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Paper Trails: Exposing Racism in the History of School Finance

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Abstract

How can we better situate resource inequities between schools in the longer history of racial oppression and discrimination in the United States? This article provides both a historiographical panorama of the field on a range of topics related to school finance and a roadmap of archival and research paths. It seeks to sketch out the contours of a burgeoning field to show that historians of school finance have the potential to make racial dispossession a central tenet of their analyses. First, I lay out a longer timeline for the periodization of school finance history than most of the previous scholarship has adopted to recast school funding inequality within the racialized context of land and capital dispossession. Second, I situate school finance more explicitly in US political history, showing how the study of school funding policies can illuminate major historiographical debates such as the history of tax revolts, federalism, local governance, and the development of US capitalism. Finally, I chart some of the directions historians can follow to study a wider array of school finance policies beyond the surface of state school funding formulae to make the role of policymakers at all levels of education policy more visible, and to further ground school finance developments in their racial contexts.

Keywords: School finance; racism; inequalities; Education policy; School funding

In tragic irony, it took a global pandemic to bring long-awaited resources to some public schools. After years of requests from the school community for electronic devices to assist teaching and learning, students in the Ferguson-Florissant School District (FFSD) in Missouri received tablets through pandemic relief grants. Yet existing inequities qualified this victory. “Even though every student got a tablet, not everybody has Wi-Fi,” Dr. Courtney Graves, an FFSD school board member, lamented to fellow board member Dr. Amanda Purnell.¹ The state’s school funding formula complicated equitable resource distribution. “It’s just so much knowing that most of our

¹Lindy Drew, Dr. Courtney M. Graves, and Dr. Amanda L. Purnell, “Dr. Courtney M. Graves and Dr. Amanda L. Purnell,” *Still Separate, Still Unequal*, n.d., <http://stillunequal.org/drcourtneygraves-dramandapurnell/>.

dollars come from the state and not locally. Other districts have all these other generated revenues because of the community and our community is suffering... For us, it's always been an uphill ladder-climb no matter what we do." For Graves, there was no question that resource inequality was a racial issue—she was only the second Black school board member in a majority-Black district when she joined the board, and described the area as one with “so much history of racial injustice.” She denounced the discrimination in the ways Missouri raises and distributes revenue at the local and state level, hindering educational opportunities for students in majority-Black districts such as FFSD. Yet the most common explanations of *why* funding inequities exist and persist often involve a disembodied mathematical explanation, devoid of historical context or a critical racial perspective: funding schools through local property tax, the story goes, simply exacerbates existing wealth inequalities between school districts. How can we better situate resource inequities between schools in the longer arc of racial oppression and discrimination in the United States? This article argues that history can provide crucial answers.

How we understand the origins of racial discrimination in school finance determines how we imagine alternatives, or if we can imagine them at all. Fifty years of case law in school finance litigation since *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* (1973), in which the Supreme Court upheld the use of property taxes to fund Texas public schools despite the inequities caused by that system, has shown that courts have not provided adequate venues to understand school finance as an issue of both resource equity and racial discrimination.² Historical perspectives on school finance have and can continue to make arrangements of power and racial discrimination more visible in the study of public education.

School finance should not solely exist, as it has in the historical literature, as a chapter in legal history or as a subtext to desegregation histories. It should hold a prominent place in our understanding of US educational inequality writ large, and a point of focus in current debates about reparations for racial dispossession and oppression. In this article, I argue that historians are in a key position to encourage this shift, and highlight important contributions that have done so. Rather than approaching school finance as a minor subfield within the history of education, scholars should consider its potential to bridge literatures on the history of capitalism, racial oppression, and economic inequality in the US.

Racial dispossession should be central to studies of school finance. The concept of dispossession is most conspicuous in literature on settler colonialism, occupation, displacement, and forcible internment, but holds explanatory power for educational injustice.³ *Dispossession* designates the seizure of property, both as tangible possessions

²*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973); Camille Walsh, “Erasing Race, Dismissing Class: *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*,” *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal* 21 (April 2011), 133–71.

³For work that centers dispossession as a concept to analyze contemporary inequalities and historical injustice in other geographical contexts, see Jordan Stanger-Ross, ed., *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (Kingston, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); Dip Kapoor, *Against Colonization and Rural Dispossession: Local Resistance in South and East Asia, the Pacific and Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2017); and Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

and the investments and opportunities attached to them. *Racial dispossession*, then, refers to systemic processes that rely on the racialization of property to steal resources, rights, and opportunities from people of color for the benefit of White people, White capital, and White institutions. It does not merely refer to the confiscation of assets, but also to the devaluation of property possessed by people of color. The racialization of property attaches value within a White supremacist ideology; one example of this is the value attached through discriminatory property assessment.⁴ A systemic analysis does not overlook the fact that processes of dispossession have sometimes, or have even often, harmed White people—especially poor White people—however, it does show that such processes are organized by White supremacist logic. This article examines systemic racial dispossession through state-sponsored policies of school funding.

School finance is a topic that economists and legal scholars have traditionally dominated, usually through the study of state funding formulae and how they determine levels of state aid and regulate the use of property taxation to fund schools.⁵ Yet history can expand our understanding of how school finance makes inequality, and how it has designed unequal schooling especially when it comes to racial injustice. Inequities highlighted in court cases and in quantitative studies about potential correlations between funding levels and student performance are only part of a broader story. Building on critical race theory, a scholarly tradition that has exposed structural racism in US institutions and denounced the absence of racial analyses in law, I contend that replicating the narratives of school finance litigation—for example, by relying on the sources, frameworks, and analyses used in court and overemphasizing legal actors—runs the risk of obscuring the organizing role that systemic racism has played in school finance policy.⁶

Archives contain paper trails of racial discrimination in school funding. Weaving primary source analysis into a historiographical overview, this article seeks to sketch out the contours of a burgeoning field to show that historians of school finance have the potential to make racial dispossession more visible in a body of scholarship that has tended to downplay, ignore, or even refute the centrality of race in shaping

⁴ Andrew Kahrl, “The Short End of Both Sticks: Property Assessments and Black Taxpayer Disadvantage in Urban America,” in Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason Williams, eds., *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 189–217.

⁵ For work that highlights the inequities caused by the use of local property taxation to fund schools, see, for example, James Ryan, *Five Miles Away, a World Apart: One City, Two Schools, and the Story of Educational Opportunity in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Charles, Ogletree Jr. and Kimberly Robinson, eds., *The Enduring Legacy of Rodriguez: Creating New Pathways to Equal Educational Opportunity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). On state school funding formulae and how they can exacerbate or mitigate inequalities, see Bruce Baker, *Educational Inequality and School Finance: Why Money Matters for America's Students* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Bruce Baker and Sean Corcoran, *The Stealth Inequities of School Funding: How State and Local School Finance Systems Perpetuate Inequitable Student Spending* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2012).

⁶ Understanding racism not as an accident of history but as a foundational feature of US institutions, politics, and law is a central tenet of critical race theory. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995); Derrick Bell, “Who’s Afraid of Critical Race Theory?,” *University of Illinois Law Review*, vol. 1995, no. 4 (1995), 893–910; Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, “For a Critical Race Theory of Education,” *Teachers College Record* 97, no. 1 (1995), 47–68.

school resources. While it cannot provide an exhaustive overview of themes related to school finance that are worthy of historical investigation, this article provides empirical directions for research.

This article contains three parts, each structured around its main arguments. First, I lay out a longer timeline for the periodization of school finance history to recast school funding inequality within the racialized context of land and capital dispossession in the United States. Second, I situate school finance more explicitly in US political history, showing how the study of school funding policies can shed light on major historiographical questions such as tax revolts, federalism, local governance, and the development of US capitalism. Finally, I chart some of the directions historians can follow to explore a wider array of school finance policies than localized taxation and the inter-district disparities on which it is based, and thus ground resource analyses in their racial contexts. Redrawing the boundaries of the field can lead to generative findings that set school finance in dialogue with literature on debt, labor organizing, and racial capitalism.⁷

Stretching the Timeline of School Finance

What historical period have scholars identified as the starting point of their analyses of US school finance? Historians can provoke scholars of school finance to think about the roots of their object of study and to reflect on the longer tradition of battles for equitable funds, which did not just start with post-*Brown* state or federal school finance litigation efforts. The question of how to financially support instruction in the British colonies begins with the first legislation regarding schools, the Old Deluder Satan Act in Massachusetts. The New England-centered literature on colonial education has explained why public education in the US has developed as a local affair, and school funding is a feature of this argument without being central to the analysis.⁸ Recent work about higher education should inspire scholars to dig deeper for the roots of school funding developments, starting with land dispossession at the very beginning of the European invasion and colonization of North American land.

