



# Racial and Class Intolerance, **NYC**

For

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## PROLOGUE

New York City prides itself as one of the most diverse city in the world. According to the 2010 census there are 44% Caucasians (White), 25.5% African Americans, 28.6 % Hispanics, 12.7 % Asians and 0.7 %Native Indians living in New York City. However, this demographic is a broad stroke of the actual diverse mix of people in the city. If we take into consideration the sub categories of groups amongst these races and ethnic cultures the demographic makes for a very colorful pie-chart. For example out of the 12.7% Asian people in New York City, 2.4% is Asian Indian (which includes people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan), 6.0% Chinese, 0.8% Filipino, 0.3 Japanese, 1.2% Korean, 0.2% Vietnamese and 1.9% of 'Other Asians'. However, no matter how vibrant the pie-chart, the reality is the colors do not bleed into one or overlap each other <sup>[1]</sup>.

Regardless of the proclaimed diversity, the city of New York is quite segregated. Not only is there little interaction between these diverse communities, in some cases there is even a subtle racial and cultural tension. This tension rears it's ugly head every now and then, most recent example of which would be the controversial cases of police brutality on African Americans Michael Brown<sup>[2]</sup> and Eric Garner<sup>[3]</sup> and the subsequent public protest and unrest. The death of these individuals has the nation divided between what is right or wrong, whether it was questioning the degree of authority the police have when it comes to upholding the law or the failure of the victims to comply with the law. Adding more fuel to the fire is the hot debate regarding the topic of systemic and institutional racism and classism. These types of events are not new; historically speaking America has had very tumultuous relationship with people of color most notable and violent being the history of slavery. While slavery officially ended 150 years ago it's residual effect seems have to persisted in one form or another throughout the ages. Acts of oppression did meet with retaliation, in the form of the civil rights movement, the Black Panther party and influential political activisms by the likes of Dr. Martin Luther king and Malcom X.

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[2]

Some scholars argue that Slavery has taken the form of institutional Racism and Classism in the modern age (Feagin, 2014), an opinion I myself share. However, I admit my opinion is based on personal observation over the last one year of residing in New York and not any previous data. The last few decades has seen an exponential increase of immigration of people from places like Asia, Russia, and Africa <sup>[4]</sup>; What was once a conflict between the 'black' and the 'white' now includes other groups contending for equal rights and opportunities. Systematic racism and classism can be found in health, criminal conviction, immigration and even in the education sector<sup>[5]</sup>. I believe by alienating and discriminating against a particular section of the community based on their race, ethnic background or culture we are in effect harming ourselves. We are prohibiting ourselves from tapping in to potential talents of individuals who because of lack of proper infrastructure and support are unable to blossom into exemplary members of the city. These citizens would have contributed to the country's wellbeing and it is my conviction that their contribution would even have significant positive effect on the now heavily indebted economy; their economic progress and stability would at least relief the burden on welfare programs. Therefore from my point of view the ramifications are as much as related to America's economy as much as to it's morals and tolerance towards people of 'different' backgrounds. Before we can tackle this issue, we need to ask ourselves why this is happening in the first place. Clearly the answer is very complex and no one article or essay would satisfactorily provide an explanation. For, the purpose of this article I would like to focus on one possible reason which may not be the definite answer but I do feel is a vital component. It is the "fear of the other". What is the fear of the other and how does it relate to contents of this paper will be further explained in the causal chain chapter of this paper. Suffice to say it is the premise based on which my argument of racism and classism begins.

### **AGENDA**

At this point it is necessary to establish the purpose of the paper. It is to search for opportunities to reconcile the racial and class tension that plagues this city. This tension is propagated by what I would refer to as 'fear of the other' and 'ignorance'. To get

rid of this 'ignorance' and gradually improve the social as well as economic conditions of the communities of the city we need to intervene at a stage where concepts of racial discrimination, social status have not yet entered our psyche. By this I mean when young impressionable adolescents learn how to interact and socialize as individuals with people who are not 'known family members' and are people beyond that social boundary; a time when they are developing their own sense of 'self'. More specifically it is the time when they start high-school or college and go to parks and other recreational spaces to play sports such as courtside basketball or skateboarding. At this stage if we can set up or encourage a healthy environment where young minds of different economic, racial and ethnic background can interact freely without any fear of repercussion we will then truly be able to have a future of not only tolerance but a genuine understanding and respect for each other's culture and community. Because, the relationships we form with the individual from a different community is more personal and not based on any pre-conceived racial stereo types.

### **STRUCTURE**

Due to the complexity of the issue and limitation of the paper it will be structured in a way that is relatively straightforward and discuss selective topics. At first I will elaborate on the concept of "fear of the other", briefly describe the ensuing causal chain that creates a systematic organization of institutional racism and classism with an overview of how such systems have affected the education system, especially when it comes to racial segregation in schools. I will propose an argument on what we can do to change that reality, talk about few possible solutions and determine which would be the best alternative under the current circumstances and political context. I will also delve into the other side of the argument of issues of Racism and Classism and will conclude the paper with some final thoughts.

## FEAR OF THE OTHER

What is this 'Fear of the 'Other'? The answer I believe lies in our attitude towards something or someone foreign. Whether we do it consciously or subconsciously we have a tendency to shy away from things we cannot relate to. Sometimes in an attempt to deal with it we often find ourselves being ignorant or even hostile towards what we deem as alien to us or the 'other' in order to preserve our 'selves'. As Iris Marion Young has said:

“*Persons feel a sense of mutual identification only with some persons, feel in community only with those, and fear the difference others confront them with because they identify with a different culture, history, and point of view.*

