarms about the potential for moral and physical degradation of residential
> neighborhoods and connected race to the quality of a homesite as both an investment
> and a domestic sanctuary.[22]

Despite the violent resistance, by the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the in-

migration of African Americans to Kansas City continued. The African American population

in Kansas City grew by almost ten thousand during the 1950s, accelerating the exodus of

whites to the fringes of the city and the nascent suburbs.[23] As the city grew and the motor car

created mobility, the suburbs became desirable and catered to the notion of "white flight."[24]

This growth and the legal requirement to operate racially segregated schools led to

substantial increases in the number of African American elementary school-age children and

produced chronic overcrowding in the segregated Black schools.[25]

During this time, Missouri's inter-district system of racially segregated schools

required African American families who wanted their children to receive an education to

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[21] Sherry L. Schirmer, *A City Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900–1960* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).
[22] Schirmer, *A City Divided.*
[23] Peter William Moran, "From Jefferson to Banneker: The Intersection of Race, Demographic Change, and School Naming Practices in Kansas City's Segregated School System, 1940–1953," *History of Education Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2019): 65–96, https://doi.org/10.1017/heq.2018.51.
[24] Diane Euston and Tim Reidy, "Dissecting the Troost Divide and Racial Segregation in Kansas City," *The Martin City Telegraph,* June 30, 2020, https://martincitytelegraph.com/2020/06/30/dissecting-the-troost-divide-and-racial-segregation-in-kansas-city/.
[25] Moran, "From Jefferson to Banneker."

attend schools in Kansas City. According to Kevin Fox Gotham, professor of sociology at Tulane University and author of *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development between World War I and 1954*, "Only six of 61 African American settlements in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties provided elementary schools for African American children."[26] In fact, until 1954, Lincoln High School was the only African American secondary school in all three counties.[27]

Year	Total Population	Percent Increase	Black Population	Percent Increase	Percent Black of Total
1880	55,785		8,143		14.6
1890	132,716	137.9	13,700	67.6	10.3
1900	163,752	23.4	17,567	28.2	10.7
1910	248,381	51.7	23,566	34.1	9.5
1920	324,410	30.6	30,719	30.4	9.5
1930	399,746	23.2	38,574	25.6	9.7

Table 2.1. Total and Black Population for Kansas City, Missouri, 1880–1930. These numbers demonstrate that the city experienced a dramatic population increase during the decades after 1880. Kevin Gotham, "Missed Opportunities, Enduring Legacies: School Segregation and Desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri," *American Studies* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 5–42.

Well documented discriminatory federal housing policies and segregated school systems mutually reinforced institutional barriers that prevented Black families from

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[26] Kevin F. Gotham, *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900–2000* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
[27] Euston and Reidy, "Dissecting the Troost Divide."

participating in the suburbanization process that benefited millions of white residents. While the promise of employment opportunities may have lured African American families to migrate to Kansas City, once in the city, housing discrimination relegated them to racially segregated neighborhoods, where their children attended racially segregated schools (see Figure 2.10).[28] The population boom in the 1880s resulted in an overdevelopment of inexpensive, affordable housing on Kansas City's east side. The financial crisis of 1890 added even more housing inventory. James Shortridge, author of *Kansas City and How it Grew*, noted, "With exclusionary laws still in the future, location [of Black residents] remained primarily a matter of affordability." This, along with adequate access to public transportation, may have been the driving force behind the east side's growing Black population.
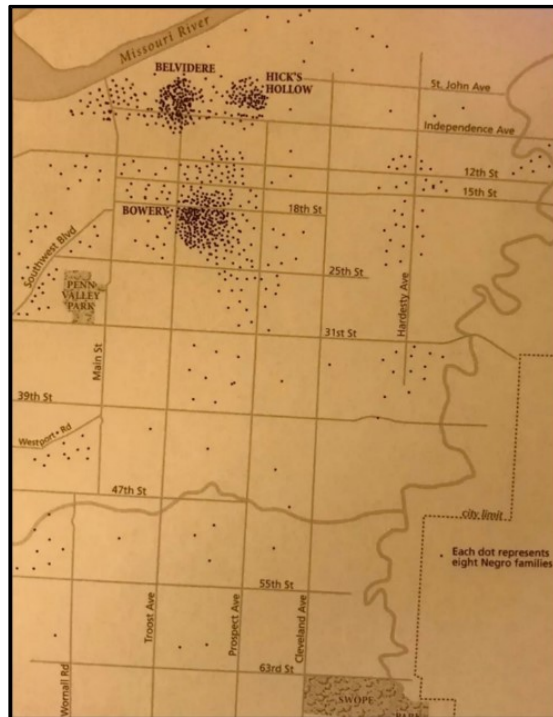
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[28] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

Figure 2.10. Map of African American neighborhoods in 1910. Each dot represents "eight Negro families." James Shortridge, *Kansas City and How It Grew* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

Deed restrictions are commonly known for their racially restrictive clauses that produced an intentionally segregated landscape that white power elites like J.C. Nichols, wanted for their city (see Figure 2.11). In 1948, a Supreme Court ruling (*Shelley v. Kraemer*) ended the enforcement of racially restrictive clauses, but as other scholars have shown, that decision did not bring about an end to residential segregation, and structural conditions still enabled a racialized landscape to continue through today.[29]

Figure 2.11. In 1912, a J.C. Nichols Co. sign at 52nd Street and Brookside Boulevard advertises property in the Country Club District as "high class residence property." Nichols placed deed restrictions on his developments to keep African American people out. Image courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri.

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[29] Sara Stephens, "J.C. Nichols and the Country Club District: Suburban Aesthetics and Property Values," The Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age and Great Depression, n.d., https://pendergastkc.org/article/jc-nichols-and-country-club-district-suburban-aesthetics-and-property-values.

Although commended for his charitable work throughout the city, Nichols was also instrumental in producing the racialized landscape of Kansas City by putting racially restrictive clauses into the deed restrictions on all the properties he sold. "The practice of redlining neighborhoods, in which a federal agency rated neighborhoods for their creditworthiness, built upon this landscape of restrictions to construct the entangled prosperity and inequality of homeownership, real estate, and race in America."[30] The use of actual physical markings on a map meant to separate communities into Black and white happened in Kansas City in the 1920s and 1930s, largely through the work of Country Club Plaza developer J.C. Nichols (see Figure 2.12).[31]

[30] Stephens, "J.C. Nichols and the Country Club District," para. 9.
[31] Megan Dillard, "Unrest Sparks Scrutiny into Redlining Development and the Racial Divide in Kansas City," Fox 4 News, June 10, 2020, https://fox4kc.com/news/recent-events-have-many-examining-how-redlining-development-caused-racial-divide-in-kansas-city/.

Figure 2.12. Neighborhoods built by J.C. Nichols around the Country Club Plaza included covenant restrictions barring Black people from owning homes. Because of those practices, Nichols' name was dropped from the parkway and fountain that once honored him. Photo courtesy of Tammy Ljungblad and the *Kansas City Star.*

In an article from the Kansas City Star entitled "J.C. Nichols' Whites-Only Neighborhoods, Boosted by Star's Founder, Leave Indelible Mark," Cortlynn Stark writes about the impact of J.C Nichols and William Rockhill Nelson, the *Star's* first publisher and founder, in Kansas City:

> Nothing in the surviving record paints either man as a virulent racist. But like most powerful men of their time, they viewed the world through a white lens, and saw segregation as a necessity for a cohesive, ordered society. In the world of real estate, that meant homes built with restrictive covenants—documents that dictated not only the details of design and construction of homes, but who could live in them.
>
> Their relationship would last less than a decade, until Nelson's death in 1915. But its legacy rippled across the decades in Kansas City, laying the foundation for a system

that denied Black families access to a housing market that created wealth for generations of white families.[32]

From the 1920s through the 1950s, the Kansas City Real Estate Board (formed in 1900) subscribed to a national code of real estate ethics that endorsed the view that all-Black and racially mixed neighborhoods were inferior to all-white homogenous neighborhoods.[33] The Federal Housing Administration, established in 1934, furthered the segregation efforts by refusing to insure mortgages in and near African American neighborhoods, a practice known as "redlining." At the same time, the FHA was subsidizing builders who were mass-producing entire subdivisions for whites, with the requirement that none of the homes be sold to African Americans.[34] The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) examiners consulted with bank loan officers, appraisers, and realtors to create "Residential Security" maps of various cities. The examiners would:

> systematically grade neighborhoods based on criteria related to the age and condition of housing, transportation access, closeness to amenities such as parks or disamenities like polluting industries, the economic class and employment status of residents, and their ethnic and racial composition. Neighborhoods were color-coded on maps green for the "Best," blue for "Still Desirable," yellow for "Definitely Declining," and red for "Hazardous"[35] (see Figure 2.13).

[32] Cortlynn Stark, "J.C. Nichols' Whites-Only Neighborhoods, Boosted by *Star's* Founder, Leave Indelible Mark," *Kansas City Star,* https://www.cortlynnstark.com/the-kansas-city-star/j-c-nichols-whites-only-neighborhoods-boosted-by-stars-founder-leave-indelible-mark/.

[33] Kevin F. Gotham, "Urban Space, Restrictive Covenants, and the Origin of Racial Residential Segregation in a U.S. City, 1900–1950," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 3 (September 2000): 616–33.

[34] Terry Gross, "A Forgotten History of How the U.S. Government Segregated America," National Public Radio (NPR), May 17, 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america.

[35] Bruce Craig Mitchell and Juan Franco, "HOLC 'Redlining' Maps: The Persistent Structure of Segregation and Economic Inequality," NCRC, March 20, 2018, https://ncrc.org/holc/.
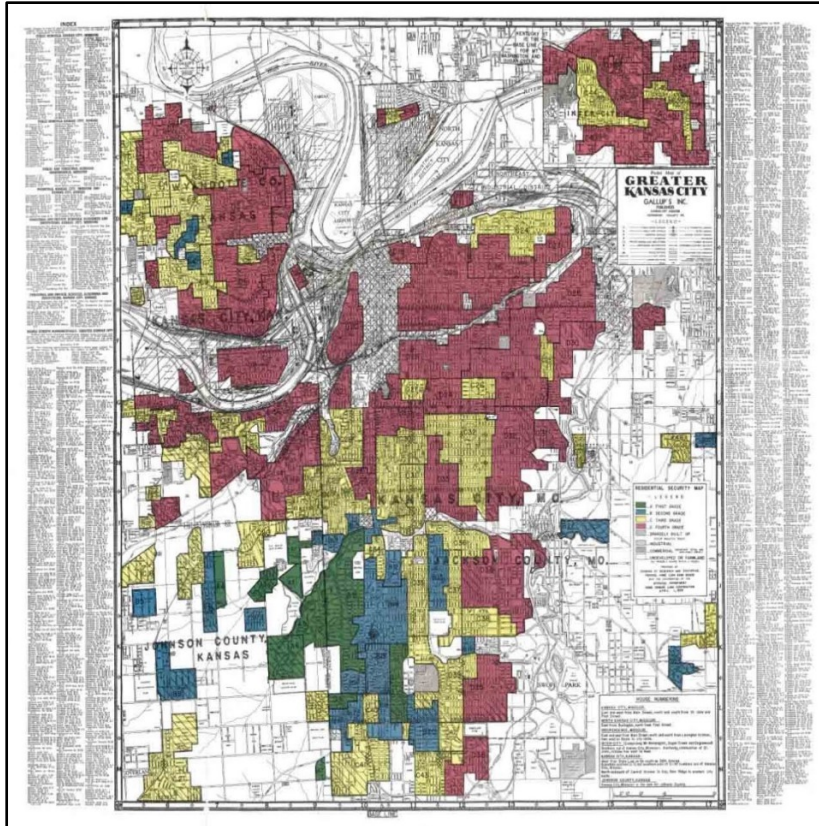
Figure 2.13. HOLC (Home Owners' Loan Corporation) Map of the Greater Kansas City area, April 1939. University of Richmond's "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America."

Specifically, the intentional practices utilized by the FHA that fostered segregation during the early part of the 20th century included:

- **Blockbusting**. The modern real estate industry played a major role during the "Great Migration" in controlling where African Americans bought homes and lived. Large real estate organizations, such as the Kansas City Real Estate Board, responded to the anxieties of white residents about Black population influx deflating property values and destabilizing neighborhoods. Real estate professionals systematically attempted to keep neighborhoods either all white or all Black.

- **Restrictive Covenants**. Residential developers were especially important in perpetuating segregation in Kansas City through the use of racially restrictive covenants. These private contractual agreements between real estate agents and homeowner associations restricted the sale of property to people of specific groups (excluding African Americans in particular).[36]

- **Redlining**. The federal government's practice in the 1930s of rating neighborhoods helped mortgage lenders determine which areas of a city were considered risky. The federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation made maps and shaded neighborhoods red that it deemed "hazardous." That risk level was largely based on the number of African Americans and immigrants living there.

These practices, along with the other segregationist housing policies of the time, had lasting effects from concentrating poverty to stifling home ownership rates.[37]

The divide in Kansas City became most pronounced along Troost Avenue, as whites living east of the division moved out of the area and further segregated the school system and neighborhoods. Real estate "blockbusters" such as Bob Wood profited from white flight by buying homes and selling them to minorities. As part of a chain reaction, whites in the neighborhood would sell their homes to people like Bob Wood below market value "on the implied threat of future devaluation during minority integration of previously segregated

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[36] "Fair Housing and Equity Assessment for the Greater Kansas City Region," Mid-America Regional Council, 2014, https://www.wycokck.org/files/assets/public/community-development/documents/2014-fair-housing-and-equity-assessment.pdf.

[37] Meg Anderson, "Racist Housing Practices from the 1930s Linked to Hotter Neighborhoods Today," National Public Radio (NPR), January 14, 2020, https://www.kcur.org/2020-01-14/racist-housing-practices-from-the-1930s-linked-to-hotter-neighborhoods-today.

neighborhoods."[38] Eventually, African Americans were pigeonholed to the east side of

Kansas City (see Figure 2.14).
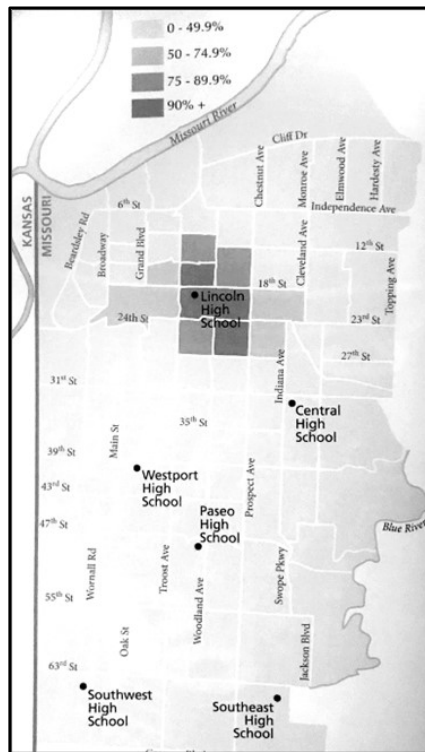
Figure 2.14. Map of Kansas City's African American population in 1940. James Shortridge, *Kansas City and How It Grew* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the process of residential transition

accelerated with the continued in-migration of African Americans to Kansas City and the

growing exodus of whites to the fringes of the city and the nascent suburbs.[39] While jobs and

economic opportunities pulled people into the city, the availability of schools would

specifically influence their housing choices.

[38] Euston and Riedy, "Dissecting the Troost Divide."
[39] Moran, "From Jefferson to Banneker."

Segregation in Kansas City Schools before 1954

Before 1929, Missouri exempted school districts from providing schools for Black

students if enrollment fell below fifteen; if attendance dropped below eight, the school was

eliminated entirely. After 1929, districts could discontinue schools for Black children, no

matter the number enrolled.[40] There were frequent school closings, particularly in rural areas

in which counties claimed they had insufficient funds to maintain separate school facilities.

This left numerous children without proper access to education. For decades, scholars have

documented the historically strong African American commitment to education in the face of

considerable economic hardship and racial discrimination.[41] With limited access to schools

for African American students, parents were pressured to either move to areas where schools

were located or make their children travel long distances to schools.

In Kansas City, from 1945 to 1954, approximately one hundred African American

school children from Independence, Missouri, were bused each year to attend schools in

Kansas City, Missouri. African American children living in Park Hill in north Platte County,

and Pleasant Hill and Harrison in rural Cass County, were transported to the KCMSD by bus

or private car until 1954.[42] Further exacerbating the issue of school segregation and limited

access was the process of Black in-migration to Kansas City and white exodus to the suburbs.

This phenomenon that was reinforced by the previously mentioned wide range of

discriminatory practices that included the housing policies of the Home Owners Loan

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[40] Megan Dennis, "The Castle on The Hill": Lincoln High, Racial Uplift, and Community Development During Segregation," The Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age and Great Depression, n.d., https://pendergastkc.org/article/castle-hill-lincoln-high-racial-uplift-and-community-development-during-segregation.

[41] Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South from 1619 to the Present* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

[42] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

Corporation (HOLC), the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and the Veterans

Administration (VA) that barred African American families from purchasing homes in the

suburbs.[43]

In south Kansas City, the population boom of the 1950s forced districts like Hickman

Mills C-1 to find ways to keep up with the population growth. This led to the Hickman Mills

community becoming an ideal place for lower middle-class whites, as explained by James

Shortridge:

> If the Country Club District represented an idealized but largely unattainable vision of
> Kansas City for an average white resident and if the East Side was an area to ignore,
> suburban developments to the south, southeast, and north were practicable realities.
> Here were new and affordable homes, green grass, good schools and convenient
> shopping centers. With postwar prosperity, growth came rapidly.[44]

The resulting increase in population became especially significant for the school district, as it

meant that more facilities would be needed to accommodate the growing number of students.

By the start of the 1953–1954 school year, the first thirty homes in the Ruskin Heights

suburb were occupied by families with forty-two school-aged children. Within six months,

one thousand additional homes were built in the district.[45] By 1955, Hickman Mills C-1 was

celebrating the approval of expansion projects and preparing for more students. The 1955–

1956 school year welcomed students into the district's third high school building, and two

[43] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

[44] James R. Shortridge, *Kansas City and How It Grew, 1822–2011* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 121.

[45] Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002), 64.

elementary schools opened shortly thereafter: Harry S. Truman Elementary School and

Westridge Elementary School.[46]

While districts like Hickman Mills C-1 were celebrating and eagerly accommodating

the growing community and school district, Kansas City schools were having a very different

experience. The circumstances of segregation and discrimination that curtailed funding,

resources, and proper facilities in favor of white schools, made it difficult to cultivate

successes but not impossible. For example, gaining a proper facility for Lincoln High in

Kansas City was a complex and extremely long process. In 1867, the Kansas City School

District formed, and the small church school became Lincoln Elementary. Lincoln (as a

grade school) was the first school for Black children on the Missouri side of Kansas City. In

1890, a separate building was built at 19th and Tracy, establishing Lincoln High School as

the first all-Black high school in Kansas City, Missouri[47] (see Figure 2.15).

[46] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future,* 66.
[47] Dennis, "The Castle on The Hill."

Figure 2.15. Lincoln High School at 19th and Tracy, 1927. Photo courtesy of the Black Archives of Mid-America.

Despite institutional barriers, Kansas City's Black community supported and claimed Lincoln High as a prestigious educational and cultural center. Lincoln High's enrollment continued to grow rapidly as Kansas City's Black population increased, but the facility increasingly fell short of the demand. Expansions were made to Lincoln High, but the building at 19th and Tracy was underfunded, lacking resources such as math and science lab equipment, and was severely overcrowded.[48] The "new" Lincoln High, opened during the 1936–1937 academic year, emerged as a prestigious educational and cultural center, known as the "Castle on the Hill" (see Figure 2.16). The new site accommodated eleven hundred students, contained two gyms, a swimming pool, updated science labs, art and music rooms, and a two-story auditorium. The modernized "Castle on the Hill" could compete with (and

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[48] Dennis, "The Castle on The Hill."

surpass) white schools that had previously received better and more immediate resources so long denied to Kansas City's Black population.[49]

Figure 2.16. The new Lincoln High School building on Woodland Ave. Photo courtesy of the Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

In the following excerpt, Dennis describes what Lincoln High meant to the community it served:

> Lincoln High built a central foundation for its students and Kansas City's Black community. The circumstances of segregation and discrimination created the school and simultaneously curtailed funding, resources, and proper facilities in favor of white schools. Despite institutional barriers, though, Kansas City's Black community supported and claimed Lincoln High as a prestigious educational and cultural center. These community members continued to insist on better educational opportunities and conditions: they moved their lives and families for closer proximity to Black schools, they campaigned for better resources and updated buildings, and they physically came together as a community within that space, holding forums and debating local issues. Part of Lincoln High's level of prestige stemmed from its excellent educators, who also created talented artists and professionals, but local businesspeople also held ties to Lincoln High and instilled a sense of racial pride and middle-class aspirations. One central narrative surrounding Lincoln High at the time was one of hope and community: hope for better educational opportunities and resources for African Americans, hope for uplift and equity, hope for a strengthened community and Black middle class.[50]

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[49] Dennis, "The Castle on The Hill."
[50] Dennis, "The Castle on The Hill."