Connecting School Funding to Racialized Land Theft

In their dissection of the system of racial capitalism and how it manifests in education, Gerrard, Sriprakash, and Rudolph cited dispossession and enclosure of land and people as its first material foundation, and encouraged others to study the “material bases of education on stolen land.”⁹ History of education literature has connected

⁷Billy D. Walker, “The Local Property Tax for Public Schools: Some Historical Perspectives,” *Journal of Education Finance* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1984), 265–88.

⁸Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Lawrence Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1951); Michael Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001); William Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to No Child Left Behind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁹Jessica Gerrard, Arathi Sriprakash, and Sophie Rudolph, “Education and Racial Capitalism,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 25, no. 3 (2022), 425–42, at 429.

Native American land dispossession and removal in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries with the growth of educational institutions in the higher education field, specifically through the land-grant program.¹⁰ The *Land-Grab Universities* project documents and analyzes the intertwined history of Native American land theft and land-grant universities.¹¹

Revisiting the celebratory narrative regarding “democracy’s colleges,” Sharon Stein and Margaret Nash have grounded the history of higher education within settler colonialism.¹² Nash analyzed the two financial mechanisms that spurred the growth of land-grant colleges, which occurred either directly through grants awarded for the building of colleges on stolen land, or through funding that came from the sale of appropriated land. Looting Native American communities of their homelands, land-grant colleges advanced American settler colonialism, with its westward movement of land appropriation, and its Americanization project through institutions of higher education, as “college boosters emphasized agricultural and scientific education that would help foster capitalism, industrialization, and nation-state building.”¹³ Thus, stretching the timeline of school finance can bring out its foundational link with land confiscation and racial dispossession.

Few scholars have chosen the lens of school funding to explain educational developments before the twentieth century. Focusing on New England, Nancy Beadie’s work on the early US republic drew direct connections between the origins of public schooling and the creation of wealth in New York.¹⁴ Casting schools as a matter of political economy, she traced battles over the incorporation of land, highlighting the role of the state in shaping the relationship between schools and commercial markets through examples uncovered in the Genesee Valley region of rural New York. Nancy Beadie and Kim Tolley’s edited volume explored the academy movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its chapters collectively serving as a story about resources through land transactions.¹⁵ *Chartered Schools* begins in 1727, thus extending historical analysis further into the past to ground a study of independent academies in the racial history of the US, bringing attention to White supremacy, Native American

¹⁰On how the expropriation of Native American land and wealth fueled the growth of US higher education, see Randall Akee, “Stolen Lands and Stolen Opportunities,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2021), 123–28; Kaisha Esty, “Rutgers: A Land-Grant College in Native American History,” in Marisa Fuentes and Deborah Gray White, eds., *Scarlet and Black: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 150–59; Margaret Nash, “Entangled Pasts: Land-Grant Colleges and American Indian Dispossession,” *History of Education Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (Nov. 2019), 437–67; and Sharon Stein, “A Colonial History of the Higher Education Present: Rethinking Land-grant Institutions through Processes of Accumulation and Relations of Conquest,” *Critical Studies in Education* 61, no. 2 (2020), 212–28.

¹¹Robert Lee et al., “Land-Grab Universities: A High Country News Investigation,” *High Country News*, n.d., <https://www.landgrabu.org>.

¹²Stein, “A Colonial History of the Higher Education Present”; Nash, “Entangled Pasts.”

¹³Nash, “Entangled Pasts,” 4.

¹⁴Nancy Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁵Nancy Beadie and Kim Tolley, eds., *Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academies in the United States, 1727-1925* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

dispossession, and patriarchal structures that shaped academy schooling, and to Black and Native American liberation movements.

Looking at the “imperial dreams” of early school reform, Matthew Gardner Kelly examined the relationship between state building, the centralization of educational governance, school funding, and racial segregation in nineteenth-century California.¹⁶ For example, in 1855, California superintendent Paul Hubbs passed a school law that formally attached state funding to the presence of White children in a given school, thus racializing the process by which government allocated state resources. Kelly’s work details the protracted battles that led to California’s adoption of property tax to fund schools amid other alternatives, and the inequitable consequences of this political choice.¹⁷ More work that centers questions of financing and taxation is needed. Historical study needs to further inform our understanding of how structures of funding were intertwined with racialized, segregationist orders—how the making of inclusion and exclusion relied in part on funding policies. Evidence of the historical role of school finance in crafting systemically racist policies can inform debates about reparations for racial oppression both past and ongoing, and scholarship on Black schooling in the nineteenth century provides an example of such critical scholarship.

School Finance and Black Education in the Nineteenth Century

With regard to funding efforts for Black schools in the nineteenth century, historians have questioned the dominant narratives focused on accounts of northern largesse, instead centering Black community efforts to create and sustain schools in the oppressive society of the US South.¹⁸ Since the 1990s, historians have built a robust literature on the institutionalization of Black schooling in the South, and have excelled at weaving narratives of school funding in the historical interpretation of these educational developments.

Education was essential to the freedom dreams of enslaved people, and thus was at the center of freed people’s organizing efforts before and after emancipation.¹⁹ Foundational work by Black scholars such as Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois, who highlighted the history of Black education in the nineteenth century, recounted the funding efforts of Black communities, who were often forced to pool from meager resources to build schools.²⁰ While accounts of northern paternalist generosity through

¹⁶Matthew Gardner Kelly, “Schoolmaster’s Empire: Race, Conquest, and the Centralization of Common Schooling in California, 1848-1879,” *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (Aug. 2016), 445–72.

¹⁷Matthew Gardner Kelly, *Dividing the Public: School Finance and the Creation of Structural Inequity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming in Jan. 2024).

¹⁸James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1865-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Christopher Span, *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1862-1875* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹⁹Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (New York: Beacon Press, 2002).

²⁰Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861: A History of Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War* (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1915); W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1935). On antebellum African

philanthropy had prevailed in scholarship about Reconstruction, education historians since the end of the 1980s have drawn from Du Bois to revisit this history.²¹ In his groundbreaking book, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, James Anderson showed that Black southerners organized to build and sustain schools in their communities before northern philanthropic efforts, which, while providing necessary support, were a complement to existing initiatives.

Anderson detailed the practice of double taxation, whereby White communities taxed Black people to fund schools while refusing their children access to these schools, coercing them into fundraising privately for Black schooling, in addition to the taxes they were already paying.²² School funding policies that persisted into the twentieth century find their ideological and policy roots in this system. In *Racial Taxation*, Camille Walsh not only analyzed these “self taxes” and the burden they imposed on Black communities, but also looked into how courts doubled down on the idea that Black Americans had no legitimate claims on taxpayer status. Their rulings equated taxpayer identity with Whiteness, thus further fueling White people’s entitlement to wield that status for political gains.²³ The “racialization of taxpayer status,” in Walsh’s analysis, held deep consequences over the political and legal battles that shaped the distribution of school funds.²⁴

Camille Walsh’s work has brought forward the longer historical arc of battles to equalize school resources, which revises traditional timelines of activism in school finance.²⁵ *Racial Taxation* investigated educational legal history from 1869 to the 1973 *Rodriguez* decision, tracing a longer historical arc than that found in much of the scholarship on school finance litigation, which often begins in 1968, when attorneys in California filed *Serrano v. Priest*.²⁶ Dubbed the “first wave” of school finance litigation, school finance equity lawsuits attacked the use of property taxation for its violation of the equal protection clause. This narrow periodization of school finance litigation fails

American education, see Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²¹ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Joan Malczewski, *Building a New Educational State: Foundations, Schools, and the American South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006).

²² Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 79, 183.

²³ Camille Walsh, *Racial Taxation: Schools, Segregation, and Taxpayer Citizenship, 1869-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 63, 85.

²⁴ Walsh, *Racial Taxation*, 86.