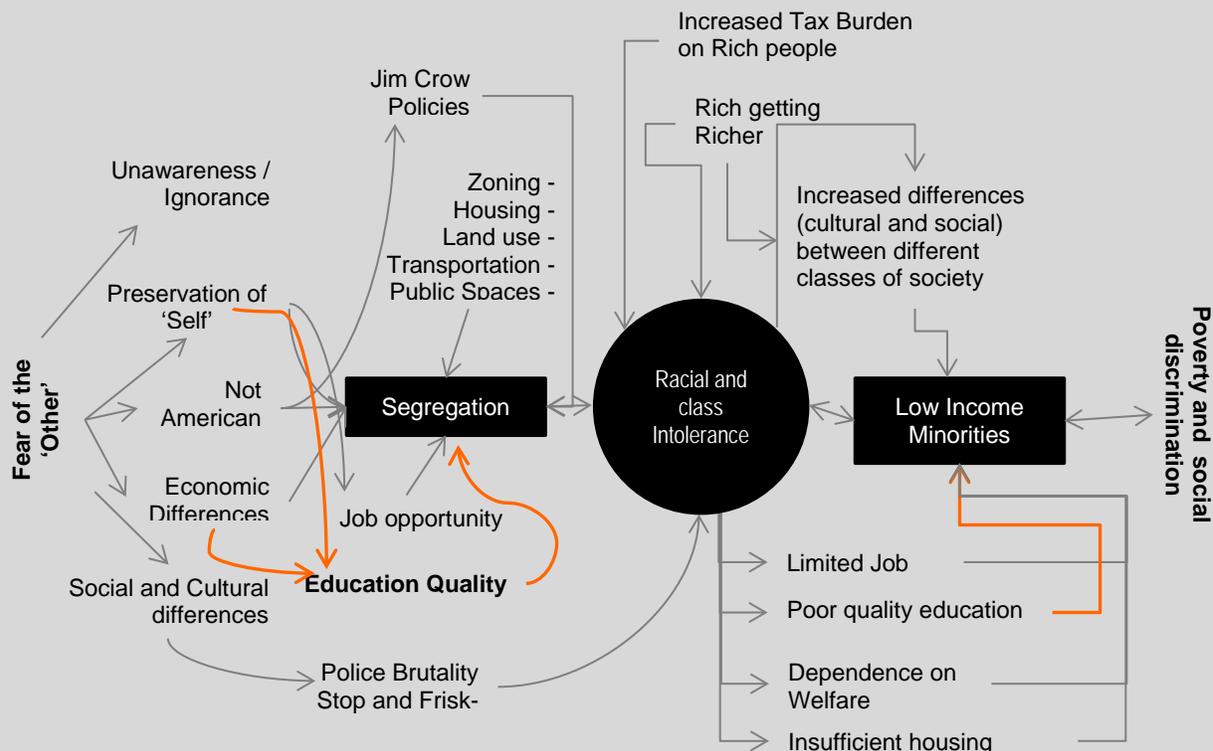
*The ideal of community, I suggest, validates and reinforces the fear and aversion some social groups exhibit towards others. If community is a positive norm, that is if existing together with others in relations of mutual understanding is the goal, then it is understandable that we exclude and avoid those with whom we do not or cannot identify.”*

-I.M. Young

(Justice and the Politics of Difference)

How does this attitude work into it the institutional racism and classism? Richard Sennet (1970, chapter 2) discusses how a "'myth of community' operates perpetually in American society to produce and implicitly legitimate racist and classist behavior and policy." An example can be found in the documentary titled "Separate and Unequal" that was shown in PBS regarding school system in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Baton Rouge currently has an integrated but underperforming public school system; nevertheless it is a gift for those who cannot afford private schools for better education. However, because of the failing school system some of the "affluent and white" residents have started a movement to create a new city named St. George outside of Baton Rouge taking the education system with them, citing that the existing school environment is dangerous, violent and mismanaged <sup>[6]</sup>. I believe in such circumstances our actions are based on the fear of the unknown and our own inaptitude for understanding how to deal with it.

**THE CAUSAL CHAIN DIAGRAM**



*Diagrammatic representation of 'causal chain'*

Fear of the 'other' propagates ignorance, an attempt to preserve one's national identity and sense of 'self', not to forget the inclination to maintain the differences in social, economic and cultural status of the dominant community from its 'inferior' counterparts. This attitude prompts the dominant community to find systematic ways to maintain a segregation through policies and technical means such as, below standard education in low income areas, scarcity of job opportunities or housing and land use policies that determine the neighborhood boundaries for the 'minorities'. Sometimes, acts of discrimination and oppression are more physical such as frequent "stop and frisk" of people of color [7] or cases of police brutality. These actions give birth to an intolerance towards people belonging to certain racial ethnicity and class, the rippling effects of which is, income inequality, further depreciating education standards, increasing dependence on welfare, which consequently adds more tax-burden to the middle to upper income groups of society, fueling more resentment for the minority groups. Eventually we are left with communities who are struggling with poverty and discrimination in a very fragmented society.

## RACIAL DOT MAP

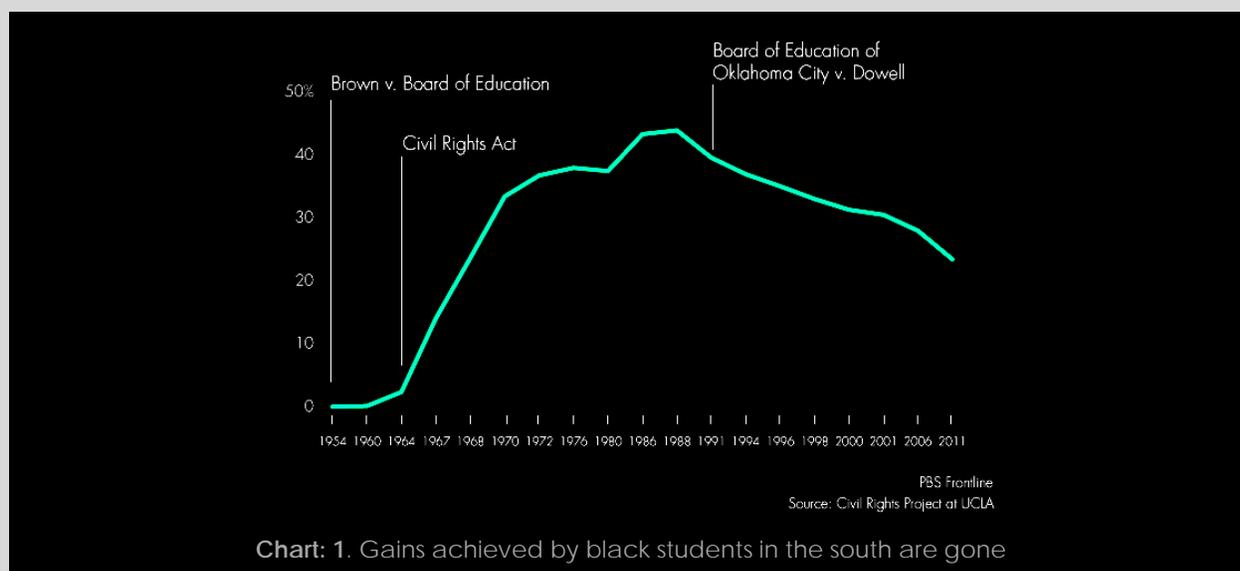
If the case for racial divide and segregation of communities is not convincing enough, then the following map should give very communicative visual impression. The map was created by Dustin Cable, a former demographic researcher at the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. This map provides an accessible visualization of geographic distribution, population density, and racial diversity of the American people in every neighborhood in the entire country. The map displays a portion of the 308,745,538 dots, one for each person residing in the United States at the location they were counted during the 2010 Census. Each dot is color-coded by the individual's race and ethnicity [8].

