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**Owen Fiss: A Way Out**

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## **WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND?**

OWEN FISS

☒ There is so much to celebrate in America. The nation is the strongest and most prosperous the world has ever known. We have enjoyed the blessings of a constitutional democracy for more than two hundred years. Civil society is endowed with effective and vibrant private institutions. The United States economy is highly productive and is the locomotive that drives the world economy. With a remarkably high standard of living, we are imbued with the sense of power and satisfaction that comes from having so many of the things that money can buy—travel, leisure, cars, and beautiful homes.

In the shadow of this glory, profound problems persist, some close to the core of our civilization. Perhaps the most glaring is the presence in our cities of communities known as ghettos. The persons living in the typical ghetto are black, but, even more significant, they are poor. Many are on welfare, and even those who work tend to earn amounts that place them beneath the poverty line. As a consequence, the housing stock is old and dilapidated, retail establishments scarce, crime rates high, gangs rampant, drugs plentiful, and jobs in short supply.

Living under such adverse conditions tests the human spirit. It demands resiliency and ingenuity, and a fair measure of faith. The survivors are often strong and determined individuals, who, through hard work and the elemental bonds of love and friendship, have made a life in the inner city for themselves and their families. The ghetto is their home. It has also been home for some of America's most talented writers and artists. Yet alongside these individual truths is a collective one, vividly and poignantly described by James Baldwin forty years ago in *Letter from a Region in My Mind*. The ghettos of America were produced by the most blatant racial exclusionary practices. As a vestige of our unique and unfortunate racial history, they continue to isolate and concentrate the most disadvantaged and, through this very isolation and concentration, perpetuate and magnify that disadvantage.

Since the time that Baldwin wrote and during the Second Reconstruction—the period in American history begun by *Brown v. Board of Education*—some black families have managed to flee the confines of the ghetto, as Baldwin and the most gifted of his generation once did. These families now live in more upscale neighborhoods, a few integrated, the others predominantly black. The poor and jobless have remained behind in the ghetto, their numbers swollen and their plight worsened as both jobs and those who succeeded economically left the inner city. Housing stock aged, social institutions deteriorated, and crime escalated. By concentrating and isolating the poor and jobless, the ghetto turned neighbors on each other and, over time, created a sector of the black community known as the underclass. The members of this class suffer from a multitude of disadvantages that can ultimately be traced to racial discrimination and its economic consequences. Those disad-

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vantages prevent them from enjoying the splendor of America or improving their position. They are the worst off in our society, and their plight stands as an affront to the ideal of equality embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment.

Many strategies have been devised for addressing the needs of the underclass, some even tried. All are imperfect. The disparity between the magnitude of the problems and the modesty of the proposed remedies is simply overwhelming. The most tempting are those that leave the ghetto intact while attempting to improve the day-to-day life of those who remain confined there. Examples of such remedies include creating jobs, allocating new resources to local schools, and strengthening the enforcement of the criminal laws. What all these remedies overlook, however, is that the ghetto itself is a structure of subordination, which, by isolating and concentrating the most disadvantaged, creates the very dynamics that render the quality of life of those forced to live in it so miserable and their prospect for success so bleak.

The only strategy with any meaningful chance of success is one that ends the ghetto as a feature of American life. Pursuing this remedy requires providing those who are trapped in the ghetto with the economic resources necessary to move to better neighborhoods—black or white—if they so choose. With the means to move, most will leave, and that will be enough to break the concentration of mutually reinforcing destructive forces—poverty, joblessness, crime, poorly functioning social institutions—that turn the ghetto into a structure of subordination. The physical space that once belonged to the ghetto quickly will be reclaimed by developers and transformed into a new, up-and-coming neighborhood.

Providing ghetto residents with such a choice of residence in a way that promotes economic integration has been tried with

success in the very recent past, though only through pilot programs with very limited reach. I believe that we must expand these programs and defend them on the grounds of justice. The ghetto is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the black underclass, and the proposed deconcentration program should be seen as a remedy for the role that society and its agent, the state, have played in constructing the ghetto in the first place.

Providing the resources necessary for such a program will have vast economic consequences for the country. Great human and social costs will also be involved. Means might be devised to facilitate moving and to lessen the disruption of a move. But no matter what, those who take advantage of the opportunity to leave will lose the comfort and support of neighbors they have known over the years and will face substantial hardships in adjusting to new communities. Because many are likely to leave, those who consider staying put will find the context of their decision radically altered. Communities will be broken up, and receiving communities will need to undergo long processes of adjustment.

All these consequences, like the conflicts engendered by earlier efforts at school desegregation, are very disturbing. Yet they seem inescapable. The only alternative to a program that seeks to expand choice is to condemn a sector of the black community to suffer in perpetuity from the devastating effects of our racial history.

### **THE PROBLEM**

Although our ghettos were never surrounded by the physical walls that often marked the European ones, a blend of economics and racial practices produced the same sense of confinement.

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Over the course of the twentieth century, principally starting after the First World War, millions of blacks left the agricultural areas of the South and moved to the growing urban centers of the nation, some in the South, others in the North and West. These migrants had no savings and few employable skills. The skills they acquired on the farms and plantations were of very limited value in the cities, and the poor education they had earlier received only compounded their competitive disadvantage. Most were educated under the Jim Crow system and thus attended schools that were systematically short-changed and grossly inferior. Separate schools were never equal.

The newcomers settled in urban sectors with the oldest and poorest housing stock, and remained clustered in these neighborhoods. Initially this form of segregation might have been attributable to the very understandable desire, shared by every group of immigrants, to seek the help and support of friends and relatives. But more pernicious dynamics were also at work, which excluded the black migrants from white neighborhoods and endowed their segregation with a remarkable degree of permanence.

Even in the North, the newcomers encountered Jim Crow, though often in new guise. Children were nominally assigned to schools on the basis of residence, but the segregation of neighborhoods and the gerrymandering of attendance zones insured that blacks attended one set of schools and whites another. The education blacks received was, once again, inferior and provided them with few of the skills necessary for upward mobility. Their parents and others of working age were either barred from employment or relegated to the lowest-paying or most-demeaning jobs because of race.

As a result, it was almost impossible for the newcomers to the cities to improve their economic position or even to imagine

a move to a better neighborhood. In the years following the Second World War, the federal government responded to the needs of the very poor by building housing projects. Although rent was subsidized, the construction of public housing only reinforced racial housing patterns. Local authorities, knowing that the occupants were likely to be black, confined these projects to the black areas of the city.