²⁵ On school finance litigation, see Michael Rebell, *Courts and Kids: Pursuing Educational Equity through the State Courts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Justin Driver, *The Schoolhouse Gate: Public Education, the Supreme Court, and the Battle for the American Mind* (New York: Pantheon, 2018); Ryan, *Five Miles Away*; and Paul A. Sracic, *San Antonio v. Rodriguez and the Pursuit of Equal Education: The Debate over Discrimination and School Funding* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2006).

²⁶ *Serrano v. Priest* (1971) 5 Cal. 3d 584. On scholarship about school finance that takes the “first wave” of litigation as its starting point, see Christine Kiracofe and Spencer Weiler, “Surfing the Waves: An Examination of School Funding Litigation from *Serrano v. Priest* to *Cook v. Raimondo* and the Possible Transition of the Fourth Wave,” *BYU Education & Law Journal*, vol. 2022, no. 1 (2022), article 5; Ryan, *Five Miles Away*; Michael A. Rebell, *Courts and Kids: Pursuing Educational Equity through the State Courts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Helen Ladd, Rosemary Chalk, and Janet Hansen, eds., *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, National Academy Press, 1999).

to set this movement in its longer historical context, and fails to understand that school finance litigation began as a movement for racial justice.

Fighting for Equity: School Finance Litigation before the 1960s

The struggle to equalize resources between predominantly or all-Black schools and their White counterparts predates the landmark post-civil rights movement cases that are hallmarks of legal scholarship about school finance. In the first half of the twentieth century, racial segregation created glaringly unequal schools. In the Jim Crow South, the doctrine of “separate but equal,” enshrined into law by the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), left little legal resort for Black educational activists other than resource equalization between racially segregated schools.²⁷ Yet in the 1930s and 1940s, equalization lawsuits often met the institutionalized White veto on Black education.²⁸ Funding equalization only truly materialized after *Brown*, when White politicians feared that unequal conditions in the schools might strengthen the legal case for desegregation.²⁹

Consider the example of an equalization lawsuit in Durham, North Carolina. In 1947, John H. Wheeler, a successful Black banker who led resource equalization efforts and later initiated Durham’s main desegregation lawsuit, wrote to the superintendent of Durham City Schools to lay out the stark figures of educational inequality in the dual school system. He described that over time, “the inequality between facilities provided for Negro and White students [had] widened to such proportions” that the city of Durham “should be greatly embarrassed.”³⁰ As he reminded board member A. E. Burcham about the constitutional mandate of “separate but equal,” he pointed out that capital outlay was “\$494 per white child against \$190 per colored child” in the city school system.³¹ Members of the all-White Board of County Commissioners, who controlled district, county, and state funds, systematically diverted money toward White schools, where they concentrated city and county resources.

In 1949, Black parents filed one of the first resource equalization lawsuits in North Carolina, *Blue et al. v. Durham Public Schools*, to challenge these injustices.³² Their complaint exposed the material inequalities between White and Black schools in the city district:

²⁷On equalization litigation before *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the NAACP did not follow the resource-equalization approach but instead stressed the psychological effects of segregation on children, see Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 2004); and Sarah Caroline Thuesen, *Greater than Equal: African American Struggles for Schools and Citizenship in North Carolina, 1919-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

²⁸The phrase “white veto” comes from Walsh, *Racial Taxation*, 22, 34, 36, 48, 60.

²⁹Walsh, *Racial Taxation*, 68.

³⁰Letter from John H. Wheeler to A. E. Burcham, March 31, 1947, folder “Durham Committee on Negro Affairs,” box AO-31, Spaulding Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³¹Wheeler to Burcham.

³²Brandon K. Winford, *John Hervey Wheeler, Black Banking, and the Economic Struggle for Civil Rights* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019), 89–91; Thuesen, *Greater than Equal*, 190.

Considering the average daily attendance which is practically 55 white to 45 negro, we have 13 school buildings for white children at a cost of \$3,164,307.55 to 8 buildings for negro children at a cost of \$1,604,891.73; we have three excellent Junior high schools well distributed over the city for the convenience of these white children and none for the negroes; arrangements exist for cafeterias, gymnasium, music, art, home economics, laboratories and equipment, and playgrounds for the white children, while some of these facilities are denied in many of the negro schools.³³

Plaintiffs won the case. The Durham City Board of Education, who referred to *Blue v. Durham* as “the Negro lawsuit,” subsequently planned for capital construction at several Black schools in the district.³⁴ Despite the continued efforts of Black activists, in 1952, virtually all-Black schools in Durham still stood at the end of unpaved roads, while White schools received continuous facility improvements. The *Brown* case, because it overturned the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, has drawn tremendous scholarly attention, and has sometimes overshadowed earlier efforts to equalize educational resources under explicit legal segregation such as *Blue*. Yet these efforts matter to our periodization of the history of school finance because they point to the racial origins of school funding battles.

How we choose to narrate resource inequities in schools matters to our understanding of their causes. Contrasting well-resourced and underfunded schools located near each other is a common narrative device in the literature on educational inequality, but many analyses stop at the explanatory power of the property tax.³⁵ Yet many public education advocates have long understood and framed funding inequities as a story of racial oppression, and historians can contextualize them by locating them in longer histories of dispossession.

Historical methods, perspectives, and narratives can counter two regrettable tendencies in school finance scholarship: the framing of school funding policies as disembodied and arcane, and the analysis of school funding disparities as colorblind. Both flaws in school finance literature, whether intentionally or not, stem from ahistorical analyses. By scratching beneath the surface of “willful colorblindness,” historians can show that school finance always operates within the racialized landscapes of US political economy.³⁶

School Finance as Political History

Historians are uniquely positioned to cast school finance as a deeply political issue rather than a patchwork of budget lines and equations, as it often appears in economic studies that seek to establish a correlation between funding levels and other variables

³³ *Blue et. al. v. Durham Public School District*, 95 F. Supp. 441 (1951) at 444; “State Education Officials Denied Dismissal from School Suit by Ruling,” *Carolina Times*, Nov. 5, 1949, p. 1.

³⁴ National Register of Historic Places, “Hillside Park High School Durham, Durham County, DH2591,” Dec. 30, 2013, p. 13, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

³⁵ See, for example, the title and opening pages of Ryan’s *Five Miles Away, a World Apart*.

³⁶ John Charles Boger, “Willful Colorblindness: The New Racial Piety and the Resegregation of Public Schools,” *North Carolina Law Review* 78, no. 6 (2000), 1719–96.

such as student test scores.³⁷ Moments of political debate and battles over school funding decisions provide opportunities to name actors responsible for and complicit in school funding schemes and to highlight their far-reaching decisions, and the voices and constituencies that have challenged them. Additionally, emphasizing the political dimension of school finance can build bridges between historiographies on the history of capitalism, taxation, and citizen mobilization.

Debating Dollars: Scrutinizing Legislative Politics

In the conversation between Ferguson-Florissant School District board members Courtney Graves and Amanda Purnell that opened this article, the question of state aid emerged as particularly contentious. “The way funding happens for schools genuinely baffles me,” Purnell noted.³⁸ “Every year, Missouri fails to fund at the expected level and then contends that they have fully funded the schools,” she explained, adding that this was “something that most people don’t know, that happens underneath all of our noses, and is a significant problem.”³⁹ Session after session, legislatures across the US have made and continue to make consequential decisions regarding the funding of public schools. State aid is a paramount source of public school funds, and many school districts across the country receive most of their funding from their state government.⁴⁰ Part of the narrow focus on local property taxation and inter-district disparities has sometimes overshadowed the crucial decisions states make, and how state legislatures choose to raise and allocate funding for public education.