From the map we can see that how the Hispanics and African Americans are concentrated on the northern part of city such as uptown Manhattan and Bronx as well as extreme south such as the Downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn. Parts of Queens sees a concentration of Asians such as Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, Bangladeshi etc. If this were truly an integrated society of diverse people then the racial composition would not have been so easy to determine through color codes from the map. Rather, we would have had a much more intricate mosaic pattern of colors which when looked at from a distance would result in a single color tone.

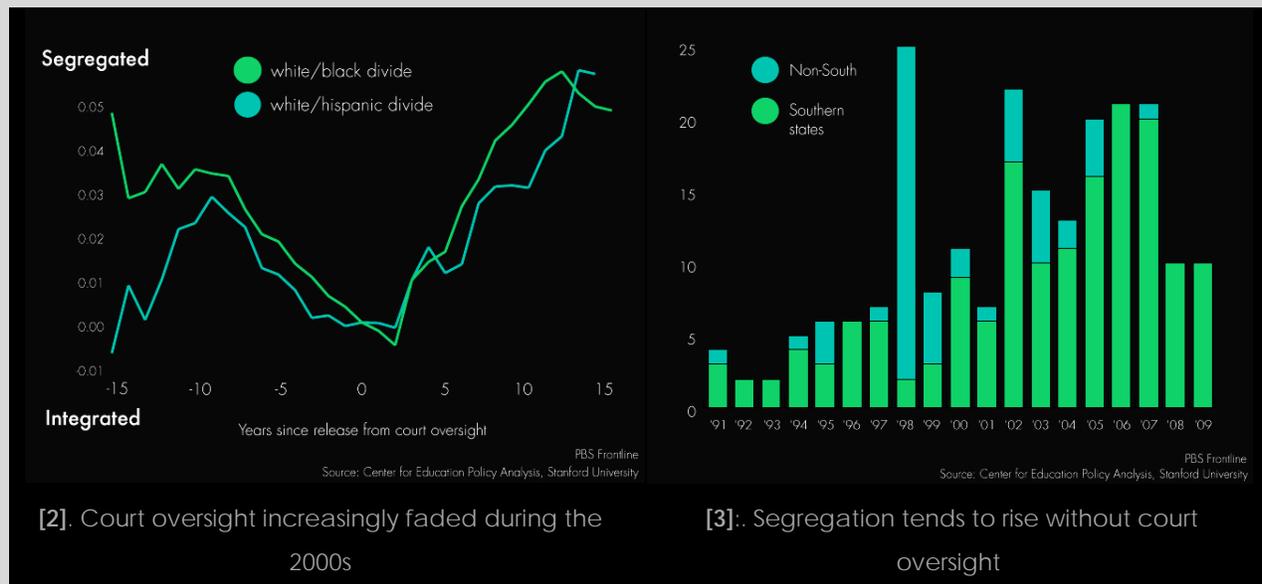


## EDUCATION SYSTEM: Racial and Ethnic Integration

The logic behind selecting the education system as an area of focus is because I feel ideally it is the most neutral platform where interaction and mutual respect between children and young adolescents from different racial, cultural and economic background is possible with limited external influences that might instigate racist or other negative sentiments. Any positive outcome in this area and its ancillary functions would have ripple effects in the causal chain. However, the remainder of this section will try to explain how living up to this ideal might be difficult. To gain some insight we look into the history of segregation and integration in the education system.



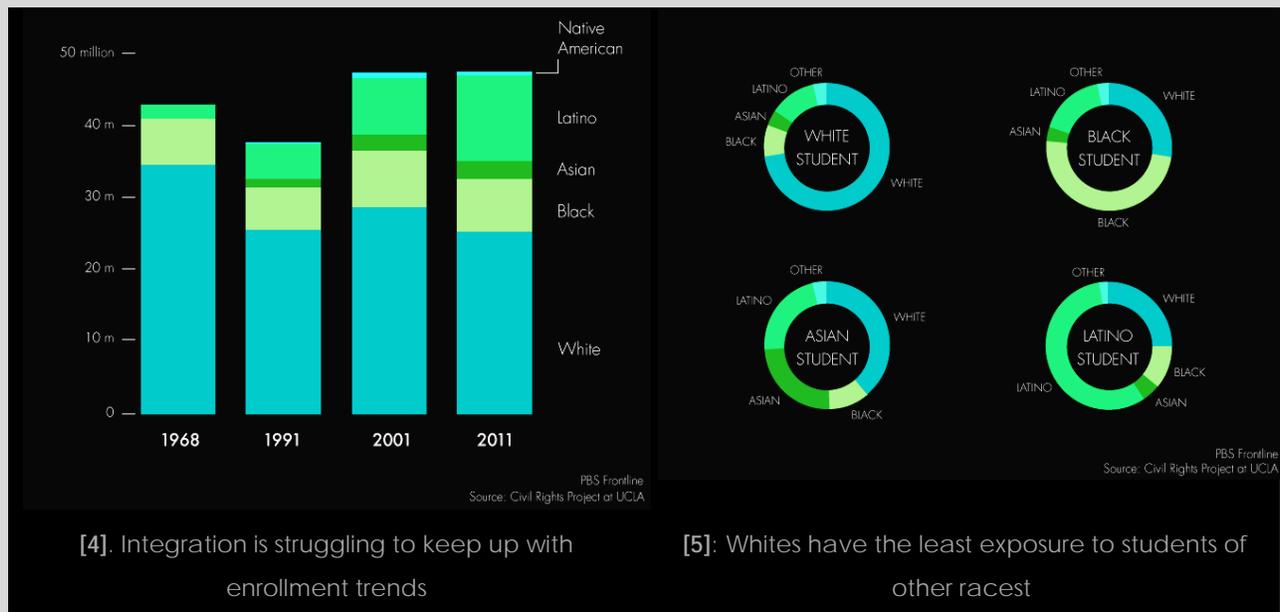
The 1950's and 60's were marked by crucial cases and acts that created golden years of same quality education for children of color. One was the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that made the conclusion that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional, and the other was the Civil Rights acts that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Following, the *Brown* decision, the percentage of black students in majority white southern schools went from zero to a peak of 43.5 percent in 1988. But it faltered after the 1991 decision in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell* which called for the end of federal court desegregation orders. By 2011 that figure reverted to 23.2 percent, just below where it stood in 1968.