CHAPTER 3

OLD HABITS DIE HARD: BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION, DESEGREGATION

STRUGGLES IN KANSAS CITY SCHOOLS, AND THE LASTING IMPACT OF

REDLINING, 1955–2014

Solving the problem of racism is America's unfinished agenda, and it must be regarded by educators as a moral imperative.[1]   —Gerald Pine and Asa Hilliard

Figure 3.1. The day after *Brown v. Board of Education* was announced, Nettie Hunt sat on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court and explained the decision to her daughter. Bettmann/Corbis.

Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka

On May 17, 1954, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous

decision in the landmark civil rights case that state-sanctioned segregation of public schools

was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.

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[1] Gerald J. Pine and Asa G. Hilliard, "Rx for Racism: Imperatives for America's Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 71 (1990): 596.

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. ... Any language in contrary to this finding is rejected. We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.[2]

This historic decision marked the end of the "separate but equal" precedent set by the Supreme Court nearly sixty years earlier in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and served as a catalyst for the expanding civil rights movement during the decade of the 1950s.[3] In May 1955, the Court issued a second opinion in the case (known as *Brown v. Board of Education II*), which remanded future desegregation cases to lower federal courts and directed district courts and school boards to proceed with desegregation "with all deliberate speed."[4] This decision by the Court set no standard or deadline for desegregation to occur and essentially opened the door to local judicial and political evasion of desegregation. Kansas and several other states acted in accordance with the verdict, but countless school and local officials did not comply, including those in the state of Missouri.

Southern states vehemently opposed desegregation, and efforts to integrate were often highly contentious and violent. The "Little Rock Nine" was a group of nine Black students who enrolled at the formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 and were barred from entering the school on their first day of classes. Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas called out the state National Guard to prevent the students from attending. After a tense standoff, President Eisenhower deployed federal troops, and the nine students were

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[2] *Brown v. Board of Education,* 347, U.S. 483 (1954).
[3] "Brown vs. Board of Education," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/plessy-v-ferguson.
[4] "Brown v. Board of Education," History.com Editors, October 27, 2009, updated January 11, 2023, https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/brown-v-board-of-education-of-topeka.

able to enter Central High School under armed guard. This unfortunate ordeal for the

students and the response drew national attention to the civil rights movement (see Figure

3.2). Duignan offers this summary of the impact of *Brown vs. Board of Education:*

> *Brown v. Board of Education* is considered a milestone in American civil rights
> history. The case and the efforts to undermine the decisions brought greater
> awareness to racial inequalities and the struggles African Americans faced. The
> success of Brown galvanized civil rights activists and increased efforts to end
> institutionalized racism throughout American society.[5]

Figure 3.2. Elizabeth Eckford, one of the nine students to integrate Central High School in
Little Rock, ignores the hostile screams and stares of fellow students on her first day of
school. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images.

Desegregation, Attendance Zones, and the Troost Dividing Wall

After fifty years of maintaining racial segregation in schools, Missouri local school

districts were charged with figuring out how to rectify the problem. In response, the Kansas

City Missouri School District eliminated explicitly racial attendance zones and replaced them

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[5] Bryan Duignan, "Brown v. Board of Education," Encyclopedia Britannica, October 20, 2022,
https://www.britannica.com/event/Brown-v-Board-of-Education-of-Topeka.

with neighborhood attendance zones.[6] This and subsequent boundary changes led to neighborhoods being coded and the creation of what had been identified as the Troost Divide.

When *Brown v. Board of Education* held that *de jure* segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, the Kansas City Missouri School District school board ordered the superintendent and the district's research department to design a desegregation plan for the district.[7] The residential patterns in Kansas City ensured that regardless of how the attendance zones were drawn, schools in several areas of the city would retain their exclusive racial quality.[8] Neighborhood schools in residentially segregated communities results in segregated schools. Moran's description of just one area illuminates KCMSD's intentional practice of keeping schools segregated after *Brown*.

> In 1955, roughly 70% of the district's 8,400 Black elementary students attended the nine formerly Black schools that served the central Black neighborhood. Four of the elementary schools (Attucks, Phillips, Booker T. Washington, and Yates) that remained 100% Black in 1955 were located in the heart of this neighborhood (Hazlett, 1955; KCMSD, 1985). Not only did the new attendance zones have no impact on this area in 1955, the racial composition of these schools remained unchanged for the next 20 years.[9]

The transitional plan called for Black and white students to attend the school closest to them regardless of race and contained a transfer policy that enabled students to transfer between schools. The transitional plan failed to desegregate KCMSD by granting student

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[6] Kevin F. Gotham, "Missed Opportunities, Enduring Legacies: School Segregation and Desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri," *American Studies* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 5–42.
[7] Preston C. Green III and Bruce D. Baker, "Urban Legends, Desegregation and School Finance: Did Kansas City Really Prove that Money Doesn't Matter?" *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 12 (2006), https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1109&context=mjrl.
[8] Peter Moran, "Difficult from the Start: Implementing the *Brown* Decision in the Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 37, no. 3 (2004): 278–8.
[9] Moran, "Difficult from the Start," 280.

transfers too liberally, and thus transfers became a way for students to avoid desegregation (see Figure 3.3). By the mid-1960s it was evident that desegregation attempts were not working, but the district was unwilling to change. KCMSD rejected desegregation alternatives such as clustering schools, implementing busing, creating magnet schools, and building schools on sites designed to maximize integration.[10] Consequently, by the mid-1970s, Kansas City was no longer in compliance with constitutional desegregation standards.

Figure 3.3. Central High School at 3221 Indiana. In 1954, Central High School was 100 percent white. Six years later, the school was 90 percent Black. Photo courtesy of Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

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[10] Peter Moran, "Too Little, Too Late: The Elusive Goal of School Desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Role of the Federal Government," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 107, no. 9 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2005.00580.x.

Over the next two decades after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling, from 1955 through the mid-1970s, the Kansas City school board made frequent shifts in the attendance areas of its schools, typically removing white areas from the western-most portions of its racially transitional zones and attaching them to all-white zones farther west.[11] In 1955 the district was 22.3 percent Black, and within ten years it was 40.5 percent Black. By 1966, at twenty-five elementary schools, more than 90 percent of the students were Black, and in 36 schools, more than 90 percent were white and some hit 100 percent.[12] The four high schools east of Troost changed from three all-white schools and one all-Black (Lincoln) to 97 percent Black enrollment in all four schools (see Table 3.1).[13]

Table 5: Racial Makeup of Kansas City, Missouri School District High Schools Located West of Troost Avenue and East of Troost Avenue at Five-Year Intervals, 1954-55 —1974-75

| | HIGH SCHOOLS WEST OF TROOST AVENUE | | | | HIGH SCHOOLS EAST OF TROOST AVENUE | | | | | | | |
| | Westport | | Southwest | | Lincoln | | Central | | Paseo | | Southeast | |
School Year	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black	Total Enrolled	% Black
1954-55	1461	0	2031	0	1100	100.0	1604	0	1657	0	1575	0
1960-61	1684	2.5	1772	.1	927	100.0	1522	90.2	1893	9.7	1883	1.7
1965-66	1862	10.9	2469	.7	1121	99.9	2648	99.4	1597	62.4	1781	22.2
1970-71	1766	38.0	2387	.8	1323	100.0	2115	99.9	1545	99.4	1463	79.6
1974-75	1361	47.6	2017	12.0	1312	99.9	2204	100.0	1466	99.9	2114	97.7

Source: Kansas City Missouri School District Annual Fall Membership Report 1954-55 and Annual Desegregation Reports, 1954-55 to 1974-75. High Schools south of Interstate-70.

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[11] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."
[12] Mara Williams, "Kansas City Schools Broke Federal Desegregation Law for Decades. The Star Stayed Quiet," *The Kansas City Star,* https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article247821130.
[13] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

Table 3.1. Racial makeup of Kansas City, Missouri School District high school located west of Troost Avenue and east of Troost Avenue from 1954–55 to 1974–75. Kevin F. Gotham, "Missed Opportunities, Enduring Legacies: School Segregation and Desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri," *American Studies* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 5–42.

The Kansas City Missouri School District redrew the boundary lines according to neighborhood "attendance zones" that happened to be all white or all Black. In the mid-1950s, suburban areas began to grow at alarming speeds as the decision to desegregate schools accelerated. The focus was on locations such as Raytown, Ruskin Heights, Hickman Mills, and Grandview as families sought out affordable housing and quality schools after World War II. For example, Ruskin Heights, south of the city, was the first tract housing development built, Grandview saw substantial growth due to its location near Richards-Gebaur Air Force Base, and Raytown offered affordable housing and newly built schools.

<div align="center">Troost Dividing Line</div>

Troost was an endless dividing line between Black and white schools, neighborhoods, wealth, and development opportunities that began with the school district's decision to segregate through attendance zones. On June 20,1963, a group of African American and white residents protested at a KCMSD board meeting, charging that the district, via its attendance zone policies, was reinforcing neighborhood segregation by adopting "the unwritten law of the Troost line" as the boundary separating white and African American populations in Kansas City.[14] The following events further underscore the district's reluctance to prioritize school integration:

- On July 25, 1963, KCMSD Superintendent James Hazlett met with the KCMSD Board to review the Board's position on school integration. Among other things,

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[14] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

he proposed that the Board "accepts the principle of promoting integration as one of many factors to be considered, but it does not believe that priority should be given to this above all other factors."

- On August 1, 1963, the Board adopted a policy statement declaring that "integration is a factor to be taken into account within the school system whenever it is possible to do so without destroying the fundamental principle of the school as a major service unit to the neighborhood of which it is part."[15]

Throughout the early 1960s, the local African American-owned newspaper, the *Kansas City Call,* repeatedly condemned the school board's segregative practices, noting how racially identifiable schools contributed to the maintenance of segregated neighborhoods and that segregative school board policies interlocked with the discriminatory activities of local real estate firms and agents to perpetuate Troost Avenue as a racially identifiable school attendance boundary.[16] Over the next decade, local civil rights groups and a number of neighborhood coalitions staged numerous protests at KCMSD board meetings demanding that the school board extend attendance zones across Troost Avenue. During this time, the school board repeatedly justified its segregative school attendance boundary policies on the grounds that "neighborhood unity," "neighborhood autonomy," and "neighborhood stability" had to be preserved before school integration could go forward.

The frequent shifts in attendance areas of its schools was essentially removing white areas from the western-most portions of its racial transitional zones and attaching them to all-white zones that were further west (see Figure 3.4). Kansas City Missouri School District

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[15] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."
[16] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

continued to be one of the most segregated (and underfunded) school systems in the nation

into the 1970s. Using Troost Avenue as a racially identifiable school boundary post-Brown

caused residents to associate east of Troost with Black neighborhoods and west of Troost

with white neighborhoods. Physical markings on a map meant to separate communities into

Black and a white occurred in Kansas City in the 1920s and 1930s.[17]
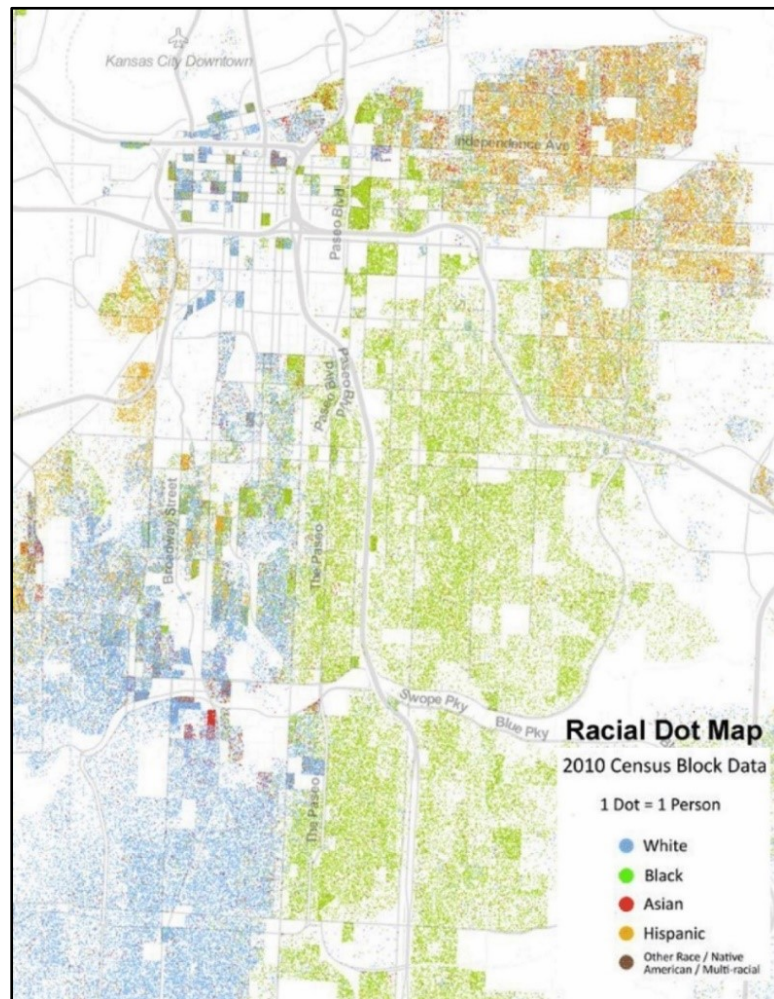
[17] Megan Dillard, "Unrest Sparks Scrutiny into Redlining Development and the Racial Divide in Kansas City," Fox 4 News, June 10, 2020, https://fox4kc.com/news/recent-events-have-many-examining-how-redlining-development-caused-racial-divide-in-kansas-city/.

Figure 3.4. Racial Dot Map: Demographics East and West of Troost in 2010. Troost Avenue was cited as one of the most prominent racial and socioeconomic borders in Kansas City. Briana O'Higgins, "Data Maps Show Troost as Racial, Economic, and Educational Divide," KCUR (NPR in Kansas City), May 16, 2014, https://www.kcur.org/community/2014-05-16/data-maps-show-troost-as-racial-economic-and-educational-divide. Photo courtesy of Weldon Cooper Center For Public Service/University Of Virginia.

The systemic problems within Kansas City schools started with the invisible line drawn at Troost Avenue in the 1950s and at least in racial makeup and housing, disparities still exist today. Tanner Colby, author of *Some of My Best Friends are Black,* wrote, "Still today, nearly every zip code, every census tract, every voting ward—and for a long time, every school district—all split along Troost."[18] There have been extensive efforts to erase the line of Black versus white, rich versus poor that you can still see along Troost Avenue (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6).

Figure 3.5. Comparison of 31st and Troost in 1954 versus 2010. Before white flight, the area was a thriving epicenter for shopping. By 2010 it was lined with mostly dilapidated buildings

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[18] Tanner Colby, *Some of My Best Friends are Black: The Strange Story of Integration in America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2012), 77.

and vacant lots. Diane Euston and Tim Reidy, "Dissecting the Troost Divide and Racial Segregation in Kansas City," *The New Santa Fe Trailer,* June 30, 2020, https://newsantafetrailer.blogspot.com/2020/06/dissecting-troost-divide-and-racial.html.

Figure 3.6. Comparison of 31st and Troost in 1954 versus 2010. Before white flight, the area was a thriving epicenter for shopping. By 2010 it was lined with mostly dilapidated buildings and vacant lots. Diane Euston and Tim Reidy, "Dissecting the Troost Divide and Racial Segregation in Kansas City," *The New Santa Fe Trailer,* June 30, 2020, https://newsantafetrailer.blogspot.com/2020/06/dissecting-troost-divide-and-racial.html.

Jenkins v. Missouri, Missouri v. Jenkins, and Magnet Schools

In the 1970s, Kansas City remained one of the most segregated school systems in the nation. A 1973 lawsuit was filed by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) alleging unlawful segregation and demanding desegregation in the high schools.[19] The school board responded by adopting an integration plan that affected only seventeen of the district's ninety-eight schools. The district bused about seven hundred of the district's 65,000 students,

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[19] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

and not surprisingly, the plan ultimately failed. Although the case was eventually dropped, other investigations quickly followed.

In 1977, the Kansas City Missouri School District, the superintendent, members of the school board, and the children of school board members sued the states of Kansas and Missouri, eighteen school districts, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Transportation (DOT) in what would become Kansas City's landmark desegregation case, *Jenkins* v. *State of Missouri*.[20] The plaintiffs argued that after 1954, Missouri failed to take the required affirmative steps to eliminate the vestiges of its prior racially segregated dual school system, and in fact perpetuated racial segregation through discriminatory housing practices (see Figure 3.7). However, Western District Court of Missouri Judge Russell Clark dismissed all of the Kansas defendants and realigned KCMSD as a single defendant.

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[20] Green III and Baker, "Urban Legends."

Figure 3.7. Decades after the U.S. Supreme Court said segregation was illegal, the Kansas City district continued to change school boundaries to avoid integration. Photo courtesy of the *Kansas City Star*.

On June 14, 1985, the district court held that past segregation and the need to attract and maintain white enrollment justified a remedy that included reduction in class sizes, implementation of summer school programs, full-day kindergarten, before and after school tutoring, early childhood development programs, magnet school programs, staff development programs, volunteer inter-district transfer programs, and capital improvements. In total, the plans included $260 million in capital improvements and a magnet school plan costing over $200 million.[21]

In June 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the central legal tenet of Kansas City's desegregation plan, ruling 5-4 in *Missouri v. Jenkins* that the district court had had no authority to order expenditures for the purpose of attracting suburban whites. Chief Justice

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[21] Jenkins v. Missouri, 639 F. Supp. 19, 26, 32–41 (W.D. Mo. 1985).

William Rehnquist said the district court had improperly tried to transform the KCMSD into a magnet district to draw white students from surrounding districts without evidence that suburban districts had done anything to cause school segregation by violating the Constitution. Specifically, he notified the district court that its ultimate objective was not to achieve racial integration but "to restore state and local authorities to control" of the school district. The majority opinion held that once the vestiges of legally enforced segregation were removed, it would not be illegal for the school district to maintain and run racially segregated all-Black or all-white schools.

The End of *Missouri vs. Jenkins*

Judge Russell Clark's call for a complete overhaul of the school district in the mid-1980s came at a cost that exceeded more than two billion dollars. Every high school and middle school and half the district's elementary schools became magnet schools with special themes such as classical Greek, Slavic studies, and agribusiness (see Figure 3.8). Special themes required special facilities, such as petting zoos, robotics labs, and a model United Nations facility with simultaneous translation capability.[22] The hope was that all of these new facilities and advancements would attract 5,000 to 10,000 white students back to the district, but the plan failed. The largest number of white students ever enrolled was 1,500—and most returned to their old schools after one year. Test scores continued to fall.[23]

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[22] Joshua M. Dunn, *Complex Justice: The Case of Missouri V. Jenkins* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[23] Diane Euston, "Segregation in KC: How the School District Helped Create the Troost Divide," *The Martin City Telegraph,* July 19, 2020, https://martincitytelegraph.com/2020/07/19/segregation-in-kc-how-the-school-district-helped-create-the-troost-divide/.
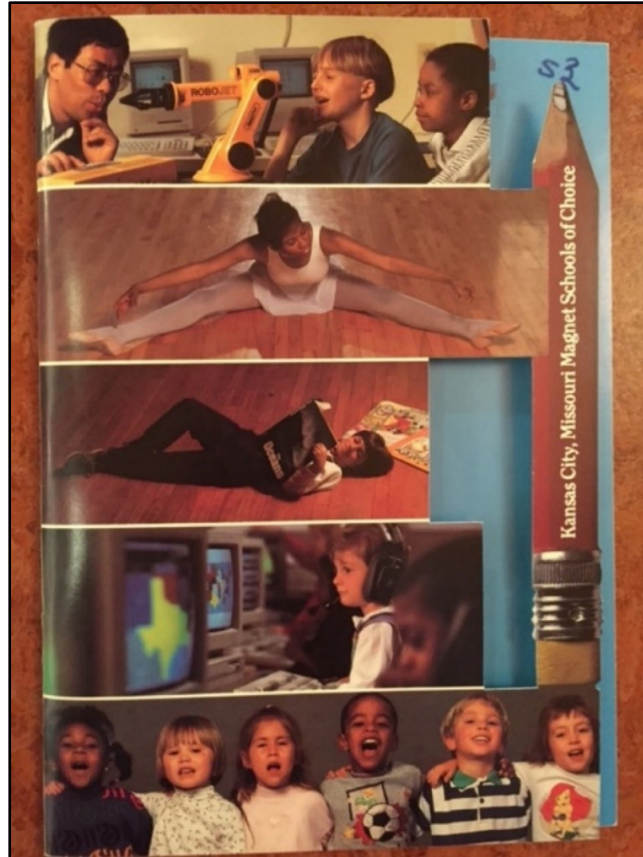
Figure 3.8. *Kansas City, Missouri Magnet Schools of Choice* Handbook. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library.

By the time he recused himself from the case in March 1997, Clark had approved dozens of increases and the district had built fifteen new schools and had renovated fifty-four others. The end of *Missouri vs. Jenkins* and the desegregation plan was led by Judge Dean Whipple. Several important developments also overlapped with the termination of the case.

- The first was a return to neighborhood schools. Under the direction of the school board president, Edward Newsome, and with the support of Black and Hispanic community leaders, the KCMSD school board voted to return to a largely neighborhood-based system.

- A second development was a permanent decrease in the KCMSD property taxes. When judicial supervision ended, the property tax rate would roll back from $4.96 per $100 of assessed value to $2.75. With no state money coming in after 2000, the KCMSD would lose an additional eighty million dollars a year in tax revenue if the case ended.