Attention to school funding can illuminate the politics of taxation and the development of the fiscal state, as historians have shown.⁴¹ State legislative sources can uncover the controversial origins of even the most foundational feature of school funding—the very system of local property taxation. Matthew Kelly investigated the political history of alternatives to this system of public schooling in California, and traced the

³⁷While providing important insight into existing policies and their impact, these studies rarely take historical context into account. See, for example, Julien Lafortune with Joseph Herrera, “Understanding the Effects of School Funding,” Public Policy Institute of California, May 2022, <https://www.ppic.org/?show-pdf=true&docraptor=true&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ppic.org%2Fpublication%2Funderstanding-the-effects-of-school-funding%2F>. Lafortune and Herrera note that the “most substantial differences are by race/ethnicity: spending is higher in the districts serving the average Black student than the average white student by roughly \$1,900, and is higher for Latino students by almost \$600. Spending for Asian students is more similar to spending for white students, though slightly higher (\$285)” (15). Yet the research does not investigate, analyze, or question these disparities, simply calling them “longstanding inequities by race and socioeconomic status” (21). See also Carolyn Abbott et al., “School District Operational Spending and Student Outcomes: Evidence from Tax Elections in Seven States,” *Journal of Public Economics* 183 (March 2020), 104142; Corbin L. Miller, “The Effect of Education Spending on Student Achievement: Evidence from Property Values and School Finance Rules,” *Proceedings. Annual Conference on Taxation and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the National Tax Association* 111 (2018), 1–121, https://ntanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Session1188_Paper1807_FullPaper_1.pdf.

³⁸Drew, Graves, and Purnell, “Dr. Courtney M. Graves and Dr. Amanda L. Purnell.”

³⁹Drew, Graves, and Purnell, “Dr. Courtney M. Graves and Dr. Amanda L. Purnell.”

⁴⁰Baker and Corcoran, *The Stealth Inequities of School Funding*.

⁴¹On the foundational role of the state and local property tax in American politics and its intertwined history with slavery, see Robin Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

contestations that have always surrounded the practice of using property tax to fund public schools.⁴² In a 2005 article, education scholars Bruce Baker and Preston Green III showed that in Alabama and Kansas, state aid policies caused racial funding gaps.⁴³

Decisions by state legislatures thus teach us something about federalism, as well as the very different approaches that state lawmakers have taken in operating public schools. Going back to the origins of structural differences between how states fund public schools, Joan Malczewski uncovered the role of educators and administrators in shaping fiscal policy during the Progressive Era.⁴⁴ In California in the early 1920s, education was a major domain of interest group politics. Lobbying by actors in the field of education can also explain differences between states, as Malczewski's joint work with Nancy Beadie highlights.⁴⁵

To spotlight the role of the state in school finance, Tracy Steffes examined debates that pitted state legislators, school administrators, education policymakers, and residents against one another in 1970s Illinois as the state failed to implement a more equitable school finance system. Steffes looked into state commission reports that documented the long history of resource inequalities between school districts in Illinois.⁴⁶ Her investigation of the state's school funding formula and allocation methods showed that "school finance is a deeply political set of policy choices that are made, remade, and naturalized over time," and the Illinois legislature was the central space of consequential negotiations.⁴⁷

Historical research can trace specific decisions about how to fund schools. In their study of New York state funds, Michael Glass and Sean Vanatta uncovered the tremendous discretion that New York State comptroller Arthur Levitt Sr. enjoyed, and the consequences of his single-handed decision to break the virtuous cycle of fiscal mutualism that used pension funds to finance public schooling in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁴⁸ Instead, Levitt directed school districts to municipal bonds, tying them to the unpredictability and competitiveness of financial markets for decades to come. State-level actors have shaped and implemented policies that still structure school funding; budget cuts, for example, throw the political battles that shape school resources into relief. Kelly Goodman probed the growing legislative power of conservative tax limiters

⁴²Kelly, *Dividing the Public*.

⁴³Bruce Baker and Preston C. Green III, "Tricks of the Trade: State Legislative Actions in School Finance Policy That Perpetuate Racial Disparities in the Post-Brown Era," *American Journal of Education* 111, no. 3 (2005), 372–413.

⁴⁴Joan Malczewski, "Taxation and Voter Logics: Interest Groups and California Education Debates in the 1920s," History of Education Society Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, Nov. 6, 2021; "A Civilized Society Requires Taxation: Education and Tax Reform in the Jim Crow South," History of Education Society Annual Meeting, Columbus, OH, Nov. 2, 2019.

⁴⁵Joan Malczewski and Nancy Beadie, "School Tax Policy and Interest Group Politics: Teacher Organizations in the 'Progressive' U.S. West circa 1920," draft paper submitted to the History of Education Society Annual Meeting, 2023.

⁴⁶Tracy Steffes, "Assessment Matters: The Rise and Fall of the Illinois Resource Equalizer Formula," *History of Education Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (Feb. 2020), 24–57.

⁴⁷Steffes, "Assessment Matters," 56.

⁴⁸Michael Glass and Sean Vanatta, "The Frail Bonds of Liberalism: Pensions, Schools, and the Unraveling of Fiscal Mutualism in Postwar New York," *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics* 2, no. 2 (March 2021), 427–72.

in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁹ Researching the private papers of conservative state leader David Y. Copeland III, she unveiled political campaigns to establish constitutional limits on taxation and spending that dramatically affected school funds. Delving into the world of these “tax limiters” and other key actors brings to light their influence on state policy.

Making Counties Count: Overlooked Actors in School Finance History

In the nebulous, multilayered, and decentralized system of school finance, counties cannot be underestimated as a powerful link in the chain of educational governance. Although the mix of state and local funding, which can vary significantly across localities, determines the percentage of funding that comes from county coffers and the level of authority county officials have over school budgets, counties constitute important sites of investigation. During the New Deal, for example, as federal projects sought to energize local, state, and national economies, counties became crucial actors in the negotiation of school funding allocation and distribution for these projects.⁵⁰ Connecting the study of school funding mechanisms to the New Deal historiography can lead to productive analyses about the specific power arrangements that structured community activism and the local implementation of federal programs. It was county boards of education and county superintendents who applied to Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds to build new schools.⁵¹

In New Mexico, the celebratory narrative surrounding Union County superintendent Raymond Huff reveals the power these local actors demonstrated in obtaining and distributing resources for public schools.⁵² Sensing the potential of WPA funds to transform infrastructure in his county, which the Dust Bowl and Great Depression had brought to near bankruptcy, Huff applied for federal funds to improve school buildings in Union County. Determined to “pump WPA ... cash into a town on its last legs,” Huff planned for a four-block junior and senior high school complex in the only town in the county, Clayton. The project included a cafeteria, a gymnasium/auditorium, tennis courts, and a football stadium.⁵³ The former high school was remodeled into a three-story junior high school, and a brand new two-story high school was built.

⁴⁹Kelly Goodman, “Tax the Rich: Teachers’ Long Campaign to Fund Public Schools” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2021), chap. 8.

⁵⁰The *Living New Deal* project features a map of the United States that charts New Deal sites across the country. The map itself showcases the juxtaposition and interplay of different scales of government, highlighting the role of the federal government even at the local scale of counties. See “Map,” *Living New Deal*, n.d., <https://livingnewdeal.org/map/#>.

⁵¹National Register of Historic Places, “The Historic & Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico, 1933-1942,” US National Park Service, 1996.

⁵²Elvon Howe, “The Man Who Saved Union County,” in Elvon L. Howe, ed., *Rocky Mountain Empire* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1946), 129-38. Huff was celebrated and recognized in Ken Burns’s PBS miniseries on the Dust Bowl (Oct. 1, 2012), <https://www.pbs.org/video/dust-bowl-mr-huff/>. In the Union County town of Clayton, a small local museum inside the school complex is dedicated to this WPA history.

⁵³“School Building Project Helped Keep Clayton Alive,” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 20, 1981, p. B8; “The Historic & Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico,” 37.