Between 1990 and 2009, courts released 45 percent of school districts under court oversight. This had a considerable impact on the integration of schools. Quite rapidly the schools began to revert back to a state of a more segregated environment.

According to research from Stanford University's Center for Education Policy Analysis, a nationwide study, which focused on districts with at least 2,000 students, found that the pace of releases went from about 7 per year in the 1990s, to roughly 15 per year during the 2000s. Schools released from integration plans saw the gulf between whites and blacks grow by 24 percent after 10 years as compared to schools still under court order. The split between white students and Latinos grew by 10 percent after a decade. The year with the most releases was 1998, when 21 schools in Indiana alone were removed from oversight.

However, the study claims that segregation does not go back to where it was before *Brown v. Board of Education* but the researchers claim "segregation does increase substantially relative to levels attained under the court orders,"

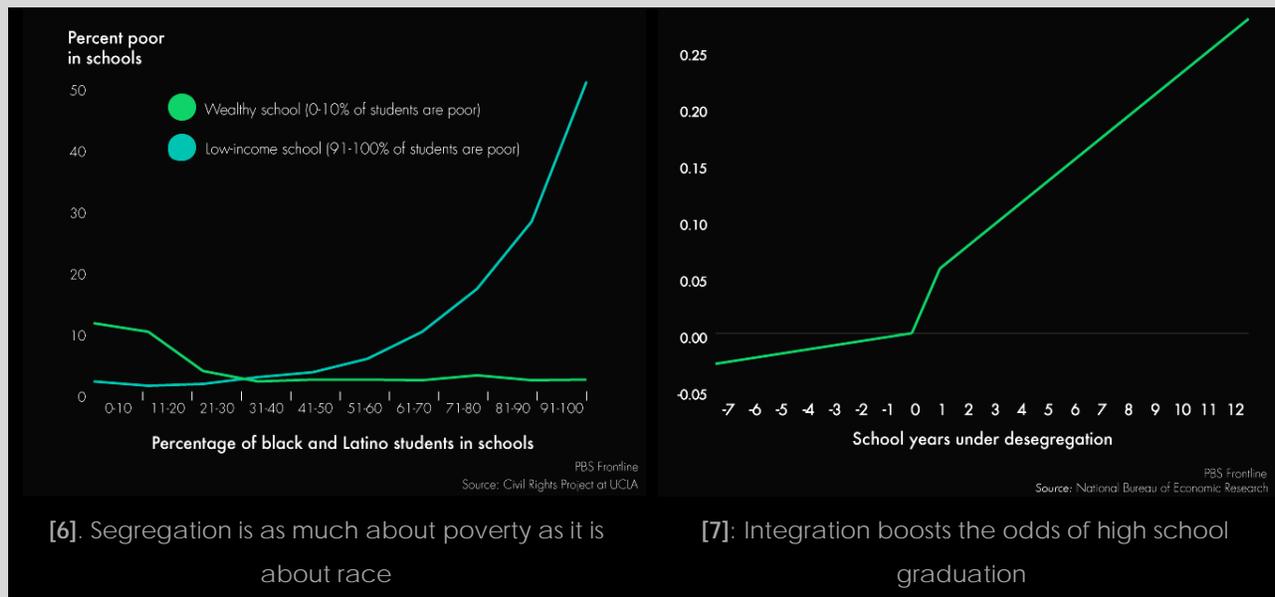


What is interesting is that trend of segregation did not decrease the enrollment of students of color. Beginning from the year 1968 to 2011, the most significant enrollment was by Latino which was 495 %, followed by increase of 19% amongst blacks and surprisingly a decrease of 29 % by white students.

Unfortunately, Latinos are the most segregated minority group even though they make up 25% of the public school going population. The manifestation of this trend is that Latino student now attend schools that's nearly 57 percent Latino, in other words they are more segregated than blacks and Asians.

Even though Latinos are the most segregated minority group, white children have the least exposure to students of other races, according to the UCLA studies. For example, in a classroom of 30 students, the average white student has 21 white classmates, 2 black classmates, 4 Latinos, 1 Asian and 1 "other." Conversely, the typical black or Latino student would have 8 white classmates and at least 20 minority classmates.