- A third development was the establishment of charter schools.[24]

Unfortunately, stabilization for the KCMSD seemed unattainable. Well into the next century, the district would be haunted by its past desegregation woes and impending challenges with competing entities.

Kansas City School District in the Twenty-first Century, 2000–2014

The early part of the century brought much instability. From 2000 to 2014, the Kansas City Missouri School District struggled to maintain consistent leadership as seven different superintendents came and went. By October 2000, the State of Missouri revoked the district's accreditation and effectively ended the state's responsibility for paying the costs of desegregation. The Missouri legislature also passed a law permitting charter schools in St. Louis and Kansas City, starting in the 1999–2000 school year. Since their inception, charter schools have been immensely popular in Kansas City and detrimental to the Kansas City Missouri School District. In 1999, fifteen charter schools opened, enrolling 4,500 students.[25] Additionally, although local charter schools showed no better results than their KCMSD counterparts, seats filled quickly, creating severe problems for the district through a

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[24] Dunn, *Complex Justice.*
[25] Dunn, *Complex Justice.*

loss of money and teachers. In the charter schools' first year alone, the KCMSD lost fifteen million dollars in state aid.

As the district has struggled to retain superintendents and accreditation, previous administrations also struggled to manage assets and finances. As the years passed, the district remained active in the headlines with a series of ongoing major events.

- In 2007, voters overwhelmingly approved the transfer of seven schools to the Independence School District.

- In 2010, the district closed more than twenty schools due to declining enrollment.

- The district lost its accreditation in 2011 but regained provisional accreditation from the state in 2014.[26]

According to the Kansas City Public Schools[27] website, in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, KCMSD closed at least thirty buildings. In 2010, district superintendent John Covington submitted a plan calling for the closure of twenty-nine of the district's remaining sixty-one schools. By that year, droves of students left their district schools to attend charter schools, private schools, parochial schools, and schools in suburban school districts. As of 2010, the school district had less than 18,000 students, half of its enrollment in 2000 and 25 percent of its peak population in the 1990s (see Figure 3.9). Over the years, the Kansas City Missouri School District and Hickman Mills C-1 experienced similar fates, both becoming all too familiar with persistent change.

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[26] "History of KCPS," Kansas City Public Schools, n.d., https://www.kcpublicschools.org/about/history.
[27] In March 2013, Kansas City Missouri School District officially changed its name to Kansas City Public Schools, according to Policy AA of its Board Policies. Kansas City Public Schools, 2023, https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=228&revid=fecQqVlvVxFZHySuSoaIZw==&ptid=amIgTZiB9plushNjl6WXhfiOQ==&secid=&PG=6&IRP=0&isPndg=false.
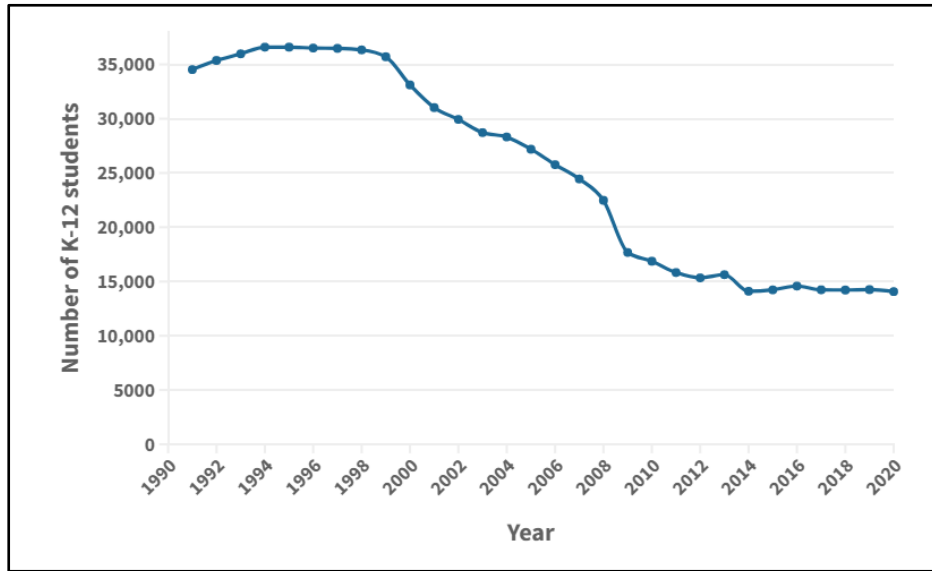
Figure 3.9. Chart showing Kansas City, Missouri School District Enrollment according to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *The Kansas City Beacon.*

CHAPTER 4

"IT USED TO BE A GOOD DISTRICT": THE URBANIZATION OF THE HICKMAN

MILLS C-1 SCHOOL DISTRICT, 1902–2014

Black people love their children with a kind of obsession.
You are all we have, and you come to us endangered. [1]

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

While Chapters 2 and 3 provided the historical background to education and

schooling in Kansas City, Chapter 4 is devoted to how the Hickman Mills C-1 School

District was created and its transformation from a suburban district to an urban district. In

parallel to what was occurring in Kansas City, Hickman Mills C-1 was experiencing its own

struggles with integration and transformation. A significant part of the district's history often

discussed is its transformation from a "suburban" school district to an "urban" school district.

This is in reference to the change in the demographics of the district and surrounding

community over time. "It used to be a good district" was a sentiment expressed by numerous

residents of the community and Hickman Mills C-1 staff when reflecting on the district's

transformation. As Black families moved in, white families moved out. As lower-income

families moved in, middle-class families moved out. This change had a tremendous impact

on the community and subsequently the district.

Consolidation and the Early Years

In 1850, Edwin A. Hickman bought ten acres of land east of Longview Road and

built a flour mill, "Hickman's Mill," and donated neighboring land for a church. The village,

named after Hickman, was originally known as Hickman's Mill until 1968. When the U.S.

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[1] Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Melbourne, VIC, Australia: Text Publishing, 2015).

post office opened in the area, a clerical error in writing the title resulted in Hickman's Mill

becoming Hickman Mills.[2] Early dates of historical significance in Hickman Mills C-1

include:

> 1885 – First public school of Union Point.
> 1870 – First public school of Holmes Park
> 1873 – First public school of Rockford
> 1890 – First public school of Hickman Mills
> 1901 – The laws change permitting two or more districts to consolidate into one and Ruskin High School was the first school built as "Consolidated School District #1."[3]

By the start of the twentieth century, publicly financed elementary schools were

firmly established, but the struggle for high schools continued. Boston, Massachusetts,

opened the first free public high school in 1820, but most high schools at that time existed

only in a small number of urban, middle-class areas, and had entrance exam requirements.[4]

During this time, many Americans had traditionally worked in jobs that required little

schooling. As late as 1870, only about 10 percent of the labor force worked in an occupation

that typically required an education beyond the elementary school years, and the other 90

percent were employed in jobs that did not.[5]

Economic changes during the late nineteenth century demonstrated that a better-

educated workforce was necessary. To meet the challenges of a new economy, the United

States began building public high schools and enrolling students en masse to prepare the next

generation academically and vocationally for the working world. With this new practical

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[2] Jill Canon, "Hickman Mills Began as a Typo," *Kansas City Star,* May 5, 1991, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library Vertical File.

[3] Jane Carroll, "Hickman Mills Traces Name to Original Mill," *Kansas City Star,* September 11, 1997, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library Vertical File.

[4] Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902–2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002), 40.

[5] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, *The Race between Education and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

focus, the American high school movement was born, and Missouri's first consolidated school district played a role in that historic and progressive movement.

In 1901, three prominent figures in Hickman Mills' early history—Orlando Slaughter, T.T. Moore, and William Johnson—combined their efforts to support legislation that would make school consolidation possible. By April 1902, the voters of Holmes Park, Union Point, Rockford, and Hickman Mills approved consolidation and passed a bond issue for $3,250.[6] For half a century, the district was officially called Consolidated School District No. 1. From its formation in 1902 to its transformation in the face of the population explosion of the 1950s, Hickman Mills C-1 consistently developed its buildings and updated facilities to keep up with population growth. The four original common schools were expanded and then completely rebuilt to accommodate more students and provide better educational experiences (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2).
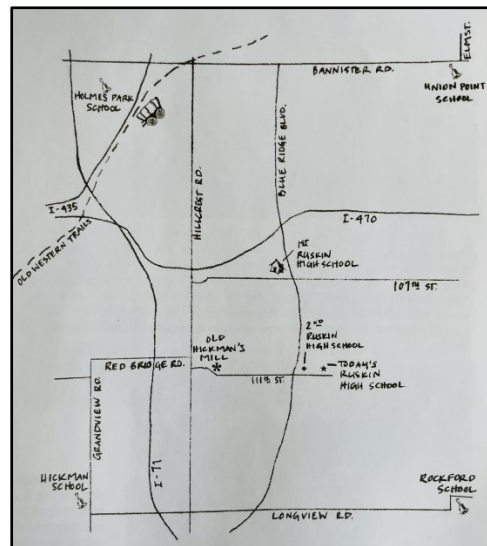
Figure 4.1. The original grammar schools in Missouri's first consolidated school district represented the geographic four corners of an area in central Washington Township, Jackson

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[6] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future.*

County. Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002).

Figure 4.2. Minutes from the first C-1 School Board meeting, April 26, 1902. Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002).

District Expansion and Change

Hickman Mills as a community, changed from a rural village south of Kansas City to a working-class suburb after the expansion of Kansas City. In the months following the end of World War II, communities across the nation experienced a critical demand for new housing.[7] The post-war years brought forth a massive increase in real estate development,

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[7] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future,* 63.

particularly on the outskirts of large cities. Farming communities were soon divided and

subdivided into a phenomenon known as the suburbs.[8] By 1953, the first thirty homes in the

suburb, Ruskin Heights, were occupied; within six months, one thousand additional homes

were built in the district.

Weathering Storms: The Tornado and Racial Unrest

Figure 4.3. Aerial view of the damage caused by the tornado that ravaged the Ruskin Heights
community. Image courtesy of the Kansas City Public Library.

The community and district construction boom was halted May 20, 1957, by the F5

tornado that barreled through parts of Kansas and Missouri. Reports indicated that forty-four

individuals across Kansas and Missouri lost their lives that night. Another 531 were injured.[9]

More than six hundred homes and two schools, Ruskin High School and Ruskin Junior High

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[8] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future,* 63.

[9] Michael Wells, "The Ruskin Heights Tornado: Sixty Years Since," Kansas City Public Library Digital
History, May 17, 2017, https://kchistory.org/blog/ruskin-heights-tornado-sixty-years.

School, were completely destroyed, and Burke Elementary School was seriously damaged.[10]

Cheryl Farris, resident of the Ruskin Heights area, recalls her experience:

> Well, it was May of '57. I was in third grade at Burke school. Ms. Brown was my teacher, and that was the year my grandfather had passed away, so my maternal grandmother was staying with us and her sister. It was just a really windy, windy day and maybe it came on television that there was a tornado going on because we didn't have the sirens. Aunt Lois said, we all need to get in the car and drive away from it. So, eight of us are in this car and we're packed in like sardines. We drive up to Longview Road and I never did see it, but we saw this stuff, debris flying in the air. We drove and drove around and then came back home, our house was not hit and so our neighborhood ... is in good shape, but we needed to check on my dad's cousin.
>
> The next day dad goes to work because there's phone out there. He starts calling around to find his cousin Bud, his wife, and Bud's mother. They had made it across the street to the house that had a basement. As my great aunt was going through the garage door a car was blown over them. And a child fell out of the car and fell on her, breaking her leg, but it broke his fall and saved his life.[11]

Despite the devastation, the response to repair and rebuild the Hickman Mills community was swift. In *A Journey to Our Future,* Parkison outlines how the efforts were supported and the school district was revived.

> Sympathetic response to victims was overwhelming. Scores of doctors and health care workers showed up. … Organizations of every kind started fundraising drives. … Churches, schools and private homes opened to admit homeless victims…and less than 10 months after the tornado, Ruskin High School was rebuilt.[12]

While white residents of the Hickman Mills community focused on rebuilding homes and schools, Black families in Kansas City were navigating attendance zones, limited housing options, and continued racial segregation (see Figure 4.4).

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[10] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future,* 71.
[11] Cheryl Farris, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, April 8, 2022.
[12] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future*, 75–9.

Figure 4.4. A neighborhood in Hickman Mills destroyed by the tornado that hit in 1957.
Image courtesy of the *Kansas City Times*.

Virtually every school the KCMSD built after 1954 opened either all-white or all-

Black. Until 1976, attendance zones did not cross Troost, despite overcrowding in African

American schools east of Troost and underutilization of white schools west of Troost.

Segregative school actions in this crucial period established Troost Avenue as a cognitive

racial boundary, later to be referred to by local residents as the "Troost Wall" that real estate

"blockbusters" manipulated to stimulate white flight from neighborhoods east of Troost

Avenue.[13] Eventually, the creation of low-income housing and larger numbers of Black

families seemingly sent a message that white residents needed to adapt to the changing

community or leave. This marked the beginning of the "urbanization" of Hickman Mills.

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[13] Gotham, "Missed Opportunities."

On January 1, 1961, after a citywide community vote, Hickman Mills became South Kansas City. The expansion towards the south included annexing unincorporated lands within the Hickman Mills C-1 School District. The geographic location of Kansas City limited its expansion to the west side by the state border with Kansas, and by other bordering and growing suburban cities such as Grandview, Raytown, Lee's Summit, Gladstone, and North Kansas City.[14] The Hickman Mills village ceased to exist, and through annexation, it now had access to needed amenities such as a police force, municipal officers, sewage disposal program, and fire department. Although the neighborhoods comprising Hickman Mills were incorporated by Kansas City, Missouri, and fit the definition of an urban community, residents preferred to identify themselves with the school district instead of the city. Hickman Mills became a part of Kansas City, but the Hickman Mills C-1 School District remained a separate school system. The school boundaries became the borders for Hickman Mills as a suburban community in the minds of the local residents, as school identity became the symbol of a separation between the southern Kansas City neighborhoods and the city itself.[15]

Throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s, the leadership of Hickman Mills occupied its time with local battles over taxation, school construction, and addressing overcrowding. Well after the *Brown v. Board* decision, residents in the all-white geographic area of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District seemed oblivious and unaffected by the landmark ruling. The community in Hickman Mills did not began to publicly address integration until it was

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[14] Aaron Rife, "Shifting Identities in South Kansas City: Hickman Mills's Transformation from a Suburban to Urban School District" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2014), https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/15154.
[15] Rife, "Shifting Identities in South Kansas City."

confronted with the possibility of joining the Kansas City Missouri School District in 1964

and again in 1969, when a statewide plan was proposed. Hickman Mills C-1 School District,

Raytown, and other blue-collar suburbs surrounding cities in the North became known for

their hostility and aggression directed at African Americans. This reputation was effective in

deterring Black settlement.[16] Eventually, however, more African American families with the

means to buy a home or rent at market rates began to settle in the area.

During the 1968–1969 school year, nearly fifteen years after *Brown v. Board of*

Education, Hickman Mills C-1 School District enrolled its first Black students: siblings

Robert Jr. and Gay-linn Gatewood[17] (see Figure 4.5). The spring and summer of 1968 was

also a tumultuous time of civil unrest across the United States. Riots, triggered by the

assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and deeply rooted issues, erupted in more than one

hundred cities nationwide, including Kansas City.

Figure 4.5. Robert Gatewood, Jr. (lower left) in the *Leprechaun,* the yearbook of Baptiste
Junior High School in 1968. Photo courtesy of Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future:*

[16] John L. Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).
[17] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future,* 92.

The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002 (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002).

The Kansas City riots of 1968 were ignited when school officials would not close Kansas City public schools in deference to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated on April 4 that year. Funeral services for the civil rights icon were scheduled for April 9. Several school districts in the Kansas City area closed to allow students and the community to mourn, including Kansas City Kansas Public Schools.

The night before King's funeral, Kansas City Missouri School District held an administrative meeting, during which Superintendent James Hazlett decided schools would remain open.[18] Within two days, a three-block-wide section of town running down Prospect Avenue lay in ruins. Over 1,700 National Guard troops and seven hundred policemen battled to maintain order and put out fires. Nearly three hundred arrests were made, mostly of young Black men. Tragically, six Black citizens died in the violence (see Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7).[19]

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[18] Dia Wall, "1968 Kansas City Race Riots: Then and Now," 41KSHB, November 15, 2019, https://www.kshb.com/longform/1968-kansas-city-race-riots-then-now.

[19] Jason Roe, "And Then It Happened," KC History, March 16, 2018, https://kchistory.org/week-kansas-city-history/and-then-it-happened.

Figure 4.6. Bruce R. Watkins, with a fist raised, leads student protestors in a march on I-70, 1968. Photo courtesy of LaBudde Special Collections, UMKC Library.

Later that year after the violent police response to the student-led walkouts and the burning and disorder that followed, the mayor created a city commission on civil disorder. Recommendations from the committee included improving the quality and availability of housing, a plan to improve trash pickup, suggestions for how to better maintain city neighborhoods, and giving Kansas City local control of its own police department. The lack of local control allowed the state instead of the city to decide how to direct police response to the protests in 1968, and it prevents the city from having full control of its police budget today.[20]

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[20] Kynala Phillips, "KC Black History: KCQ Reflects on 1968 Student-led Civil Rights Walkouts that Shook the City," *The Kansas City Star*, March 6, 2022, https://www.kansascity.com/news/your-kcq/article258307148.html.

Figure 4.7. Students and community members gathered at City Hall with a heavy police presence, 1968. LaBudde Special Collections, UMKC Library.

The riots that ensued after Dr. King's death represented loss and fueled feelings of hopelessness. King had represented the promise of a better life for African Americans. But with his death, that hope seemed to have died, too.[21] The racial tensions in Kansas City and across the United States that existed in 1968 were left unresolved. By 1970, the schools in Hickman Mills and other Missouri suburban schools were still mostly segregated, with only two of the urban core Kansas City districts serving large numbers of minority families, most of which were African American (see Table 4.1).

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[21] Erin Blakemore, "Why People Rioted After Martin Luther King Jr.'s Assassination," History, December 13, 2021, https://www.history.com/news/mlk-assassination-riots-occupation.

DISTRICT	POPULATION	MINORITY PERCENT*	MEDIAN INCOME (DOLLARS)	ADULT HS GRADS (PERCENT)
Center	33,581	2	12,630	71
Grandview	17,894	3	10,906	70
Hickman Mills	47,882	1	11,712	72
Independence	67,643	2	10,684	60
Kansas City, Kansas	155,923	40	9,024	47
Kansas City, Missouri	370,109	35	8,803	50
Lee's Summit	21,749	1	11,132	67
Liberty	16,014	3	10,498	64
North Kansas City	87,451	1	11,470	66
Raytown	59,586	1	12,120	67
Shawnee Mission	182,470	1	14,037	83

Table 4.1. Kansas City Metropolitan School Districts: Economic, Social, and Demographic Profiles in 1970. John Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

The 1990s marked the beginning of the shift Hickman Mills experienced from being a predominately white, lower middle-class suburb of Kansas City into "an extension of Kansas City, Missouri." This affiliated Hickman Mills with all the problems and negative perceptions that plagued Kansas City. By the early part of the twenty-first century, Hickman Mills began to experience a similar fate as it transformed from a quiet village, to suburb, and finally, to an extension of the Kansas City urban core (see Table 4.2). In 1991, with Black students making up 37 percent of its enrollment, Hickman Mills C-1 had the third largest Black student population in the metropolitan area.[22]

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[22] Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future.*
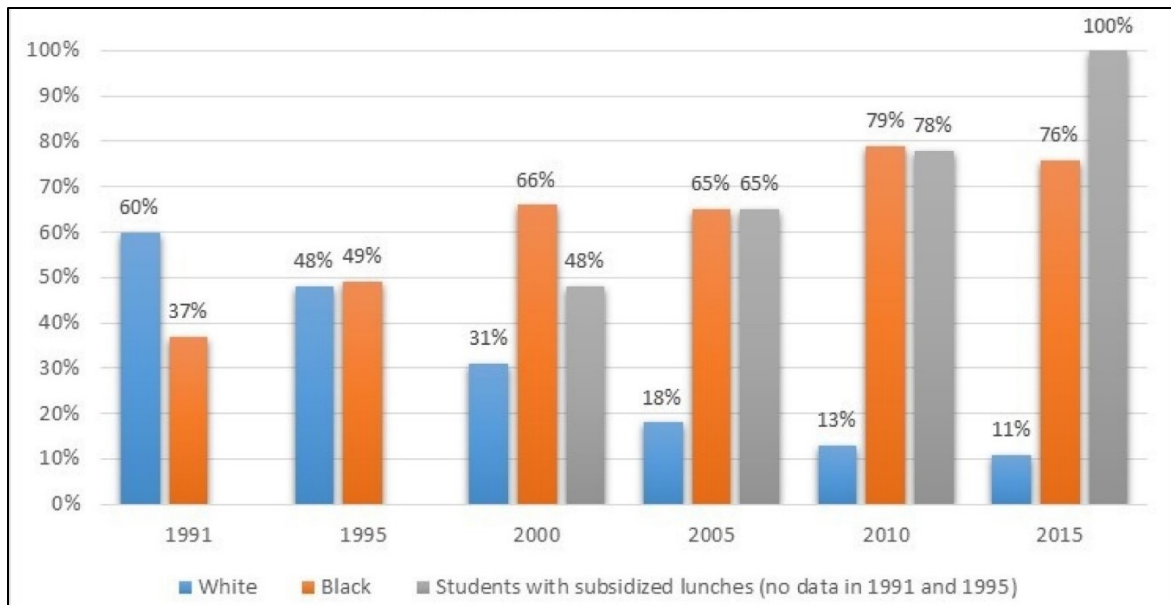
Table 4.2. Hickman Mills C-1School District Student Enrollment, 1991–2015. About 76 percent of Hickman Mills' students were African American, with white students and Hispanic students each accounting for about 10 percent of enrollment. Nearly all of the district's students at this time came from households that qualified for free or reduced lunches based on income. Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Barbara Shelly, "This Longtime Hickman Mills Teacher Has Witnessed Economic Slide in the District," KCUR (NPR in Kansas City), October 11, 2016, https://www.kcur.org/community/2016-10-11/this-longtime-hickman-mills-teacher-has-witnessed-economic-slide-in-the-district.