Even the few blacks who prospered economically or professionally found it difficult, if not impossible, to rent an apartment or buy a house in a white neighborhood. At one point in our history, the municipal zoning power was used explicitly to confine blacks to certain areas of the city. After such ordinances were declared illegal in 1917, greater reliance was placed on racially restrictive covenants, which obliged buyers never to sell their newly acquired houses to blacks. In 1948 the Supreme Court declared racial covenants illegal, but other barriers persisted.

White property owners refused to sell or rent to blacks. Some banks refused to make home mortgage loans to blacks altogether, and others disfavored so-called changing neighborhoods. Those blacks who were lucky enough to find a willing seller or landlord and dared to move to a white neighborhood faced great hostility and harassment, sometimes even violence. Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which opened on Broadway in 1959 and two years later was released as a film, still stands as a monument to the ordeal of a black family moving to a white neighborhood.

Usually the state acquiesced in these exclusionary practices. Sometimes it actively supported them, even after the Supreme Court declared racially restrictive zoning and covenants to be illegal. In the postwar era, the Federal Housing Administra-

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tion (FHA) played a pivotal role in the development of the suburbs by issuing home mortgages and lowering the cost of housing. As Kenneth Jackson explains in *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), the FHA consistently promoted, or at least reinforced, bank practices that made it virtually impossible for blacks to get mortgages for homes in white neighborhoods. The FHA *Underwriting Manual* in force during the 1950s warned that “if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.”

In time these policies were also abandoned, but others were instituted that had similar effects. As late as 1964 the voters of California approved an initiative, the notorious Proposition 13, that reaffirmed the right of property owners to sell or rent to whomever they wished. This measure was described by the Supreme Court as a thinly veiled attempt to encourage racial discrimination. It was held unconstitutional in 1967.

In April 1968, in the immediate wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Congress passed a federal fair housing law. The law created new opportunities for those who had the economic means to move out of the ghettos into more affluent, typically white neighborhoods. Admittedly blacks seeking to move had to cope with resistance to that law and considerable hostility. Still, the 1968 law made exodus from the ghettos easier and thus began to chip away at one important source of confinement.

When the fair housing act was initially passed, only a few blacks were able, as a practical matter, to take advantage of their newly expanded freedom. Yet over the next thirty years this changed. The number of blacks financially able to leave the ghettos increased significantly, thanks to the general growth of



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the economy and, perhaps even more important, to a number of civil rights strategies instituted during the Second Reconstruction.

During this period, efforts were made to spread resources more equitably among schools and to give black Americans access to some of the better elementary and secondary schools. The 1954 decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* decreed as much, but it was not until the late 1960s that open resistance to that decision was overcome and practical steps, usually under court order or threat of terminating federal financial assistance, were taken to implement it. In lock-step fashion, the doors of higher education were also opened to blacks.

A federal fair employment law was enacted in 1964, and full enforcement began in 1968. Affirmative action programs also appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and over the next thirty years dramatically enhanced the process of integration. These programs gave preferential treatment to blacks in employment and in certain educational sectors that controlled access to the professions and other high-paying careers.

As a result of all these policies, plus a growing economy, a sector of the black community—generally referred to as the black middle class—emerged with the economic means to exercise the freedom conferred under the 1968 fair housing law. These individuals claimed for themselves what has long been thought part of the American dream—moving to a better neighborhood. It is hard to leave friends and familiar surroundings, but everyone recognizes that the quality of life—vulnerability to crime, the nature of one's kids' friends and classmates, the quality of stores and housing—depends, in good part, on one's neighborhood. Many people move when they have the

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economic means to do so, and the new black middle class was no exception. Most moved to what were then white, middle-class neighborhoods. Some of these stabilized as racially integrated neighborhoods; others experienced so-called white flight and emerged as middle-class black neighborhoods.

Like Baldwin and the lucky few of his generation, the families who moved during this period were the exception. Against all odds, they were able to seize the new opportunities created during the Second Reconstruction and escape the harsh realities of ghetto life. But the bulk of those living in the ghetto remained there, bearing the full burden of America's racial history, stymied by poverty and by the discriminatory practices that persist to this very day in housing, employment, and education. Indeed, ghettos have continued to grow in recent decades, both in geographical reach and population. In 1970, 2.4 million blacks lived in neighborhoods where more than 40 percent of the persons were below the official poverty line. By 1990 the number had risen to 4.2 million. The comparable figure from the 2000 census is not yet available, but it is fair to assume that the same trajectory has continued. During the boom of the 1990s the poverty rate among blacks declined modestly. During the same period, however, the economic position of some sectors of the black community deteriorated, the birth rate remained high, and the pronounced degree of residential segregation that characterized most of America's cities persisted.

Although moving out of the ghetto presumably improved the quality of life of those who moved, it had an unfortunate effect on the economic and social profile of the community they left. It turned the black ghetto into a community of the most disadvantaged. It enhanced the isolation and concentration of

the poor, weakened social institutions, and distanced the community from those with the greatest economic and social resources, many of whom were also valuable role models. Surely some people remained because they valued their established relationships above all else; others may have remained for religious or political reasons and continued to exercise leadership in the community. My own sense, however, is that they, too, were the exception and that most of those who stayed did so because they had little choice.

As the black middle class left the ghetto, jobs also began to disappear. Some plants once located in the inner city fell to global competition and closed. Others moved to suburban communities to take advantage of cheaper land, proximity to highways and airports, lower crime rates, and perhaps a workforce that appeared to be better educated or more able. Racial assumptions about the ability of the workforce undoubtedly played some role in these calculations, but the economic logic was also manifest. Overall the result was devastating. Jobs left the community at the same time as the most successful left, worsening the plight of those remaining behind.

Like the propensity of the upwardly mobile to move to better neighborhoods, commuting to work is a familiar American tradition. The hour commute from Stamford, Connecticut, to New York's financial district is not at all unusual. Those who remained in the ghetto were not, however, readily able to adapt to the relocation of jobs by this means, and commuting from the inner city to the suburbs was difficult, in some cases impossible. The distances were long, the pay for the jobs available was insufficient to cover the costs of whatever transportation might exist, and working outside one's immediate neighborhood was

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especially difficult for parents of small children, who wanted to be available for calls from schools and day care providers.

Ghetto residents also faced a mismatch of skills. In one important respect, the economic plight of inner-city neighborhoods parallels a broader trend in the United States over the last thirty years—the decline of manufacturing jobs. For America, in general, the void has been filled by a growing service sector, which takes the Stamford commuter to Manhattan. But most of these new jobs were unavailable to those left behind in the ghetto, who, inevitably, had the lowest educational achievements and little work experience. They were not in a position to compete for high-paying jobs in finance or communications. True, entry-level jobs in retail establishments, hotels, and other service providers remained within reach, but few such jobs existed in their immediate neighborhoods because the residents were poor. One study reported that the ratio of applicants to those recently hired at fast-food restaurants in Harlem was fourteen-to-one.

