In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a 5–4 verdict in the case of Milliken v. Bradley, thereby blocking the state of Michigan from merging the Detroit public school system with those of the surrounding suburbs. This decision effectively walled off underprivileged students in many American cities, condemning them to a system of racial and class segregation and destroying their chances of obtaining a decent education.

In Hope and Despair, Gerald Grant compares two cities—his hometown of Syracuse, New York, and Raleigh, North Carolina—in order to examine the consequences of the nation’s ongoing educational inequities. The school system in Syracuse is a slough of despair, the one in Raleigh a beacon of hope. Grant argues that the chief reason for Raleigh’s educational success is the integration by social class that occurred when the city voluntarily merged with the surrounding suburbs in 1976 to create the Wake County Public School System. By contrast, the primary cause of Syracuse’s decline has been the growing class and racial segregation of its metropolitan schools, which has left the city mired in poverty.

Hope and Despair is a compelling study of urban social policy that combines field research and historical narrative in lucid and engaging prose. The result is an ambitious portrait—sometimes disturbing, often inspiring—of two cities that exemplify our nation’s greatest educational challenges, as well as a passionate exploration of the potential for school reform that exists for our urban schools today.

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My Personal Review:
This book gives an engaging historical account of how government policies led to segregation in Americas cities - which resulted in failing schools with
high concentrations of poverty - and how one school system is addressing the problem by attempting to balance schools for socioeconomic diversity.

The author has managed to make the book an interesting read by weaving in details of his own family's life in Syracuse. Because I live in Raleigh/Wake County, I found the section on Raleigh's long history (dating back to the Civil War) of progressive racial integration policies fascinating, and it helped me put into proper perspective the battle that is currently being waged between those who support our school systems diversity policy, and those who do not.

This book is enlightening and well-written. If you have any interest in learning more about how our society can begin to tackle the problem of poverty, you will enjoy reading this book!

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh by Gerald Grant - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!