

Book Review

Metzger, M. W., & Webber, H. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Facing segregation: Housing policy solutions for a stronger society*. Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by Peter A. Kindle, Ph.D., CPA, LMSW
The University of South Dakota

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Metzger and Webber have edited materials from a 2015 conference on inclusive housing hosted at the Center for Social Development in the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis where they are on faculty. Their book is about residential segregation in America, its harms, and potential solutions. It advocates for the social value of integration that they call living together—the intentional racial and economic desegregation of American communities to promote economic growth, strengthen democracy, and enhance equal opportunity.

The first section contains four chapters addressing the causes and consequences of segregation, the second section has seven chapters proposing policy solutions to reduce segregation, and the concluding chapter summarizes potential solutions in a three-pronged, ambitious policy agenda.

An introductory chapter provides a history of U.S. residential segregation in the Fair Housing Act in 1967. Demographic changes since then, primarily the growth of non-White people groups in America, have resulted in greater concentrated segregation based on both race and economic class. The second chapter challenges the notion that segregation is the result of private prejudice, a myth that has received indirect sanction from the Supreme Court as recently as 2007 in a decision that denied local regulations to erode segregation unless that segregation was by state action.

The sad fact is that racial segregation of low income neighborhoods did not really exist prior to the

creation of federal housing projects in the 1930s. Housing projects replaced economic segregation with racial segregation. The presumption in federal housing policy that housing integration was unfeasible lingered after World War II. The Federal Housing Authority denied financing to suburban developers and mortgagees who were Black. Deed restrictions were allowed that denied home sales to Blacks. Redlining by financial institutions furthered the segregation because letting Blacks into a White neighborhood made the loans too risky. Interstate highways were located to raze integrated neighborhoods and isolate Black ones. Real estate agents lost their licenses for selling to Blacks. Police stood by while thousands of mobs burned homes in White neighborhoods bought by Blacks. Overcrowding and denial of municipal services turned the remaining Black housing areas into ghettos. Any fair analysis of the Black–White wealth gap will find it anchored in federal and local policies that privileged appreciating home values of White homebuyers.

Chapter Three understands that segregated federal housing projects is not the entire story. As Blacks moved out of the south, their lack of political power was somewhat overcome by segregation and the Black institutions and Black agency developed in the ghettos Affordable public housing in the New Deal intentionally segregated Blacks from Whites, but provided substantial improvements in housing including indoor plumbing and electricity. Public housing for Blacks continued to receive support in the Black press until the 1960s because

new affordable housing was such a significant improvement. The growth of a Black middle class changed everything and by 1972 HUD was siting new public housing in integrated neighborhoods with explicit bans on more in the ghettos. By Nixon's term, there was a moratorium on new public housing. The more recent neoliberal era shifted toward market solutions, primarily through Section 8 housing vouchers and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). Section 8 has not been perceived as racial assistance in the same manner as public housing, but despite effectively renovating some Black ghettos (e.g., Harlem), these market solutions have tended to abandon an integration motive.

The consequences of segregation close with Chapter Four that illustrates how intentional segregation policies in St. Louis resulted in the concentration of Black poverty and the dispersion of White poverty. Some attention is also paid to social psychological research on in-groups and out-groups. Here the point is that people will discriminate against out-groups when distributing rewards, but not when distributing punishment. This research also notes the heavy bias toward conflict over cooperation when under threat. All attempts to reverse segregation must find ways to cope with these findings.

Chapters Five through Eleven discuss detailed policy solutions that may have flourished if the Obama-era Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) mandate (2015) had been implemented. Chapter Five noted that AFFH switched focus away from anti-discrimination litigation to proactive administration oversight of efforts to end racial segregation through a more balanced and comprehensive approach to stimulate investment in concentrated poverty areas. Chapter Six describes the failure of housing vouchers to promote racial integration and suggests tax incentives and supportive casework to address lingering discrimination and transportation barriers. Chapter Seven argues for the addition of desegregation to the charter of the Community Reinvestment Act. Chapter Eight addresses the failure of mixed-income housing programs (HOPE VI and Obama's Choice Neighborhood Initiative) to deconcentrate poverty

and promote social integration. The only solution proposed is a thorough revamping of every aspect of these programs to produce broad structural change.

Chapter Nine attempts to analyze neighborhoods threatened by blight and contagious abandonment by classifying them as low demand, high demand, or middle markets. There is little hope for market-driven solutions in the low demand neighborhoods where residents are better advised to simply relocate, and high demand neighborhoods are already benefitting from market-driven effects that are often to the detriment of low income residents. The sweet spot for public-private investments is the middle market neighborhood where improving existing amenities and focusing on stable families may arrest the threat of blight. Chapter Ten returns to the theme of failed policies, this time focusing on Tax Increment Financing that has been noted more for largess and corruption than for economic development. The connection between housing value and educational attainment is the focus of Chapter Eleven that explicitly denies that racial segregation is explained by economic segregation and that academic achievement is a function of school resources. The proposal here is a comprehensive plan to support brain development from birth to young adulthood through universal prenatal care, public health insurance, regional preschool clearinghouses, and Black-owned business development.

The agenda proposed in the final chapter is threefold: (a) increasing integration in high opportunity neighborhoods (which is against longstanding traditions of local zoning), (b) redeveloping areas of concentrated poverty (which means displacing some poor with middle class households), and (c) preserving and supporting middle class neighborhoods. All of these approaches are heavily constrained by market effects on land prices. Affordable homes in high opportunity neighborhoods rarely stay affordable long as the market pushes housing values upward. Affordable homes in poor neighborhoods increase housing stock that further devalues housing due to lack of demand. Affordable homes in middle class neighborhoods create the opportunity for

gentrification. The extent to which racial segregation is complemented by economic segregation suggests that this agenda will do nothing to support housing for low income residents.

While well-researched and remarkably accessible, I do not believe that the authors represented in this volume have grappled with the value conflict that is the core of racial housing segregation. I believe that Americans value equal opportunity for all, except when providing equal opportunity might lower their home value or the quality of the education their children might receive. As noted in Chapter Four,

people will discriminate against out-groups when distributing rewards, but not when distributing punishment. What White Americans need to realize is that resistance to racial and economic integration is in itself a form of social punishment. It is not enough to support equal opportunity over there unless we are willing to promote equal opportunity in our own neighborhoods. I believe that this book confirms that there are no market solutions to segregation. Americans must choose to value people over assets or there will be little to no racial integration in housing.