We thus confront the fact that over the last thirty years—just as the black middle class has left the ghettos—joblessness in those communities has risen. In the 1980s William Julius Wilson called attention to the emergence of the black middle class and how different their situation was compared to that of ghetto residents. In 1996 Wilson opened his new book, *When Work Disappears*, with this startling observation: “For the first time in the twentieth century most adults in many inner-city ghetto neighborhoods are not working in a typical week.” To be sure, many of these adults have child care responsibilities, unmistakably work, but which Wilson excluded from his calculus. Also, those who cannot work because of age or disability

need to be taken into account. Still, the fact that a very large percentage of the adults in certain urban neighborhoods are jobless is astonishing. It well warrants the stir that Wilson's book caused.

At the very least, joblessness means no income. It produces poverty and leads to dependence on the welfare system, with all the stigmatization and loss of self-esteem such dependence entails. The impact of joblessness goes even deeper. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and, before it, the famed study of Marienthal by Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel, Wilson explained how joblessness deprives people of the patterned set of expectations that teaches discipline, instills our activities with meaning, and provides a framework for daily life. Individuals without jobs are not only poor; their sense of self-efficacy weakens, and they are less able to cope with life's challenges. They are also probably bored. Sustained joblessness can lead to activities that are self-destructive and a threat to others, most often neighbors. It might lead individuals to seek such palliatives as drugs and alcohol; or it might lead them to join gangs, which import a structure to ordinary life but pursue antisocial ends.

The concentration of the jobless and poor in one relatively compact geographic area intensifies both the deprivation and barriers to upward mobility. So does the weakening of social institutions and networks that results from the exodus of those who made it. The community is left to turn on itself, exposing those in the ghetto to a heightened risk of crime and violence, which degrades the quality of life in the community and creates further incentives for individual families and local businesses to flee. The sense of isolation increases as the quality of life spirals downward.

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In the course of this process, community norms and expectations also change. Wilson explains how criminal activity or long-term welfare dependency often become adaptive strategies for those living within the confines of the ghetto. Eventually these activities become normalized and are perceived as legitimate by significant sectors of the community. This change in attitude and expectations increases the prevalence of activities so destructive of self and others—what Wilson politely calls “ghetto-related behavior.” These activities magnify the deprivations of those living within the ghetto and further foreclose the possibility of upward economic mobility for both the individuals engaged in them and the community at large.

In these ways the ghetto has become, even more so than when Baldwin first wrote, a structure of subordination. More than a sum of individual disadvantages, the ghetto is the mechanism through which we have created and maintained the black underclass, a group saddled with a multitude of burdens—above all, joblessness and poverty—that relegates its members to the lowest stratum in society and locks them into it.

### **SOCIAL RESOURCES**

A community is more than a collection of individuals. It is also made up of institutions—from the family to churches to schools—that give it coherence and identity, and sustain those who live there. These social resources are available in the ghetto, of course, but they have been adversely affected by the same dynamics, above all joblessness and the legacy of discrimination, that have transformed the ghetto into a community of the worst off and compounded its isolation. The institutions of the ghetto are unable to counter the downward spiral in the

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quality of life of those who live there and, in fact, may work to entrench the underclass even more deeply.

The family's capacity to perform ordinary social functions in the ghetto is limited by the prevalence there of single-parent families. Although recent decades have witnessed higher rates of single parenthood throughout the nation, the trend in the ghetto is exceptional. More than 70 percent of black households residing in extreme poverty are headed by single women. Even more striking is the number of such women who became mothers in their teenage years. Recent statistics indicate a drop in the rate of teen births, but the numbers remain disturbing. In 1990, 6 percent of all teenage women throughout the nation became mothers; in 1997, the number was 5.2 percent.

The challenge facing teenage mothers is staggering, particularly in the ghetto. Barely able to fend for themselves, they are called on to protect their children, instill in them socially constructive values, teach them social skills, and help them to develop goals and aspirations. No wonder, as Orlando Patterson reports in *The Ordeal of Integration* (1997), that when the children of teenage mothers become teenagers themselves they are less likely to finish school, three times more likely to be incarcerated, and significantly more likely to become teenage mothers themselves.

People often turn outside the immediate family for help in raising children. Sometimes the surrogate parent is a grandparent, uncle, or aunt; often it is a neighbor. But, in the ghetto, the problems of the immediate family—sustained joblessness or the presence of only a single parent, sometimes a teenager—are often replicated in the extended family and larger community. Sometimes these problems are compounded by the scars of the most blatant forms of racism. A grandfather who has been with-

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out meaningful work for decades is not likely to be an ideal care provider, let alone a role model, for the child of his sixteen-year-old granddaughter. An aunt who was herself an unmarried mother at age fifteen, and who has spent the last decade in a state of dependency, may not be an ideal surrogate parent for her newborn nephew. Nor are the immediate neighbors, many of whom are—in part thanks to the exodus of the black middle class—poor, jobless, or young single parents themselves.

Some families may turn for help to local churches, which have long been important institutions in the black community and were once the source of many leaders of the civil rights movement. Today that movement has lost much of its steam, but black ministers continue to act as spokespersons for the black community and as persons capable of organizing and activating that community. In that respect, the work of Eugene Rivers and his colleagues in Boston, who have served as buffers between the police and the citizens of Dorchester and Roxbury, is exemplary. Yet it remains doubtful that the church can take the place of the family and supply discipline and structure to children who lack direction. This is not to deny the sometimes heroic achievements of a number of black ministers, but only to recognize the limited capacity of the black church to counter the ghetto's many destructive dynamics, day in and day out.

Many black churches do not even serve the ghetto. Some are located in middle-class black neighborhoods and minister to the needs of those communities. Others are geographically situated in the ghetto but draw their members from families who once lived there but now reside in the suburbs or upper- or middle-class communities. The trip on Sunday mornings to the old neighborhood may provoke powerful memories, but over time these memories fade, and the ghetto and its distinctive



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needs become more distant. Even those churches that are located in the ghetto and draw their membership from the neighborhood cannot fully compensate for the limits of the local family as a socializing institution nor combat the destructive dynamics of the ghetto.

The power of these churches to serve the community in this way may be limited by the increasing secularization of American culture, which is as prevalent in the ghettos as in the cities of which they are a part. A few years ago William Finnegan published an extraordinary and now rightly famous portrait of a young man involved in drug trafficking in New Haven's ghetto. Entitled *Out There*, Finnegan's essay described this young man's family situation and social network in some detail, and made clear that neither he nor his friends had any ties to the local churches. They were as fully secularized as most New Haven teenagers, though, of course, they confronted a different predicament—how to participate in the riches of our consumer culture with little or no income from lawful employment.

