

# Progressives versus Brown v. Board of Education: Woke Resegregation

By [Eric Rozenman](#) (June 2023)



*Young Woman Overtaken by a Storm (Une Jeune Femme s'étant Avancée dans la Campagne se Trouve Surprise par l'orage), Chevalier Féréol de Bonnemaïson, 1799*

**This spring has been a** rubber mallet to the forehead of those in one local front of the struggle to preserve equality—as principle, law and frequent reality—in America against resegregation in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Some background: Last year this writer was one of 15 members of the Virginia Commission to Combat Antisemitism, established by Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) via executive order on his first day in office. While some of the commission's recommendations could be dealt with by executive order or proclamation, three went to this year's General Assembly as legislation. The Republican-controlled House passed all of them—expanding hate crimes law to include ethnicity as well as religion, adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism and prohibiting state agencies from doing business with firms that support the anti-Israel boycott, divest and sanctions (BDS) campaign.

The Democratic-majority Senate also okayed the ethnicity expansion for hate crimes coverage. But only concerted lobbying rescued the IHRA definition after self-described pro-Palestinian and progressive opposition. Opponents claimed IHRA, which sees some examples of anti-Zionism as antisemitic, threatened free speech by foreclosing criticism of the Jewish state. Never mind that this hasn't happened in the more than 30 countries, including America where the State Department endorsed the alliance language, and nearly 30 U.S. states that have adopted it.

During the January to March General Assembly session, some black legislators asserted to a commission member that the IHRA legislation was unnecessary since antisemitism was not a problem in Virginia. But as the commission had reported to Gov. Youngkin, the commonwealth recorded nearly 350 such [incidents in 2023.](#)

As for BDS, its originators have made clear their goal is not

Israeli-Palestinian peace but rather the destruction of the one Jewish state. (There are 21 countries in the Arab League, plus the notional “Palestine.”) Nevertheless, the anti-BDS bill failed to reach the Senate floor, dying in committee.

Meanwhile, a grassroots parents’ group called United Against Antisemitism, with help from the Zionist Organization of America, filed a Title VI civil rights complaint in the federal Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights against Fairfax County Public Schools. FCPS is one of the country’s largest public-school districts, with 181,000 students (down 5,000 in three years) and \$3 billion annual budget. The complaint, now being reviewed, asserts the system has failed to respond adequately to repeated antisemitic incidents.

In March and April, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington sponsored two “townhall” sessions at local synagogues featuring FCPS Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid. Reid is finishing her first year as head of the system. Fairfax County’s median household income ranks fourth in the United States at [\\$133,974](#), according to the Census Bureau. Demographically, its 1.1 million people more or less resemble the United Nations’ General Assembly. The comment website for the school system’s new strategic plan featured links in English, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

## **Tolerating intolerance**

Several parents told Reid about anti-Jewish episodes their children experienced in school. These, according to UAA, include other students greeting them with the Nazi salute, throwing coins in front of them in hallways, drawing swastikas on their desks, a teacher posting the Palestinian flag on her classroom bulletin board, another teaching anti-Israel poetry

as literature, and teachers or principals responding—if at all—slowly or uncomprehendingly.

During the question-and-answer session at the first townhall, I mentioned the state commission had noted a 2021 Heritage Foundation report (“Inclusion Delusion”) of a correlation between active DEI offices on college campuses and [higher numbers of antisemitic incidents](#). I asked how FCPS’ new equity implementation strategy would prevent that. What was to stop DEI from enabling, intentionally or not, reverse discrimination against disfavored minorities, like “white adjacent” Jews and Asians?

Many parents would get the reference. The county’s Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, one of Virginia’s handful of governor’s schools for excellence, repeatedly ranked as one of the country’s top academic high schools. Admission required, among other things, scoring well on a rigorous entrance exam. Asians (quite broadly defined) comprised 20 percent of the county’s school-aged population but 71.5 percent of TJ’s enrollment. Whites, 38 percent of the population, constituted 19.5 percent of the student body. Hispanics, 27 percent of the population, made up only 2.6 percent of the school’s enrollment. Blacks, 10 percent of the total, but just 1.7 percent at TJ. The “other” category mirrored itself at five percent.

Faced with a suit by the local National American Association of Colored People chapter, in 2020 the previous superintendent and school board, in the name of closing an “equity gap,” discarded the academic achievement exam in favor of a lottery among high-ranking students at each middle school. This although a comparatively high rank at a relatively poor performing junior high might not mean preparation for TJ.

FCPS officials, noting high grade point averages, disputed this when breaking down the background of the entering freshman class for the 2021-2022 school year. In any case,

under the lottery admissions system, the percentage of black students jumped to seven, Hispanics to 11, whites to 22 while Asians [plunged to 54.](#)

Before imposing DEI bean-counting over academic preparation, some of TJ's nearly 2,000 students studied in nano chemistry and quantum physics laboratories funded by Lockheed-Martin and Northrup-Grumman. From the student body come two-thirds of the entire state's National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists. Who isn't going to TJ now? Hard to tell, but perhaps some potential engineers, rocket scientists and medical researchers who could have benefitted from attending the old TJ. When race-consciousness trumps individuality—identity group privilege over equal rights—DEI rhetoric can mean separate and unequal exclusion in practice.

After the first townhall session, Reid took my business card and, a few days later, invited me to participate in a meeting for FCPS's new strategic planning document. On April 24, I joined 120 or more high school students, teachers, other staff, parents and interested individuals in what turned out to be the sixth and last of a series of nearly day-long get-togethers for the new plan. The binder full of recommendations each of us received could be tweaked before going to the board of education—its 12 technically non-partisan members ranging from liberal Democratic to full woke. My intention to question the definition of, let alone compulsion to emphasize equity over equality, was months behind the process and trailed prevailing ideological consensus by maybe a generation. Another case of conservatism way behind the cultural curve.