Huff traveled to the WPA headquarters in Denver, Colorado, to negotiate a deal—WPA would pay for labor and the city of Clayton would provide all the materials.⁵⁴ Lauded as the “man who saved Union County” during the New Deal years, Huff chose to empower local communities, prioritizing local workers and exclusively using local building materials for the project.⁵⁵ The new school complex was built with native stone, and local pine trees were used for tables, desks, and doors. Couches and chair seats were upholstered with the skin of local cattle. The endeavor employed six thousand people out of the county’s ten thousand inhabitants.⁵⁶ The story in Union County became one of the most celebrated cases of federal funds rescuing struggling populations, and the school complex was the poster child for New Mexico’s intense efforts to promote the use of WPA funds. Governor Clyde Tingley had traveled across the state in 1935 to encourage communities to apply to federal funds for various projects. Of all the WPA funds it received, New Mexico spent 26 percent on public buildings, including 361 schools, which was the highest percentage among all states.⁵⁷

In the South, counties require careful examination. The common assumption among scholars of education that most school districts are countywide in the region has tended to obscure the deeply political nuances of county governance and school district boundaries in the region. Taking county politics seriously also sheds light on the long tradition of organized resistance at that scale.⁵⁸ In North Carolina, county commissioners control the distribution of some state and county revenue to school districts within their county, and have the authority to allocate resources for school construction and maintenance. Commissioners have often used that power to dispossess communities of color and concentrate resources in White communities, therefore increasing property value and school budgets in these privileged spaces. Theft, rather than mere inequality, characterized the discriminatory methods that commissioners chose for the allocation of school funds in Halifax County, as I showed in my investigation of the long history of racial discrimination in school finance through the example of three rural counties in North Carolina.⁵⁹

The minute scale of county-level educational politics allows for fine-grained analyses of the relationship between race and social class as it pertains to school funding distribution. Looking at Robeson County, North Carolina, I examined protracted battles over school district annexations in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁰ Reverend E. B. Turner, taking a representative approach of many community leaders from the Black middle class, fought for the transfer of his majority-Black neighborhood of

⁵⁴“School Building Project Helped Keep Clayton Alive.”

⁵⁵Howe, “The Man Who Saved Union County.”

⁵⁶“The Historic & Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico,” 37.

⁵⁷Works Projects Administration, *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-1943* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 113, 135.

⁵⁸In Lowndes, Alabama, Black organizers knew very well why county politics mattered for freedom rights. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁵⁹Esther Cyna, “Schooling the Kleptocracy: Racism and School Finance in Rural North Carolina, 1900-2018,” *Journal of American History* 108, no. 4 (March 2022), 745–66.

⁶⁰Esther Cyna, “Shortchanged: Racism, School Finance and Educational Inequality in North Carolina, 1964-1997” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2021).

South Lumberton from the poor Robeson County Schools, a majority-Black and Native American school district, into that of the wealthier, majority-White Lumberton City Schools.⁶¹ The annexation would mean that Black students from South Lumberton would attend Black segregated schools in Lumberton, which were better funded relative to the poor county schools. Seeking support from Lumberton's White leadership in 1971, Turner argued that Lumberton City Schools' annexation of South Lumberton would take the neighborhood out of poverty. In Turner's successful plea for annexation, tools that had been used for segregation and fiscal discrimination could now serve to increase opportunities for all. In what he saw as a joint effort, Turner also promoted urban renewal in South Lumberton, which displaced many poor Black families, as urban renewal did elsewhere in the country.⁶²

Rural counties in particular have long been neglected by histories of education interested in school funding. Yet, White poverty in rural counties and school districts can force scholars to confront difficult questions about race and social class. Looking at how poor White communities in rural North Carolina were able to vote in school board elections even as Black and Native American citizens were disfranchised, I shed light on the racial purpose of policies that have shaped school funding distribution in North Carolina rural counties.⁶³ Investigation into the rural locale will confront historians with inequalities in the preservation of materials, with scarcer archival sources to document local histories than in metropolitan contexts. Yet these material disparities often translate a deeper story about wealth.

Rethinking Tax Revolts

Scholars have examined taxation politics mostly through the political realignment of the 1970s, when the Republican Party seized the issue of taxes as its core platform, with the infamous tax-limiting Proposition 13, a major shock to school funding in California.⁶⁴ Sociologist Isaac Martin partially rejected the argument that anti-tax sentiment stemmed from opposition to resource redistribution in school finance.⁶⁵ He instead argued that the taxpayers who revolted feared the abolition of informal tax privileges and benefits, such as fractional assessment practices, and refuted the idea that

⁶¹Cyna, "Shortchanged," 166–69.

⁶²On how some Black actors such as real estate developers and landlords sometimes profited from poor Black communities, see N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). On the history of urban renewal projects and their destruction of Black neighborhoods, see Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Clarence Stone, *Economic Growth and Neighborhood Discontent: System Bias in the Urban Renewal Program of Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

⁶³Cyna, "Schooling the Kleptocracy."

⁶⁴Isaac Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt: How the Property Tax Transformed American Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Joshua Mound, "Inflated Hopes, Taxing Times: Fiscal Crisis, the Pocketbook Squeeze, and the Roots of the Tax Revolt" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2015).

⁶⁵Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt*, 4, 5, 17.

“Americans rebelled against the property tax because activist judges were equalizing the finances of rich and poor school districts.”⁶⁶ He dismissed the idea that competition for resources among school districts caused anti-tax revolts because he equated school finance with school finance litigation, citing the fact that many tax revolts happened in places that had not seen equalization remedies through court mandates. Yet this limitation did not account for the myriad ways school finance had contributed to and continues to provide tax privileges. White conservatives found in the anti-tax movement a resonance to what they had long argued and practiced in their special school districts, on county commissions and school boards. Walsh took race as the starting point and analytical lens to study taxpayer claims in the South, rather than seeing taxpayer resistance there as originating in movements in the West and Midwest that did not center race.⁶⁷

States’ decisions to divest public education can provide fresh perspectives on 1980s austerity politics. Tracy Steffes argued that, rather than being an economic necessity or mere conservative politics, tax cuts in the 1980s partially stemmed from “over a decade of policy decisions and frustrations with politically constructed inadequacy, unfairness, and inequity in state taxation, especially property tax.”⁶⁸ Because state officials chose to limit state revenue through taxation, they increasingly shifted funding responsibility to local governments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, creating heavier and heavier financial burdens for communities of color especially. Kim Phillips-Fein formulated a similar argument about New York City’s fiscal crisis in the 1970s by dissecting the decisions and rhetoric that came with austerity politics at the municipal and state levels.⁶⁹ Looking at political decisions about schools specifically shows that during the city’s fiscal crisis, local authorities prioritized the needs of White children, systematically failing Black children in Harlem by cutting resources and closing several schools there in the name of economic necessity.⁷⁰

Kelly Goodman offered another interpretation based on the influence of business leaders, state lawmakers, and teacher unions.⁷¹ Centering labor actors, she set tax revolts within the context of organized interest coalitions starting in the 1930s. Goodman detailed protracted battles in Michigan and California around tax limits that pitted conservative politicians and business organizations against labor-liberals, leaving the latter scrambling for alternatives to property taxation after constitutional tax limits were passed, and dashing their hopes of progressive taxation to fund schools.

Court decisions in school finance cases are also far from apolitical. To try to improve schooling for millions of children, state school finance lawsuits since the *Rodriguez* case in 1973 have challenged that same system as well as insufficient state aid. Historians should interpret court decisions themselves in the political context that produced

⁶⁶Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt*, 17.

⁶⁷Walsh, *Racial Taxation*, 141–42.

⁶⁸Steffes, “Assessment Matters,” 27.

⁶⁹Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York’s Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017).

⁷⁰Kim Phillips-Fein and Esther Cyna, “Harlem Schools in the Fiscal Crisis,” in Ansley Erickson and Ernest Morrell, eds., *Educating Harlem: A Century of Schooling and Resistance in a Black Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 257–75.

⁷¹Goodman, “Tax the Rich.”

them, including in the partisan sense of the word. As Ethan Hutt, Daniel Klasik, and Aaron Tang found, judges in these cases are “more likely to rule in favor of the state when the legislature is split between Democrats and Republicans than when the Republicans have sole control.”⁷² In fact, scholars have not found any meaningful correlation between the nature of state constitutional language and the outcomes of school finance lawsuits, which further shows the importance of understanding court decisions in their historical and political contexts.⁷³

Studying school finance as an integral part of local and state political economies foregrounds the distribution of political and economic capital, which are inseparable from questions of racial discrimination in the United States. Deeply entrenched school finance policies of all types belong to a wider state legal and political apparatus to which scholars have recently referred as *racial capitalism*, a theoretical framework that analyzes how capital derives social and economic value from racial classification and racial inequality.⁷⁴ Because most families hold their wealth in the form of home equity, scholars have highlighted how discriminatory federal wealth-building programs over the twentieth century shaped the racial wealth gap.⁷⁵ Literature in urban history is extensive on the question of capital accumulation through home ownership and the hindrance of this opportunity for people of color—through processes such as redlining and urban renewal.⁷⁶ Educational historians can draw connections between scholarship on dispossession and the history of public education by investigating school funding.⁷⁷

⁷²Ethan Hutt, Daniel Klasik, and Aaron Tang, “How Do Judges Decide School Finance Cases?,” *Washington University Law Review* 97, no. 4 (2020), 1047–130.