James Baldwin, writing from his own experiences in Harlem in the 1950s, fully understood the appeal in the ghetto of the evangelical churches and the Nation of Islam. They seemed to promise to the young not just salvation but also the structure, discipline, and coherence absent in many ghetto families. Yet the capacity of these organizations to deliver on this promise has always been limited by the reluctance of parents to cede control of their children to another institution. Baldwin joined the church at age fourteen but only over his father's strong objection. Account must also be taken of the possibility that certain less constructive characteristics of ghetto life might be replicated in the local churches—which, to some extent, reflect the

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culture of the neighborhood of which they are a part. They are likely to be as poor and as needy as their parishioners.

Access to other intermediate organizations is not controlled by parents, and, accordingly, these organizations might have greater potential than churches to serve as parents' surrogates. But because they, too, are neighborhood-based and thus largely populated by youngsters who grow up with insufficient family support or control, they can hardly fill the void. Local gangs teach discipline but most often in the service of criminal ends. Public schools stand ready to socialize the children entrusted to their care by law, but schools are encumbered because enrollment is normally determined on the basis of residence. Thus elementary and secondary schools in a ghetto contain a heavy concentration of children who come from families wracked by joblessness and poverty, headed often by a single, very young parent.

A student body drawn from such families places an enormous burden on the teacher, often making ghetto schools the least preferred among teachers who have a choice. In addition, a high concentration of very poor children impairs that portion of the learning process that comes from one's classmates. In *All Together Now: Creating Middle Class Schools Through Public Choice* (2001), Richard D. Kahlenberg refers to this aspect of the learning process as the "hidden curriculum" and explains how it works: "In high poverty schools, peers are likely to have smaller vocabularies and less knowledge to share; they tend to have lower aspirations and negative attitudes toward achievement and to engage in anti-achievement behavior (cutting classes, failing to do homework)." Kahlenberg also describes the dynamics that keep parents of these children from fully involving themselves in school activities and from pressuring the

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authorities to make sure that these schools are staffed by the very best teachers available.

As a result of these dynamics, ghetto schools are likely to fail, not just in fulfilling their academic mission—teaching cognitive skills and knowledge of the world—but also in their less well-defined socialization function: imposing discipline, building confidence, heightening aspirations, and instilling the values needed for personal success and a well-functioning society. Public schools in other communities are important instruments of social mobility, but not those in the typical urban ghetto. The challenge they confront is overwhelming. Kenneth B. Clark described this challenge in his 1965 book, *Dark Ghetto*. He warned that the public schools of the ghettos “are becoming an instrument for the perpetuation—and strengthening—of class and caste, while the elite cluster in their safe suburban schools or in the exclusive private schools.” Contemporary realities confirm his fears.

### **THE FAILURE OF FAMILIAR REMEDIES**

A wide variety of public remedies have been proposed to deal with the plight of the underclass, and with the limited capacity of families, churches, schools, and other institutions in the community to address the dynamics of deprivation. Understandably, government has tended to favor those remedies that preserve urban neighborhoods and that focus on isolated features of these dynamics.

The 1996 federal welfare reform act can be understood in such terms. Imposing a five-year limit on the receipt of welfare over a life time, the statute was designed to create incentives or pressure for welfare recipients to find work. This measure

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implicitly recognized the destructive impact of joblessness and the importance of work—even low-paid work—for the self-esteem it engenders and the structure it gives to daily existence. The fear was also present that the availability of welfare without any time limits might encourage women to have children regardless of their economic ability to provide for them. In fact, the 1996 welfare reform measure was often presented as a strategy to combat teenage pregnancy and the rise of single-parent families.

Before the enactment of the 1996 measure, a number of states instituted experimental programs intended to move individuals from welfare rolls to the workforce. Based on a comprehensive review of the evidence, Robert Solow reports in *Work and Welfare* (1998) that moving people from welfare to work was much harder than lawmakers had anticipated. None of the more than a dozen welfare-to-work programs he reviewed, Solow writes, “offers grounds for optimism about the ability of welfare recipients to find and hold jobs, or to earn a decent living.” Without additional supports, he concludes, “the transformation of welfare into work is likely to be the transformation of welfare into unemployment and casual earnings so low as once to have been thought unacceptable for fellow citizens.”

The 1996 reform extended these experimental programs to the nation at large, but without the additional supports that Solow urged. Although they were given the freedom to determine which families were eligible for assistance, the states faced fiscal penalties unless a certain percentage of families were working or engaged in work-related activities such as searching for a job. On top of this, the states were prohibited from using federal funds for providing assistance to any family for more than five years.

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Following the enactment, the welfare rolls dropped dramatically—by almost 60 percent. Many attributed this development to the new law, but the economic boom may have had at least as much to do with it. During the 1990s unemployment reached historic new lows, below 5 percent. With the end of the boom and unemployment edging back up in 2001 and 2002, thousands of families will reach the five-year limit imposed by the 1996 law just as the demand for employees decreases. It is not at all clear where poor families will turn for support.

Nor should the effectiveness of the 1996 reform be measured solely in terms of the decrease in the welfare rolls. A 2002 study reported that 40 percent of the families who left welfare are not working, and many of those who are working find themselves in low-paying, dead-end jobs with no benefits. They can barely scrape by. The bulk of welfare recipients are single mothers, and although the 1996 law pressures them to get out of the house and look for work, it does not require states to make adequate provision for child care services. One can only wonder what will happen to the children of those who somehow manage to find a job. Under the best circumstances the 1996 reform may reduce welfare dependency and many of the dysfunctions allegedly associated with it, but only by putting the welfare of children at jeopardy and thereby entrenching the underclass across generations.

Tougher and more aggressive police tactics—to end, what some consider, the underenforcement of the criminal law in the ghetto—entail a similar danger. The hope is that by reducing criminal activity in the inner city, we will curtail the victimization of those who live there and, at the same time, reduce the exodus of jobs and people from the community. It is doubtful that these

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new police tactics—for example, blanket searches of public housing projects in pursuit of illegal arms—will have any immediate impact on crime rates. More fundamentally, we need to consider the impact of these tactics on the life of the community. The level of crime may be reduced, but only at the cost of ushering in an oppressive police regime. Such a regime is of concern to everyone, particularly to ghetto residents who remember all too well abuses at the hands of the police. Recent experiences will refresh the memory of those who may have forgotten.

Others sought to deal with the high level of criminal activity in the ghetto by enhancing sentences for drug-related crimes. They have declared a War on Drugs. Over time, this war may deter some criminal activity, but only by increasing the number of young males from the ghetto who will spend a good portion of their lives in prison. This would impoverish the ghetto community further by reducing its available labor force and would exacerbate the dynamics that already produce so many single-parent families. Those eventually released will confront the same obstacles that every ex-con faces in finding a well-paying job.