Hickman Mills C-1 in the Twenty-first Century

As the student demographics continued to change, so did the face of leadership in the district. In 2000, Dr. Marjorie (Marj) Williams became the first African American to serve as the district's superintendent (see Figure 4.8). Leading the district for twelve years, Dr. Williams inherited a Hickman Mills C-1 that was facing a decline in enrollment and funds. She led a resolution to decrease the district's operating budget by five million dollars in 2009, to close Hickman High School and merge it with Ruskin High in 2010, then cut the budget by another three million dollars, and eliminated twenty-eight teachers in 2011.

The district was experiencing decreased revenues, vacant buildings, and enrollment and was struggling to maintain enough funding to operate the schools. Decreasing property values, lack of sufficient funding, and a dwindling student population forced Hickman Mills C-1 School District to reduce in size. An annual progress report (APR) released by the state in August 2011 showed that the district received just seven out of fourteen APR points in 2011–2012. As a result, the loss of full accreditation was recommended by state education commissioner Dr. Chris Nicastro and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Dr. Williams retired in December 2012, and the district set out to find its next leader.

Figure 4.8. Dr. Marjorie Williams, former Hickman Mills C-1 superintendent, and children from each of the elementary schools at the groundbreaking ceremonies on April 20, 2001. Jami Parkison, *The Journey to Our Future: The History of Hickman Mills C-1 School District 1902-2002* (Kansas City, MO: Hickman Mills C-1 School District, 2002).

CHAPTER 5

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE: THE DEVELOPMENT AND

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HICKMAN MILLS C-1 SCHOOL DISTRICT'S

RACIAL EQUITY POLICY

> Discussions and debates about racism create anxiety and conflict, which are handled differently by different cultural groups. For example, whites tend to fear open discussion of racial problems because they believe that such discussion will stir up hard feelings and old hatreds. Whites tend to believe that heated arguments about racism lead to divisiveness, loss of control, bitter conflict, and even violence. Blacks on the other hand, believe that discussion and debate about racism help to push racial problems to the surface—and perhaps, force society to deal with them.[1]   —Gerald Pine and Asa Hilliard

The expansion and transformation of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District brought a shift in student demographics and challenges related to addressing the needs of an urban school district. According to DESE, students of color (non-white) made up 30.1 percent of the district's student population in 1991. By 2003, that number more than doubled to 73.2 percent, and in 2015, the percentage of students of color (non-white) had reached nearly 90 percent.

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[1] Gerald J. Pine and Asa G. Hilliard, "Rx for Racism: Imperatives for America's Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 71 (1990): 596.

Figure 5.1. Ruskin High School in the Hickman Mills C-1 School District, circa 2021. *Eagle's Eye News* [school newspaper], http://www.ruskinnews.com/.

   The development of the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy was a strategy to respond to the needs of the demographic it currently served and subsequently, improve overall student performance. The district's history of changing demographics, challenges in academic performance, and societal dynamics became the catalyst for exploring a "different" approach to educating students in a predominately Black school district (see Table 4.3).

Year	Asian	Asian Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	Indian	Multi Racial	Pacific Islander	White	Total
1991	*	*	2718 37.3%	105 1.4%	24 0.3%	*	*	4356 59.9%	7278
1997	*	*	4047 56.2%	154 2.1%	22 0.3%	*	*	2913 40%	7196
2003	*	*	5307 71%	281 3.8%	22 0.3%	*	*	1774 23.7%	7478
2009	*	*	5394 79.7%	416 6.1%	10 0.1%	*	*	848 12.5%	6765
2015	91 1.5%	*	4710 75.5%	555 8.9%	15 0.2%	184 3%	17 0.3%	664 10.6%	6236

Table 4.3. Hickman Mills Demographic and Enrollment Data, 1991–2015. "2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look: Key Data Highlights on Equity and Opportunity Gaps in our Nation's Public Schools," U.S Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, June 7, 2016, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf.

   The need for change did not apply only to Hickman or schools in Missouri. The need to address racial disparities in schools and districts had become a national call to action. In 2016, The U.S. Department of Education released 2013–2014 data on key topics such as student discipline, early learning access, teacher and staffing equity, access to courses and programs that foster college and career readiness, and chronic student absenteeism. A sampling of the results from the 2013–2014 Civil Rights Data Collection survey included the following disturbing statistics:

- **Black public preschool children are suspended from school at high rates:** Black preschool children are 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as white preschool children.
- **Racial disparities in suspensions are also apparent in K-12 schools:**
  - While 6 percent of all K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, the percentage is 18 percent for Black boys; 10 percent for Black girls; 5 percent for white boys; and 2 percent for white girls.

- **Black students are expelled from school at disproportionately high rates:**
  - Black students are 1.9 times as likely to be expelled from school without educational services as white students.
  - Black boys represent 8 percent of all students, but 19 percent of students expelled without educational services. Black girls are 8 percent of all students, but 9 percent of students expelled without educational services.

- **Black students are more likely to be disciplined through law enforcement:**
  - Black students are 2.2 times as likely to receive a referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest as white students.

- **Black and Latino students have less access to high-level math and science courses**.

- **English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color are more likely to be retained or held back in high school**:
  - Students with disabilities served by IDEA and English learners are 12 percent and 5 percent of high school student enrollment, but 22 percent and 11 percent of high school students held back or retained.
  - Black students are 16 percent of high school students but 30 percent of high school students retained, while white students are 53 percent of high school students but 31 percent of high school students retained.
  - Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and multiracial high school students are also retained at disproportionately high rates, representing 27 percent of high school students but 35 percent of high school students retained.

- **Black, Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native students are more likely to attend schools with higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers.**[2]

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[2] "2013–14 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look: Key Data Highlights on Equity and Opportunity Gaps in our Nation's Public Schools," U.S Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, June 7, 2016, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf.

The 2015–2016 Civil Rights Data Collection survey, released in 2018, reflected that students of color were still disproportionately disciplined, suspended, and expelled more often than white students.[3] It is overly harsh disciplinary policies and punishments that push students down the pipeline and into the juvenile justice system. The phenomenon known as the "school to prison pipeline" is easy to push students into but challenging for most to get out of. Suspended and expelled children are often left unsupervised and without constructive activities; they also can easily fall behind in their coursework, leading to a greater likelihood of disengagement and drop-outs.[4] All of these factors increase the likelihood of court involvement. Despite the release of this compelling data, very little has been reported about how districts could and should address these concerns. Little noise equated to minimal concern, and most of these statistics were just standard operating procedures. Hickman Mills C-1 was one of the districts in Missouri that attempted to address racial disparities by creating and implementing its own district racial equity policy.

The Why

In 2012, the district's mission to "educate our students for a lifetime of success," would prove to be an uphill battle. The year brought with it substantial job cuts, a superintendent going into retirement, and probably most discouraging, the loss of full accreditation status by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Earning just seven out of fourteen points on the Missouri Annual Performance Report, the

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[3] "2015–2016 Civil Rights Data Collection: School Climate and Safety," U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, April 2018, https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/school-climate-and-safety.pdf.
[4] "School to Prison Pipeline," American Civil Liberties Union, 2023, https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/juvenile-justice-school-prison-pipeline.

district's overall performance was a combination of low assessment scores and decreasing

attendance rates. Over the next two years, the district saw little improvement in its

Figure 5.2. Hickman Mills C-1 School District former Superintendent Dennis Carpenter and staff hosting a press conference expressing concerns about state testing methods that ignored the economic and technological inequities that most of the students in the district faced. Cody Newill, "Hickman Mills School Officials Say State Testing Discriminated Against Students." KCUR (NPR in Kansas City), October 23, 2015, https://www.kcur.org/education/2015-10-23/hickman-mills-school-officials-say-state-testing-discriminated-against-students.

performance and more decline in the surrounding community. On July 1, 2013, Dr. Dennis

Carpenter was hired to provide new direction and a sense of hope to a district that was still

provisionally accredited by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and still

struggling to find its footing. He would start the 2013–2014 school year with a vision to

address student achievement by tackling institutional racism.

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the

Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) has the responsibility of reviewing and

accrediting the public school districts in Missouri. The process of accrediting school districts

is mandated by state law and by State Board of Education regulation. To measure progress and to distinguish among school and district performance, DESE generates an Annual Performance Report (APR) score for districts. This overall score is comprised of the MSIP five Performance Standards: (1) Academic Achievement, (2) Subgroup Achievement, (3) High School Readiness (K-8 districts) or College and Career Readiness (K-12 districts), (4) Attendance Rate, and (5) Graduation Rate (K-12 districts). Three distinct metrics focusing on status, progress, and growth (where applicable) are used. Annual Performance Reports are based on the performance standards and are reviewed for accreditation purposes at the district level. DESE dropped Hickman Mills C-1 from 70.7 percent compliant with state standards in 2014 to 59.3 percent in 2015. Most of that decrease came from science scores in grades five and eight on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests.

The science results and the negative impact they had on the district's overall performance elicited a strong response from Dr. Carpenter. He first initiated a press release that included an appeal letter addressed to the Commissioner. The first two paragraphs illuminate the resolute disagreement and distress communicated by the superintendent on behalf of the district's stakeholders.

Dear Dr. Vandeven,

I write on behalf of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District. We wish to formally protest the State's methodology in calculating this year's MAP science performance assessments and subsequent Annual Performance Report. We also wish to object to the sudden, exclusive method of electronic testing for the science MAP test, which resulted in discrimination against our students. This discrimination stems from an inequity in access to educational technology in our economically disadvantaged school district.

This year's use of exclusive electronic testing for science discriminated against our students. The swift transition from pencil and paper testing to electronic testing failed

to provide sufficient time for our student population to assimilate to the electronic testing process. Hickman Mills C-1 students are financially disadvantaged, and 100% of our students qualify for free lunch. Most of our students do not utilize technology outside of school and have limited opportunities to interact with technology, even in school. These inequities should have been addressed prior to the state's complete and immediate conversion to electronic testing in science; not unlike what was done by DESE in both ELA and math...[5]

While concerns about DESE and the state assessment were common, I had not seen a superintendent openly confront and question the state assessment and testing practice. The cabinet, Board of Education, leaders, and staff admired Dr. Carpenter's courage but worried about how the state would respond to being publicly challenged. October 23, 2015, Dr. Carpenter held a press conference in the Hickman Mills C-1 board room. He expressed that most of the district's students were not technologically savvy due to economic disadvantages, and DESE failed to adequately prepare them for the new online tests. "I don't think the state recognized that the shift to technology-based assessments across the state would have an impact," Carpenter said. "DESE said, 'We're going to get you sample [online testing] tools, in July 2014.' We ended up getting them in late February, less than two months to the start of the testing window."[6]

Despite Carpenter's fierce advocacy, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education representatives defended the online testing process, noting that school districts were given ample time to prepare for online science testing. Based on the DESE Report Card for Hickman Mills C-1, between 2013 and 2015, the district met the 70 percent minimum

[5] Local Investment Commission (LINC), "Hickman Mills Challenges State Test Scores," KCLINC News, October 23, 2015, https://kclinc.org/news/2015/10/23/hickman-mills-challenges-state-test-scores.

[6] Cody Newill, "Hickman Mills School Officials Say State Testing Discriminated against Students," KCUR (NPR in Kansas City), October 23, 2015, https://www.kcur.org/education/2015-10-23/hickman-mills-school-officials-say-state-testing-discriminated-against-students.

percentage threshold for accreditation (see Table 5.1). The district has not met that target

since and has remained provisionally accredited since 2013 (see Table 5.2). The Department

reviews each district's accreditation status and the APR supporting data to identify trends and

status in performance outcomes. Other considerations include Comprehensive School

Improvement Plans, previous Department MSIP findings, financial status, compliance with

regulations and statutes, and superintendent certification.

	2013	2014	2015
APR Total Points	72.5/140	99.0/140	83.0/140
Percent of Points	51.8%	70.7%	59.3%

Table 5.1. Hickman Mills C-1 Annual Performance Report scores, 2013–2015. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools (DESE), Missouri Comprehensive Data System. Hickman Mills C-1 District Report Card 2013–2015, https://apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS/home.aspx?categoryid=14&view=2.

	2012	2013	2014	2015
HICKMAN MILLS C-1	Accredited	Provisionally Accredited	Provisionally Accredited	Provisionally Accredited

Table 5.2. Hickman Mills C-1 Accreditation Status, 2012–2015. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools (DESE), Missouri Comprehensive Data System. Hickman Mills C-1 District Report Card 2013–2015, https://apps.dese.mo.gov/MCDS/home.aspx?categoryid=14&view=2.

A district's accreditation classification remains intact until the State Board of

Education rules otherwise. The continued decline in academic performance and their

disapproval with the state assessment process left the superintendent and his Board of

Education to figure it out on their own. They were committed to acknowledging that

inequities existed and were willing to address the problem head on.

The Policy

Figure 5.3. Protester sign about privilege and racism. Center for the Study of Racism, Social Justice and Health.

Implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Policy started with the

adoption of the initial policy in 2015 (see Figure 5.4). Casey Klapmeyer, who served as the

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources during this time, reflects on how the racial

equity work began in the district and the beginning stages for creating a district racial equity

policy:

> Prior to Dr. Carpenter, I would say ... there were some discussions (about race) because back then there was No Child Left Behind. So, I mean, obviously, you were focused on your subgroups based on the APR scores that came out but nothing specific. I mean, the district work at that time focused on Ruby Payne and poverty,

like we had certified trainers in the district and focused on the socioeconomic status (SES) of students, rather than discussions about race.

It was a year after we started, and the Board had a retreat in June. Glenn Singleton came and did a presentation to the whole Board as part of that retreat that we were a part of. And so that was kind of the first official PD and him gauging (the board and the superintendent) like, can you do this? Are you going to be committed to this? Are you going to lean into this? And the board saying, Yeah, we want to do this."[7]

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Dennis L. Carpenter, ED.D.

RE: **Racial Equity Policy Adoption**

DATE: May 28, 2015

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends the adoption of Racial Equity Policy (Code TBD per MSBA Formatting).

BACKGROUND:

After spending a half day with the CEP/Founder of Pacific Education Group, during the Board's annual institute (June 14, 2014), the Board unanimously agreed to accelerate the work of advancing racial equity in our school district. Throughout this school term, the Board and administration (building and district), have engaged in training and professional growth opportunities designed to develop and accelerate the district's capacity to engage in systemic racial equity transformation and eliminate racial educational disparities. Given the desired outcomes achieved during year one, the Board has agreed to further accelerate this work in the coming school year via continued training at the governance leadership team level, introduction of this framework to faculty/staff at the building level and the certification of two district affiliates who will be trained to provide the pre-requisite *Beyond Diversity* training in our district. The final deliverable for the 2014-2015 school year work plan is the adoption of the district's racial equity policy. The adoption of this policy, in essence, provides our district with a clear framework that accelerates support for system-wide racial equity and the elimination of systemic practices that result in the predictably lower academic achievement of our students of color.

Figure 5.4. Racial Equity Policy Adoption Board of Education Memo, May 28, 2015. "Hickman Mills C-1 School District Racial Equity Policy Adoption Board of Education Memo, Board Meetings and Agendas," Board Docs, May 28, 2015, https://go.boarddocs.com/mo/hickmanmills/Board.nsf/Public.

On May 28, 2015, the racial equity policy was adopted by a unanimous vote. The 2014–2015 Hickman Mills C-1 Board of Education President, Karry Palmer, Vice President, Eric Lowe, and members Bonnaye Mims, Byron Townsend, Dan Osman, Darrel Curls, and Shawn Kirkwood agreed to adopt the district's racial equity policy as the final deliverable of their equity work plan for the school year (see Figure 5.5). Eager to uncover how the board

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[7] Casey Klapmeyer, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.

deliberated and reached their unanimous approval, I reached out to each board member to gather more insight. Hopeful to hear from at least three of the members, I was surprised that only two responded to my meeting requests, and only one member agreed to provide insight about this crucial board decision.

Figure 5.5. 2014-2015 Hickman Mills C-1 Board members attending a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Ervin Early Learning Center. Several members shown with the superintendent (center) include Eric Lowe, Dan Osman, Darrell Curls, Shawn Kirkwood, and Bonnaye Mims. "Hickman Mills Cuts the Ribbon for Ervin Early Learning Center," Local Investment Commission (LINC), February 19, 2015, https://kclinc.org/news/2015/2/19/hickman-mills-cuts-the-ribbon-for-ervin-early-learning-center.

Eric Lowe, former President and Vice President of the Board, shared that the board was confident in its decision to approve the racial equity policy and felt it was a necessary next step to addressing racial inequities throughout the district. There was anticipation surrounding the new superintendent being a Black male, and he immediately made note of the racial demographics of the staff in relation to the student population. This dynamic

brought racial tensions to the surface and motivated the board to act. Lowe noted that the

racial equity policy was an appropriate next step for the district after prioritizing the

utilization of Women Business Enterprise (WBE) and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE).

The unanimous approval by the Board spoke loudly about their commitment to the racial

equity work and their urgency to see change.

> If we are going to do the work, why waste time. We need to be about the business of implementing as quickly but as effectively as possible. This was our way of not only eliminating racial disparities but also creating what we now know as the anti-racist perspective.[8]

Unlike the implementation of a program, a board-adopted policy remains in place and

continues to be enacted despite changes in leadership staffing. Ensuring the sustainability of

the racial equity policy meant that any amendments or elimination of the policy would

require board action. The Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Policy's goal to address

institutional racism, biases, practices, and beliefs was detailed in the policy's opening

statement:

> Students of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District deserve respectful learning environments in which their racial and ethnic diversity is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes.

> This policy confronts the institutional racism that results in predictably lower academic achievement for students of color than for their white peers. Eliminating the district's institutional racism will increase achievement, including on-time graduation, for all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students.

> The district acknowledges that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequity within the educational environment. Rather than perpetuating the resulting disparities, the district must address and overcome this inequity and

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[8] Eric Lowe, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, February 28, 2023.

institutional racism, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.[9]

The focal areas of the racial equity plan included:

- **Systemic Disparities**: interrupting systems that perpetuate inequities.
- **Systemic Equity and Implementation and Monitoring**: implementing and leading from a system-wide racial equity plan that stands on three critical pillars: family, student and community engagement, leadership, and teaching and learning.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:** the Board directs the superintendent to develop and implement a system-wide plan with clear accountability and metrics which will result in measurable academic improvements for students. The superintendent shall regularly report progress on the plan and outcomes.[10]

Although the district's policy has been amended since its initial adoption, the creation of a district racial equity policy was a bold declaration of board support for the racial equity work. It was evident that the Hickman Mills C-1 Board of Education and the Superintendent agreed that systemic practices that existed within the district were having an adverse impact on student achievement.

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[9] Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Policy, Policy Descriptor Code ACI, May 2015. Hickman Mills C-1 School District. This policy has since been updated. It can be found at https://www.hickmanmills.org/cms/lib/MO01001730/Centricity/Domain/3173/Racial%20Equity%20Policy%20Official.pdf

[10] Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Policy, Policy Descriptor Code ACI.

The Foundation

Figure 5.6. Black Lives Matter protest. Image courtesy of Clay Banks/Unsplash.

Just prior to the policy's implementation, the nation was reeling from the images,

videos, and recurring reports of white males (most of them police officers) murdering

unarmed Black males. On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black male,

went to buy Skittles and iced tea from a local convenience store. On his way home he was

shot and killed by George Zimmerman, who served as the community's neighborhood watch

coordinator. Zimmerman was later acquitted of second-degree murder, spurring the start of

the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM).[11] BLM was responsible for spearheading

demonstrations worldwide, protesting police brutality and systemic racism affecting the

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[11] Black Lives Matter, blacklivesmatter.com.

Black community (see Figure 5.6). According to its website, blacklivesmatter.com, the

movement has evolved since its inception in 2013:

> In 2013, three radical Black organizers—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—created a Black-centered political will and movement building project called #BlackLivesMatter. It was in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman.
>
> The project is now a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters. Our members organize and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.[12]

Despite the beginnings of what eventually became a massive movement for racial

justice, the nation continued to see traumatizing images of Black lives lost. In July of 2014,

43-year-old Eric Garner was wrestled to the ground by New York police officers and held in

a chokehold for selling untaxed cigarettes. He ultimately died after saying, "I can't breathe."

