



FURMAN CENTER
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
JANUARY 20, 2014**

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NYU Furman Center Launches “Slow Debate” on Racial & Economic Segregation

New blog, “[The Dream Revisited](#),” will provide forum for debate among leading scholars on contested issues on economic and racial segregation

New York, NY— In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the [NYU Furman Center](#) has launched a blog to host a “slow debate” on economic and racial segregation in neighborhoods and schools.

[The Dream Revisited](#) will feature essays on contested issues in contemporary research and policy analysis on segregation and on efforts to promote integration in order to advance equality. Each month will feature a new discussion topic, including a short essay and responses from leading scholars.

“Some people have proclaimed the [end of the segregated century](#),” said [Ingrid Gould Ellen](#), co-director of the NYU Furman Center. “While black/white segregation has declined in the past few decades, it remains extremely high in many major metropolitan areas. Meanwhile, Hispanic and Asian segregation have remained unchanged, and the neighborhoods in which minorities live enjoy far fewer advantages than the neighborhoods in which whites live.”

The opening discussion in [The Dream Revisited](#) explores the meaning of the term “integration” and the conditions under which it may be an effective strategy for promoting racial and economic equality.

Mary Pattillo, a professor of Sociology and African American studies at Northwestern University and a Straus Fellow at NYU, opens the debate by questioning the extent to which promoting integration may unintentionally stigmatize Black people and the places they live while valorizing whiteness as both the symbol of opportunity and the measuring stick for equality. “Why,” [Pattillo wrote](#), “would anyone *else* want to live around or interact with a group that is discouraged from being around itself?”

Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director–Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., responds by pointing out that it is whites that are actually most segregated racial group. “Focusing on the benefits and burdens of integration and segregation for blacks and other racial minorities concedes Patillo’s critique, without challenging its premise,” she writes. Ifill notes that Dr. Kenneth Clarke’s research on the negative effects of segregation on white children was left out of the Supreme Court’s famous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. “To truly measure the benefits of integration,” [Ifill writes](#), “we must correct that exclusion and focus on the costs of segregation for all Americans.”

The second response, contributed by **Pat Sharkey**, associate professor of Sociology and a Straus Fellow at NYU, argues that residential segregation provides a mechanism for the reproduction of racial inequality. “Living in predominantly black neighborhoods affects the life chances of black Americans, not because of any character deficiencies of black people, not because of the absence of contact with whites, but because black neighborhoods have been the object of sustained disinvestment and punitive social policy since the emergence of racially segregated urban communities in the early part of the 20th Century,” [Sharkey writes](#).

The final contributor, **Rucker Johnson**, associate professor of Public Policy at UC-Berkeley, stated that creating high quality educational opportunities for all requires addressing the housing policies that shape residential segregation. “Pursuing strategies to promote integration and championing ones that ensure equal educational opportunity should not be conceived as an ‘either/or’ proposition, but a ‘both-and’ one,” [he writes](#).

“In the past two decades, both residential and school segregation by income has increased significantly, while the gap between rich and poor Americans has widened to levels not seen since the early 1900s,” said [Vicki Been](#), director of the [NYU Furman Center](#). “We are excited to provide a forum for leading researchers and academics to have a thoughtful and informed discussion about these critical and difficult issues, and hope that it can break through some logjams to get productive debate and creative ideas flowing.”

[The Dream Revisited](#) will feature a new discussion each month for the entire year. At the conclusion of project in 2014, the debates will be digitally archived. [The Dream Revisited](#) is a project of the [NYU Furman Center](#), presented as part of its Integration Research Initiative and supported in part by a grant from the Open Society Foundations.

Visit [The Dream Revisited](#) or [sign up to receive new discussions in via email](#).

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The [Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy](#) is a joint center of the New York University School of Law and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The Furman Center is the leading academic research center in New York City devoted to the public policy aspects of land use, real estate, and housing development, and is dedicated to providing objective academic and empirical research. More information on the Furman Center can be found at www.furmancenter.org and [@FurmanCenterNYU](#).