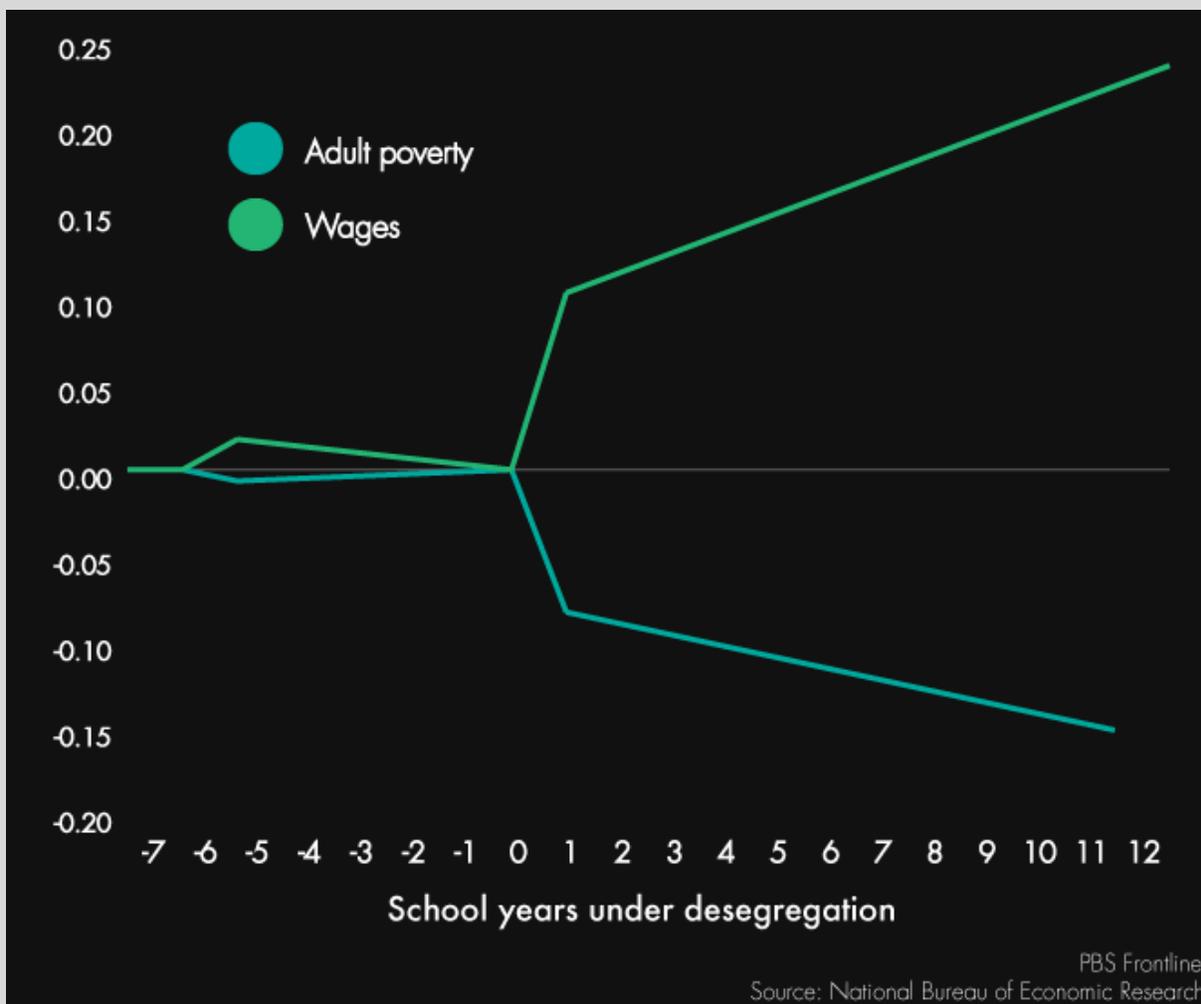
# Racial and Class Intolerance AREA OF FOCUS



According to The UCLA research there is a strong connection between poverty and segregation. Blacks and Latinos represent more than 50 % of children in schools with the most poverty, and just 11 % of students in the least impoverished schools, which means for many black and Latino children, there are less qualified teachers, as well as below standard facilities and materials. In comparison, the schools serving White and Asian students are doing much better,

Rucker Johnson, a professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley, has studied the life trajectories of students born between 1945 and 1970, the objective was to study the effects that exposure to court-ordered desegregation had on their lives. In one study, he found that for every year a black student attended an integrated school, their likelihood of graduating went up 2 percentage points. The longer the student stayed in school, the greater the odds. Johnson reasoned that schools under court supervision benefit from higher per-pupil spending and smaller student-teacher ratios<sup>[9]</sup>.

Therefore, an educated human being is more likely to have a better quality of life than one who was provided below expected standard of education. The person is more equipped to adapt to the changing dynamics of the world, and more exposure to people of different background only enhances the individual's perception of the diverse qualities of human beings. Therefore adequately educated people irrespective of their racial, cultural and economic background have no option but then contribute to society in various social and economic ways. I believe the person is also more tolerant and compassionate towards others.



## INTEGRATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICIES

In 2013, the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings published a writing of the education system in New York. The elaborately titled “School Choice and School Performance in New York City Public Schools- Will the Past be Prologue” was co-written by Grover J. Whitehurst and Sarah Whitfield. The writing informs us that there has been significant change in the New York Public school system in recent years, for example there are now 159 charter schools in NYC as opposed to 22 in 2003-2004. More public schools have sprung up at the rate of 60 schools per year starting from 2003 up to 2013. Out of these schools 123 are small non-selective high schools which aim to serve the poorest neighborhoods and are alternatives to previous large high schools that are now closed due to low performance during the Bloomberg administration <sup>[10]</sup>.

In 2004, a ‘universal choice process’ was implemented and this system allowed the students to choose schools based on course curriculum and personal preferences by parents. This option provided low income parents the scope of sending their children to better public schools and not be limited in option because of their zip code. While for the most part, the writing discussed the positive outcomes of the initiatives for the NYC public schools, there was one segment that was very interesting. It was regarding which schools the students or their guardian chose as their first choice.

Groups	Reading z-score in 1 <sup>st</sup> choice high school	Percentage black in 1 <sup>st</sup> choice high school
All Public	0.18	29.7
Black	0.09	43.9

It stated that, “students tend to prefer a school that includes students similar to them. This means that lower income, lower achieving minority students compared to their more advantaged peers are more likely to have as their first choice a lower performing high minority school.” This information gives us an insight into another side of Racism and Classism. My interpretation here is that the minority groups prefer forsaking better education and opportunity in favor of preserving their sense of ‘self’. Therefore, it seems the path to Racial and Class integration in society will not be so easy.

The brief overlook of the patterns of school segregation posits the question “why is it happening?” Is it because the initiatives seem over imposed by the government and people participation is not voluntarily but rather mandatory? Because it seems given the option both the majority and minority groups prefer to be within their ‘comfort zone’ and seem unwilling to integrate. From that point of view would it be better if the approach was not so much so policy based but rather it was more of an ‘attitude’? Is there any way where we could make it more of a culture and part of the human psyche? I believe so. As previously mentioned I believe a harmonious environment can be attained through three principle factors, which I identity as **AWARENESS**, **INTERACTION** and **COMMON INTERESTS**.