Other government interventions may have greater short-run chances of success. One is Head Start, which has its roots in the civil rights era and, more specifically, in the War on Poverty. Recognizing that the family is sometimes an inadequate socializing institution, Head Start, a preschool program for three- and four-year olds, reaches children at an early age and lasts for a year or two. Although all children from poor families are eligible, most Head Start programs are based in the ghetto. As is true for the standard elementary and secondary schools in the ghettos, the burden these programs take on is immense,

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given their neighborhood-centered quality and the backgrounds of the children they receive.

Head Start can succeed only through enormous investments. In 2001 the annual federal appropriation for Head Start was around \$6.2 billion, but this figure significantly understates the needs that Head Start is designed to address. Presently Head Start serves only about one-third of the estimated number of children eligible, with most enrolled in part-day programs that last only eight months. Because there are some fifteen hundred grantees, comprising more than eighteen thousand local learning centers, the standards of Head Start programs vary throughout the country. Showcase federally funded preschool projects, such as the Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and the Carolina Abecedarian Project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where the greatest achievements have been observed, were not Head Start programs and, in fact, were funded at per-child rates of almost double the national average for Head Start.

But even if funding were increased, as indeed it should be, Head Start would be a radically incomplete response to the everyday needs young children encounter growing up in what William Julius Wilson terms, in an effort to be realistic about the prospects of any preschool program, “the harsh environment of the inner-city ghetto.” Head Start is only a beginning, but, even so, we can expect the lessons Head Start teaches to be unlearned once the child reaches a certain age, leaves the program, enters a public school, and suffers the full force of that environment. The benefits of Head Start will soon fade. Indeed, well-documented studies indicate that initial improvements in test scores among Head Start participants tend to recede by the time an average child reaches the third grade. Even

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more disturbing, the fade-out effect differs across populations, occurring more quickly among blacks. This, of course, is not at all surprising given the conditions of life on the ghetto street and the quality of education available in the local public schools, where resources, student/teacher ratios, and the length of the school day and year are likely to be set on a citywide basis, without consideration of the special needs of inner-city communities. (Janet Currie and Duncan Thomas present their findings on these issues in the 1995 *American Economic Review* and again in the 2000 *Journal of Human Resources*.) Programs such as Head Start will make a difference in the lives of a few—who are likely to exit the ghetto—and for that reason must be continued and their funding strengthened as long as the ghetto exists. But they will not have a broad enough impact to break the ghetto's overall confining grip.

Perhaps the most promising remedies are those that seek to deal with the spatial mismatch between workers and jobs: the fact that jobs have moved to the suburbs while potential workers remain in the inner city. One strategy—the creation of enterprise zones in the inner city—provides economic incentives for businesses to relocate or simply to remain there. Such incentives have to compensate for higher land costs, increased security needs, and perhaps even lower skill levels in the ghetto workforce because of sustained joblessness and inadequate social institutions. The economic logic behind the move of businesses to the suburbs seems so compelling, however, that there is reason to doubt the efficacy of such programs.

Empirical studies support such skepticism about the effectiveness of enterprise zones. They also explain why these measures have fallen out of fashion. After reviewing studies of a dozen enterprise zone initiatives, Rebecca Blank concludes in



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her 1997 book, *It Takes a Nation*, that such programs generate few new jobs and that those that are created pay poorly and come at an exorbitant financial cost. Paul Jargowsky is also critical of these programs. As he explains in *Poverty and Place* (1997), because enterprise zones fail to address the larger, metropolitan-level dynamics responsible for inner-city joblessness, they can never incorporate severely deprived neighborhoods “into the mainstream economy but will only sustain them at a minimal level with a patchwork of subsidies and handouts.”

William Julius Wilson, also concerned with the spatial mismatch, fully understands the difficulties of bringing business back to the ghetto and, as a result has thrown his support behind still another strategy for bringing jobs there: a neo-Works Progress Administration (WPA) program. The government would hire the unemployed, much as it did during the New Deal, to do jobs that improve the quality of life in the ghetto. These workers could repair the streets, clean the parks, construct new playgrounds, and perhaps even run various social programs.

Like enterprise zones, Wilson’s proposal does not have much chance of working. Certainly, the government can create jobs and open them to everyone, but what sorts of jobs will they be? How much will they pay? And what will be the chances of advancement? In essence, Wilson responds to these worries in a single, succinct sentence: “Most workers in the inner city are ready, willing, able, and anxious to hold a steady job.” Notice that Wilson refers to “workers,” not the “jobless,” who, he told us, were the norm in the ghetto, and he fails to give any specific content to the phrase “steady job.” In truth, Wilson’s rejoinder is at odds with the governing sociological insight of his book:

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that sustained joblessness not only produces poverty but also undermines character. Joblessness removes structure from individuals' lives and tends to cause people to be decidedly not "willing, able, and anxious" to take the government jobs Wilson envisions.

Although a large number of ghetto residents may have flocked to the new McDonald's in search of work, they are unlikely to pursue Wilson's neo-WPA jobs with great intensity. Such jobs contain few opportunities for advancement and would be tinged with the stigma our society associates with any government handout. They are likely to be viewed as make-work. Wilson contemplates that the wages of the new government jobs would be slightly below minimum wage, but even if they were above the minimum they would be very low, certainly not a living wage. Another welfare program—say, an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit—would be needed to lift these employees above the official poverty line.

More fundamentally, Wilson's proposal, or, for that matter, any program to end the spatial mismatch by bringing jobs to the ghetto, slights the structural dimension of the problem—specifically, that the jobless individual is situated in a neighborhood with lots of other jobless individuals and that over the years this neighborhood has been wracked by a host of destructive forces. Job creation in the ghetto must not only overcome the reluctance of any particular individual to accept a menial job but must also reckon with this individual's membership in a community or group of similarly situated individuals. Together, these individuals exert pressure on one another and produce a culture in the ghetto that makes it most unlikely that a job creation program such as the one Wilson proposes will work.

### AN ALTERNATIVE

Any ameliorative strategy must confront the fact that the ghetto is more than a place where the underclass happens to live. It is a social structure that concentrates and isolates the most disadvantaged and creates its own distinctive culture, and thus is integral to the perpetuation of the underclass. It is the paramount mechanism through which a historically subordinated group continues to be kept far beneath others in terms of wealth, power, and living standards. Accordingly, we need strategies that promise to dismantle that structure—to tear down the walls of the ghetto. To speak less metaphorically, we must provide those who still are trapped in the ghetto with the economic means to move into middle- or upper-class neighborhoods.

