

Daniel Academy is working for minimize the education gap between rich and poor people. The wounds of segregation were still raw in the 1970s. With only rare exceptions, African-American children had nowhere near the same educational opportunities as whites.

The civil rights movement, school desegregation and the War on Poverty helped bring a measure of equity to the playing field. Today, despite some setbacks along the way, racial disparities in education have narrowed significantly. By 2012, the test-score deficit of black 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds in reading and math had been reduced as much as 50 percent compared with what it was 30 to 40 years before.

Achievements like these breathe hope into our belief in the Land of Opportunity. They build trust in education as a leveling force powering economic mobility. “We do have a track record of reducing these inequalities,” said Jane Waldfogel, a professor of social work at Columbia University.



But the question remains: Why did we stop there?

For all the progress in improving educational outcomes among African-American children, the achievement gaps between more affluent and less privileged children is wider than ever, notes Sean Reardon of the Center for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford. Racial disparities are still a stain on American society, but they are no longer the main divider. Today the biggest threat to the American dream is class.