

Brown V. Board of Education

Brown v. Board of Education is a famous court case in which the Supreme Court overturned the infamous 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson which had instituted the "separate but equal" policy which had allowed racial segregation to become entrenched in society. But in Brown, "separate but equal" public schools for black and white children were ruled unconstitutional. The case was actually a consolidation of cases from Kansas, South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia and Washington D.C. These cases were consolidated because each case was seeking a remedy for poor conditions in the segregated black schools.

What differentiated The Supreme Court's *Brown* decision was that it was not based on the gross inequalities in facilities and other tangible factors affecting education that had featured in previous desegregation cases. Brown's ruling emphasized that even if factors like facilities, teachers and supplies were equal, the act of being separated itself was inherently unequal, violating the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment.

The Brown course was one of the catalyzing events of the civil rights movement. It inspired education reform all across the U.S., as people could now point to the case as legal justification for challenging segregation in all aspects of society. Integration of schools after the court decision took time, court orders, and active law enforcement of federal civil rights.

1. The word *instituted* means:

- A. put into place
- B. violated
- C. finished

2. A "tangible" factor is something that you can:

- A. imagine
- B. see and measure
- C. prove in court

3. If something is "inherent" then it is:

- A. really
- B. not exactly
- C. existing in something as a permanent attribute

4. *Entrenched* means:

- A. on the surface
- B. dug in
- C. no longer in effect

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right that must be made available on equal terms.

— Chief Justice Earl Warren, Brown v. Board of Education