Such a voluntary relocation strategy would eliminate the spatial mismatch between jobs and residence by allowing the jobless to move closer to the jobs. It would break up the concentration of impoverished, single-parent households by enabling ghetto residents to move to safer neighborhoods where there is a greater mix of economic classes and family structures. It would also enhance access to schools, churches, and other intermediate institutions that are not so heavily burdened as those of the ghetto and that are more likely to facilitate social mobility.

This strategy would improve the lives of the adults who choose to move by situating them in communities where jobs exist, and thus enable them to transform their lives into something more fulfilling and productive. It would also break the entrenchment of the underclass across generations because children in families that relocated would reap the benefits of

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safer, more positive surroundings and greater institutional resources. Of course, middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, both black and white, have their own dysfunctions. Still, they have advantages over the ghetto in terms of safety, social services, education, and employment opportunities. Moving to those neighborhoods would capitalize on those advantages.

The strategic advantage of choosing racially integrated or predominantly white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods as receiving communities should not be overlooked. Tying the fate of blacks to that of whites in this way may be the most reliable means of securing equal protection for the minority because it guarantees that every gain enjoyed by whites in social services or neighborhood improvements will redound to the benefit of blacks. The integrative ideal affirmed by *Brown v. Board of Education* rested, in part, on the fear that the majority would always shortchange the schools attended only by the minority.

Although such gains might be achieved if families relocated to racially integrated or predominantly white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, the receiving communities need be defined only by class. Because the concentration of the poor and jobless functions as the engine of subordination, economic integration must be the centerpiece of any suitable remedy. A black middle-class community created over the last thirty years as a result of antidiscrimination laws in housing and employment would thus be a suitable receiving community for residents moving from the ghetto, as would an upscale racially integrated or predominantly white community. Sometimes the search for such neighborhoods might take us beyond the city limits, sometimes not. In either case, the move will mean enhanced access to jobs, better schools and social services, nicer housing, and higher-quality retail establishments.

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Those who decide to move must not, however, be regrouped into another ghetto. The ghetto is a structure of subordination, and the purpose of this program is to enable people to leave it. So care must be taken not simply to move from one site to another a concentration of poor, jobless, single-parent families headed by teenagers. To achieve this objective, an agency needs to be created that would seek out the opportunities for such moves and help to coordinate moves by those who choose to relocate among the various middle- and upper-class communities. This agency would also need to assist in the relocation process itself. Every move is difficult, but the challenges of moving out of a ghetto and into a considerably more upscale and possibly predominantly white neighborhood would be extreme. The tasks that burden every move—trips to the hardware store for light bulbs, meeting the new neighbors, enrolling the children in schools, joining a new church, knowing which social services are available—are intensified when the racial or class makeup of the new neighborhood is different from that of the old one.

Charitable organizations might be able to help with relocation, but given the magnitude of the endeavor, it will be necessary to rely on the government and its unique powers to raise and distribute funds. The relocation agency will need to be publicly funded. In addition, public funds will be necessary to enable people who were living below the poverty level to afford the rents in the receiving neighborhoods. The rent of those moving would be subsidized, though the subsidies may go directly to those providing the housing. One method of implementing this plan would be to issue housing vouchers and to require that realtors and landlords in the specially designated receiving communities accept these vouchers. Such a require-

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ment would be only one small part of the effort needed to render it impossible for receiving communities to thwart the purpose of the relocation program, which is to create economic, and maybe racial, integration. Tough enforcement of existing antidiscrimination laws and perhaps the fashioning of new ones would also be necessary.

Any program seeking to end the dynamics responsible for entrenching the underclass will require an enormous dollar investment. The relocation program I have outlined is no exception, though the cost is in no way prohibitive. As a rough gauge, consider a 1994 effort by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to institute an analogous but smaller, pilot relocation program. This program, called Moving to Opportunity, offered aid to families with children who were living in public housing in high-poverty census tracts within Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. In each of these tracts, more than 40 percent of the residents were living below the official poverty level. Those who applied and were selected were given Section 8 rent vouchers that could be used only in census tracts with poverty rates below 10 percent. Local nonprofit organizations played a crucial role, supplying each moving family with a counselor who actively helped the family find an apartment and overcome the obstacles associated with the move. The cost of moving sixty-two hundred families was \$234 million over two years.

These figures need to be adjusted to account for the scale of the program I am proposing, which would not be confined to persons living in public housing in five cities but would be nationwide in scope and available to all people living in areas marked by the high concentration of extremely poor black families. To define these areas with more precision we can require,

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as Moving to Opportunity did, that 40 percent of the residents in a census tract live below the poverty level. Estimating the precise number of families in such areas is more difficult. Studies based on the 1990 census indicated that more than 4.2 million blacks were living in census tracts with extremely high concentrations of poverty (more than 40 percent living beneath the official poverty line). A comparable figure based on the 2000 census is not yet available, but as an outside estimate let us assume that 6 million blacks now live in such areas. This number needs to be adjusted to account for the fact that the relocation program would be aimed at families rather than individuals. Working on the assumption that at least two persons comprise each family, and that every family chooses to move, the proposed program would embrace 3 million families. Based on the cost of the Moving to Opportunity program, we can estimate the cost of a comprehensive program at around \$50 billion a year.

If anything, this figure is on the high side. It assumes that every family chooses to move, and it treats the average family as a two-member unit. Also, a number of collateral dynamics may reduce the costs once the deconcentration program is actually implemented. For example, the costs of relocation would have to be offset by savings from the hoped-for diminished need for programs aimed at community development, public housing, and perhaps even income support. Relocation will enhance access to jobs. In any event, we need to put the \$50 billion figure in perspective. To do so, note should be taken of the fact that in June 2001 Congress passed and President Bush signed into law a bill reducing taxes by \$1.35 trillion over the next ten years—almost three times the cost of dismantling the nation's ghettos under my proposed program.

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The impact of deconcentration should not be measured only in monetary terms. Relocation runs the risk, for example, of eroding the base of various political leaders who have long served the most desperate neighborhoods. It is not entirely clear, however, that such political realignments as may occur will work to the long-term disadvantage of those now trapped within the ghetto. There is at least the possibility that their interests will be more effectively represented politically once they become members of more economically advantaged wards. Not only will the representatives of these wards have greater sway in the councils of power, but coalition building across class and racial lines may be easier. Political participation at the grass-roots level may also increase. Studies by Cathy J. Cohen and Michael C. Dawson in the 1993 *American Political Science Review* indicate that living in extremely poor neighborhoods leads to political disengagement and undermines the confidence individuals may have in their capacity to control or influence decisions of importance to the community. Although incumbents may be unseated, deconcentration may actually enhance democratic politics. Consideration must also be given to the gains in social and economic opportunities that ghetto residents who choose to relocate will enjoy. To make such gains available, and to end the oppression endured in a life confined to the ghetto, we may simply have to run the risk of altering established and all too familiar patterns of political representation.

