



LEXINGTON-FAYETTE URBAN COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Statement of William D. Wharton Concerning the United States Supreme Court Ruling in the Louisville and Seattle Public School Assignment Cases

The United States Supreme Court has ruled today that the Louisville and Seattle public school systems' school assignment plans impermissibly takes in account the student's race. The ruling, by a vote of 5 – 4, seems to strike down the programs, but a 5 – 4 vote seems to say that race may be used in some other limited circumstances.

Unlike the 1960s, school desegregation is no longer a Black/White paradigm. Latino and Asian American populations are growing faster than these two groups.

While we must respect the decision of the Court, it is very disturbing that at a time when the U.S. is undergoing major demographic transition, few public officials have publicly voiced the need for all groups to prepare to live in a fast-approaching multi-racial /multi-cultural society in which Whites will be in a minority and no group will constitute a majority. When you take in account our present aging population that is predominately White and our population under five (5) years of age is more than 40% non-white, this places an interesting perspective on any discussion of race and diversity.

Although the White population in the U.S. is not projected to dwindle to 50 percent until 2050, that ratio has already been reached in many of our public schools systems. In other words, our public schools are the preview of things to come.

What this ruling means to the local school system and our community is unknown at this time. What is known is the harmful effects of segregation have had on our community and the stubborn and persistent affects it still has. We also know of the continuing trend of resegregation in our public schools as the courts and public officials have retreated from the gains of the 1960's and 1970's.

In the coming days and weeks following this ruling it is our hope that our public officials and leaders in our community will reaffirm and recommit to its support for our public school system and the ideals of living in a community committed to equal opportunity for all.