*AWARENESS*: about the differences and similarities in culture between communities which would include religious beliefs and traditional practices.

*INTERACTION*: Activities that encourage and provide a platform for children/young adults from different background (economic, racial or cultural) to mingle or physical spaces and neutral common grounds where young minds from diverse communities are able to interact without feeling threatened of each other’s group.

*COMMON INTERESTS*: Outdoor sports or other extra-curricular activities that is popular with both the socially defined ‘rich’ kids and the ‘poor’ kids (e.g. skateboarding, cycling, basketball etc.) that can initiate a common point of discussion and communication.

The proposals I present in the following pages touch upon the domains of public policy, civic spaces and innovative approaches to bridge the gap between communities. They are as follows:

- [1] Inter-School Cultural Exchange Activities
- [2] Urban-Suburban Interdistrict Transfer Program
- [3] Neutral Public Spaces- Interaction Through Sports

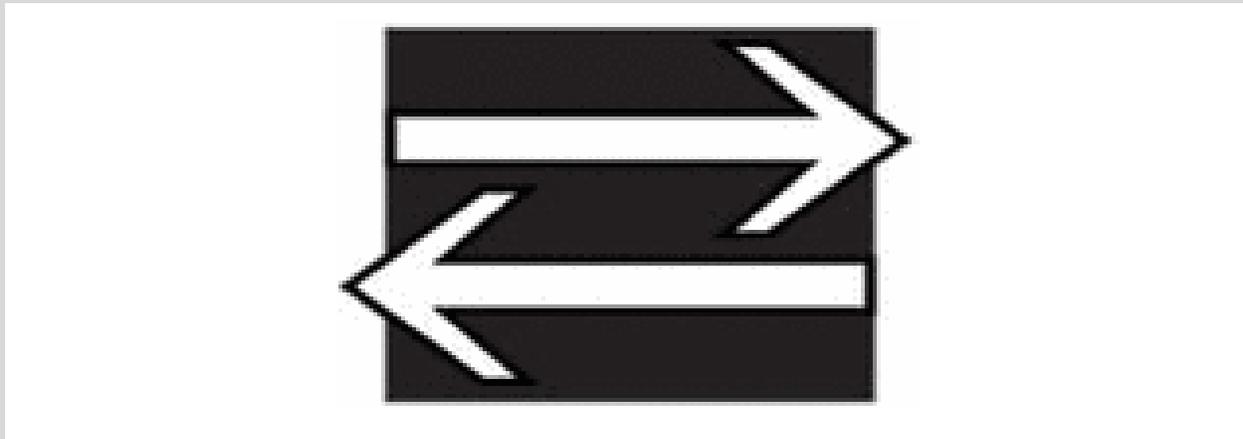
### INTER-SCHOOL CULTURAL EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES [Option 1]



The concept was quite simple. Find two schools which are worlds apart in terms of educational quality and expense but they are in close proximity to each other. Initiate a program that encourages interaction between the students from the two schools. In this case the two schools were University Heights High School which is on St. Anns Avenue in the South Bronx (one of the poorest district in America) and just six miles away is the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, a high end school where the annual tuition fee per children is \$43,000. The program was setting up children in pairs and encouraging them to exchange letters. This correspondence has been happening for the last eight years. After the initial exchange of letters there were combined field trips, meetings, events of telling stories all in the effort to create a platform where these young individuals from diverse background get to know about each other in a more personal level.

The positive aspect of such programs is that the outcomes are instant. The eight year interaction also shows the scope of longevity of the program. The interactions between the children are more insightful and humane. Also, there is no political or social pressure to 'stop' the progress of this rather inexpensive social experiment, which inevitably is a double edged sword because the drawback is that there is a lack for political or social support to encourage such programs to take place more often in other schools with similar circumstances.

## URBAN-SUBURBAN INTERDISTRICT TRANSFER PROGRAM [Option 2]



The purpose of the program is to voluntarily reduce racial isolation, and the segregation of academic opportunities in elementary and secondary schools in order to enhance and enrich racial and ethnic awareness among students, teachers, and parents. In order to accomplish this purpose, *minority pupils* residing in the Rochester City School District may apply for transfer to participating suburban school districts through the Program. The program recently completed its 50<sup>th</sup> year as an institution. Fifty years later, approximately 450 students from RCSD attend 42 schools in seven suburban school districts in Monroe County. According to a 2005 data only 1% of the current city school population participate in the program.

The program initially was supported by interest groups, including the media, politicians, school board members, district administrators, parent groups, and community organizers but later it was evident a constant tension exists between the benefits of integration and the 'self-interests' of the taxpayer in allowing students to cross district boundaries, particularly in a program that only involves city residents enrolling in the suburbs.

However, the program still persists after fifty years contention with various groups and years of struggling to find funds.