Eleven times. A cell phone camera held by a friend of Mr. Garner recorded the struggle that

would be seen by millions.[13] The very next month, police officer Darren Wilson shot and

killed Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager, in Ferguson, Missouri. Protests and riots

ensued in Ferguson and soon spread across the country. The deaths of these young men, who

were all Black and all unarmed, sparked outrage and protests over the apparent disregard for

Black lives. These examples demonstrate how the larger social and political landscape

impacted local communities and school systems. For people of color, particularly Black men

and boys, the urgency to bridge understanding was a matter of life and death. It seemed

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[12] Black Lives Matter, blacklivesmatter.com.
[13] Al Baker, J. David Goodman, and Benjamin Mueller, "Beyond the Chokehold: The Path to Eric Garner's Death," *New York Times,* June 14, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/14/nyregion/eric-garner-police-chokehold-staten-island.html.

incumbent upon society and school systems to first acknowledge the existence of racism and the impact of racism in and outside of schools.

Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Transformation Plan

As a part of the district's Strategic Plan, the Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Transformation Plan outlined how the racial equity work would be implemented throughout the district beginning with the 2015–2016 school year. The Courageous Conversation framework of Systemic Racial Equity Transformation includes three overlapping domains within which Courageous Conversation guides the dialogue. The three domains are community, leadership, and learning and teaching (see Figure 5.7). The framework also includes four content and process realms: Courageous Conversation (protocol), critical race theory (tenets), systems thinking (tools), and adaptive leadership (principles).[14]

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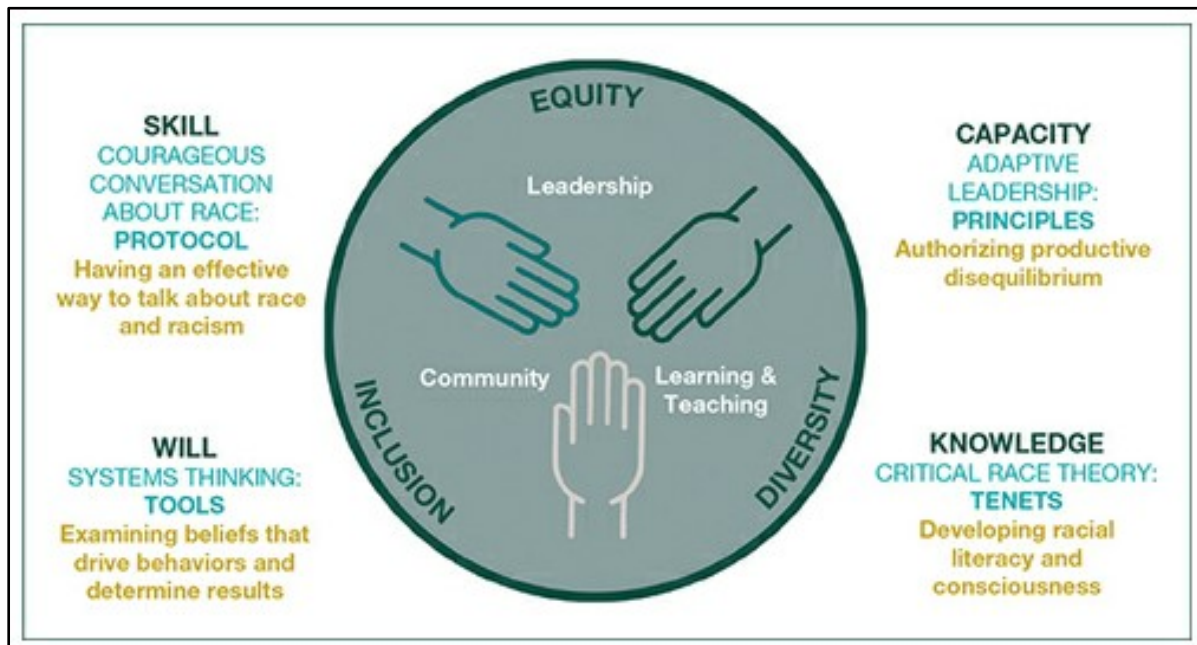
[14] Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016).

Figure 5.7. Courageous Conversation Systemic Racial Equity Transformation Framework. Hickman Mills C-1 Training Handout, March 2020, Pacific Educational Group.

Hickman Mills C-1's Racial Equity Transformation Plan was developed primarily by the district leadership team members and included pillars or focus areas for the work and specific strategies for implementation and monitoring: Students at the Center, Equity Leadership Development, Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning, and Family and Community Engagement and Empowerment. Each pillar included its own set of action steps, equity objectives, equity assessment plans, and equity action plans (see Figure 5.8).

Each year, the district leadership team met to discuss and update the transition plan, and from all accounts it was very consistent in executing the action steps as outlined from year to year through 2018.

Hickman Mills C-1 Equity Transformation Plan - Equity Leadership Development

Pillars	Action Step	Equity Objectives	Equity Assessment Plan	Equity Action Plan
Equity Leadership Development	All certified and classified staff will participate in Beyond Diversity.			Continue to build capacity around the racial equity work by conducting two rounds of Beyond Diversity during the 2016-2017 school year.
				During the 2017-2018 school year the district will offer Beyond Diversity opportunities to classified staff members as identified by leadership.
	PEG Affiliates identified and trained at District level.		Dr. Cargile and Mr. Klapmeyer completed certification to lead Beyond Diversity	Dr. Cargile and Mr. Klapmeyer, with coaching, will lead the Beyond Diversity in December, and another round in March.
	Beyond Diversity with E-Teams and district personnel from each department		Yr3 E-Teams training completed during 1st semester	E-Teams will develop their building level Equity Transformation Plans after the conclusion of Seminar 6, November 1.
	All new certified staff members will participate in Beyond Diversity		All new certified staff participated in Beyond Diversity August 2016.	
				Every meeting in the district will begin with a Racial Equity message and an opportunity for individuals at the meeting to check-in using the protocols.

Figure 5.8. Hickman Mills C-1Racial Equity Transformation Plan: Pillar – Equity Leadership Development. "Hickman Mills C-1 School District. Racial Equity Transformation Plan." https://www.hickmanmills.org/cms/lib/MO01001730/Centricity/Domain/3173/HM%20Racial%20Equity%20Transformation%20Plan.pdf .

Courageous Conversation

Hickman Mills C-1 started the 2014–2015 school year provisionally accredited in a community fraught with poverty and violence. The first years of racial equity work included required reading of *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton, professional development sessions, resources, and strategies to engage in conversations about race. Courageous Conversation, previously known as the Pacific Educational Group, provided the training, coaching, and consulting services utilized by staff (see Figure 5.9). This section expands on those resources as a part of the racial equity work in Hickman Mills C-1 and the emphasis on developing district and building leaders to be culturally responsive. Personal narratives are incorporated to offer multiple perspectives on how the work was experienced by those leading it throughout the district.
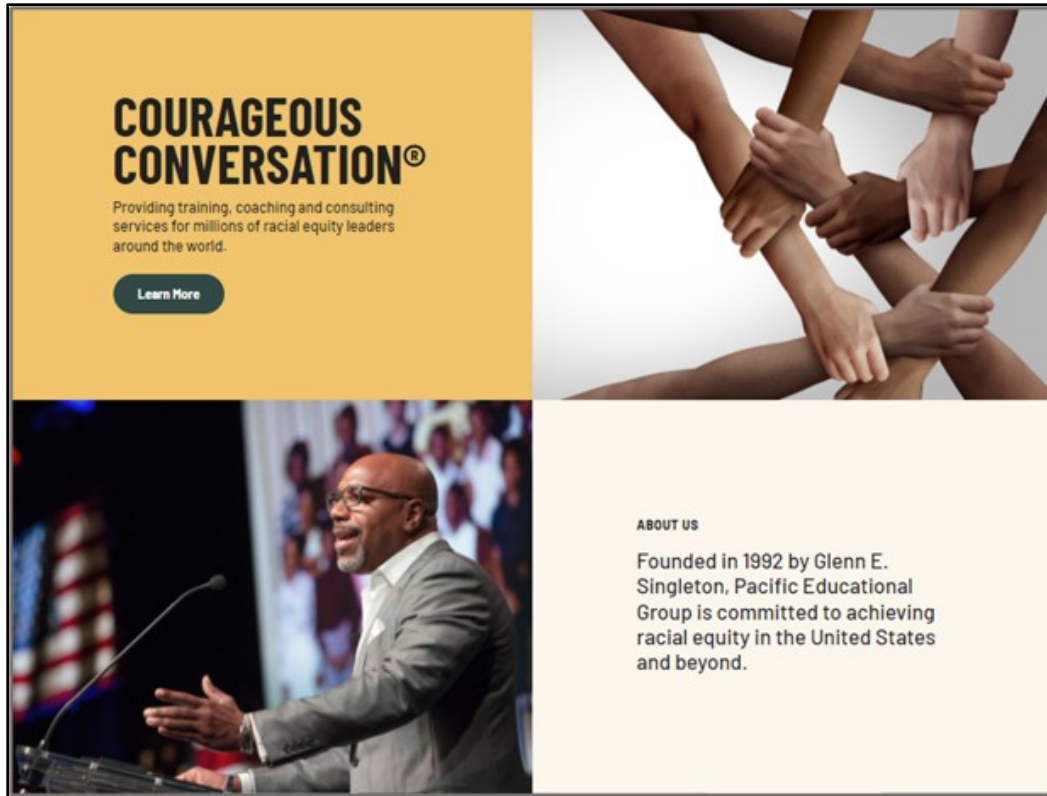
Figure 5.9. Courageous Conversation Beyond Diversity website image and founder Glenn E. Singleton. Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016).

Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools by authors Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton describes the significant achievement gap that exists between Black and Brown students and their white and Asian counterparts as a *racial* achievement gap, because the variance in performance exists between students of different skin colors. To begin addressing the racial achievement gap—intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively—is the purpose of the book.[15] I recall receiving the book as required reading for all staff members, but remaining doubtful that the book would be referenced or utilized to facilitate discussions. Upon my arrival to Hickman

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[15] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race*, 2.

Mills C-1, I had not read any book that encouraged conversations about race in the workplace or classroom, and I certainly had not engaged in any conversations about race on the job.

The *Courageous Conversations* text was just one of the tools utilized in Hickman Mills C-1 to achieve racial equity in the district. It included strategies and protocols discussed in this chapter and was used to help educators talk about race in a safe and honest way to develop racial understanding, conduct an interracial dialogue about race, and address racial issues in the schools.

Three Critical Factors: Passion, Practice, and Persistence

The *Courageous Conversations* text identified three critical factors necessary for school systems to eliminate the racial achievement gap: passion, practice, and persistence. The authors note that a focus on developing and nurturing these critical factors is necessary to fostering an intentional desire to change how students are taught and supported in their learning.

- *Passion* is defined as the level of connectedness educators bring to racial equity work and to district, school, or classroom equity transformation. One's passion must be strong enough to overwhelm institutional inertia, resistance to change, and resilience in maintaining the status quo.

- *Practice* refers to the essential individual and institutional actions taken to effectively educate every student to his or her full potential. Substantial knowledge exists, in the form of research-based practices, about what works in the classroom for students of color and indigenous students. Educators need to develop and engage this knowledge and these practices.

- *Persistence* involves time and energy. Persistence calls for each of us to exercise a rare and seemingly oxymoronic combination of patience and urgency. Rarely do we dedicate sufficient time to addressing the racial achievement gap. Persistence at the institutional level is the willingness of a school system to stick with it

despite slow results, political pressure, new ideas, and systemic inertia or resistance to change.[16]

The three critical factors provide a philosophical context for understanding the Courageous Conversation strategy and protocol. They are the foundation for starting the work, and they are necessary in individuals who are prepared and committed to addressing the various impacts of race on student achievement. Racial equity work is not just something you do; it is something you believe in. In Hickman Mills C-1, it was suggested that an ample number of staff did not possess the passion, practice, or persistence necessary to impact change. Dr. Carpenter's vision was to see systemic change. The hope was to have the racial equity work continue no matter who was in charge. Kelli Washington describes barriers that impeded the opportunities to develop these critical factors:

> We missed opportunities to move the work forward by not addressing and/or removing barriers. When I say when removing barriers, I'm talking about people who were there in performance only needed to be removed. We needed to be surrounded by the people who had the fire and the passion; the same values that Dr. Carpenter had about the work. That would have moved the work forward.[17]

Courageous Conversation: Four Agreements, Six Conditions, and Compass

Courageous Conversation is a strategy for school systems to close the racial achievement gap (see Figure 5.10). Educators develop racial understanding, conduct interracial dialogue about race, and address racial issues in schools.[18] A Courageous Conversation is defined as:

> utilizing the agreements, conditions, and compass to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling and improve student achievement. Specifically, a Courageous Conversation engages those who talk,

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[16] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations,* 14–15.

[17] Kelli Washington, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 30, 2022.

[18] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 16.

sustains the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, and deepens the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur.[19]

Former educator and principal Connie Moore recalls how valuable it was to have tools to help guide conversations with and between staff members. She describes how she experienced using the Courageous Conversation protocol to engage in conversations about race with her staff as a building principal:

> As I transitioned into my new building, I thought the staff was experienced with using the protocol and understood how to navigate conversations about race. I quickly learned that they were not using the protocol. You still had a significant number of people who were just not on board. That would just say little things that you would think wow, okay, so now your true beliefs are coming out. Because you can't hide that for very long.[20]

Figure 5.10. Pacific Educational Group: Courageous Conversation about Race Protocol. "Where Are My Students and Based on That Where Am I?" Courageous Conversation Training Handout for Hickman Mills C-1, March 2020, Pacific Education Group.

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[19] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 16.
[20] Connie Moore, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 27, 2022.

It is important to note that although the Agreements exist as a foundation, the first step for educators to engage in a Courageous Conversation is to commit to practicing the Four Agreements. Educators agree to:

1. Stay engaged.

2. Speak your truth.

3. Experience discomfort.

4. Expect and accept non-closure.

Standard norms typically provided during professional development sessions do not suffice when race surfaces as a topic of conversation. It is not uncommon for educators to quickly become silent, defiant, angry, or judgmental.[21] In my own experiences working with administrators, I experienced instances in which staff exhibited all the aforementioned behaviors. Even after years of professional development and opportunities to engage in conversations about race, the effectiveness of the conversation was still based on the willingness and commitment of the individuals involved.

Supporting the Four Agreements that define how to have Courageous Conversations, the Six Conditions of Courageous Conversation guide what is supposed to be talked about and what to be mindful of during the interracial dialogue. The Six Conditions are:

1. Establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate.
2. Isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors and conditions that contribute to a racialized problem.
3. Develop understanding of race as a social/political construction of knowledge and engage multiple racial perspectives to surface critical understanding.
4. Monitor the parameters of the conversations by being explicit and intentional about the number of participants, prompts for discussion, and time allotted for

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[21] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 18.

listening, speaking, and reflecting using the Courageous Conversations Compass to determine how each participant is displaying emotion—mind, body, and soul— to access a given topic.

5. Establish agreement around a contemporary working definition of race, one that is clearly differentiated from ethnicity and nationality.

6. Examine the presence and role of whiteness and its impact on the conversation and the problem being addressed.[22]

The Six Conditions are "somewhat" sequential in that they scaffold for a more difficult and authentic conversation about race. The district placed substantial emphasis on learning how to engage using the first three conditions. The Sixth Condition, which examines the presence and role of whiteness, was equally important to put into practice but proved far more challenging to broach. It is discussed in a later section, along with white privilege and white fragility.

The First Condition of Courageous Conversation invites us to establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate. Because the racial equity work begins with an examination of self rather than of others, the staff spent a significant amount of time studying the meaning of the First Condition and using the personalized language when engaged in racialized conversations. Singleton elaborates:

> Examining the impact of race in our own lives serves as a precursor to examining the impact of race in the larger context of a school. As we become personally aware of our own racialized existence, we can more deeply understand the racial experiences of others. Without doing this, we will continue to assess the racial experiences of others through our own distorted lens. The foundational level of racial awareness must be personal, local, and immediate. Thus, heightening racial consciousness begins with self-examination and is bolstered by continuous racial inquiry and reflection.[23]

An example of this introspective process was having each staff member write their Racial

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[22] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 18–19.
[23] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 88.

Autobiography. These narratives were personal reflections of how race impacted one's life. They were used as a tool to develop and deepen one's personal understanding and insight about race.

The Second Condition of Courageous Conversation encourages us to isolate race while acknowledging the broader scope of diversity and the variety of factors that contribute to a racialized problem. The Second Condition focuses on the critical need to address race explicitly and intentionally. Singleton explains:

> Educators not only deepen their understanding of race but also develop skills to acknowledge and address other diversity-related factors, such as economic status, gender, and religion, which often contribute to a racialized problem. Through our careful and isolated examination of race, educators not only discover new meaning in race but also more authentically recognize the intersection of race and other aspects of human diversity and culture.
>
> My experience suggests that when educators attempt to address too many phenomena coupled with race initially, they tend to converse about those other topics—say, poverty or family values—instead of race, because those topics are often easier to negotiate. It is extremely difficult to keep the conversation focused on race and not drift off into topics that are less emotionally charged, and about which people feel more knowledgeable.[24]

Centering race and keeping race on the table was a challenge whenever staff would engage in conversations about student achievement data or discipline data. Kelli Washington recalls how staff would describe why they chose to come to Hickman Mills C-1 and work with "these" students during professional learning sessions:

> At the beginning of the year, everyone liked to talk about working in an urban district because they want to "make a difference" and our students "need" them. But when things get too difficult and they can't relate to the students or the students don't relate to them, they resort to blaming the students. Very rarely would teachers look within or at their performance as part of the problem.[25]

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[24] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 100.

[25] Kelli Washington, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 30, 2022.

Justifications for low student performance identified by staff were factors outside of

the control of the teacher and school system. Hickman Mills C-1 teachers and staff learned

how to challenge and redirect discussions when excuses for the racial achievement gap were

continually presented (see Table 5.3).

Family	Poverty	Community	Language	Mobility
No value for education A natural dislike for reading Parents don't read to their kids Parents are uneducated	Parents are always working There is no money for books They can't visit museums or travel Kids have to work to support the family	No value for education No respect for authority No good role models Kids feel too unsafe to focus on school Bad influences like drugs and gangs	Students don't understand English well enough Since the parents can't speak English, they can't help their kids A lack of proper English proves a lack of intelligence I (the teacher) can't speak their language, so I can't help them	We (the school) are not responsible for their lack of learning, since they just arrived here How can we help a student who is just going to move again? The student isn't stable enough to learn

Table 5.3. Justifications for Low Student Performance. Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016), 101.

The Third Condition of Courageous Conversation prompts us to normalize social

construction of knowledge, thus engaging multiple racial points of view in order to surface

critical perspective. Singleton expounds:

> To normalize social construction of knowledge is to acknowledge the process through which racial meaning is inherited, interpreted, and passed on from one generation to the next. Each of us creates meaning around our current racial reality based on how we have experienced and understood our near and distant pasts. The Third Condition enables educators to develop will, skill, and capacity for listening to and engaging with others' contrasting and conflicting racial perspectives and experiences. In our

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discussions around race, educators must formally recognize and respect that people offer a broad continuum of willingness and ability to examine and understand racial matters.[26]

The final component necessary for the Courageous Conversation is the Courageous Conversation Compass (see Figure 5.11). The compass is designed to be a personal navigational tool to guide participants through the conversations. Specifically, it helps them know where they are personally as well as recognize the direction from which other participants come. Collectively, it leads them to a mutual understanding of their varied beliefs and opinions and helps them locate the sources of their emotion."[27]

Figure 5.11. The Courageous Conversation Compass. Pacific Educational Group. Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016).

The Courageous Conversation Compass identifies four primary ways that people deal with racial information, events, and/or issues: emotional, intellectual, moral, and relational. These are the four points or cardinal directions for the compass.

- *Emotionally*, we respond to information through feelings, when a racial issue strikes us at a physical level and causes an internal sensation such as anger, sadness, joy, or embarrassment.

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[26] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 115.
[27] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 19.

- *Intellectually*, our primary response to a racial issue or information may be characterized by personal disconnect with the subject or a steadfast search for more information or data. Our intellectual response is often verbal and based on our best thinking.

- *Morally*, we respond from a deep-seated belief that relates to the racial information or event. This belief has to do with the rightness or wrongness of a given racial issue. The justifications for one's moral views are often situated in the "gut" and may not be verbally articulated.

- *Relationally,* we connect and respond to racial information through our acting or what is most often characterized as specific behaviors and actions.[28]

By expanding on the Courageous Conversations Protocol, I hope to emphasize that it is necessary for engaging, sustaining, and deepening understandings and conversations about race. Linda Darling Hammond states, "In order to create a cohesive community and consensus on how to proceed, school people must have the occasion to engage in 'democratic discourse' about the real stuff of teaching and learning."[29] During the beginning sessions with Hickman Mills C-1, we acknowledged that it was our responsibility to understand how race and racism affected student achievement, and that understanding began with learning how to talk about race and not allow ineffective "racial emergency" conversations to continue to be the norm. The Compass, the Six Conditions, and the Four Agreements were the foundation and complete definition of Courageous Conversation.

