

Reaction to: “Where They Draw the Line: School Secessions and the Resegregation of Public Schools in the United States”

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In *Where They Draw the Line: School Secessions and the Resegregation of Public Schools in the United States*, Ayana Brown explores nationwide secession trends, inadequate justifications for these secession trends, and a possible remedy to rectify the ongoing issue of school segregation. In her note, Brown argues that in order to successfully enforce the holding of *Brown v. Board of Education*, courts must limit secession attempts and acknowledge that localism is a harmful device that has been used as a vehicle to resegregate schools post-*Brown*. Brown further argues (1) that localism is an inadequate justification for school secessions that affect students of color, (2) that courts analyzing the legality of school secessions should use the theory of destructive localism to guide their analysis, and (3) that courts should adopt a statute, similar to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, as a tool for actively policing school secessions. I agree with Brown’s third argument. However, I am not fully convinced by her first and second arguments.

First, in regard to Brown’s argument that localism is an inadequate justification for school secessions that affect students of color, Brown fails to provide sufficient evidence to support her claim that school secessions negatively affect *all* students of color. Brown provides two examples of school secessions, however, both examples only present evidence of the issues affecting *Black* students of color. Although Brown makes a valiant effort of providing evidence to support her claim, Brown fails to provide any evidence of the issues affecting students of color who are not Black, even though her note sets out to prove that school secessions affect *all* students of color.

Second, in regard to Brown’s argument that localism is an inadequate justification for school secessions that affect students of color, Brown fails to provide any evidence to support her claim that justifications for localism are inadequate because the goals of localism are questionable and often “cloak racism.” Brown provides a clear explanation of the goals of localism. However, she fails to establish a clear link between racism and localism. Brown’s failure to provide specific instances in which justifications for localism have been demonstrably questionable or racially motivated, weakens her argument that justifications for localism are inadequate. Moreover, Brown ignores the reasonable alternative explanation that justifications for localism could simply be motivated by a community’s desire to use a more efficient way to address local issues.

Last, in regard to Brown’s argument that courts analyzing the legality of school secessions should use the theory of destructive localism to guide their analysis,

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Brown's underlying claim that localism is actually "destructive localism" fails, as it relies in part on her previous, unsupported assertion that localism and racism are causally linked. The lack of substantive support for Brown's claim is further evidenced by Brown's reference to Erika W. Wilson's *The New School Segregation*, in which Wilson suggests that localism is destructive because "it acknowledges the harms that arise at the intersection between race and localism." Simply referencing another scholar's work that states that there is a connection between race and localism is not enough to bolster Brown's argument that localism is destructive. Brown's argument would have been more persuasive if she had used the foregoing evidence of the racially disparate impact of school secessions to bolster her argument. This would have established a clear connection between localism and racism, and thus would have resulted in a stronger argument for "destructive localism."

Although Brown's arguments are intriguing, by (1) failing to provide sufficient evidence of the effects of school secessions on *all* students of color, (2) failing to provide any evidence to support her claim that justifications for localism are questionable and "cloak racism," and (3) relying solely on another scholar's statement that there is a causal link between localism and racism, Brown ultimately fails to persuade us of the inadequacy of school secessions.