⁷³William E. Thro, “The Role of Language of the State Education Clauses in School Finance Litigation,” *West’s Education Law Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 1993), 277–89.

⁷⁴Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Justin Leroy and Destin Jenkins, eds., *Histories of Racial Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

⁷⁵Dorothy Brown, *The Whiteness of Wealth: How the Tax System Impoverishes Black Americans—and How We Can Fix It* (New York: Random Penguin House, 2021); Mehrsa Baradaran, *The Color Of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2017); Palma Joy Strand and Nicholas Mirkey, “Racialized Tax Inequity: Wealth, Racism, and the U.S. System of Taxation,” *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy* 15, no. 3 (2020), 265–304; Andrew Kahrl, “Capitalizing on the Urban Fiscal Crisis: Predatory Tax Buyers in 1970s Chicago,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 3 (2018), 382–401. On the relationship between the development of a racial state and its taxation systems, see Robin Einhorn, *American Taxation, American Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁷⁶Taylor, *Race for Profit*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009); Paige Glotzer, *How the Suburbs Were Segregated: Developers and the Business of Exclusionary Housing, 1890–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Andrew R. Highsmith, *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan, and the Fate of the American Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*.

⁷⁷On dispossession within the framework of racial capitalism, see K-Sue Park, “Race, Innovation, and Financial Growth: The Example of Foreclosure,” in Jenkins and Leroy, eds., *Histories of Racial Capitalism*, 27–51.

Beyond the Local Property Tax: Rethinking Causality through Historical Analysis

Including a wider array of school funding components than just the local property tax clarifies the extent to which school finance mechanisms structure unequal schooling with the complicity of policymaking agents at the state, county, and district levels. The reductive focus on school funding formulae as they appear in school finance litigation has reverberated in the extensive literature on school finance in economics, with decontextualized approaches to cause and effect that ignore processes of racialization.⁷⁸ Going beyond interpretations of school funding disparities that are rooted in market logics, historians can investigate sales and supplemental taxes, school bonds, local allocation systems, and capital outlay for school maintenance and construction. By bringing other aspects of school finance into focus, they can show that school finance problems were not limited to disparate tax bases—themselves the result of decisions regarding land use and the selective drawing of district lines—but also stemmed from taxation and governance structures within and across districts that limited how poor districts could use their resources. This section centers racism as the cause of school finance disparities, showing how studying various funding policies can challenge the widespread interpretation of educational inequality as a mere disparate effect of existing wealth inequalities.

School District Boundaries

Fifty years ago, in its *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* decision, the Supreme Court emphasized the “merits of local control.” In a ruling that changed the course of school finance litigation for generations, the highest court identified “local control” as a legitimate goal within a rational basis test. “Though concededly imperfect,” the court wrote in a euphemism that failed to capture the gross inequities between Alamo Heights and Edgewood, “the system bears a rational relationship to a legitimate state purpose. While assuring a basic education for every child in the State, it permits and encourages participation in and significant control of each district’s schools at the local level.”⁷⁹ Wielding historical arguments about school district authority, the court majority articulated taxation power as a right in the democratic process, without contextualizing how school district boundaries are drawn. Again in 1974, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, the court curtailed desegregation efforts across school district lines by finding “substantial local

⁷⁸A strand of the economics literature on the topic has sought to quantify the impact of court decisions in school funding disparities. Although these studies provide valuable insights, they often fail to take historical context into account, thus missing the centrality of race in shaping school resources. See, for example, C. Kirabo Jackson, Rucker C. Johnson, and Claudia Persico, “The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131, no. 1 (Feb. 2016), 157–218; Michah Rothbart, “Does School Finance Reform Reduce the Race Gap in School Funding?,” *Education Finance and Policy* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2020), 675–707; Bruce Baker and Kevin Welner, “School Finance and Courts: Does Reform Matter, and How Can We Tell?,” *Teachers College Record* 113, no. 11 (2011), 2374–414; Robert Manwaring and Steven Sheffrin, “Litigation, School Finance Reform, and Aggregate Educational Spending,” *International Tax and Public Finance* 4 (May 1997), 107–27.

⁷⁹*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 44–53.

control of public education in this country” to be “a deeply rooted tradition.”⁸⁰ This ahistorical perspective makes the question of history pressing and political. Historians have found that the tradition of local control has also provided tremendous opportunities for segregationist and exploitative practices for the benefit of White people and White capital.⁸¹

School district boundaries are powerful tools, and the recent history of education literature has been particularly effective in demonstrating the role of these boundaries, particularly in urban and suburban areas, in shaping residential and school segregation and affecting school resources and collective wealth.⁸² Spurred in part by the repercussions of the Supreme Court decision in *Milliken*, historians scrutinized the consequences of school district fragmentation and consolidation in the twentieth century. For example, focusing on the Los Angeles suburb of Compton, which was separate from the large Los Angeles Unified School District, Emily Straus chronicled how policymakers at the local and county levels designed the decline of the suburban neighborhood’s tax base in the second half of the twentieth century, trapping its public schools in a spiral of underfunding and neglect.⁸³ By deconstructing tax bases and illustrating how they are engineered rather than static, recent scholarship has deepened our understanding of school district boundary manipulation as a matter of school finance. In this perspective, the use of property taxation to fund schools does not merely reflect wealth disparities, it also creates and exacerbates inequality. School district boundaries thus appear as powerful weapons in tax base politics.⁸⁴ By pushing scholars to see school districts not as fixed entities but as the result of political decisions, historians can bring attention to the economic consequences of school district line drawing, and complement generative research on the divisiveness of school district lines.⁸⁵ Evidence gathered by EdBuild’s *Dismissed* project pointed to the divisive power of these boundaries, and historians can cast a light on the actors that built these borders, the systems that empowered them, and the long traditions of resistance that have always challenged them.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717 (1974), 741–42.

⁸¹ Andrew R. Highsmith and Ansley T. Erickson, “Segregation as Splitting, Segregation as Joining: Schools, Housing, and the Many Modes of Jim Crow,” *American Journal of Education* 121, no. 4 (2015), 563–95.

⁸² Ansley T. Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and its Limits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Emily E. Straus, *Death of a Suburban Dream: Race and Schools in Compton* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); John Rury, *Creating the Suburban School Advantage: Race, Localism, and Inequality in an American Metropolis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020); Walter Stern, *Race & Education in New Orleans: Creating the Segregated City, 1764–1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018); Michael Glass, *Cracked Foundations: Debt and Inequality in Postwar Suburbia* (under contract with University of Pennsylvania Press); Kelly, *Dividing the Public*; Ryan, *Five Miles Away*. In his study of Boston, Adam Nelson examined the role of the federal government in shaping school funding. See Nelson, *The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston’s Public Schools, 1950–1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁸³ Straus, *Death of a Suburban Dream*.

⁸⁴ Michael Glass uses the term *tax base politics* in his analysis of competition between suburban school districts in Long Island. Michael Glass, “Schooling Suburbia: The Politics of School Finance in Postwar Long Island” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2020).

⁸⁵ David Gamson and Emily Hodge, eds., *The Shifting Landscape of the American School District: Race, Class, Geography, and the Perpetual Reform of Local Control, 1935–2015* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018).

⁸⁶ EdBuild, *Dismissed*, n.d., <https://edbuild.org/content/dismissed>.

How Bias Shapes School Budgets: Property Appraisals and Assessments

One crucial and yet understudied aspect of taxation systems is how bias in property assessment has crafted special, racialized tax advantages.⁸⁷ Wealthy suburban neighborhoods have long enjoyed the benefit of seeing their wealth under-assessed, a fact that has held direct consequences on school budgets, which draw on engineered local tax bases and manipulated property values. In her study of school finance in Illinois, Tracy Steffes demonstrated how “wealthy suburban districts benefited from generations of tax benefits, including the ability to monopolize their own wealth for their own benefit and the systematic underassessment of their wealth, which required them to contribute less than their fair share in taxes to the county and state.”⁸⁸ This fiscal perspective on suburban privilege shifts our understanding of arguments about “local control” that these communities typically wielded in the 1970s, as desegregation loomed large.