Race, Racism, Racist

Throughout the learning process, staff were taught the importance of developing and using common language in conversations about race to establish critical understandings about how racial issues impact schooling. Defining race, racism, racist, and equity in terms

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[28] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 29–30.
[29] Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Right to Learn* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 336.

that all could universally understand seemed an impossible feat. The following working

definitions were utilized in the trainings and included in the text:

> Race is the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes, including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere. Racism can be defined as beliefs and an enactment of beliefs that one set of characteristics is superior to another set (e.g., white skin, blonde hair, blue eyes are more beautiful than brown skin, brown eyes, and brown hair). A racist would be any person who subscribes to these beliefs and perpetuates them intentionally or unconsciously.[30]

Other relevant definitions and discussions were derived from the book study sessions that

took place with the leadership team members. In her book, *White Fragility,* Robin DeAngelo

explores the concept of race as a social construction and how the idea of racial inferiority was

created to justify unequal treatment:

> The idea of racial inferiority was created to justify unequal treatment; belief in racial inferiority is not what triggered unequal treatment. Nor was it fear of difference. As Ta-Nehisi Coates states, "But race is the child of racism, not the father." He means that we first exploited people for their resources, not according to how they look. Exploitation came first, and then the ideology of unequal races to justify this exploitation followed.
>
> Similarly, historian Ibram Kendi, in his National Book Award-winning work *Stamped from the Beginning*, explains: "The beneficiaries of slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration have produced racist ideas of Black people being best suited for or deserving of the confines of slavery, segregation, or the jail cell. Consumers of these ideas have been led to believe there is something wrong[31]

When viewing race, racism, and racist in the context of historical and contemporary

American culture or Western culture, Asa Hilliard and Gerald Pine define racism as:

> The combination of individual prejudice and individual discrimination, on the one hand, and institutional policies and practices, on the other, that result in the unjustified negative treatment and subordination of members of a racial or ethnic

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[30] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 50.
[31] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

group. By convention, the term racism has been reserved to describe the mistreatment of members of racial and ethnic groups that have experienced a history of discrimination. Prejudice, dissemination, and racism do not require intention.[32]

Finally, Julian Weissglass explores racism, its implications, and distinction from the concept of prejudice, two terms that are often misconstrued:

> *Racism* is the systematic mistreatment of certain groups of people (often referred to as people of color) on the basis of skin color or other physical characteristics. This mistreatment is carried out by the societal institutions, or by people who have been conditioned by the society to act, consciously or unconsciously, in harmful ways toward people of color. Racism is different from prejudice. A person of color can hurt a white person because of prejudice. The difference is that in this country, people of color face systematic and ongoing personal and institutionalized biases every day.[33]

Racism becomes institutionalized when organizations—schools, districts, or a university— remain unconscious of issues related to race, or more actively perpetuate and enforce a dominant racial perspective or belief.[34] The lack of knowledge about race, racism, and related terminology stalls the dismantling process. Foundational to understanding racism is recognizing the distinctions between individualized racial prejudice and institutionalized racism. Authors Terrell, Robins, and Lindsey explain:

> Certainly, any individual can perpetrate acts of racial prejudice towards another individual. Thus, Black people as individuals can be racially prejudiced against white people, Asians can be racially prejudiced against American Indians, and so on. But Black, Brown, and American Indian people, individually or collectively, do not have the social, political, or economic power in the United States to alter the collective racial experience of white people. So in that sense, no matter how much racial prejudice individual Black Americans or other people of color might project towards white Americans, truly they cannot be said to be practicing institutional racism unless they are actively supporting the maintenance of racial power for white people.[35]

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[32] Pine and Hilliard, "Rx for Racism."
[33] Julian Weissglass, Racism and the Achievement Gap, *Education Week* 20, no. 43: 49–50.
[34] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 52.
[35] Raymond D. Terrell, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Randall B. Lindsey, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 9.

Deinstitutionalizing racism begins with believing first and foremost that racism exists. Most do not understand what racism is and/or how it is normalized in society. Obviously, if an individual does not understand what racism is or that it exists, having a productive conversation about race is unlikely to occur.

Tackling the Sixth Condition: White Supremacy, White Privilege, and White Fragility

The Sixth Condition of Courageous Conversation invites us to examine the presence and role of whiteness, its impact on the conversation, and the problem being addressed. Because of the racial dynamics at play in Hickman Mills C-1—a predominantly white staff educating a predominantly Black and Brown student population—understanding white as a color, culture, and consciousness and how it influences learning and teaching was necessary learning that never entirely took hold. Staff were introduced to the following terminology and understandings, which proved to be an emotional and overwhelming undertaking.

- **White Supremacy**. A historically-based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege.[36]

- **White Privilege**. A phrase coined by Peggy McIntosh in her 1988 paper, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" and defined as follows: "I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I

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[36] Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, *What is White Supremacy,* February 1, 1998, last modified October 9, 2021, https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/ProfDev/what-is-white-supremacy.pdf.

can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" (see Figure 5.12).[37]

- **White Fragility**. A phrase coined by author Robin DiAngelo, defined as "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves."[38]
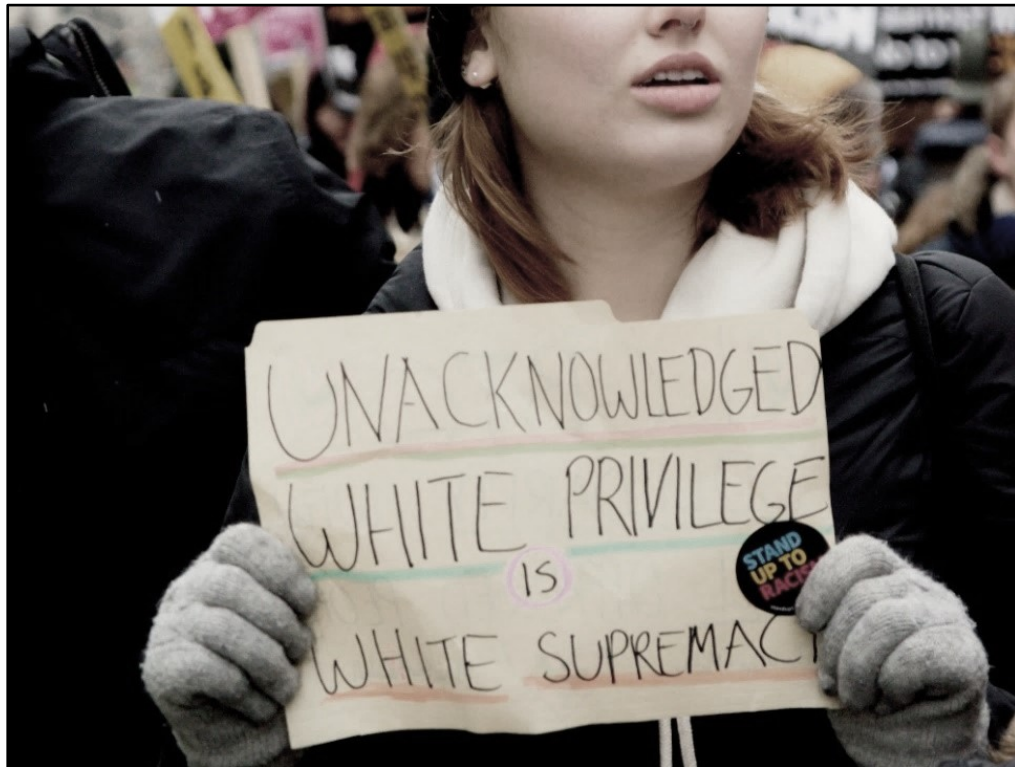
Figure 5.12. "Unacknowledged White Privilege is White Supremacy." Photo: Dreamstime/Ben Gingell.

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[37] Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," Working Paper No. 189, Wellesley Center for Women, 1988, 2, https://www.wcwonline.org/images/pdf/White_Privilege_and_Male_Privilege_Personal_Account-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf.
[38] DiAngelo, *White Fragility,* 2.

Between 2015 and 2018, the Hickman Mills C-1 School District's student

demographic data remained consistent. Nearly 90 percent of the students enrolled in the

district were non-white/students of color (see Table 5.4). In 2017 and 2018, over 70 percent

of certified staff in Hickman Mills C-1 were white, which is closely aligned with national

statistics.

Hickman Mills C-1 School District 2015 -2018 K-12 Enrollment Data

HICKMAN MILLS C-1	2015	2016
Total	6,236	5,807
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	1.5%	1.4%
Black	75.5%	74.9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.1%
Hispanic	8.9%	10.7%
Multi-Race	3.0%	2.5%
White	10.6%	10.2%

HICKMAN MILLS C-1	2017	2018
Total	5,758	5,565
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.30%	0.20%
Asian	1.60%	1.70%
Black	73.80%	73.20%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.10%	0.30%
Hispanic	11.10%	11.90%
Multi-Race	2.70%	3.90%
White	10.40%	8.80%

Table 5.4. Hickman Mills C-1 School District K-12 Enrollment/Demographic Data, 2015–2018, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education District Report Card.

In the 2017–2018 school year, 79 percent of public school teachers were white and

non-Hispanic. About 9 percent of teachers were Hispanic (of any race), and 7 percent were

Black and non-Hispanic. Two percent of teachers identified as Asian and non-Hispanic, two

percent as two or more races and non-Hispanic, and less than one percent as Native

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native,

non-Hispanic.[39] These statistics, in conjunction with the racial achievement gap, were the

drivers for prioritizing racial equity work in the district (see Table 5.5).

Certified Staff Members

	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Total Certified Staff	484	477	529	542	560
Staff of Color	139 (28.7%)	136 (28.5%)	159 (30.1%)	161 (29.9%)	157 (29.5%)
White	345 (71.2%)	339 (71.5%)	370 (69.9%)	368 (70.1%)	382 (70.5%)

Classified Staff Members

	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Total Classified Staff	431	439	460	469	461
Staff of Color	267 (61.9%)	271 (61.7%)	285 (62%)	268 (57.1%)	256 (55.5%)
White	164 (38.1%)	166 (37.8%)	175 (38%)	201(42.9%)	205 (44.5%)

Table 5.5. Hickman Mills C-1 School District Demographic Data for Certified and Classified
Staff. Hickman Mills C-1 School District: Annual Staff Demographic Data by Race
Document Handout, Professional Development Session, January 2021.

Anti-Racism and Equity

In addition to understanding and establishing a common language for race, racism,

and racist, key to the racial equity work was understanding the terms equity and anti-racism.

Singleton explains that equity is not a program or initiative and does not correspond to the

beginning or end of the school day. Achieving true equity for all students must be a moral

imperative, and it serves as a central and essential component of any attempt to eliminate

racial achievement disparities.[40] Additionally, he defines educational equity as:

- raising the achievement of all students while,

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[39] "Data Point: Race and Ethnicity of Public School Teachers and Their Students," U.S. Department of
Education, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), September 2020,
https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020103/index.asp.
[40] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 55.

- narrowing the gaps between the highest and the lowest performing students, and
- eliminating racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.[41]
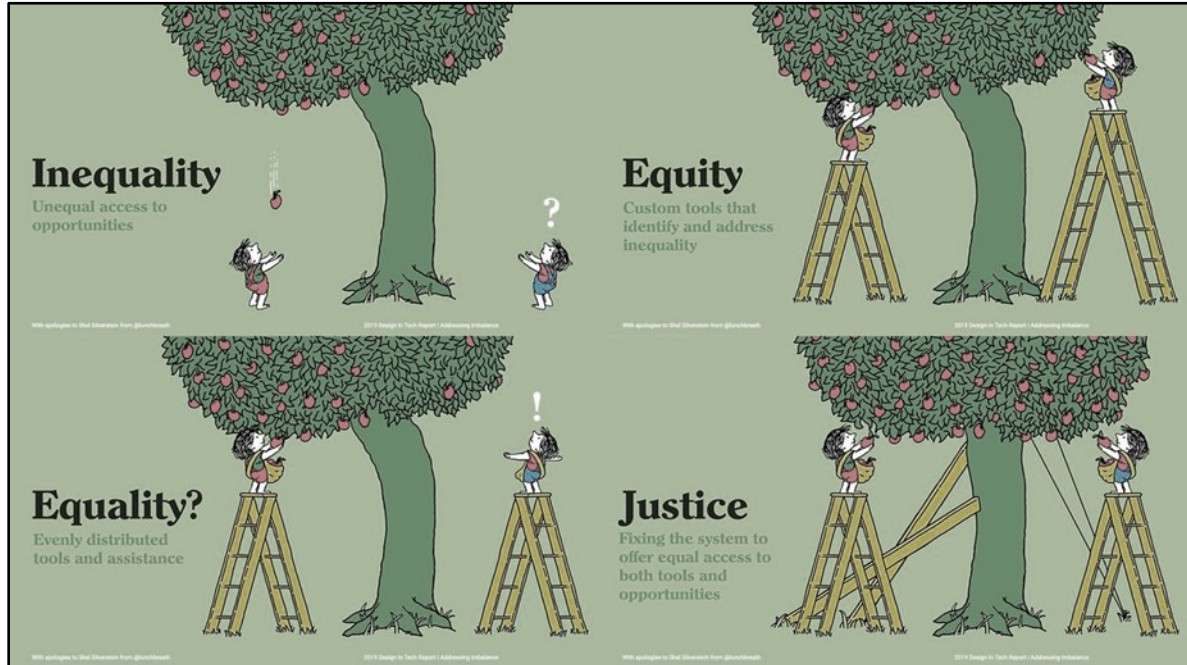
Figure 5.13. Image depicting Inequality, Equality, Equity, and Justice. Nikki Erdman, "Defining: Equity, Equality and Justice," Achieve Brown County, August 5, 2021, https://achievebrowncounty.org/2021/05/defining-equity-equality-and-justice/.

Additionally, there is a difference between equity and equality as reflected in Figure 5.13.

This is another set of terms that are difficult to distinguishing between. According to DeCuir

and Dixon:

> In seeking *equality* rather than *equity*, the processes, structures, and ideologies that justify inequity are not addressed and dismantled. Remedies based on equality assume that citizens have the same opportunities and experiences. Race and experiences based on race, are not equal. Thus, the experiences that people of color have with

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[41] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 55.

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respect to race and racism create an unequal situation. Equity, however, recognizes that the playing field is unequal and attempts to address the inequality.[42]

Equity does not guarantee that every student will succeed; it ensures that all students will have the opportunity and support necessary to succeed. Equity does not mean that every student receives the same resources and supports towards their goals; equity means that students with the greatest need receive the greatest level of support to guarantee academic success.

Ibram X. Kendi states, "Literally, racism is death. And anti-racism is life,"[43] a statement that underscores the suffocating weight of racism and how to fight it. Being anti-racist is to actively push to dismantle racism, engage in deep personal work, and promote racial equity. Commonly, people see themselves as "non-racist" or may say they "do not see color or race in others," which passively allows racism to continue. Singleton defines anti-racism and anti-racist schools:

> Anti-racism is conscious and deliberate efforts to challenge the impact and perpetuation of institutional white racial power, presence, and privilege. It is critical that our examination of institutionalized white racism is not viewed as being against white people; rather it is a way in which people of all races can gain the same level of access and privileges that white people seem to demand, to feel entitled to, and to take for granted.

> Anti-racist schools teach the history of how oppressed people have been treated in this country and support students of color and indigenous students and their families to challenge and heal from internalized racism. They move beyond the celebration of diversity and create communities in which it is possible for students to talk about how

[42] Jessica T. Decuir and Adrienne Denise Dixson, "So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There": Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education," *Educational Researcher* 33 (2004): 29, https//:doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033005026.

[43] Eric Deggans and Audrey Nguyen, "Racism Is Death, Anti-Racism Is Life' Says Author Ibram Kendi," National Public Radio (NPR), October 24, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/10/23/927100641/racism-is-death-anti-racism-is-life-says-author-ibram-kendi.

they experience unfairness and discrimination and to heal. In these healing communities, adults' highest priority is caring about students and their learning.[44]

The goal of the racial equity work and policy and aim of the *Courageous Conversations* text was to help educators improve the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing groups and eliminating the pattern by which racial groups predictably and disproportionately occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.[45] To help facilitate the racial equity work in Hickman Mills C-1, everyone received a copy of *Courageous Conversations about Race,* ongoing professional development, and coaching and consulting provided by the Pacific Educational Group (PEG).

The Work

The implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 racial equity policy and the experiences of various staff members gives voice to the work and how individuals were impacted. In 2015, the racial equity policy was approved, and professional development, coaching, and consulting services began. Like other school districts across the country engaging in racial equity work, Hickman Mills C-1 participated in the Courageous Conversation Systemic Equity Transformation Programming services, which included:

- Superintendent and School Board Workshops. Training, coaching, and support focused on leading and governing for racial equity. Workshop themes include

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[44] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 56–7.
[45] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 37.

equity policy development and governance, strategic alignment, and systems

accountability for eliminating racial achievement disparities.

- District Equity Leadership Team Development (DELT). Training, coaching, and

  support focused on building executive capacity and accountability for leading and

  implementing district equity transformation and creating the district's Systemic

  Equity Transformation Plan.

- District Administrators and Principals (LEADS). Training, coaching, and support

  focused on deepening the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity of administrators to

  lead, oversee, and manage the dynamic process of system-wide racial equity

  transformation (see Figure 5.14).

- School Based Equity Leadership Development (E-Teams). Training, coaching,

  and support for principals and staff teams from each school, focused on leading

  school-wide equity transformation.
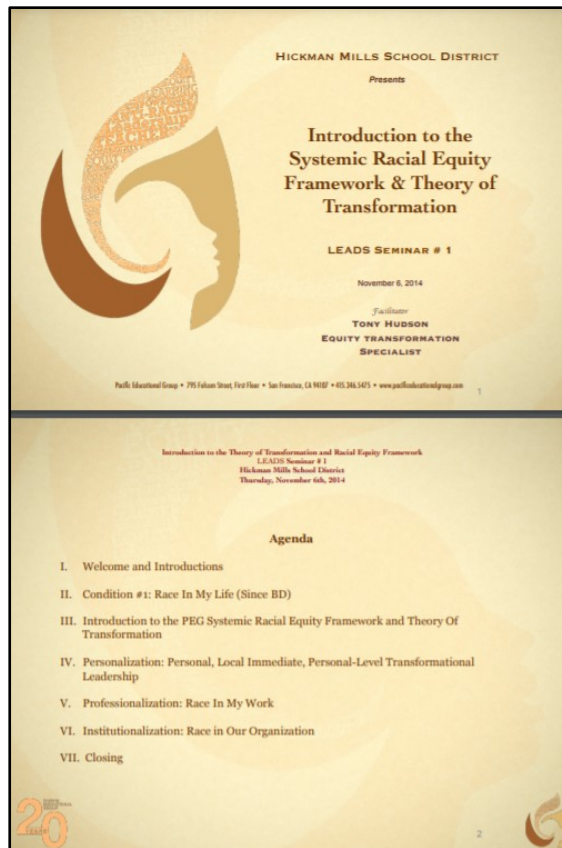
Figure 5.14. Pacific Educational Group LEADS Professional Development Training Agenda handout, 2014. LEADS training was provided to building and district leaders in Hickman Mills C-1.

- **Beyond Diversity Seminar (BD)**. Two-day seminar foundation (pre-requisite) for all equity leadership development phases. Beyond Diversity is designed to help leaders, educators, students, parents, and community understand the impact of race on student achievement and the role that racism plays in institutionalized academic achievement disparities (see Figure 5.15).

- **Pacific Educational Group Affiliates (PEGA).** Provides a certification process to develop educators qualified to facilitate PEG's foundational seminar, Beyond Diversity (BD), in their own districts and organizations to build system capacity and sustainability for racial equity transformation.

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- **Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE).** Discovering, implementing, and documenting instructional practices for improving the school experiences and performances of underserved students of color. CARE is focused on improving the cultural relevance/pedagogy of instruction in the classroom, thus improving engagement and performance.

- **Students Organized Against Racism (SOAR)**. Training designed to empower young people of all races to become catalysts for change through leadership for racial equity.

- **National Summit for Courageous Conversation.** Designed for educators, civic and community leaders, and other professionals who are committed to elevating individual and organizational racial literacy and consciousness to eradicate racial disparities that are predictably evident in achievement. A venue for bringing together the most promising and effective racial equity leadership voices, practices, and results for examination and broader dissemination across the United States and globally.[46]

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[46] These were elements of the professional training offered to staff as part of the Hickman Mills C-1 School District Transformation Plan as provided by Pacific Educational Group.
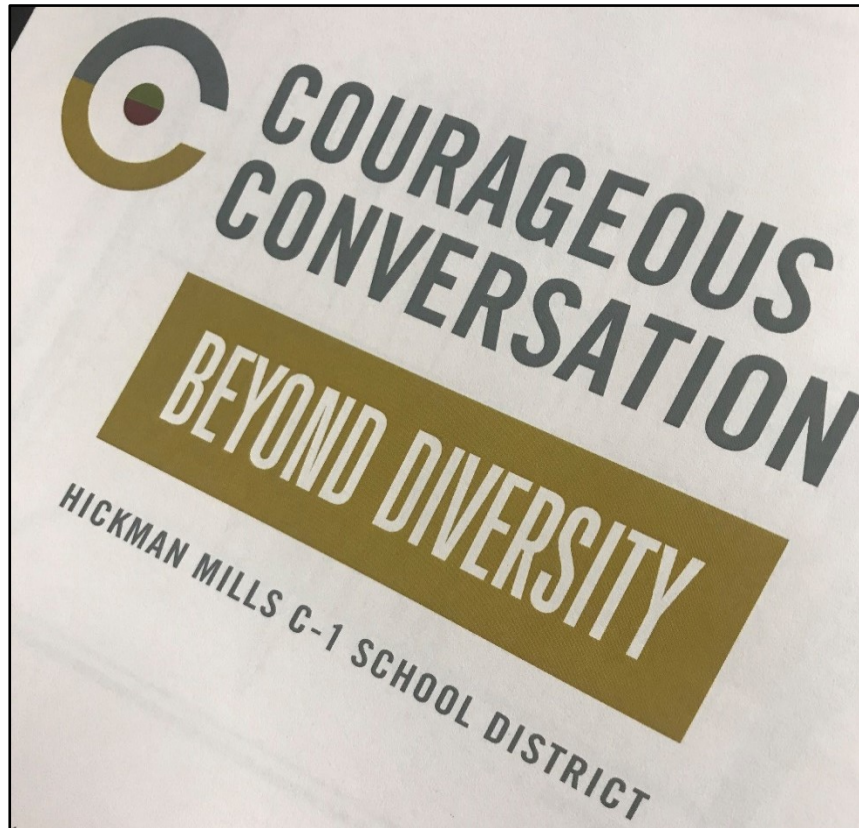
Figure 5.15. Courageous Conversation Beyond Diversity training handout for Hickman Mills C-1 School District.

