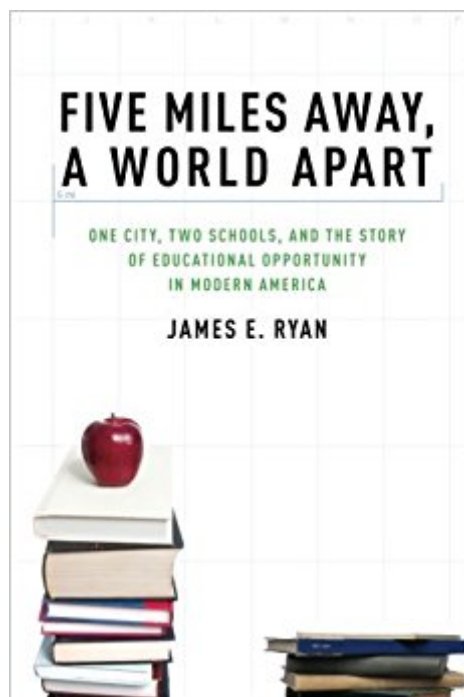




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# Five Miles Away, A World Apart: One City, Two Schools, And The Story Of Educational Opportunity In Modern America



## Synopsis

How is it that, half a century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, educational opportunities remain so unequal for black and white students, not to mention poor and wealthy ones? In his important new book, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart*, James E. Ryan answers this question by tracing the fortunes of two schools in Richmond, Virginia--one in the city and the other in the suburbs. Ryan shows how court rulings in the 1970s, limiting the scope of desegregation, laid the groundwork for the sharp disparities between urban and suburban public schools that persist to this day. The Supreme Court, in accord with the wishes of the Nixon administration, allowed the suburbs to lock nonresidents out of their school systems. City schools, whose student bodies were becoming increasingly poor and black, simply received more funding, a measure that has proven largely ineffective, while the independence (and superiority) of suburban schools remained sacrosanct. Weaving together court opinions, social science research, and compelling interviews with students, teachers, and principals, Ryan explains why all the major education reforms since the 1970s--including school finance litigation, school choice, and the No Child Left Behind Act--have failed to bridge the gap between urban and suburban schools and have unintentionally entrenched segregation by race and class. As long as that segregation continues, Ryan forcefully argues, so too will educational inequality. Ryan closes by suggesting innovative ways to promote school integration, which would take advantage of unprecedented demographic shifts and an embrace of diversity among young adults. Exhaustively researched and elegantly written by one of the nation's leading education law scholars, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart* ties together, like no other book, a half-century's worth of education law and politics into a coherent, if disturbing, whole. It will be of interest to anyone who has ever wondered why our schools are so unequal and whether there is anything to be done about it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Anyone looking to understand the 'lay of the land' in kindergarten-through-12th-grade education should look no further than James Ryan's outstanding 'Five Miles Away, A World Apart' . . . Mr. Ryan's book is both sweeping and accessible."--Phil Brand, *The Washington Times*"Americans seem to concur that school desegregation is the right and just policy, and also that we will do nothing to pursue it. We also don't talk or think about it--until a book such as *Five Miles Away* comes along. Jim Ryan has produced just the right mix of case study and rigorous analysis to both help us grapple with an issue that most people would rather ignore, and to prod us into realizing the urgent need to do so. The focus on urban/suburban boundaries is exactly targeted and the attention to politics and the law, as well as to real children, is essential."--Jennifer L. Hochschild, Professor of African and African American Studies, and Harvard College Professor, Harvard University"[R]equired reading . . . This is the type of book that inspires a cheer on one page and a jeer on the next. It raises issues many Americans . . . prefer not to raise. His conclusions and recommendations defy ideological categorization . . . Regarding education, the country neither is living up to its ideals nor meeting the needs and aspirations of young people. Many students prosper, of course; many do not. Ryan asks why. His answers command respect."--*Richmond Times-Dispatch* "[An] excellent book . . . in *Five Miles Apart*, [Ryan] carefully surveys the evidence and concludes that steps must be taken to address the social and economic segregation of American public schools. A system of greater choice, rather than compulsory busing, is his prescribed solution, one made more politically feasible by changing demographics, and changing attitudes among young adults." --*The New Republic's* online book review "Ryan effectively, conclusively enlightens policy makers, professors, school administrators, legal and educational scholars and researchers, and undergraduate and graduate students of school administration by providing an exhaustive discussion of judicial decision making and executive and legislative thinking since *Brown v. Board of Education*....The author's experience and expertise in law, research, data analysis, and personal interviewing make this an absolute must read for anyone interested in understanding the impact of judicial decision making on desegregation efforts in the US public school system. Summing Up: Highly recommended."--*CHOICE*"In this work, James E. Ryan explores the history of integration in America's schools through an examination of court decisions,

historical analysis, and previously published education research." -- Political Science Quarterly

James E. Ryan is William L. Matheson & Robert M. Morgenthau Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Virginia School of Law. He is a former clerk to Chief Justice William Rehnquist.

