

Separate and Unequal

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CONTACT

Tom Koch, Vice President
PBS International
10 Guest Street
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL: +1-617-208-0735
FAX: +1-617-208-0783

jtkoch@pbs.org
pbsinternational.org

School segregation is making a comeback, sixty years after the Supreme Court declared separate schools for black and white children unconstitutional. What's behind the growing racial divide in American schools—and what's the legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*?

In *Separate and Unequal* FRONTLINE travels to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the site of one of the country's longest battles over school integration. The East Baton Rouge Parish School District was forced to desegregate its schools in 1981 after a 25-year legal fight. But now, frustrated over the district's many low-performing schools, a group of mostly white, middle-class parents and business leaders are trying to break away and form a new city with its own separate schools.

It's a controversial effort that mirrors similar breakaway movements in cities around the country that critics say are reversing hard-fought civil rights gains. If the plan succeeds in Baton Rouge, the new district is expected to be more affluent and white, and will leave behind a population of mostly black students from low-income families.

Also this hour: *Omarina's Story*, FRONTLINE's continuing examination of a groundbreaking effort to stem the dropout crisis in America's high-poverty schools. The film follows the story of Omarina Cabrera, a young girl from the Bronx. When FRONTLINE first met Omarina back in 2012 for the documentary *Middle School Moment*, she was a student at Middle School 244. She was doing poorly in school and had a tumultuous family life.

But when her teachers identified her as being at risk for dropping out, they intervened, using an experimental program based on the research of Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University. Balfanz's theory is that the make-or-break moment for preventing kids from dropping out of high school actually happens in middle school. Omarina's path has led her out of the Bronx and to an elite New England prep school, where she has now finished her sophomore year.

But Cabrera's journey has not been without challenges: she makes regular trips home to the Bronx, juggling the competing demands of her schoolwork and her sense of responsibility to her twin brother—who was not part of the intervention program. He is still in the 9th grade, and was recently arrested for carrying a knife.

CREDITS

Producer: Mary Robertson

Writers: Frank Koughan and Mary Robertson

Co-producer: Kyle Spencer

Executive Producers: Ken Druckerman and Banks Tarver

FRONTLINE Deputy Executive Producer: Raney Aronson

FRONTLINE Executive Producer: David Fanning

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