Racial Equity Policy and Transformation Plan: Early Implementation

The initial trainings were a combination of LEADS and E-Teams trainings for district and school site lead teams. Pacific Educational Group/Courageous Conversation provided the professional development sessions and resources designed to help facilitate dialogue around race and equity (see Figure 5.16). Not surprisingly, talking about race and acknowledging racial inequities proved to be challenging for teachers and leaders in the district. Hickman Mills C-1 invested in trainings and the book, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by authors Singleton and Linton for all incoming staff.

Figure 5.16. Pacific Educational Group's Systemic Racial Equity Transformation Framework. Hickman Mills C-1 Professional Development Training Packet.

The text is described as a resource designed to help educators, leaders, and districts close the achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts.

My early experiences with the racial equity professional learning sessions felt uncomfortable and confusing because I lacked the foundational knowledge needed to understand the information being presented. Essentially, I felt like I was thrown into the work without a firm understanding of what to expect and what the purpose was. I understood that a racial achievement gap existed and needed to be addressed. I did not have the awareness to understand how racist beliefs and practices were contributing to that gap and that we as educators and leaders needed to change that. Based on informal feedback and discussions, the staff lacked a full understanding of the work but engaged as much as they could.

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In general, the principals and educators at that time did not believe there was a "race issue" in Hickman Mills C-1. Staff would argue that the educational disparities that existed in the district were likely the result of socioeconomic disparities. In 2015, Hickman Mills C-1 qualified for 100 percent free and reduced lunch due to the high number of students who qualified. As a district, Hickman Mills C-1 also received district Title I funds (financial assistance to schools with a high enrollment of students from economically challenged homes). Title I funding is used to provide educationally productive programs to ensure all children meet challenging state academic standards. Given these circumstances, school-related concerns were often blamed on "poverty." Recounting her feelings about her first racial equity sessions in Hickman Mills C-1, Kelli Washington, district employee, describes her feelings about participating in the racial equity professional development training:

> The only information I knew about the racial equity training was through my principal at the time, she just said that we were doing racial equity work and she wanted me to be on the team. She stated that I would get more information at the training. I was not interested. I just did not think it was necessary because we didn't have a "race problem." I thought we needed to focus on other things like instruction, like teachers getting better. That was my position at that time. I was not a proponent.[47]

Ms. Washington's sentiments about participating in the racial equity trainings were very similar to my own. Limited knowledge about the racial equity policy and uncertainty about the professional development caused apprehension and made the implementation phase more difficult. Ms. Washington communicates a perception that was likely shared by others:

> My first two days of training were torture. I say that because I wasn't invested in the idea of centering race. I didn't like the way we were being forced to focus on race. Being there with my principal, lead teachers, and myself, I felt like it was just a tick mark thing to do. So, we just participated, but we didn't really discuss anything in

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[47] Kelli Washington, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 30, 2022.

depth. And I didn't take anything from it. Like I just didn't take anything away other than we got it done. And it didn't move from those two days in that one room. It didn't move from there.[48]

Connie Moore also describes challenges with the implementation of the racial equity policy and training. She explains her experiences and how she and her colleagues managed to adjust:

> The first initial trainings were horrible. People couldn't wrap their heads around it, and I was in the same situation. I didn't have the background knowledge that others had because they attended previous trainings. We were in the large professional development room and like everybody was there with their E-Teams. It was a big deal. One principal had teachers who did not want to remain on the team and some of the white teachers would come back crying and all upset. I mean, a majority of the white teachers could not handle it. I tried to keep an open mind and think what can I learn from this, but there were days I did leave feeling really bad.

> Eventually, I figured out how to process the message as you can do a better job of helping students of color. I felt like I went through different stages of growth. But a lot of people couldn't do it. We leaned on the Black and white teachers who were on board and ready to learn, to help keep the others afloat. We tried to be more open-minded and look at what the data was telling us. Some of us started to embrace the work and grow, but listening to others complain and make ignorant comments, made the trainings more difficult.[49]

In retrospect, it is clear to see that most of the staff knew very little about the racial equity policy and how the implementation process would be operationalized. Ideally, multiple opportunities to communicate with the district staff about the racial equity work and what it would entail could have helped with the transition. I recall Dr. Carpenter, superintendent at that time, was operating with a level of consciousness, knowledge, passion, and persistence that a vast majority of the staff did not possess nor could they appreciate.

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[48] Kelli Washington, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 30, 2022.
[49] Connie Moore, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 27, 2022.

Casey Klapmeyer, who served as the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources recalls

his experience with the initial implementation and Dr. Carpenter's expectation:

> I would say, there were levels of discomfort, but the sessions were more pressing as we moved further along. I think my time working in Kansas City and my personality lends itself to not experiencing a ton of discomfort going through the trainings. Of course, there was an element of uneasiness, but it didn't feel like a super uncomfortable situation for me. For others, I don't think people knew what to expect. They did not know what was coming in the long term and how long this would last. I don't think people had a sense back then the type of long-term commitment this was intended to be.
>
> For me personally, Dr. Carpenter's approach was not challenging. He was clear that you were either going to be in and on board no exceptions. There was no choice. If you were going to be here, you were going to do this work. Part of the flaw in the process was not understanding that it would be a journey and people would need time. He didn't really have time for people to experience a journey. He expected us to get there and get there quickly.[50]

Figure 5.17. Hickman Mills C-1 staff participating in racial equity training provided by Pacific Educational Group/Courageous Conversation. Hickman Mills C-1 website, https://www.hickmanmills.org/Page/1.

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[50] Casey Klapmeyer, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.

As the staff struggled to find their footing and embrace the racial equity work

eventually, we started to realize that the work was not going away, and working through the

discomfort was just a necessary part of the journey. As the trainings continued, the

momentum slowly started to shift. There were staff members who began to support the racial

equity work through active participation (see Figure 5.17). By year two of implementation,

they started to see the benefits of the racial equity work and advocated for more. Comments

about the professional development varied over the years but most were surprisingly

supportive. Following is a sampling of comments from a Beyond Diversity session provided

as a part of the on-boarding process for all new staff:

- I cannot tell you how wonderful the session about race is. This is ground-breaking work. This is what makes me proud to work for this district. This is the work which needs to be done to change decades of hate, and I am proud to be a part of this change. I cannot stress this enough how this is the best PD I have ever been a part of.

- With "An Introduction to Race," I didn't not realize by avoiding the subject that I have been hiding the hurt/pain that I experience on a fairly frequent basis from racism . . .

- As for the Introduction to Race session, I believe that the Introduction to Race session is really culturally. I feel that it could be expanded upon to not just about color but other angles such as sexuality, ethnicity, stereotypes, and etc. I think giving the groups a skit or a choice board topic of something historic in history involving color would make the presentation more powerful and create more engagement.

- The Equity training session. It was the first time that I experienced an Equity training that I did not feel invalidated or told my input wasn't important because I was a white cis female.[51]

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[51] Staff members' responses to Hickman Mills C-1 Professional Development Survey, August 2016.

Figure 5.18. National Summit for Courageous Conversation description. Courageous Conversation website, https://courageousconversation.com/

The National Summit for Courageous Conversation, held in October in a select location each year, is described as an opportunity to bring together dedicated racial equity leaders from throughout the U.S. and around the world to engage in a deepened conversation about systemic racism and its impact on opportunity and achievement for all students. The National Summit for Courageous Conversation is uniquely designed for educators, civic and community leaders, and other professionals who are committed to elevating individual/organizational racial consciousness and eradicating racial disparities that are predictably evident in academic achievement. The Summit is generally comprised of individuals who have practiced the language and use of the Courageous Conversation

protocol and agreements and/or have read *Courageous Conversation About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton. There is a two-day pre-Summit to help prepare individuals for the full Summit.

Attending the National Summit for Courageous Conversation became an expectation for all district and building leaders. Cohorts of leaders would be scheduled to attend each year, and eventually, other lead staff and teachers who demonstrated a desire to participate were also invited to attend. Attending the 2015 National Pre-Summit for Courageous Conversation in Baltimore was a life-changing experience for me. Although I was not initially interested in going, the superintendent was clear that I could not serve as a leader on the district's Department of Curriculum and Instruction or support the racial equity work without attending this training. For two full days, a large, diverse group of attendees were immersed in discussions, activities, group work, and assignments that challenged us intellectually, professionally, and emotionally to build our racial consciousness. In my journal reflections, I noted the following activities as the most meaningful and impactful to my racial awareness/consciousness development:

- *Racial Autobiography*. To increase awareness of our own racial experiences as well as learning from others. The group read and discussed two racial autobiographies paying attention to when the authors become aware of their race, and how they describe their racial experiences. Afterwards, we discussed the pieces, as well as our own personal experiences and wrote our own racial autobiographies.

- *Understanding Privilege Exercise*. To understand personal privilege and how it can be used to confront racism. We spent time examining the privileges we may or may not hold by responding to a series of statements/situations that may be influenced by a person's race or color.

- *Understanding Microaggressions*. Microaggressions are brief, everyday, verbal, behavioral, and environmental exchanges, both unintentional and intentional, that send disparaging messages to individuals based on their group membership. Microaggressions can have a serious impact and should not be dismissed because of their brief or often unintentional nature. Researchers have linked continuous exposure of microaggressions to depression, anxiety-related symptoms, and diminished psychological wellbeing and physical health.

- *Racial Affinity Group/Caucus Discussions.* To provide spaces for people to work within their own racial/ethnic groups. White people were provided time and space to work explicitly and intentionally on understanding white culture and white privilege and to increase their critical analysis of these concepts. A white caucus also puts the onus on white people to teach each other about these ideas, rather than placing a burden on people of color to teach them. People of color were provided space to work with peers to address the impact of racism, to interrupt experiences of internalized racism, and to create a space for healing and working for individual and collective liberation.

Pre-Summit was validation for me as a Black woman and my racialized experiences.

That weekend in 2015, my racial awareness and consciousness was awakened, and my

passion, practice, and persistence were ignited (see Figure 5.19).
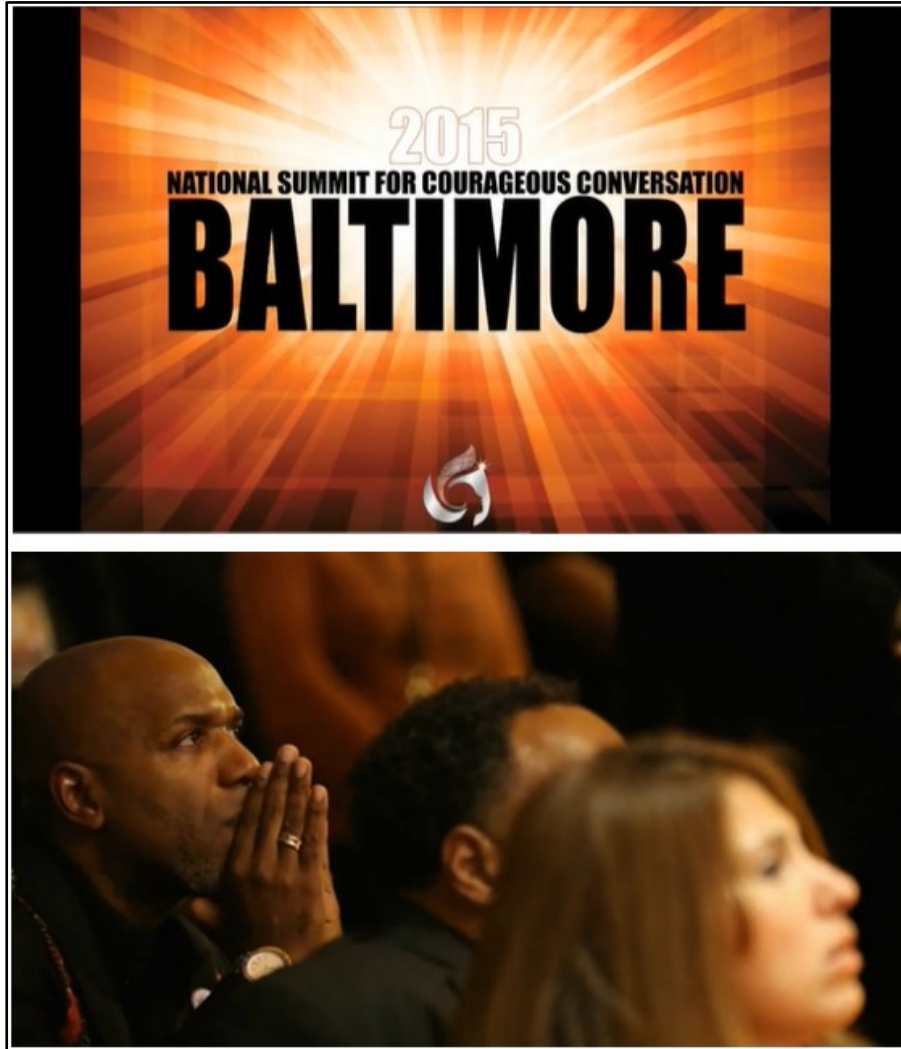
Figure 5.19. The National Summit for Courageous Conversation 2015 Opening Ceremony.
Marcus Moore, "National Summit for Courageous Conversations," Youtube Video, January
30, 2019, https://youtu.be/lkwwg6xxMWA.

Of all the experiences, the National Summit stood out as one of the most impactful

components of the racial equity work. Each person who shared their perspective reiterated

how attending the National Summit influenced them personally and professionally. Connie

Moore, in her role as the building principal, was responsible for leading racial equity work in her school. Known for her no-nonsense approach, she embraced the racial equity work quickly and had high expectations for those who worked alongside her.

> The racial equity work and allowing staff to participate in Summit was one of the best things Dr. Carpenter did for the district. People misunderstood his passion but that's what I appreciated. I also understood how after Summit, I was eager and wanted everyone to be urgent and on fire. I learned that you must let people have their own journey if they are on a journey. For me, Summit helped me recognize my privilege as a white woman. I took notice of how Black women would be treated differently. How they didn't receive the respect they deserved but I did. I learned about white fragility, my own biases, and how to use the protocol effectively. Even outside of work, I feel like my awareness and the work I've done has allowed me to engage in race-related conversations without feeling threatened or defensive.[52]

Dr. Yolanda Cargile, who served as Superintendent of Hickman Mills C-1 after Dr. Carpenter, was the Executive Director of Student Services when she started working in the district. Although she came to Hickman Mills C-1 having worked with the Pacific Educational Group in her previous district, she described how attending the National Summit was a critical turning point in her racial equity journey.

> Summit allowed me an opportunity to connect with other leaders who were doing similar work or even better work than I was doing. I was able to hear what others were doing and gain ideas to take back to my own organization. It was almost like a renewal and a refresher for me. Being in a session or at a conference with like-minded people who are just as committed and excited as you are to live in a work and carrying out the work is a great feeling.

> Even with my experience in my previous district, I did not attend Summit until I came to Hickman Mills C-1. This allowed me to see what was missing in my earlier trainings. Summit and the E-Teams trainings provided a greater context to see the work unfold in the proper way. Summit cleared things up for me in addition to the sessions that were offered allowed me to put all the pieces together.[53]

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[52] Connie Moore, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 27, 2022.
[53] Dr. Yolanda Cargile, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.

Dr. Cargile, Mr. Klapmeyer, and Ms. Washington served as district leaders who participated in trainings, but they were also responsible for leading trainings for the district. Summit became an opportunity for them to grow as racial equity leaders while doing their own individual work. Klapmeyer attended Summit for consecutive years and summarizes his Summit experiences as a participant and facilitator:

> Summit was deep. I remember being mentally, like exhausted at the end of it because it was so intense. I did both Pre-Summit and Summit and being in a room for five days with people who are super racially conscious, you know, it's nothing like the space you are in every day of your life. It made me commit myself more. I mean, I just remember being energized but exhausted at the same time. But if you are truly into the work, you left Summit emotionally worn out—but not in a negative way. If you were there for the purpose you were supposed to be there for, you are giving your all, being honest and putting yourself out there and hearing other people share their truths. I mean, if you left and you didn't feel that way, then you didn't do something right.[54]

Kelli Washington shares how her Summit experience was more adaptive and introspective than technical in nature:

> Summit was almost spiritual. I never worked so hard in my life. It was the inner workings that I worked on myself. In a way I've never worked on myself before. So much reflection, so much. Contemplating and so much studying. Totally going into myself is what I did, so Summit was hard. I was completing Summit as a prerequisite for the affiliate certification. My thoughts about the work had completely shifted right before I attended Summit. I was excited about moving into the coordinator role because it is included leading the racial equity work in the district.[55]

The Pacific Educational Group Affiliates Experience

One of the most critical components of the district's racial equity policy adoption and district Racial Equity Transformation Plan was to embed racial equity professional learning into the organizational system. To help build system capacity and sustainability for racial

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[54] Casey Klapmeyer, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.
[55] Kelli Washington, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 30, 2022.

equity transformation in Hickman Mills C-1, staff members were identified to participate in

the Pacific Educational Group Affiliates (PEGA) training (see Figure 5.20). PEGA provided

a certification process to develop educators to facilitate the PEG's foundational seminar,

Beyond Diversity (BD). Dr. Yolanda Cargile, Casey Klapmeyer, and Kelli Washington,

along with other staff members, provided the two-day seminar to all new and beginning staff

who entered the district and staff who had not gone through the training previously.

Reflections about their affiliate experiences demonstrate the commitment that each invested.

Figure 5.20. Hickman Mills C-1 School District Racial Equity Affiliate Team. Staff Training
Presentation, August 2019.

Casey Klapmeyer and Dr. Yolanda Cargile were two of the first staff members to

participate in the PEGA certification training. Casey describes how he was impacted by the

affiliate trainings:

> I was super excited to learn that I would be facilitating the racial equity work. I knew
> I was dedicated to this work, and it aligned with my whole career path that included
> the whole social justice piece. Although before I didn't delve into race, working in
> urban districts and serving the students, serving as an affiliate was in line with
> continuing that journey. I thought it was a great opportunity.

I didn't know how deep and emotional it was going to be but personally, those were some of the most powerful times that continue to push me. I was gaining personal insight all the time even as I was teaching other people. I attended the affiliate summit three or four times, and they always forced me deeper into the work. Sometimes people would be in tears during the trainings. I realize the purpose was to get you got to feel this because this is what you will be doing with others. You want them to take the work seriously, be honest and open up.[56]

Dr. Cargile explained that the gravity of the work and the skill of the affiliate being trained determined the quality of the outcome. This concern caused the Pacific Educational Group to reevaluate the effectiveness of the affiliate process:

The affiliate training forced me to think about my own story because you connect better with the group when you can tell your own personal story, not someone else's. Sharing my racial lived experience and how it has that impacted who I am. It was a deeper reflection in terms of understanding and showing who Yolanda was and why I am standing here in front of you leading this conversation and training. I remember the organization questioning if all the affiliates were offering the training at the expected magnitude to have the intended impact. I knew I wanted to give my all to the process and be an effective affiliate.

I think if we had a larger committee of people doing the work instead of isolated pockets of people, we could see a bigger impact. I feel like you have a higher level of accountability when more people are involved, and better ways to look at to finding the quantitative results. We could actually see how this work is directly impacting student achievement. But at this point, there is no turning back for me. I make it clear to all stakeholders that in my work, I am committed to created equitable spaces for students.[57]

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[56] Casey Klapmeyer, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.
[57] Dr. Yolanda Cargile, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 29, 2022.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Figure 5.21. Hickman Mills C-1 School District Racial Equity Professional Development. Photos courtesy of Hickman Mills C-1 website, https://www.hickmanmills.org.

Implementation of the Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Transformation Plan was heavily dependent on the commitment and work of district and building leadership and their work within the Equity Team (E-Teams). Singleton explains:

> Systemic Racial Equity Transformation requires leadership. … If achievement is to improve for all student groups, school site and district office leadership need to establish a culture in which effective practice with the Four Agreements, Six Conditions, and Compass of Courageous Conversation is eventually internalized by all educators. If a vision for racial equity is embraced only in selected classrooms,

departments, or schools, those educators who are disengaged will simply move to places in the district where fear of transformation, resistance, inequity, and racism remain unaddressed.[58]

The E-Teams were trained to engage their colleagues in ongoing, job-embedded professional development learning. At the helm of ensuring that site level staff continued to develop their will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to support the racial work was the building principal.

