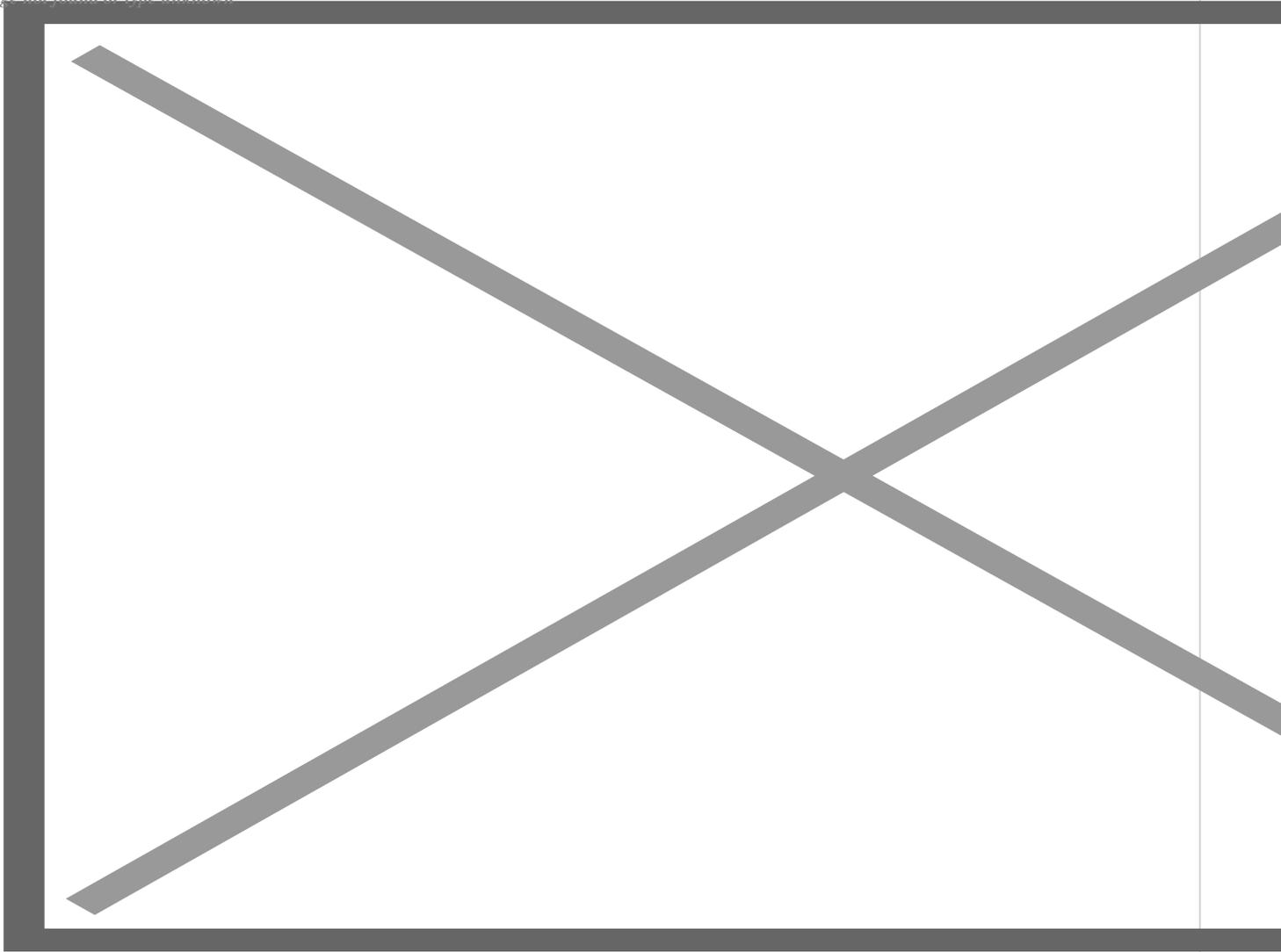


New York City school segregation perpetuates racism

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A pedestrian walks past Public School 41 following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Manhattan borough of New York City. (Photo: Reuters)

New York, March 11 (RHC)-- The largest public school system in the U.S. perpetuates racism through a flawed admission process for selective programs that favor white students, according to a lawsuit.

The sweeping suit filed by a group of New York students this week in Manhattan argues that high schools and programs continue to remain out of reach for many Black and Latino pupils. The lawsuit asserts a “rigged system” starts to sort children academically when they are as young as 4 years old through using criteria that disproportionately benefit richer and white students.

Due to this process, minority students often cannot have the opportunity to gain access to more selective programs, from elementary to high school, with the result that they get relegated to failing schools that aggravate existing inequities, the lawsuit contends.

The complaint calls on a judge to order the school system to stop using its current admissions screening process for intensely competitive selective programs. “Racism thrives in New York City through its school system,” Mark Rosenbaum of the pro bono law firm Public Counsel said at a news conference.

Rosenbaum called the case “the first lawsuit of its kind in the nation: to secure for the children of New York City the constitutional right to an anti-racist education as an integral part of a sound and basic education.” Rosenbaum is one of the several lawyers, including prominent civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who represent the students.

The city’s public school system, which is the country’s largest with around 1 million students, has long been viewed as deeply segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines.

Approximately three-quarters of Black and Latino students attend schools that have less than 10% white students, whereas over a third of white students go to schools with majority white populations, data collected by the City Council show.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, who has once attempted in vain to eliminate the admissions exam for elite specialized high schools, agreed at a news conference that the admissions are “broken.”

In a statement, Danielle Filson, a spokeswoman for the city’s education department, noted the de Blasio administration has recently made some changes. “This administration has taken bold, unprecedented steps to advance equity in our admissions policies,” she said. “Our persistent work to drive equity for New York City families is ongoing, and we will review the suit.” The lawsuit, however, argued those changes do not go far enough to resolve the problem.

In addition to admissions criteria, the lawsuit also says that because of the school system’s faulty curriculum, students of color learn that “civilization is equated with whiteness” and that history is taught from a Eurocentric point of view.

Although the school system is majority Black and Latino, most teachers and administrators are white, the lawsuit adds.

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