Of even greater concern than these political realignments are the human costs entailed in the decision to move, especially the disruption of communal ties. For many living in the ghetto, the ordinary relations among neighbors have provided support and comfort over the years, and should not be treated lightly in considering the effects of relocation. Plans to transform inner-



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city communities into safe, flourishing environments with plenty of jobs, attractive housing, safe streets, easy access to good stores, strong schools, and all the other features of prosperous neighborhoods are often defended on the ground that they seek to end the danger and hardship of the ghetto while preserving what is good in the neighborhood. This ambition is indeed honorable, but I doubt that it can be fulfilled. Putting an end to the social dynamics that have transformed the ghetto over the last thirty or forty years into a structure of subordination would require so many deep interventions into the life of that community that it would profoundly disrupt, if not actually destroy, preexisting communal ties. The geography would remain the same, but the community would be different.

The program I envision openly acknowledges the threat to community entailed in deconcentration but allows the residents of the ghetto to weigh the benefit of the preexisting communal ties against what might be a better life for themselves and their children. Choosing to move entails a sacrifice. Many of the things that are so good about the old neighborhood, including social ties forged over decades, will be lost. But under my program the choice is vested where it belongs: in the individual family. Admittedly the choices of those most anxious to leave will affect the options of those inclined to stay, since a decision to stay will appear less appealing when many of one's neighbors have left. Such decisional interdependence, however, is inescapable, and it is not clear why the balance should be cast in favor of the status quo. All the available evidence indicates that it should not—there is so much to be gained by a move.

One follow-up study of the Moving to Opportunity program in Boston found that almost immediately after moving—within one to three years—children of the families that participated in

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the program exhibited “fewer behavior problems, prevalence of injuries, asthma attacks, and personal crimes.” This program has not yet been in existence long enough to measure the long-term effects of moving, but another study—this time of a de-concentration program in Chicago that began in the late 1970s, in the context of a lawsuit—provides an even more useful measure of the benefits to be gained by moving from an inner-city ghetto to a middle- or upper-class neighborhood.

These studies, first published in 1991 by James Rosenbaum, involved moves from all-black, inner-city public housing projects to predominately suburban communities. Among adults who never previously held a job, those who had moved were over 50 percent more likely to become employed than those who remained behind. Among those who were children at the time of the move, 75 percent of those who moved to the suburbs were employed seven years after the move, compared to 41 percent of those who stayed; 21 percent of those who moved had jobs paying more than \$6.50 per hour, compared to 5 percent of those who remained; 54 percent of those who moved went to college, compared to 21 percent of those who stayed in the city; and 27 percent of those who moved to the suburbs attended four-year colleges, compared to 4 percent of those who remained in the city.

When first reported, these findings were treated as front-page news. Yet they only confirmed what common sense told us and what every parent knows—although moves are painful, the chances for a better life and greater success can be significantly improved by moving to a better neighborhood. The ties that bind neighbors are indeed valuable, but my own sense is that most parents in the ghetto would be prepared to sacrifice them if offered a chance—a real chance—to move. Indeed, in

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the deconcentration programs mentioned, the number of applicants greatly exceeded the available opportunities. In the Chicago case studied by Rosenbaum, for example, during one call-in application period lasting only a few days, fifteen thousand applicants called in pursuit of 250 places.

The individuals who participated in these programs were not offered an unrestricted subsidy. They could not use the government funds to fix up their apartment or to improve security but had to use the money to move. If given the chance, many would conceivably prefer to stay put and spend the money for projects they deemed important in the neighborhood, but that does not seem likely. They would realize that too many of the dynamics—the poor quality of the schools, the movement of jobs to the suburbs, and the prevalence of crime—are far beyond their control. It is only fair to assume that those presently in the ghetto would follow the path of the new black middle class, who, once they had the means, left the ghetto. True, the burden and the pain of moving would remain. Integration, in any form, has never been a picnic, but neither is staying put.

### JUSTICE

To put all the costs in perspective, we must come to understand that deconcentration is required not only as good social policy but also as a matter of justice. The costs of such programs are indeed great, as would be the costs of any program that seeks to tackle the problem of the underclass, but they are no greater than those entailed in implementing *Brown* and are justified by an analogous theory of equal protection. The dual school system of Jim Crow was condemned because it tended to perpetuate the caste structure of slavery; the inner-city ghetto today

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has a similar effect, though the group subjugated is not defined, as under slavery or Jim Crow, in purely racial terms—race must be supplemented by economic and social coordinates. The subjugated group is not blacks in general but the black underclass. The inner-city ghetto stands before us as an instrument of subjugation and thus represents the most visible and perhaps most pernicious vestige of racial injustice in the United States—the successor to slavery and Jim Crow.

Presently the state does not, by statutes or regulations, confine people to the ghetto. To the contrary, through antidiscrimination laws governing employment, education, and housing, the state has helped to create the black middle class and thereby enabled some to leave. Yet for the better part of the twentieth century and before, the state played an important role in creating and maintaining the ghetto, and is thus duty-bound to use its powers to remedy the present-day consequences of that action. In the historic decision that provided the foundation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Justice Hugo Black emphasized that any court had “not merely the power but the duty to render a decree which will so far as possible eliminate the discriminatory effects of the past as well as bar like discrimination in the future.” He was referring to the judiciary, for the duties of that institution were being contested, but the obligation he spoke of extends to all branches of government.

State complicity in the creation of the ghetto has taken various forms. Some of the state’s responsibility derives from the failure, for most of our history, to prevent acts of discrimination and violence aimed at keeping blacks out of white neighborhoods. In other instances the state played a more active role, for example, by enacting racial zoning ordinances or enforcing racially restrictive covenants. Though these practices were out-

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lawed—the first in 1917, the second in 1948—they played a crucial role in the formation of the black ghetto. Later they were replaced by the more subtle but equally pernicious practices I mentioned earlier: California's Proposition 14, restrictions on FHA loan guarantee programs, and the discriminatory methods by which public housing projects were located. The means by which residential segregation has been established and maintained in the United States—described in further detail in Douglas S. Massey's and Nancy A. Denton's important 1993 book *American Apartheid*—are as sinister, and their effects as lasting, as Jim Crow segregation in the South, especially when coupled with this country's traditional economic and social policies.

Blacks are not the only group in America that suffers from high rates of poverty and joblessness and that finds itself concentrated in neighborhoods wracked by crime and overburdened public institutions, such as the schools. Today we find in our large urban centers residential clusters of Asian immigrants or Hispanics whose economic profiles may closely resemble that of black ghetto residents. Yet an adequate assessment of the chances of these other groups for upward mobility requires a fuller understanding than is currently available of the family and kinship structures in these neighborhoods and the capacity of available intermediate institutions such as the churches. Segregation may not have the same social meaning or social consequences for these groups as it does for blacks who are poor and jobless.

