

MacMichael, Mary

To: MacMichael, Mary
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] We Made the Wall Street Journal

From: Marguerite Downham <mdownham@aol.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 6, 2024 8:06 AM
To: Dave Hesse <dchespe@pbnlaw.com>; Valarie Smith <vmaffeismith@aol.com>; Darren Harris <dharris@pittsgrove.net>; Pia Lordi <plordi@dealschool.org>; Silverstein, Mark <msilverstein@gpsd.us>
Subject: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] We Made the Wall Street Journal

=====
=====
** EXTERNAL EMAIL -->> **BEFORE** opening attachments, clicking on links, or providing any information, **PLEASE STOP** and **VERIFY** the sending source **
=====
=====

Activists Seek to Revive Court-Ordered Racial Integration

BY MATT BARNUM for the WSJ

Activists pushing for equality in American schools want to revive one of the most successful but divisive educational policies in the nation’s history: court-ordered racial integration.

Lawsuits in Minnesota and New Jersey are seeking to compel the states to ensure more racially balanced public schools, while a new organization called Brown’s Promise says it plans to back similar integration suits in other states.

The advocates hope courts will require policies that facilitate more-diverse schools, such as magnet schools or voluntary transfer programs. They play down more-controversial strategies—such as the mandatory cross-district busing that many U.S. cities adopted following court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s— and emphasize what they see as the broad benefits of inte-grated education.

“We simply need to be preparing for learning together, working together, across lines of difference. Our country is stronger when we do that,” said Ary Amerikaner of Brown’s Promise, named after Brown v. Board of Education, the 1954 Supreme Court case that struck down mandated segregation in schools.

Though still modest in scope, the efforts are among the most serious in years to address the racial stratification of American schools. Some skeptics question whether an integration revival can succeed politically and worry that it will end up restricting educational choice. Seven decades after the Brown decision, many public schools continue to be separated by race and class. A 2020 analysis by the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles found that 40% of Black students attended schools that were 90% or more nonwhite.

Experts say school segregation has persisted in America for a variety of reasons, including private housing choices and government policies such as school boundaries and zoning. A 2019 Gallup poll found that a majority of Americans described school segregation as at least a “moderately serious problem.”

In the case in Minnesota, which targets alleged segregation in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the state Supreme Court recently ruled that plaintiffs will have to show that “racial imbalances” contribute to an “inadequate education.”

The case will now return to a lower court for trial, although it could also be settled out of court.

Alejandro Cruz-Guzman, the lead plaintiff and a parent in St. Paul, said he joined the case after initially sending his children to a predominantly Hispanic charter school.

“All the kids were just like my kids,” said Cruz-Guzman, who is Mexican American. “What’s going to happen when they get older, they grow up, and they haven’t been exposed to other kids from other communities and different backgrounds?”

Not all parents in the region support the activists. Nekima Levy Armstrong, a lawyer who was previously the head of the Minneapolis NAACP, said that when she sent her two Black daughters to a diverse neighborhood school in suburban Minneapolis, they didn’t feel welcome or challenged. She switched them to a predominantly Black charter school, which she described as “culturally affirming.”

Armstrong is representing three charter schools that have intervened in the Minnesota suit. She said she feared that if the plaintiffs prevail, charter schools could be required to meet demographic quotas. In New Jersey, a suit filed in 2018 on behalf of several civil-rights advocates and students alleged that the state “has been complicit in the creation and persistence of school segregation.” Attorneys for the state sought to dismiss the suit, saying it called for “essentially obliterating the State’s entire public school system.”

In October, a judge declined to dismiss the case or to give the plaintiffs a swift victory. The parties are now in closed-door mediation.