

FOREWORD

At its most basic level, *Brown v. Board of Education* promised equal educational opportunity for all Americans and recognized that racially segregated schools simply cannot make good on such a promise. Yet, fifty years after the decision, *Brown's* promises seem unfulfilled to many. Poor children living in urban centers overwhelmingly attend re-segregated schools, as more affluent white families have departed for the suburbs. Methods of school funding virtually assure that wealthy districts will offer superior educational opportunities. As a result, educational opportunity for many now means the chance to attend a private school, as voucher programs and school choice further threaten the funding of many financially strapped public school districts. Studies continue to reveal persistent gaps in rates of punishment for school misconduct and in gifted program enrollments. White students have increasingly challenged race-based affirmative action programs, arguing that such programs interfere with their own right to equal educational opportunity. The Court's twin decisions in the University of Michigan cases raises important questions about the future of such programs.

Held on the campus of the University of Illinois in April 2004, the Promises to Keep?: *Brown v. Board* and Equal Educational Opportunity symposium explored the past, present, and future of *Brown*, by bringing together a distinguished group of judges, policy makers, public intellectuals, and academics. While considering the nation's challenges in delivering on *Brown's* promises, the conference examined the second-generation of school desegregation litigation, the role of same-race and same-sex schools in a pluralistic society, the challenges posed by school voucher and charter programs, the rise of segregation academies, the litigation over educational funding in the state courts, and the prospects for preserving diversity in the current environment. The *University of Illinois Law Review* is pleased to reproduce here the comments of many of the symposium's participants.

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