This was confirmed not only by the binder full of Newspeak, but also in a small break-out session. Noting I had taught American history at the local community college, I suggested that the school system teach this diverse country's unique progress, however uneven, toward equal rights. Replied one of the session's two leaders, a perky, smiling school staffer, "thank you for sharing," and moved on. Thank you for sharing

recalls the Arabic proverb, “the dogs bark but the caravan moves on.”

## **Left unsaid**

Yet for a second I thought all was not lost. One of the high school students, an apparently bright, talkative girl, seated at the same table with me, said, “I don’t like the way they teach history.” Ah, an ally, I imagined. “Take ancient Greece” she continued. “They don’t tell us how like one-third of the Greeks were gay, and transgender history is ignored.”

Oh, yes: LGBTQAI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, asexual, intersexual and more), the prism—or better, party line—through which all education, from history and English to, no doubt, science and mathematics, must be force fed. How forcibly Superintendent Reid made clear at the Jewish Community Relations Council’s second townhall on April 27.

She heard from even more angry parents at this JCRC session about antisemitism faced by their children in school and delayed if not dismissive responses by teachers and administrators. The superintendent listened attentively, alluded to the Title VI complaint, and responded—in general—sympathetically. But as Rebecca Schgallis, a co-founder of United Against Antisemitism, noted afterwards, having heard angry parents relate stories of harassment and lack of response, Reid failed to say what was necessary, something like:

“This is completely unacceptable; I am sorry that Jewish kids are not safe in our schools. Starting tomorrow I will gather my staff and we will, among other things, require all staff training on current manifestations of antisemitism and the IHRA working definition, mandate reporting of incidents to district office to ensure consistency and accountability

across schools, and audit previous incidents to learn and inform our next steps to stop this in our schools, and we will be completely transparent in what we are doing.”

What she said was something else altogether, and revealing. In reply to a question by another member of the Virginia Commission to Combat Antisemitism, Julie Strauss Levin, an attorney and, coincidentally, wife of author and nationally-syndicated radio talk show host Mark Levin–Reid showed emotion for the only time that evening. She did so in rejecting the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream of a racially integrated society, a United States in which “my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Strauss Levin started a question to the superintendent by saying “we can all agree that we strive for a color-blind society, including in education,” when Reid interrupted. “No, I don’t agree,” she said with some vehemence. At which point some audience members, likely including some who’d come to complain about antisemitism in the system Reid headed, applauded.

Hence the poisoned chalice: the “anti-racism” compulsion underlying DEI orthodoxy demands race-based policies. Never mind that President Harry Truman integrated the military in 1948. Or that the Supreme Court declared “separate but equal” school systems unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Dismiss the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, War on Poverty legislation in 1965 and 1966 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Pretend all this did not dismantle a Jim Crow-influenced society. The prevalence of black Americans in fields from athletics and entertainment to business and politics, acceptance of inter-racial marriage, the virtual death of the “n-word” refute the allegation that this remains a “systemically racist” society. So does the arrival every year of several million immigrants, legal and

illegal, from scores of countries and every race. Many people may well still hold racist attitudes, but those attitudes don't shape society. Why then does "equity" so often trump equality?

Mark Spooner, a retired attorney who runs the [www.fairfaxschoolsmonitor.com](http://www.fairfaxschoolsmonitor.com) blog, explained things in a May 19 post headlined simply "Equity." He acknowledged that "some definitions are widely supported in the community." However, "others are highly controversial. ...[S]ome people use the term to advocate equality of results (not just equal opportunity) for all racial and social groups, using whatever means that may be needed to achieve that goal, including reverse discrimination, downgrading education standards, altering grading systems to create artificial equality, etc. 'Equity' is also used as a justification to create race-based curricula, using divisive concepts of 'systemic racism,' 'white privilege,' and teaching students to think about society in terms of their separate 'identities'."

The FCPS board of education is to vote on the new equity policy—which has not yet been made public—in late June. Assuming publication of the plan early in the month, approximately three weeks will be left to solicit public comment. Not enough, says Spooner.

That's because "the Equity Policy was being developed by the FCPS equity staff, which was working independently of the more inclusive team developing a new Strategic Plan for the schools. The equity staff developed a divisive, ideological definition of 'equity.' This definition was radically different than the concept of equity embodied in the proposed Strategic Plan, which limited the concept of 'equity' to opening opportunities to a good education where such opportunities were deficient and removing barriers where they existed. No effort was being made to reconcile the two definitions. The superintendent was deeply involved in every aspect of the Strategic Plan process but seemed reluctant to

supervise the equity team's development of an Equity Policy."

Reid's rejection of the goal of a color-blind society suggests a discriminatory "equity" policy is in the offing. And what does this have to do with fighting antisemitism? Just this: Jews have prospered in America—despite widespread antisemitism until late in World War II, when understanding of the consequence of Nazi Jew-hatred began to spread—to the extent that this country rewarded individual merit. The foundational belief in and striving for a nation in which "all Men are created equal" and "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" permitted the largest, freest and most prosperous diaspora in Jewish history. It magnetically attracts all those foreign-born, now [nearly 14 percent](#) of the population.

The progressive fight against and flight from equality under the banner of equity incites a divisiveness that obstructs recognizing, let alone combating, antisemitism. Ultimately it jeopardizes every identity group. It would be a step in the right direction if educators everywhere, including FCPS administrators, understood that.

\*\*Corrected to delete reference to Jews as a racial group in U.S. Censuses up to 1940.

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