Assessors and appraisers typically enjoy a level of discretion that can translate into virtual archival silence on the question of racial bias. Several problems cloak the power of assessors, including the difficulty of disentangling the appraised value and the real value of property, and variations in the percentage of appraised value that is taxed between localities. Denouncing the “toxic brew” of pseudo-scientific theories about racial hierarchies, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor linked the arbitrary nature of appraisals to the history of anti-Black racism in the United States, which deflated the value of property associated with communities of color or in their proximity.⁸⁹ An understanding of school finance structures should inform studies on the racialization of property, which scholars have explored more extensively in real estate.⁹⁰ Schools affect individual and collective property value. In a White-supremacist capitalist society, a school that serves children of color devalues property around it, thus fueling and incentivizing a racist regime of wealth and privilege distribution.

Evidence of bias in the assessment of property by individual assessors is rare, but historians have begun to find creative ways to locate stories and data about property assessment. Media sources and judicial reviews of tax assessment methods can provide helpful leads to link the history of funding discrimination and assessment bias. Tracy Steffes uncovered controversies around assessment methods in Cook County, Illinois, in the early 1970s, and showed that the underassessment of suburban property accelerated generational wealth building.⁹¹ Andrew Kahrl’s investigations of property assessment practices uncovered evidence of systemic racial discrimination, leading him to affirm that the “overassessment of African American property owners is almost as old as African American property ownership in America.”⁹² Kahrl brought

⁸⁷ Andrew Kahrl, *The Power to Destroy: A History of Taxation in Black America* (under contract with University of Chicago Press); Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt*.

⁸⁸ Steffes, “Assessment Matters,” 28.

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 147.

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Race for Profit*; Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America*; Freund, *Colored Property*; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*.

⁹¹ Steffes, “Assessment Matters,” 35, 36, 51.

⁹² Kahrl, “The Short End of Both Sticks,” 191.

attention to how taxation policy and authorities took on the task of maintaining White supremacy in the South, starting in the 1940s, as the most overt features of Jim Crow came under attack. Calling tax assessors the “local administrators of white supremacy,” Kahrl argued that these elected officials abused their power to protect and boost White property, while burdening Black property owners, harming their ability to build generational wealth.⁹³ Drawing links between these racist practices and the ways they shape school resources and community wealth can clarify how school finance and the racial wealth gap have long been intertwined.

Contemporary research in the social sciences can also provide leads. Casting a light on the role of racism in assessment practices, researchers at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University uncovered systematic discrimination in Franklin County, Ohio.⁹⁴ From 2010 to 2015, neighborhoods that were over 70 percent Black were overvalued between 30 to 50 percent relative to sale prices, while neighborhoods that were over 70 percent White were either valued at the sale price or slightly undervalued. The most undervalued property sat in neighborhoods that were more than 90 percent White. Lee Harris obtained similar findings in New Haven, Connecticut.⁹⁵ So did property law scholar and organizer Bernadette Atuahene in Detroit.⁹⁶ Public finance professors Carlos Avenancio-Leon and Troup Howard found a nationwide pattern of racial discrimination in real estate property appraisals, and Michael Fouassier’s 2022 dissertation explored the problem of the disparate racial impact of assessment limitations.⁹⁷ These studies did not address the relationship between assessment and school funding, yet the two are deeply intertwined. Not only does property valuation have an impact on the portion of school budgets that is generated through local property tax, but it also influences credit ratings, which in turn affects a city or district’s power to contract school bonds.

Bankrupting Education: School Bonds and School District Debt

Consequential work in the burgeoning field of the history of capitalism has explored the racial dimension of municipal debt, bringing to light its relationship to systemic racial discrimination.⁹⁸ Interest for these thematic investigations should point

⁹³ Andrew Kahrl, “The Power to Destroy: Discriminatory Property Assessments and the Struggle for Tax Justice in Mississippi,” *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 3 (Aug. 2016), 579–616, at 580.

⁹⁴ Michael Outrich et al., “Franklin County Auditor Report: Investigating the Appraisal Process,” Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University, July 2021, <https://www.franklincountyauditor.com/AUDR-website/media/Documents/Community%20Relations/In%20the%20News/Kirwan-Institute-Franklin-County-Auditor-Report-Investigating-the-appraisal-process.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Lee Harris, “Assessing’ Discrimination: The Influence of Race in Residential Property Tax Assessments,” *Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law* 20 (2004), 1–60.

⁹⁶ Bernadette Atuahene, “Our Taxes Are Too Damn High’: Institutional Racism, Property Tax Assessment, and the Fair Housing Act,” *Northwestern University Law Review* 112, no. 6 (June 2018), 1501–64.

⁹⁷ Carlos F. Avenancio-León and Troup Howard, “The Assessment Gap: Racial Inequalities in Property Taxation,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137, no. 3 (Aug. 2022), 1383–434; Michael Fouassier, “Assessment Limitations and the Disparate Impact of Tax Policy on Minoritized Communities” (PhD diss., West Chester University, 2022).

⁹⁸ Destin Jenkins, *The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

educational historians to how school bonds can reveal processes of dispossession, and encourage them to look for the racialization of indebtedness by digging into these technical sources.

Borrowing money for schools involves the democratic process, as constituencies vote to pass or defeat school bonds; yet school bond elections have been an understudied venue for protest. In the literature, the activism of communities of color in particular rarely figures as a pillar in the variegated strategies to achieve more educational equity for marginalized and oppressed people.⁹⁹ When they were not robbed of the franchise by White supremacists, Black communities used school bond elections to protest egregious schooling conditions.

Consider a 1926 story in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In February of that year, the Mountain City Teachers Association, a local Black teachers' union, denounced their school district's diversion of school bonds. When they were promised an auditorium-gymnasium for the segregated Black junior high school, Black residents had backed school bonds in the election at a rate of virtually 100 percent.¹⁰⁰ G. A. Key, the president of the Black teachers' union, charged that despite the bond issue, the city was denying Black middle school students facility upgrades enjoyed by their White counterparts in "even the smallest elementary schools." To justify the changes between what the bonds were supposed to buy and the cruel reality of racial dispossession, Chattanooga commissioner T. H. McMillan claimed the lowest bid received for the auditorium-gymnasium was more than the district could afford, even with the newly borrowed funds. Yet a comparison between what the campaign literature promised before the election and the allocation of the passed bonds pointed to clear racial discrimination: the contracted projects at Black schools showed a cut of 30 percent from the original amounts estimated, while projects under contract at White schools showed increases of 9 to 15 percent. A petition by the Mountain City Teachers Association rhetorically asked, "Is this fair?"¹⁰¹

The decisions that officials made when it came to raising and distributing borrowed funds conveyed the significant hold of White supremacy on public education. In the 1940s and 1950s, southern states feared challenges to school segregation, and led equalization campaigns to maintain segregated schooling. These endeavors to prevent or delay integration required intense borrowing for school construction, maintenance, and improvement. The pressure to build led Virginia to contract large amounts of school bonds, and by 1955, the state owed over \$200 million to its Wall Street creditors.¹⁰² Litigation around school bonds attacked the state's financing of segregated schools. In 1955, after *Brown v. Board of Education* destabilized the legal foundations of racial apartheid in the state, a lawsuit threatened to invalidate the Virginia school

⁹⁹Thomas B. Priest and Linette P. Fox, "Minority Support for School Bonds in Charlotte-Mecklenburg: A Cautionary Note," *Education and Urban Society* 37, no. 2 (Feb. 2005), 193–203.

¹⁰⁰"Labor Indorses [sic] Negroes' Stand on Supervisor," *Chattanooga News*, Feb. 26, 1936, p. 5.

¹⁰¹"Labor Indorses [sic] Negroes' Stand."

¹⁰²James H. Hershman Jr., "Public School Bonds and Virginia's Massive Resistance," *Journal of Negro Education* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1983), 398–409.

bonds, arguing that *Brown* had nullified the purpose for which the bonds were voted—building and maintaining segregated school facilities.¹⁰³ When *School Board v. Shelton* reached the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in 1956, however, the state’s highest court overturned previous rulings, and decided instead that bonds could proceed unabated.

