

documented how racist policies and practices in government and the private sector structured modern American metropolises. Historians of education such as Jack Dougherty, Karen Benjamin, and Ansley Erickson have also demonstrated how schools both shaped, and were shaped by, their racially inequitable metropolitan contexts. My own book on New Orleans illustrates how the school board there collaborated with real estate professionals and municipal and federal policymakers to construct and institutionalize White supremacy before and after the *Brown* decision. Drawing upon these other scholars, I frame that story as a process of government creating and maintaining racialized schooling and housing markets. The challenges facing urban schools, this literature reminds us, are not easily disentangled from the challenges facing cities.

Harris does broadly acknowledge the racially inequitable conditions in which New Orleans schools operated before and after Hurricane Katrina. He also straightforwardly describes the ways in which the New Orleans reforms undermined democratic participation in public schooling, enabled schools to exclude or push out students they viewed as undesirable, and transferred power and resources from Black to White hands. (The latter was especially notable in terms of the post-Katrina shifts in teaching, administrative, and nonprofit jobs like the one I once held.) Additionally, he finds that “school choice” often failed to give families the options they really wanted, which were neighborhood schools with robust offerings.

Harris concludes his book with the lessons Americans can draw from New Orleans. While he identifies five roles that government can play to counteract inequities and provide “Democratic Choice,” his focus strictly on schools suggests—possibly with unwarranted optimism—that meaningful educational reform is feasible within existing social, political, and economic arrangements.

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## **Amaka Okechukwu. *To Fulfill These Rights: Political Struggle Over Affirmative Action and Open Admissions***

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In *To Fulfill These Rights: Political Struggle Over Affirmative Action and Open Admissions*, Amaka Okechukwu tells us the story of two policies that aimed to increase the representation of Black and Latinx students on college campuses: open admissions (at City University of New York) and affirmative action (at University of California, Berkeley and the University of Michigan). Through detailed research and analysis, Okechukwu painstakingly explains legal battles, ballot initiatives, elected

and appointed officials' actions, and student and administrator responses in conflicts over attempts to increase access to higher education. Along the way, Okechukwu highlights the roles of neoliberalism, color-blindness race frames, and what she calls "racial political strategies" (p. 25) and "defensive innovation" (p. 12). We see the critical role of strategic and systematic action by conservative actors at both the elite level (affirmative action) and mass level (open access). The results—systematic retrenchment, and subsequent administrators' valiant "defensive innovation" to maintain access—are a painful story for anyone who supports the policies, especially in the clear moments in which things could have turned out differently.

The most insightful part of this book is the story of open admissions at City University of New York (CUNY). In the wake of protests by Black and Puerto Rican student groups, in 1970 the CUNY colleges opened admission to any high school graduate. While affirmative action rests on the continuation of systems of meritocracy, in which there are winners and losers, open admissions advocates argued for access for all, recognizing that affirmative action would never serve the majority of Black and Latinx students. As such, it had the potential to increase opportunity for far larger numbers of underrepresented minorities than affirmative action could. Still, attention to diversity in higher education almost always focuses on affirmative action, despite the practice being part of admissions to a minority of colleges in the United States.

Related to affirmative action, Okechukwu shows how conservatives employed "racial political strategy," defined as the "deployment of race in a plan for collective action—specifically, the goals, targets, and tactics employed in mobilization" (p. 69), including the rearticulation of civil rights and racial justice language to frame Whites as the victims of race-based policies. These moves, along with the US Supreme Court decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), forced liberals to shift to the language of "diversity" in their legal defense of affirmative action. Beyond the courts, conservatives have attacked affirmative action and open admissions through state ballot initiatives and administrative decision-making, respectively. Okechukwu shows how those opposed to open admissions cast lower income Black and Latinx students at the CUNY colleges as inferior and the cause of institutional decline at CUNY, ignoring dramatic budget cuts, while anti-affirmative action advocates pushing ballot initiatives in California and Michigan employed the rearticulation strategies used in court to attack it.

Okechukwu also shows how students and university administrators responded to attacks on open admissions and affirmative action. She optimistically concludes that while most student protests were unsuccessful in their stated goals, they did invigorate student activism to fight injustice beyond the walls of their campuses, and that activism could be redeployed for other progressive causes. For their part, university administrators, constrained by legal requirements around affirmative action, employed "defensive innovation" (p. 12) in their attempts to maintain access for Black and Latinx students. This innovation included percent plans that offered admission to state universities to all students graduating in the top 10 percent of their high schools and more recruitment, among other things.

Along the way, Okechukwu gives readers a sense of the outcomes that could have been. By emphasizing the strategies employed on both sides of these debates and the

actors who made consequential decisions, as well as the negative cases (for example, the failure of anti-affirmative action ballot initiatives in Colorado and Missouri), Okechukwu shows the openings for strategic mobilization going forward. She expands on these opportunities in the book's conclusion. Okechukwu argues further that the racial strategies conservatives described in the book employed, in fact, paved the way for the growing White nationalism in the United States in the twenty-first century, in part because they promoted ideas about White racial victimization. This is a convincing description of the rise of Donald Trump as a continuation of, rather than a departure from, Republican strategies.

A few moments in the book mention the complexity of Asian American achievement and affirmative action. Most recently, as Okechukwu describes, Asian Americans were recruited as plaintiffs in the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2019) case against affirmative action, spearheaded by White anti-affirmative action activist Ed Blum. Asian Americans overall are achieving academically at higher levels than White youth in the United States and are sometimes framed as "model minorities," supposedly demonstrating the lack of necessity of policies to expand access for Black and Latinx youth. This story would have been enriched if Okechukwu traced the positioning of Asian Americans in the different cases—how did courts, governing bodies, students, and administrators articulate the position of Asian Americans in the attacks on and defenses of affirmative action? How did Asian Americans themselves respond? What do these tell us about racial political strategies, defensive innovation, rearticulation, and more? Answers to these questions would have brought even more richness to this marvelous book that will be of great interest to scholars of higher education, social movements, the rise of White nationalism, and color-blind race frames.