

# Book Notes: Science for Segregation: Race, Law, and the Case Against Brown v Board of Education, by John P. Jackson, Jr.

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*SCIENCE FOR SEGREGATION: RACE, LAW, AND THE CASE AGAINST BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION.* BY JOHN P. JACKSON, JR. NEW YORK: NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2005. Pp. xii + 291. Notes, bibliography, index. USD \$45.00 hardcover.

BY AUDREY NGO-LEE

*Science for Segregation* is a chronicle of the racist scientific and philosophical thinking that eventually propelled a group of racial scientists to assert that *Brown v. Board of Education* was wrongly decided and to lobby for it to be overturned. These segregationist scientists propagated a defensive conspiracy theory that accused “equalitarian” scientists who occupied senior positions in academic departments at major educational institutions of suppressing “the truth” about racial science. The racial scientists argued that if scientific evidence proved that blacks were inferior to whites, there was incontrovertible proof in favour of maintaining segregation in the South.

Jackson discusses how the objectivity of law and of science were at issue in *Brown*. The segregation scientists relied upon what they believed to be scientific facts to argue that segregation of whites and blacks in the South was both necessary and desirable. Science, they argued, was a politically neutral, investigative field. They criticized the U.S. Supreme Court for relying upon social science evidence produced by partisan equalitarians to find that segregation was harmful, and for dismissing the scientific evidence they had put forth on less than completely impartial grounds.

In chapter 2, Jackson delves into the roots of the conspiracy theory that pitted the minority racial anthropologists against the so-called “leftist

anthropologists.” In chapters 3 and 4, he profiles influential personalities from a group of conspiracy theorists called the Northern League, and other significant players in the fight to keep the South segregated, and summarizes the scientific research they used to support their positions. Chapters 5 and 6 explain how prominent representatives from each group joined to form the International Society for the Advancement of Ethnology and Eugenics, and how this society masterminded an unsuccessful legal challenge to *Brown*. Chapter 7 outlines the mainstream scientific community’s intellectual struggle—to define the true role of science in society and with its own claims of objectivity—that came to light in response to the racial scientists.

In the final chapter, Jackson proposes that while the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 put an end to open opposition to desegregation, the conspiracy theory, though underground, remains intact and operative today.

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