Role of the Principal

Addressing inequities in the school environment is now an expectation for educational leaders. The most recent Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, specifically, Standard (3) Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, charges leaders with ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school by ensuring equity of access to social capital and institutional support; attacking issues of student marginalization; deficit-based schooling; and limiting assumptions about gender, sexual orientation, race, class, disability, and special status, and other functions related to being equity and culturally responsive.[59] Although the standard for principals to take a proactive approach to address inequities and develop schools that are equitable and culturally responsive is clear, the roadmap to attaining proves harder to attain. Connie Moore recalls becoming the building principal of a school that seemed to be fully engaged in racial equity work:

> I thought I was going into a building that was so deep into the racial equity work and really strong courageous conversations. I quickly realized it was mostly surface because when we really got into it our discussions about the below the line narrative, I could see we still had people at our school that were not really on board. I would

[58] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 239.
[59] "Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015," National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf.

hear staff make comments that would let me know that their true beliefs were coming out.

Over time I started to see the transformation unfold, we started making progress, you know. I still had negative staff, but they worked really hard to do what's right for kids. It was like finally! We are finally making progress. Leaving was difficult. I worried that the work would not continue without a leader who had been trained and understood the work. I didn't want everything to fall apart because the students really needed the racial equity work to continue.[60]

Singleton and Linton describe the type of leader who can lead for racial equity and the characteristics required to carry out the responsibility:

We have a pronounced need to develop powerful, dynamic, and engaged leaders who are willing to do what is necessary to build an anti-racist/equitable educational system where all students succeed. An effective force of anti-racist leaders can foster real equity transformation in America's schools and districts.[61]

In order to achieve racial equity in schools, principals must be committed to fighting racism and must believe they have the skill required to do so. According to Khalifa, leaders should not only understand how to perform as effective instructional leaders, but to be effective they need training that prepares them to become culturally responsive leaders.[62] Four "major strands" or behaviors of Culturally Responsive School Leaders (CRSL) include:

1. Critically self-reflects on leadership behaviors.

2. Develops culturally responsive teachers.

3. Promotes culturally responsive/inclusive school environment.

4. Engages students, parents, and indigenous contexts.

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[60] Connie Moore, interviewed by LaTanya Franklin, March 27, 2022.

[61] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 240.

[62] Muhammad A. Khalifa, Mark Anthony Gooden, and James Earl Davis, "Culturally Responsive School Leadership: A Synthesis of the Literature," *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 2 (2016): 1272–311.

Figure 5.22. Diversity should be reflected in all aspects of the school community and in the books students have access to. Image: Angela Lieu. "How to Help Children Understand Anti-Racism and Diversity through Books," Edmonton Public Library, June 4, 2020, https://www.epl.ca/blogs/post/how-to-help-children-understand-anti-racism-and-diversity-through-books/.

These CRSL behaviors seek to make not only teaching, but also the entire school environment responsive to the schooling needs of minoritized students.[63] Because they understand what is required of culturally responsive leaders, principals intentionally develop their knowledge base about equity, race, and culture. During their leadership trainings, principals in Hickman Mills C-1 learned that they are the key and guiding force behind the racial equity efforts in their schools. In addition to their other duties and responsibilities, they were also expected to lead the site level E-Team and supervise the CARE Team. As a district leadership team, we learned and witnessed firsthand that without the principal's full and complete commitment, eliminating racial achievement disparities would be very difficult.

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[63] Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis, "Culturally Responsive School Leadership."

By the end of the 2015–2016 school year, the Hickman Mills C-1 Racial Equity Transformation Plan had been fully implemented. While the district took substantial steps forward in its racial equity journey, there was no shortage of obstacles to navigate and overcome. Transforming district and school culture is to transform the language that is used. Racial achievement disparities cannot be eliminated without talking about race, and specifically talking about the opportunity, access, and success gaps between white students and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).[64] In Hickman Mills C-1, although the work was present and being implemented by district leadership and at school sites, the capacity of those leading the work varied immensely. Not surprisingly, the inconsistencies in the skill and will of the leadership teams made it difficult to build capacity in teachers and staff, and thus the effectiveness of the work and racial equity plan began to waver. New leadership, new staff, and new conditions changed the course of the initial racial equity plan, but the development, implementation, and impact has now been preserved.

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[64] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* 236.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Culturally proficient, racially conscious, courageous educators of all races can succeed with all students, but only after they locate and nurture their passion for equity. The essence and hallmark of our passion is our heightened engagement and our willingness to change. There is little honor in holding back, limiting participation, accepting mediocrity, and finding comfort in the status quo. With passion, we engage our soul and our being in this work, along with our mind and our body. With passion, we reclaim our hope and belief in the possibility of a future devoid of racial injustice—a future governed by racial equality and a true quest for human equality. With passion, we will survive the conflict, the lack of support, and the passive resistance that comes with challenging institutionalized racism in our schools. And with passion we will have the strength not only to stand up for what is right for our children, but to do what is right for them as well. [1]   —Glenn Singleton

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[1] Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2016).

Figure 6.1. Students from Ruskin High School's graduating class of 2022. Image: Hickman Mills C-1/Twitter.

The racial equity policy implemented in Hickman Mills C-1 was yet one more opportunity for an educational system to change. In telling this story, I hope the significance and impact on the staff and students are apparent and the need for such a policy is made clear. But also, this historical research should serve as a vehicle to stimulate more questioning, learning, and most importantly, dismantling of systems that continue to harm the BIPOC community. Voices have been raised, alarms have been sounded, and the data remain clear. People of color in white-dominated societies and spaces continue to be on the receiving end of constant discrimination, inequities, injustices, and aggressions. Sadly, our educational system is one of the worst perpetrators of harm, refusing the call to emerge as a catalyst for change.

Addressing the Philadelphia Bar Association in March 2011, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor asserted that the most pressing diversity issue in the United States was "the inequality in education. Until we get equality in education, we won't have an equal society."[2]

There is no denying that racial inequities exist in our society and throughout our school systems. These inequities can look like "disparities" or "differences in treatment" between students based on race. They can be overtly apparent or subtly embedded into systems and practices. Inequities in education can surface in the forms of gaps in achievement, disparities in access to programs and resources, discipline disparities, how

[2] Jeff Blumenthal, "Sotomayor Receives Philadelphia Bar's Diversity Award," *Philadelphia Business Journal,* March 11, 2011, https://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/blog/jeff-blumenthal/2011/03/sotomayor-receives-philadelphia-bars.html.

groups of students are treated by teachers and staff based on race, and teacher quality.[3]

Students should not leave learning institutions with horror stories and hashtags about "Being Black" at their respective schools.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE BY RACE/ETHNICITY & SEX

BOYS Boys of nearly all races were disproportionately disciplined, but Black boys were suspended and expelled at proportions that were 3 times their enrollment.

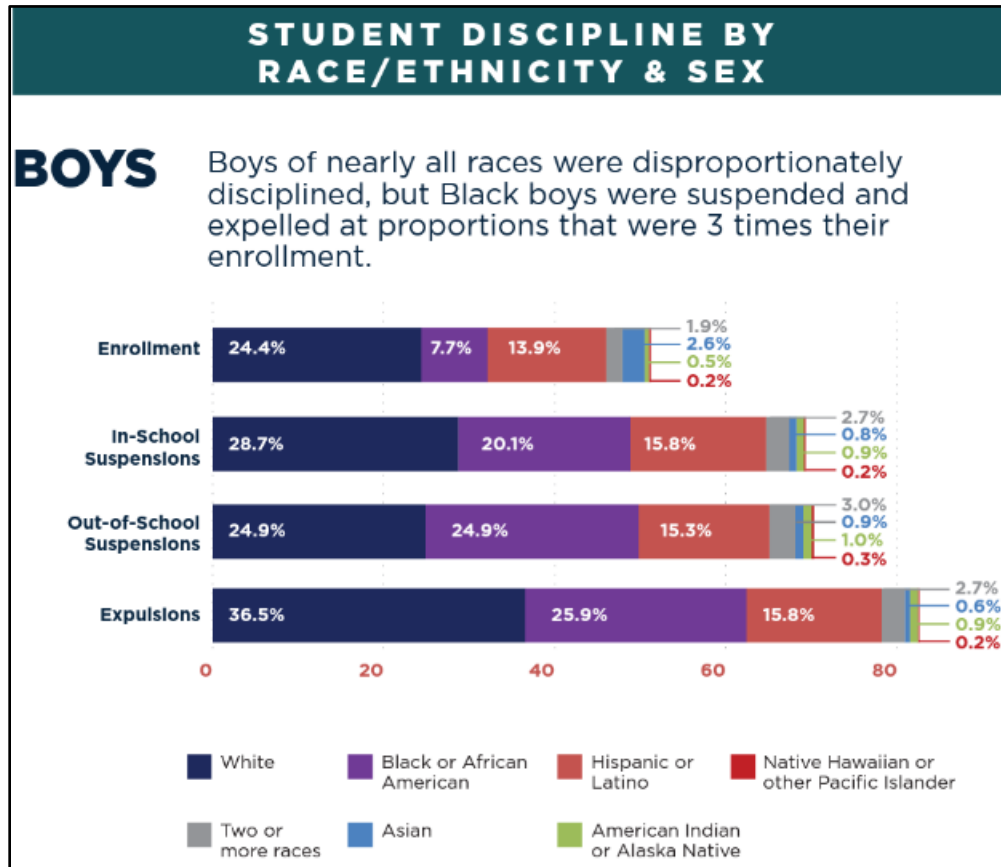|	White	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Two or more races	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
Enrollment	24.4%	7.7%	13.9%	1.9%	2.6%	0.5%	0.2%
In-School Suspensions	28.7%	20.1%	15.8%	2.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.2%
Out-of-School Suspensions	24.9%	24.9%	15.3%	3.0%	0.9%	1.0%	0.3%
Expulsions	36.5%	25.9%	15.8%	2.7%	0.6%	0.9%	0.2%

Figure 6.2. Civil Rights Data Collection: Student discipline by race/ethnicity and sex for boys 2017–2018. U.S. Department of Education, "Suspensions and Expulsions in Public Schools Data Release for the 2017–2018 School Year," Civil Rights Data Collection, August 2022, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/suspensions-and-expulsion-part-2.pdf.

I previously stated that the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection data released for the 2013–2014 school year reflected nation-wide racial disparities in school discipline, early learning, college readiness, and teacher equity. The

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[3] Kirsten Weir, "Inequality at School: What's Behind the Racial Disparity in our Education System?" *Monitor on Psychology,* 40, no. 2 (2016): 42–7.

recent data are blatant and disturbing and cannot continue to go unaddressed. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 reflect the ongoing patterns of "pushout" for Black boys and Black girls who are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school. These frightening statistics represent what is widely known as the "school-to-prison pipeline," the disturbing trend of funneling youth out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal legal systems. The national data indicate that Black and Brown youth are disproportionately isolated, punished, and pushed out of the school system. Racial equity policies and culturally responsive trainings are proactive approaches to help educators better understand and more effectively serve the most vulnerable and underserved students.
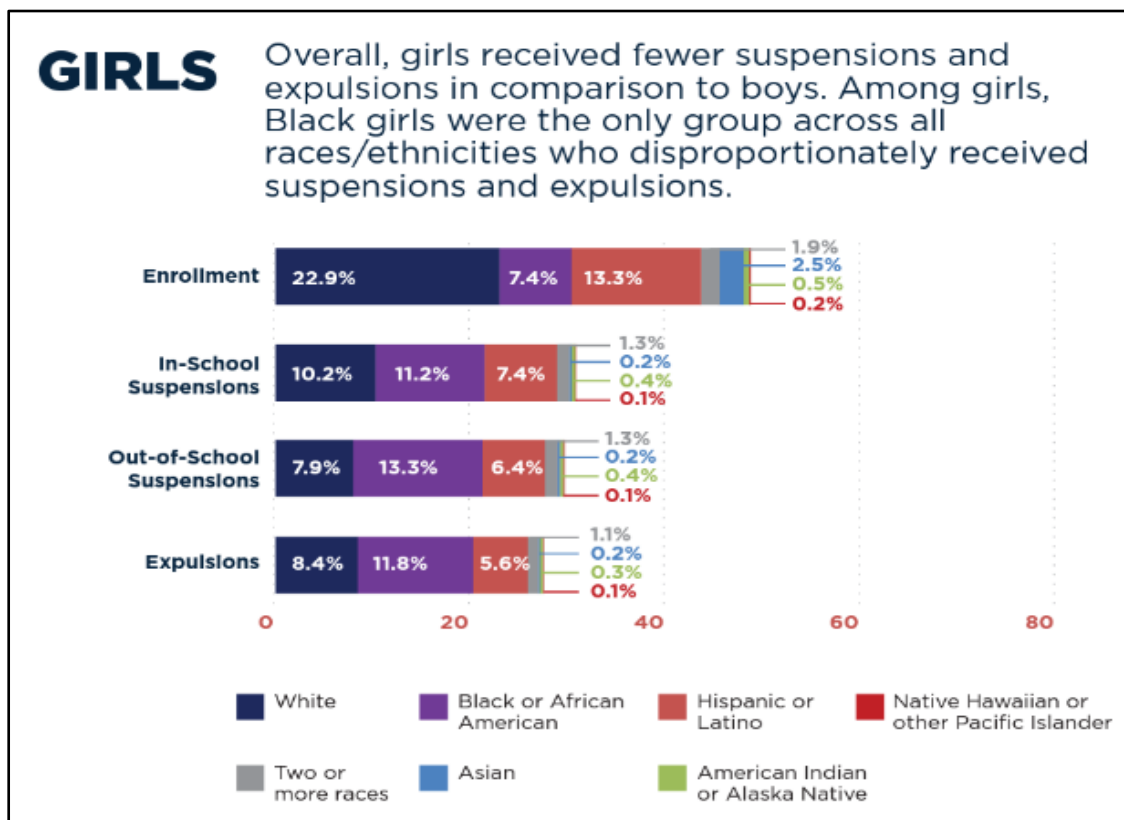

Figure 6.3. Civil Rights Data Collection: Student discipline by race/ethnicity and sex for girls 2017–2018. U.S. Department of Education, "Suspensions and Expulsions in Public Schools Data Release for the 2017–2018 School Year," Civil Rights Data Collection, August 2022, https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/suspensions-and-expulsion-part-2.pdf.

Hope

The momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement was an opportune time for school districts and other organizations to take a stand against racism and racist policies. But as 2020 came and went, the media attention waned, organizational support and anti-racist statements seemed to disappear, and the status quo of racism in our society resumed. Despite the lack of public attention and awareness, the fight against racism continues. On his first day in office, President Biden signed Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government (see Figure 6.4). The Fact Sheet states:

> The Order emphasized the enormous human costs of systemic racism and persistent poverty and provided a powerful and unprecedented mandate for all federal agencies to launch a whole-of-government approach to equity. Over the past two years, agencies have taken historic steps toward ensuring that federal programs are serving the American people in an equitable and just manner and supporting communities that have been locked out of opportunity. Through the implementation of landmark legislation and historic executive action, the Biden-Harris Administration is working to make real the promise of America for everyone—including rural communities, communities of color, Tribal communities, LGBTQI+ individuals, people with disabilities, women and girls, and communities impacted by persistent poverty.[4]

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[4] "White House Fact Sheet: President Biden Signs Executive Order to Strengthen Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities across the Federal Government," White House, February 16, 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/02/16/fact-sheet-president-biden-signs-executive-order-to-strengthen-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-across-the-federal-government.

Figure 6.4. Susan Rice, President Biden's domestic policy adviser, discusses his racial equity agenda at the White House. Drew Angerer/Getty Images.

One of the key components of this order is the requirement of federal agencies to produce an annual public Equity Action Plan that will assess and include actions to address the barriers underserved communities may face in accessing and benefiting from the agency's policies, programs, and activities. This emphasis on tackling racism and inequitable systems that guide our nation symbolizes change and a sense of hope.

Locally, small organizations like Showing Up for Racial Justice Kansas City are keeping their radar on school districts and pushing them to train teachers on anti-racism, rethink school policing, and hire diverse staff to promote equity in schools. Working as a collaborative, groups such as Education Core, JUST Systems, Elements of Education KC, Kansas City Black Mental Health Initiative, Latinx Education Collaborative, Brothers Liberating Our Communities, SURJ-KC Families, and Racial Equity EdConnect issued a list of twelve equity demands for districts (see Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6).

The organizations call on districts to train teachers on anti-racism; examine their own racial identity and culturally responsive teaching; implement restorative practices; remove police and metal detectors; make libraries more diverse; and hire at least 30 percent staff of color on all levels.[5]

Figure 6.5. Jennifer Collier, interim superintendent of Kansas City Public Schools, greeting a student at Gladstone Elementary on the first day of school in 2022. Collier has made addressing equity issues one of her central priorities. Maria Benevento, "Are KC-area Schools Racially Equitable? This Group is Keeping Track," *The Kansas City Beacon,* August 30, 2022, https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2022/08/30/kc-schools-racial-equity. Photo by Zach Bauman.

Although districts were not required to share information with the organizations, districts such as Kansas City Public Schools, Hickman Mills C-1, Blue Valley, Independence, Blue Springs, and others, were invited to communicate about their progress in meeting the demands and commitments to ongoing racial equity work.

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[5] Maria Benevento, "Are KC-area Schools Racially Equitable? This Group is Keeping Track," *The Kansas City Beacon*, August 30, 2022, https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2022/08/30/kc-schools-racial-equity.

1. Require staff to participate in 16 hours per year of anti-racist, anti-bias professional development led by professional consultants for the next five years.
2. Ask (mostly white) staff members to examine their own racial identity and have conversations about racism in the classroom.
3. Include culturally responsive and congruent teaching as part of teacher training and evaluation.
4. Reduce disparities in suspensions by replacing traditional "exclusionary" discipline with restorative practices.
5. Remove police and metal detectors from schools, and examine data on law enforcement referrals and race.
6. Include diverse, representative and inclusive texts in curriculum, libraries and classrooms.
7. Recruit, hire and retain staff of color, with the goal of 30% representation at all levels.
8. Ensure inclusion in Advanced Placement, honors, gifted and special education programs is equitable.
9. Offer ethnic studies and history courses at the high school level.
10. Encourage students and parents of color to be leaders.
11. Prioritize these action steps in budgets and leadership positions.
12. Share annual data related to the action steps, disaggregated by race.

Figure 6.6. Twelve Equity Demands sent to area schools in response to their Equity Statements. Maria Benevento, "Are KC-area Schools Racially Equitable? This Group is Keeping Track," *The Kansas City Beacon*, August 30, 2022, https://kcbeacon.org/stories/2022/08/30/kc-schools-racial-equity.

For school districts in Missouri, Hickman Mills C-1 was ahead of its time in its efforts to address gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and access through the lens of race. Through its policy implementation, urban school principals and teachers became aware of the racial inequities occurring in their schools and developed the skills necessary to lead for equitable and culturally responsive schools. Traditionally, school leadership models did not emphasize or acknowledge diversity and difference. It is no longer enough for leadership to possess traditional standards of effective leadership skills. Similarly, progressive culturally responsive educational leaders represent mainstream dominant, cultural, and educational

ideologies (e.g., data driven, increase student achievement, decrease dropout rates); however, these leaders critically recognize educational inequities as a detriment to the local and global greater good.[6]

In *Toward Culturally Sustaining Leadership: Innovation Beyond School Improvement: Promoting Equity in Diverse Contexts,* Santamaria and Santamaria note the following about educational leaders:

> The majority of educational leaders in the US are not culturally and linguistically diverse. Comparatively and as a result, there are more leaders representing mainstream demographics, values, and leadership practices which consequently have the most impact on what is happening in education today.[7]

The future of racial equity will depend largely on the work being done in schools. Since schools are the primary formal societal institutions that young people encounter, they have enormous responsibility in combating all forms of racism.[8] The current racial disparities in resources and outcomes requires a greater investment in students of color at the school level to help meet future societal needs. Although the fight against racism goes far beyond the walls of the school, actions by educators and leaders to address inequities in schools is an important contribution to the struggle to eliminate racism from our schools and society.

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[6] Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

[7] Lorri J. Santamaría and Andrés P. Santamaría, "Toward Culturally Sustaining Leadership: Innovation Beyond 'School Improvement' Promoting Equity in Diverse Contexts," *Education Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2016): 33, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci6040033.

[8] Singleton and Linton, *Courageous Conversations About Race.*

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VITA

LaTanya Charisse Franklin was born on September 15, 1973, in Kansas City, Missouri. She attended school in Kansas City, Missouri, where she graduated in 1991. She attained her Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice Administration in 1995 from University of Central Missouri (UCM), formerly Central Missouri State University (CMSU). In September of that year, she worked as a Prevention Specialist providing support groups for students experiencing abuse and trauma. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Special Education in 2002 from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and began her first teaching position as a secondary special education teacher at Southwest Charter School in Kansas City, Missouri. While working as a classroom teacher, LaTanya earned her Specialist in Education Administration degree from UMKC in 2004. LaTanya accepted an administration position in 2005 at a middle school in Kansas City, Missouri, where she served as the seventh grade assistant principal for six years. LaTanya went on to become an elementary principal in Grandview, Missouri, serving in that role for four years. In 2015, she accepted a director of curriculum and instruction position in Hickman Mills C-1 and started her journey to acquire her doctorate degree in 2016 at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In 2018 LaTanya was promoted to assistant superintendent, and in 2022 she accepted an assistant superintendent position in Kansas City, Missouri. Upon defense of her dissertation, LaTanya will complete her Doctorate of Education in 2023. She continues her role as the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction in Kansas City Public Schools.

LaTanya lives and works near family in Kansas City, Missouri, and remains dedicated to advancing equity in education.