This is a great book that takes apart the issues impacting the opportunity gap.

The author presents a well-documented history of school desegregation in Richmond. As a resident of Virginia during this time, the author presents the issues you might not have been aware of when you were only in elementary school. The author also is informative as to his insights into the courts, the judges, and the parties on both sides of the argument. The author's analysis of Detroit and Charlotte-Mecklenburg cases helped me to draw my own conclusions of how history played out over the past 50+ years and in hindsight how some ideas may have had flaws. While there was some controversy in my rural area of Virginia at this time, I was vaguely aware of the issues in the capital city. This book helped to fill in some of the gaps of not being there as well as explain the chain of events leading up to this point - many of which were before I was even born. If you are from the right, you may not like this book. If you are middle-class and white, you might not like what you read. While the white middle-class played a major role in the transformation of Richmond, it was interesting to learn of the division within the class between "metropolitan whites" and their rural counterparts. For those that know the area, you would have to admit that Richmond has become a kind of urban "suburb" to the surrounding counties - especially Henrico County. Except for state government, law firms, and banking offices, most large retailers and shopping areas are located in the suburbs. (Department stores long abandoned downtown.) That form of economic segregation may be a subject for another author.

Every tax payer should read this book. It's an excellent explanation of the history of our nation's public school system. It's an easy read and very informative. It's not just for parents and teachers. Anyone can educate themselves on how our taxes are (or aren't) at work and take a stand for things to go differently.

I read this as a textbook for an Education class, and it is really eye opening. "Fixing" schools is a concept that gets thrown around a lot, after reading this you will have much more context about why some schools fail, and some of the few ways we could possibly fix them. Whether those fixes are

popular enough that they could be implemented is another story.

Wish ebooks had page numbers but the cost was great

The book was very factual and boring. It chronicled the educational system from the 50's to the present. The author did not spend much time talking about Freeman or T.J. I really wanted to hear about those schools and not the history of segregation in our educational system.

As a public school teacher, this book is a must read!!! Some of the reviews I read on this book I can't help think these people have NO CLUE as to what goes on in public education. I especially liked the comment from another review "he doesn't say anything about the parent attitude"!! Really?! Wow. That comment made me chuckle. What this book does do is present facts. It was an eye opener for me. This book advocates more of a way for schools to be truly desegregated. A lot of schools still flirt with the idea of segregation, and as this book chronicles, government giving more \$\$\$/title 1 money to poor under performing schools isn't the answer. After teaching in various schools, it shocks me how much money an underperforming low SES school gets from the government versus a well upper class school with no government money. (And they still outperform their poor school neighbors without the millions of dollars) Students will benefit from being integrated with each other. Integrated by social class and race. A must read for anyone and everyone concerned with kids and the public education system today.

I must disagree with the author's approach to education and diversity. While this book is well-researched and thorough, I continue to be mystified by sociological theory and a world where all neighborhoods and greater metropolitan areas are directly before or after Brown v Board. I grew up in, was educated in, and have now worked in "mixed education" for most of my entire life. Regardless of where students were born or how far they were bused - regardless of race - the students that I have known for over thirty years of my life have attended schools not isolated from or despoiled by racial or social or economic disparity. I graduated as a minority from a black high school. I teach at a community college in an area where black people and students are a slight majority. Many more of our schools and students represent random mixes of the population, but authors like Ryan don't have conclusions to support data supplied in these cases, and would not like what they find. Over the past year at my community college, a year that began with just how bad Ferguson schools were, I kept statistics on my ground zero level. Discounting internet students -

about 30% of my student population and a population I don't physically see (also a population most likely reproducing everything you see below) - here is what a year of raw data produces. For the 2014-15 year I taught: 38 white females 23 black females 37 white males 12 black males - Again, in accordance with Ryan's statements on race and disparity, this is from a population in which blacks should outnumber whites slightly. If you choose to believe along with Ryan that more black students don't compete in this "Pell grant for all who need it" atmosphere because they are isolated from opportunity, then please view the completion tallies, tallies of those who passed (the numbers above only represented those who 'began' a class): 30 white females 10 black females 26 white males 3 black males. That's a completion rate of 78% for white female, 43% for black female, 70% for white male, and 25% for black male. That's 75% for whites and 37% for blacks. And one more time: that's 56 passing whites versus 13 passing blacks in a geographical area that takes full advantage of Pell grants in an area that is about 55% black. Is this a matter of minority discrimination? Not included above was the number for Hispanic students who are first or second generation American. Despite being a much smaller number of total students, they complete classes at a much higher percentage than black students. It's time to stop making excuses and throwing money and guilt down an irredeemable hole.

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