Even if it does, however, the claim for justice supporting a deconcentration program aimed at the black ghetto seems more urgent simply because of the active role the state played over the last century in creating these neighborhoods. Certainly the state has an affirmative obligation to eradicate any practice or

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condition that systematically disadvantages a group and threatens to turn them into pariahs—even the casual passerby has an obligation to throw a drowning man a life preserver. But the state’s obligation to provide a remedy is all the more powerful when it helped to bring the threatening condition into being in the first place.

The foundation, perhaps the inspiration, for a deconcentration program along the lines I envision can be traced to the 1976 Supreme Court decision in *Hills v. Gautreaux*. The case involved the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)—the agency specifically charged with the construction and management of public housing projects in Chicago—and arose from the Authority’s practice of giving local city council members the summary power to prevent the construction of such projects in their wards. It was understood that the residents of such projects would be predominantly black, and council members from white wards used their power to prevent the construction of public housing projects in their areas. As a result, for years all public housing projects in Chicago were located only in black neighborhoods and thus helped constitute the urban ghettos of that city. The Supreme Court ruled this practice unlawful and, by way of remedy, sustained an order of a lower court requiring HUD to provide funds to help break up these concentrations of poor black families.

The relocation remedy upheld in *Gautreaux* provided rent subsidies to some CHA residents, enabling them to move to suburban committees. Support was also provided to a nonprofit organization in Chicago that participated in the relocation program by looking for housing and facilitating the move. Arguably this remedy could be conceived as a form of compensation for a highly discrete act of racial discrimination, namely, the deci-

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sion to locate the public housing projects only in black neighborhoods. Such a reading of *Gautreaux* would limit its scope and reduce it to a public housing precedent. But I see lurking beneath its surface a far more powerful principle: an obligation on the part of the state to eliminate a social formation that it helped create and that is responsible for producing and perpetuating the black underclass.

This principle is suggested by the fact that the remedial obligation imposed in *Gautreaux*—funding the relocation agency and providing subsidies to enable tenants to move—was placed on HUD, the federal agency, rather than on the CHA or the Chicago City Council. HUD did not participate in any way in the choice of the site for the public housing projects. At most, it could be accused of funding public housing projects with the knowledge that they were being built only in black wards. This conduct might be described as supporting or acquiescing in the discrimination, thus bringing it within the ambit of both Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Constitution's equal protection guarantee. But the involvement of federal and state governments in creating urban ghettos may be similarly characterized. So may the government's role in the social processes responsible for joblessness and poverty in the ghetto, and the inferior quality of schools and social services available there.

Account must also be taken of the fact that the *Gautreaux* remedy required HUD to provide subsidies that would enable the public housing residents to move to the suburbs and to do so in a scattered fashion. These suburbs were predominantly white. A remedy conceived in purely atomistic terms—as a corrective for the race-based decision as to where to build public housing projects—could not possibly have that reach. At

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best, such a remedy would mandate the construction of public housing projects in white parts of the city—for example, building a counterpart to the Robert Taylor Homes in a predominantly white ward with comparable land value or a similar socioeconomic profile, and then giving all the Robert Taylor Homes residents a chance to move to this new project. The remedy approved in *Gautreaux*, by contrast, was far more ambitious: It contemplated moving the public-housing residents, all of whom were black, into middle- or upper-class neighborhoods in the suburbs and scattering them so as to avoid creating a new ghetto.

In purely individual terms, the *Gautreaux* remedy succeeded admirably. As Rosenbaum first found, the employment opportunities and educational achievements of those who had moved increased significantly. Even more remarkable, I believe, is that *Gautreaux* marked the beginning of the process of dismantling the massive public housing projects in Chicago, such as the Robert Taylor Homes, and thus represents the first decisive step toward the dissolution of the ghetto. In this respect the *Gautreaux* remedy should be seen not as a compensation for a discrete act of discrimination—an attempt to put certain persons in the position they would have been in but for a particular act of discrimination—but as a broader remedy designed to eliminate a structure of subordination that the state helped to create. *Gautreaux* was premised on an understanding of how massive public housing projects—with their concentration of poor, jobless families often unable to assist significantly in the socialization process, all sending their children to the same local school, victimized by crime and gangs—had become a mechanism that created the black underclass and threatened



to perpetuate it. The *Gautreaux* remedy also constituted a recognition of the government's responsibility for dismantling that mechanism.

Although the *Gautreaux* remedy had grandiose ambitions, it was rather limited in its numbers. Only seventy-one hundred families received subsidies. This limit, I believe, was a function of the fact that the precise number of families receiving subsidies was set in a consent decree, or bargained-for agreement, between HUD and the plaintiffs. The number was not dictated by considerations of justice, which is, after all, the only proper metric for a court or any other institution bold enough to remedy a violation of equal protection. Every affirmative remedy poses the question of precise limits: How much must be spent to do justice? How much is enough? No precise response can be given to these questions at this stage other than to say that the subsidies must be large enough to relocate all residents of the ghettos who choose to move—large enough to bring an end to the social mechanism that is entrenching the black underclass across generations. Anything short of that would allow to remain in place an instrument perpetuating a hierarchical structure that is at odds with the Constitution's egalitarian aspirations.

In an attempt to minimize or trivialize deconcentration remedies, and thus to highlight his neo-WPA program and the effort to bring jobs to the ghetto, William Julius Wilson claims that the acceptability of *Gautreaux*-type integration is dependent on the modesty of its scope. "The success of this program," he writes of *Gautreaux*, "is partly a function of its relatively small size. Since only a few families are relocated to other housing sites each year, they remain relatively invisible and do not present the threat of a mass invasion." It is not at all clear what Wilson means by a "mass invasion" or whether such a threat

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would ever be present under a relocation strategy designed to avoid the creation of new ghettos. The approach I envision entails moving few enough ghetto residents into each middle- or upper-class neighborhood that the prior residents of those neighborhoods remain. We need to recognize, moreover, that whatever hostility this relocation program engenders—from whites in upscale communities, from blacks in such communities who pride themselves on having escaped the ghetto, or from the political or economic interests served by the perpetuation of the ghetto—it cannot be a basis for limiting the program or, even worse, turning one’s back on it altogether. Justice permits no such compromise. It requires instead that the state undertake all action necessary to end “lock, stock, and barrel”—as Judge John Minor Wisdom once put it in talking of the remedies for school segregation—the social processes that continue to perpetuate the near-caste structure of American society.