### NEUTRAL PUBLIC SPACES- INTERACTION THROUGH SPORTS [Option 3]



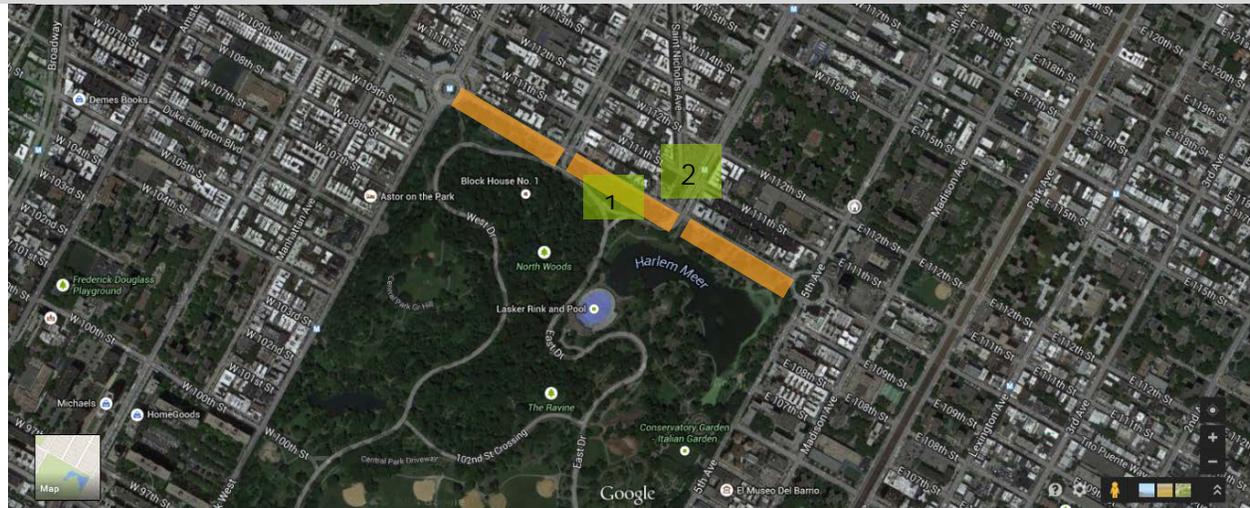
Ted Watkins Park at 103rd and Central, L.A was an unwelcoming and dangerous place thirteen years ago. But after an investment of 6.8 million dollars this 27 acre park has transformed in to a bright and colorful, nicely landscaped park full of picnic tables, playing fields and handball courts, as well as fitness equipment along the west side. It is now considered a jewel of the surrounding community.

The renovation prompted many public activities such as morning walks, jogging, playing hand ball in the court, skateboarding in the skating area, children playing in toddler's area, even a farmers market on Saturdays all bustling with life. But the most interesting phenomenon is the summer kickball league launched by members of two rival biker gangs "Los Ryderz Bike Club" and "East Side Riders". These kickball events are safe haven for youths who would otherwise be involved in unwanted anti-social activities. The sports event also helped bridge gaps between communities in conflict.

Similar initiatives and repurposing of public spaces can be applied in New York. The spaces do not always have to be 'formal parks', they can also be informal spaces such as logically appropriate streets or pedestrian spaces that are closed on the weekends. However, one place I would suggest that can be transformed in a similar fashion to Ted Watkins Park is taking a strip on the North side of Central park which runs parallel to 110 Street. The reason being, it is on the invisible line where the division between Harlem and the rest of Manhattan begins.

# Racial and Class Intolerance

## ALTERNATE SOLUTIONS



The cost of such urban design intervention can be relatively inexpensive. It is not necessary to have elaborate designs to provide an 'active' public space. The image on the left shows how a simple landscape and 1'-6" level difference of concrete can inspire a space for sports activity, shaded informal sitting arrangement and an excuse to plant more trees in this urban jungle. Similar level changes, slopes or flat surfaces can be designed for multiple purposes, such as skateboarding, outdoor basket ball in the strip on the edge of Central Park North.

1. Below: Proposed area of renovation

2. Left: Informal spaces where activity already takes place



The alternate solutions will be compared based on a set of criteria. The objective is to establish parameters so that a rational model of analysis can be formulated. The criteria are selected based on the comparative implications of each solution and to justify these implications quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

**[1]** Feasibility: Any policy or initiative has to consider it's monetary and logistic issues. They are usually quantified in terms of cost or 'expense' and the duration of these expenses, that is 'time' taken.

**[2]** Effectiveness: For the purpose of this paper we will try to see the rate of success of each solution and will compare it with the time and expense that has been spent on it.

**[3]** Political willingness: The solutions are inevitably tied to the political context. However some are more dependent on political support while others are a little more independent. Depending upon each solution 'political support' has its benefits and drawbacks. It will be a more qualitative analysis.

**[4]** Economic benefit: Usually this sort of criterion is quantified, but due to scarcity of sufficient data and limitation of the paper it will be mostly a qualitative analysis and look into the short term and long term benefits.

**[5]** Social benefit: Probably, the most crucial criterion from this set. The social benefits for the most part cannot be quantified but their implications can be observed and noted down.

Most of the criteria show that in an attempt to rationalize and organize these criteria there are many areas in the argument that need better clarification of methods or quantification. I believe it only exemplifies that the benefits or the loses cannot be holistically quantified but rather it's effects can only be experienced through the passage of time. However, in order to communicate with the readers a rational model such as this was indispensable. After all as human beings we are programmed to compartmentalize complex issues, analyze them separately and then re-synthesis them in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

# Racial and Class Intolerance ANALYSIS MATRIX

The objective here is to deduce which option would best propagate a psychology or culture of racial and class harmony. Their merits and de-merits are quantified in the scale of 1-3. The number 3 signifies highest positive effect while 1 signifies the lowest effectiveness.

	Feasibility		Political willingness (3) is positive	Economic benefit		Social benefit		Total
	Time (3) is less	Expense (3) is inexpensive		Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term	
<b>Option [1]</b>	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	16
<b>Option [2]</b>	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	13
<b>Option [3]</b>	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	14

From the table above it is deduced that Inter-School Cultural Exchange Activities (Option1) has the most potential in mitigating racial and class based tension and promotes mutual understanding of young minds from different racial, cultural and economic background. It is plausible because the considerable progress that was made in a short period of time has significant short time and possibly long term social benefits. However, since it is an interaction exercise no profit of economic value can be attained in the short term, but we should hope that such un-biased interactions will have considerable impact in the lives of the young minds and inspire them to be model citizens and in the long run contribute to the country's economy. In terms of expenses, writing letters or sending e-mail to pen-friends is quite inexpensive in this day and age. The Urban-Suburban Interdistrict Transfer Program (Option 2) unfortunately scores the lowest even though it has a long history of being part of the country's education system, but considering that heritage it has struggled to make significant social or political impact not to mention being dependent on outside funds and donations. Surprisingly, Neutral Public Spaces (Option 3) did slightly better. While it would be the most expensive initiative, I believe it's physical presence would have significant positive impact on the surrounding community members who would be using it (as illustrated on the Ted Watkins Park). But from a political point of view opinions may be divided and it would need a great deal of analysis to make a convincing argument in this option's favor. On a personal note I would prefer to see Option 3 to be selected, as it would also provide a platform of economic benefit in the short term. E.g. Function as a temporary space for events such as Farmers Market and spots for local street vendors.

