





Mr. Bell's most practical section covers alternatives to school desegregation. He will irritate liberals and union supporters by advocating experiments with vouchers, along with charter schools and single-sex education. Unfortunately, he leaves the proposals underdeveloped. Showing advanced symptoms of academic celebrity, he may be too busy to put in the long hours of contemplation or to do the digging necessary to come up with fresh, factually rich arguments to vie with Ms. Cashin's.

Charles Ogletree Jr., a professor at Harvard Law School, names Mr. Bell as a mentor and is clearly on the celebrity track with him. Like Mr. Bell, he is a brilliant lawyer, but he writes evenhandedly in "All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half-Century of Brown v. Board of Education" (W. W. Norton), more like a judge than Mr. Bell, who is content to advocate one side. Mr. Ogletree shares Ms. Cashin's concerns about black flight and, like her, takes economic divisions, including those within the black population, very seriously. The best part of his book is an invigorating memoir of his rise from poverty. He found opportunity and hope in desegregation, which balance his disappointment with Brown's unfinished business.

Mr. Ogletree gives critics of reparations a fair hearing, though he ultimately rejects their arguments. His proposal for reparations, one of many in this wide-ranging book, is his most fully developed idea — perhaps because he is preparing a related suit, on behalf of victims of the Tulsa race riot in 1921. Since the Tulsa victims are few, and since they sustained direct injuries, their case sidesteps some of the objections to reparations for slavery: slavery was perfectly legal until 1865; its victims and perpetrators are long dead; only racists think guilt is genetically transferable. (So far, the Tulsa suit does not answer the objection that, politically, reparations are a pipe dream.)

If the suit helps revive black commitment to the freedom struggle, or white support, it will revive the most elusive part of the struggle's half-century-old heyday. If not, the frustrations of the affirmative-action era may not go away so much as change form.

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