

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 1849** **Massachusetts** Supreme Court rules that segregated schools are permissible under the state's constitution. U.S. Supreme Court later uses this case to support the "separate but equal" doctrine.
- 1850s** With Dred Scott decision, Supreme Court upholds denial of citizenship to African Americans and rules that descendants of slaves are "so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."
- 1860s** Pres. Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in Southern states.
- U.S. Congress prohibits Native Americans from being taught in their own languages.
- Civil War ends; 13th Amendment is enacted to abolish slavery.
- 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law; citizenship extended to African Americans.
- 1870s** Congress passes Civil Rights Act of 1875, banning racial discrimination in public accommodations.
- Federal officials begin separating Native American children from their families and force them to attend boarding schools off the reservation.
- 1890s** **Louisiana** passes first Jim Crow law requiring separate accommodations for Whites and Blacks.
- Supreme Court authorizes segregation in Plessy v. Ferguson, finding **Louisiana's** "separate but equal" law constitutional.
- Supreme Court allows **Georgia** to levy taxes on black and white citizens alike while providing a public school for white children only.
- 1940s** Federal appeals court strikes down segregated schooling for Mexican American and white students in **Orange County, California**. The verdict prompts **California** Governor Earl Warren to repeal a state law calling for segregation of Native American and Asian American students.
- 1950s** Supreme Court hears oral arguments in Brown v. Board of Education of **Topeka, Kansas**.
- In a unanimous opinion, Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education overturns Plessy and declares that separate schools are "inherently unequal."
- Court rules that federal government is under same duty as states, and must desegregate **Washington DC** schools.
- Between 1955 and 1960, federal judges will hold more than 200 school desegregation hearings.
- Tennessee** Governor Frank Clement calls in National Guard after white mobs attempt to block the desegregation of a high school.
- More than 1,000 paratroopers from 101st Airborne Division and federalized Arkansas National Guard protect nine black students integrating Central High School in **Little Rock, Arkansas**.
- 25,000 young people march in Washington, D.C., in support of integration.
- Prince Edward County, Virginia** closes public schools rather than integrate. White students attend private academies; black students do not return to class until 1963, when Ford Foundation funds private black schools. Supreme Court orders county to reopen schools on a desegregated basis in 1964.
- 1960s** In **New Orleans**, federal marshals shielded Ruby Bridges, Gail St. Etienne, Leona Tate and Tessie Prevost from angry crowds as they enrolled in school.

For the first time, a small number of black students in **Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana** and **Mississippi** attend public elementary and secondary schools with white students.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 is adopted, authorizing federal government to file school desegregation cases and prohibiting discrimination in programs, including schools, receiving federal financial assistance.

Rev. Bruce Klunder is killed protesting construction of a new segregated school in **Cleveland, Ohio**.

Supreme Court orders states to dismantle segregated school systems "root and branch" in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia*.

1970s In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina* Board of Education, Supreme Court approves busing, magnet schools, compensatory education and other tools as appropriate remedies to overcome the role of residential segregation in perpetuating racially segregated schools.

In **North Carolina**, Supreme Court refuses to allow public school systems to avoid desegregation by creating new, mostly or all-white "splinter districts."

Supreme Court finds **Denver** school board intentionally segregated Mexican American and black students from white students.

Supreme Court requires **Boston Public Schools** to implement desegregation order, which faces massive, violent resistance from several white neighborhoods. White parents withdraw their children from school, stone school buses. State troopers are brought in to ensure safety of children.

Non-English-speaking Chinese students file suit against **San Francisco** Unified School District for failing to provide instruction to those with limited English proficiency. Court rules that failure to do so violates Title VI's prohibition of national origin, race or color discrimination in school districts receiving federal funds.

1980s For the first time, a federal court finds in **Norfolk, Virginia** that once a school district meets certain factors, it can be released from its desegregation plan and returned to local control.

School integration reaches all-time high; almost 45% of black students in U.S. attend majority-white schools.

1990s Emphasizing that court orders are not intended "to operate in perpetuity," Supreme Court makes it easier for formerly segregated school systems to be released from court order. **Oklahoma City** school system abandons its desegregation efforts and returns to neighborhood schools.

In *Missouri v. Jenkins*, Supreme Court sets a new goal for desegregation plans: the return of schools to local control, emphasizing that judicial remedies were intended to be "limited in time and extent."

2000s White parents in **Charlotte, North Carolina** schools successfully seek an end to the desegregation process and a bar to the use of race in making student assignments.

A study by Harvard's Civil Rights Project finds that schools were more segregated in 2000 than in 1970 when busing for desegregation began.

In *Parents Involved*, the Supreme Court finds voluntary school integration plans in **Seattle** unconstitutional, paving the way for contemporary school segregation to escalate.

Sources:

Story of American Public Education, Master Timeline, PBS; and Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org