In a spirited debate between Bill 'O Reilly and Megyn Kelly, Mr. Reilly asked his guest whether she believes in the "white privilege theory"? Miss Kelly replied the alarming evidence does indicate that. "Statistics shows" she said:

**“Black Unemployment in Ferguson is three times the white unemployment rate. Black men between the ages of 16-24 has almost 50% unemployment rate, for whites it's 16%. In the United States a black child is four times as likely to stay in a poor neighborhood than a white child. 20% per cent of white kids are in single parent homes, 52% black kids are in single parents are. The incarceration rate is 6 times higher for blacks than whites. There is segregated housing in Ferguson, there are under performing schools both of them co-relate with low prospects in life . ”**

**-Megyn Kelly, Fox News Reporter**  
(the O' Reilly factor, August 5, 2014 )

Mr. 'O Reilly provided a counter argument where he explains that what "drives the poverty" are lack of values from families, culture and personal responsibility amongst black people<sup>[14]</sup>. But he is not the only person to express such comments. The Republican Party member Paul Davis Ryan has indirectly stated in a "Morning in America" interview that African American people are poor because they are lazy. To quote his now infamous statement:

**“We have got this tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of work, and so there is a real culture problem here that has to be dealt with...you need to get involved, you need to get involved yourself, whether through a good mentor program or some religious charity, whatever it is to make a difference. And that's how we resuscitate our culture. ”**

**-Paul Ryan, Republican Party**  
(excerpt from 'Morning in America' interview)

The arguments put forth by Paul Ryan is based on his 204 page "War on Poverty" report in which he also proposed sweeping reforms on welfare and complete overhauls of all social programs including Head Start, Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps, housing assistance, and anything helping the poor<sup>[15][16]</sup>. In a nutshell his argument is that such aid-programs act as a crutch for those who are currently on the lower income threshold and prevents them from being motivated to search for work and improve their living conditions. Walking down the streets of Harlem one will observe many able bodied men standing on sidewalks at odd hours of the day whose daily routine seems to revolve around 'hanging out' on that particular spot. If we consider this phenomenon at face value is the sentiments expressed by Paul Ryan and Bill 'O Reilly completely out of line?

Returning back for a brief moment to the PBS documentary "Separate but Unequal" the chairperson of the separation movement known as "City of St. George incorporation effort", Mr. Norman Browning in an emotional speech in the petition signing event expressed that the purpose of the movement is to ensure a better future for the children (who were present in the program) in front of him, that they have been failing their children for thirty plus years and the movement begins with the petition for a new city of St. George just outside Baton Rouge which he believe they can do it. While on the outset it might seem like a prime example of institutional racism, it can be argued that as any concerned parents who want to protect and secure the future of their children, they are pursuing the course of action that would best serve their interest even though that approach might be inherently 'selfish'.

Darren Wilson the controversial figure behind the death of African American Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri has also claimed his actions are based on defense and self-preservation. News reports indicate that ex-officer Wilson was initially overpowered and beaten by the 'hulking' 18 year old, for which he was later taken to hospital with severe bruises. It was only when Brown approached the victim the second time that ex-officer Wilson had to take fatal measures as a form of self-defense. While he has remorse for the death of Michael Brown he also mentions that he does have a 'clear conscience' because he believes what he did was right in terms of the law. <sup>[17][18]</sup>

It is easier to speculate what was right or wrong during the weeks following the incident, but on the exact moment as these events are unfolding we find ourselves reverting to our basic instinct of survival and self-preservation. In the face of any calamity it is human nature to think of ourselves first and at the most our near and loved ones. 'Other' people's well-being is not important. In that case how do we tackle the disastrous effects of calamities such as Racism and Classism?

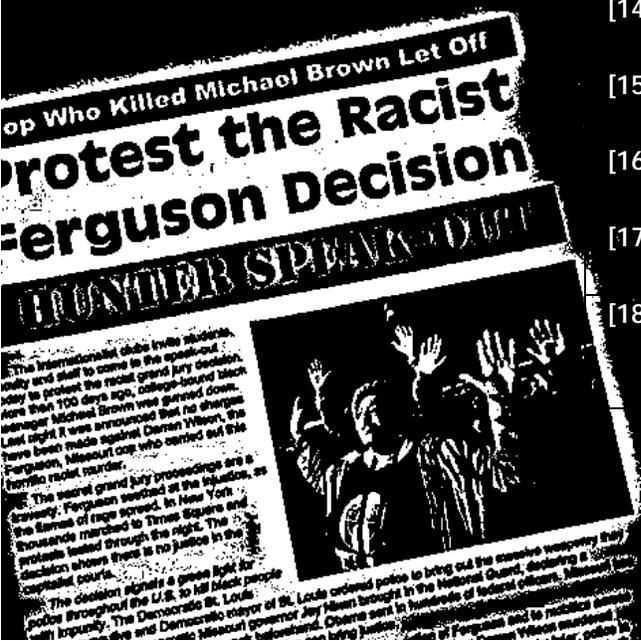
This paper is a small addition to a long list of articles essays, books written by many authors with their various perspectives on the racial, ethnic, class and discrimination that still prevails in this country and not to mention in other countries also. While I have tried in a humble effort to look for opportunities to mitigate this issue, I have to admit one thing that might always obstruct progress in this area is "Economic Status". In this capitalist society it seems wealth and the status that comes with it takes precedence over other 'values'. It is my opinion that a few very affluent members of society (abstract 1%) prefer to perceive themselves as an exclusive group of elites and would like to preserve that status quo at in any possible way. This action, further establishes the invisible line that separate the 'rich' from the 'poor', which has unfortunately become synonymous with the separation of the white from the poor.



However, I still believe in a brighter future because the new generation of spirited adolescents is much more enlightened than their previous generation. They are more aware of the society they live in and observe the injustice around them. Also, instant access to information has given them a much broader scope of understanding different cultures and practices. A proper example would be the protest arranged by various student bodies of Hunter College for recent victims of police brutality such as Michael brown and Eric Garner. Their political consciousness, understanding of civil rights and public expression gives a person hope. After all it should not be too naïve to presume that some of them will one day be politicians, take part in government jobs, or do social work or even be urban planners and apply the ideals of equality they are learning plus developing now in their respective professional field.

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Unity is in our Diversity