Yet overt resistance to integration in Virginia jeopardized its ability to borrow funds. In 1956, Governor Thomas Stanley introduced a “fund cut-off” bill that would withdraw state funds from counties and districts operating integrated schools as part of his package of statutes to challenge *Brown*.¹⁰⁴ In an astounding manifestation of the White veto on Black education, Stanley and his segregationist supporters threw the public education system into complete uncertainty, as it became unclear whether schools would continue to operate. This directly affected the state’s ability to market its school bonds. The 1956 “cut-off” bill led to an instant hike in school bond rates, with education experts estimating a 1 percent increase as a result of the segregationist law.¹⁰⁵ The *Richmond News Leader* reported that the Stanley bill had led to a “penalty on school bonds.”¹⁰⁶ As 1956 drew to a close, Norfolk was about to accept a 4.4 percent bid on twenty-five-year school bonds, which, according to the *Richmond News Leader*, was the “highest paid in many years, if not in the city’s history.”¹⁰⁷

Massive resistance threatened to bankrupt public schools. Warned by influential economists that the “cut-off” bill could bankrupt the state, which held more than \$200 million in bonded indebtedness, Governor Stanley traveled to New York to meet with Wall Street executives to reassure them, and to downplay the economic impact of the anti-integration plan.¹⁰⁸ State officials returned to Virginia satisfied, and although bond rates remained high, they attributed the figures to the tight bond market rather than to the school bill. But debt is a tool of control, and in 1957, when a new governor took office, he wielded the power of indebtedness against localities that were likely to close their public schools rather than integrate them.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the financial hegemony of Wall Street was keeping Virginia in check.

Although Wall Street exercised pressure over Virginia state officials to limit the impact of segregationist law, the bond market was far from an engine of integration. In his investigation of postwar suburban inequality in Long Island, Mike Glass exposed the vicious effects of school bond ratings that entrapped suburban residents in spiraling debt.¹¹⁰ Poor and majority-Black suburbs such as Roosevelt, as well as picture-perfect majority-White suburbs like the iconic Levittown, lost control of the

¹⁰³*County School Bd. of Hanover County v. Shelton*, 93 S.E.2d 469 (Virginia, 1956). Supreme courts in Florida and North Carolina heard similar cases at the time. See, for example, *Constantian v. Anson County*, 244 N.C. 221, 93 S.E.2d 163 (1956); Walsh, *Racial Taxation*, 135.

¹⁰⁴Robert A. Pratt, *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia, 1954-89* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁰⁵Hershman, “Public School Bonds and Virginia’s Massive Resistance,” 404.

¹⁰⁶“3.89 Interest Rate Bid on Norfolk Bonds,” *Richmond News*, Dec. 18, 1956, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁰⁷“3.89 Interest Rate Bid on Norfolk Bonds,” quote on p. 3.

¹⁰⁸Lorin Thompson, “Virginia Education Crisis and its Economic Aspects,” *New South* 14, no. 2 (Feb. 1959), 3–8, 5.

¹⁰⁹Hershman, “Public School Bonds and Virginia’s Massive Resistance,” 408.

¹¹⁰Glass, “Schooling Suburbia.”

debt that built schools. Dissecting school bonds, from referenda to contracts and allocation, is therefore an opportunity for scholars of school finance to insert their work more squarely in the literature on finance capitalism.

Such historical accounts of school finance, in turn, enrich a literature on the history of capitalism that has tended to treat patent inequalities between public schools as a mere symptom of inequities in real estate, land ownership, and income disparities—as collateral damage, rather than a driving force, of capitalism.¹¹¹ The intersection of finance and public policy in the field of school funding makes it a generative topic to study connections between public schools and financialization, private and public actors, government subsidies, school bonds, and investments in the stock market. An emphasis on how school finance became a vehicle to generate profit for some people and communities at the expense of others can also inform conversations about reparations for past and contemporary racial oppression by adding evidence, even in quantitative terms, of racial dispossession.

Income Inequality

Recasting equalization efforts within a longer history of school finance battles, rather than seeing equalization simply as a prequel to the *Brown* case, can illuminate the intertwined history of race and funding for teacher salaries. Before *Brown*, the NAACP led campaigns for the equalization of salaries between Black and White teachers in southern states.¹¹² These legal efforts compiled evidence of patent inequities. Additionally, looking closely at these campaigns can situate the Jim Crow South more prominently within school finance litigation history. Labor movements have long advocated fairer salaries and better working conditions for teachers, paraprofessionals, and school personnel, and a dialogue with labor history can further enrich histories of school funding inequality in the US.¹¹³

Labor history can explain the development of school funding mechanisms. In *A Chance for Change*, Crystal Sanders showed how working-class Black women educators and administrators tapped into federal resources to build the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) in 1965.¹¹⁴ Black women created opportunities for political activism through the program, all while giving poor Black children increased

¹¹¹Ansley Erickson makes a similar argument about the relationship between desegregation policies and urban planning in Nashville, Tennessee. See Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis*.

¹¹²Scott Baker, “Testing Equality: The National Teacher Examination and the NAACP’s Legal Campaign to Equalize Teachers’ Salaries in the South, 1936-63,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 49–64.

¹¹³Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). New York City’s teacher strike of 1968 has occupied a prominent role in the literature on teachers’ unions. See Charles S. Isaacs, *Inside Ocean Hill-Brownsville: A Teacher’s Education, 1968-69* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014); Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*; Heather Lewis, *New York City Public Schools from Brownsville to Bloomberg: Community Control and Its Legacy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2015).

¹¹⁴Crystal R. Sanders, *A Chance for Change: Head Start and Mississippi’s Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

access to early childhood education. It was White local and state leaders' authority over funding that eventually brought CDGM's demise.

Research that examines teachers' unions has framed issues of educational resources from a labor perspective, looking into negotiations at different scales between state officials, corporate leaders, and practitioners.¹¹⁵ In her investigation of teacher unions and school finance in Michigan and California, Kelly Goodman revised the history of school finance reform to insert neglected actors into a narrative too often monopolized by lawyers, and argued that union demands, gains, and compromises shaped school finance policies.¹¹⁶

Conclusion: School Finance and the Case for Reparations

State school finance systems continue to create inequitable conditions and unequal outcomes for millions of children across the US. In her conversation about educational inequality in Ferguson, Amanda Purnell disparaged the inequity of public school funding in Missouri. "The way we fund schools is deeply problematic and I feel like I could just mic drop with that," she said deploringly.¹¹⁷ In Missouri, the Forward Through Ferguson (FTF) collective demonstrated that the combination of state and local school funding was inequitable by design because it made a majority-Black district more dependent on meager and volatile state funds.¹¹⁸ In 2020, FTF found that the median difference per student between the budgets of majority-White districts and majority-Black districts in St. Louis was \$1,698 for funding received and \$2,076 for money spent in 2018–2019.¹¹⁹ Understanding that policymakers deliberately created and widened this racially unjust disparity through discrete decisions, made and remade over time, casts the history of school finance not just as one that mirrored unequal wealth distribution, but as a story of racial dispossession.

Historians have a role to play in explaining the complexities, political stakes, and racial origins of these inequalities. School funding formulae and policies, although often obscure or hidden, have a direct impact on the experiences and educational opportunities of students. Questioning the foundations, legacies, and contemporary consequences of racial discrimination in school finance can also shape how we imagine alternatives. Historical scholarship on school finance should therefore be embedded in an expansive understanding of *why* school finance creates inequities beyond the property tax to expose instances of theft and fund diversion, thus sparking discussions of

¹¹⁵Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*; Nick Juravich, *The Work of Education: Community-Based Educators in Schools, Freedom Struggles, and the Labor Movement* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).

¹¹⁶Goodman, "Tax the Rich."

¹¹⁷Drew, Graves, and Purnell, "Dr. Courtney M. Graves and Dr. Amanda L. Purnell."

¹¹⁸Karishma Furtado et al., "Still Separate, Still Unequal: A Call to Level the Uneven Education Playing Field in St. Louis," *Still Forward through Ferguson*, Sept. 2020, http://stillunequal.org/files/FTF_StillUnequal_Report_2020_web.pdf.

¹¹⁹Furtado et al., "Still Separate, Still Unequal," 3.

reparations for school finance injustice and through school finance remedies, starting with the dismantling of harmful practices.¹²⁰

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¹²⁰Preston C. Green III, Bruce D. Baker, and Joseph O. Oluwole, "School Finance, Race, and Reparations," *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice* 27, no. 2 (2021), 483–558.

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