

Historical Investigation into the Desegregation of the Armed Forces and its effect on the Civil Rights Movement

Museum Connection: Labor that Built a Nation

Purpose: In this lesson students will examine various sources in order to determine how the post-World War II desegregation of the Armed Forces influenced the Modern Civil Rights movement.

Course: United States History, American Government

Time Frame: 1-2 class periods

Correlation to State Standards:

United States History State Curriculum:

5.0 CONTENT STANDARD: HISTORY- Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs and themes; organize patterns and events; analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

Expectation 5.4: Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from 1946-1968.

3. Analyze the major developments, controversies, and consequences of the Civil Rights Movement between 1946 and 1968 (5.4.3).

American Government State Curriculum

1.0 CONTENT STANDARD: POLITICAL SCIENCE – Students will understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of authority, power, and influence, with particular emphasis on the democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens.

CLG Expectation 1.2: The student will evaluate how the United States government has maintained a balance between protecting rights and maintaining order.

3. The student will evaluate the impact of governmental decisions and actions that have affected the rights of individuals and groups in American society and/or have affected maintaining order and/or safety (1.2.3).

Objective:

- a. Describe the purpose, limitations, and impact of some executive Orders in maintaining order and safety for citizens.

**Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards
Framework Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies**

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to and understanding of the text as a whole.

CCR Anchor Standard #3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

RH.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

**Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards
Framework Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies**

CCR Anchor Standard #1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

WHST. 11-12.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

1a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Objective:

Students will evaluate the impact of the desegregation of the Armed Forces on the lives of African Americans through the examination and analysis of primary and secondary resources.

Vocabulary and Concepts:

Desegregation	the process of ending the separation (segregation) of racial groups.
Executive Order	legally binding order given by the President to Executive Branch agencies to implement or execute laws of the land.
Jim Crow	state and local laws enacted in southern and

The Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

	border states of the United States largely between 1876 and 1965 that mandated segregation in all public facilities and modes of transportation, with supposedly “separate but equal” facilities available to African Americans.
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Materials:

For the Teacher:

Teacher Resource Sheet 1

For the Students:

- Student Resource Sheet 1: President Clinton’s Speech
- Student Resource Sheet 2: Individual Analysis Graphic Organizer
- Student Resource Sheet 3: Group Analysis Graphic Organizer
- Student Resource Sheet 4: Executive Order 9981
- Student Resource Sheet 5: Letter from Americans Veterans Committee
- Student Resource Sheet 6: Letter from Stewart A. Street
- Student Resource Sheet 7: Letter from Assistant Secretary of Defense
- Student Resource Sheet 8: “South in Turmoil over Sweatt Rule”
- Student Resource Sheet 9: *Brown v. Board of Education*
- Student Resource Sheet 10: Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Student Resource Sheet 11: Create an Opening Statement!

Resources:

Publications:

***Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South.* Edited by Neil McMillan (University of Mississippi Press)**

Web Sites:

- <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/gallery.cgi>
- <http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/09/0928001r.jpg>
- http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1951/daf50-3.htm
- http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1951/daf212-1.htm
- http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1953/daf424-1.htm

Historical Background:

From the time Africans first set foot on American soil, most of them were indentured servants and slaves and thus were prevented from becoming members of mainstream society. In *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) the U.S. Supreme Court re-affirmed that

African Americans were not citizens of the United States and therefore not entitled to any protection or rights accorded to citizens by the U.S. Constitution. It wasn't until segregated military units were created in 1862 during the Civil War that black men were allowed to enlist in the U.S. Army. As a result of the Civil War and the push for equal rights afterward that, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were adopted. The 13th ended chattel slavery in the U.S.; the 14th made African Americans citizens of the U.S., prohibiting states from denying equal protection; and the 15th granted universal suffrage to men (including black men). These advances, however, were short lived as southern states passed laws and implemented Black Codes, with northern support, that undermined African American civil rights and black men's voting rights

By 1877, the Democratic Party had regained power in the South and implemented policies that denied African Americans many of their newly-won civil rights. A variety of measures were used to deny voting privileges to African American men, including poll taxes, literacy tests and even racial violence. Encouraged, Southern legislators carried their measures to extremes with the creation of Black Codes and "Jim Crow" laws. In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of segregated railroad cars. These actions included passing legislation that required separate drinking fountains and waiting rooms, and prohibited interracial marriage. A largely segregated society was created that separated blacks and whites in public facilities and schools. By World War Two, the South, and some parts of the North, had once again become fully segregated.

After 1869, segregation was also the norm in the United States Armed Forces. This policy remained intact through the Spanish American War and World War One. It was not seriously challenged until World War Two. The NAACP and other African American leaders pointed out the hypocrisy of African Americans, who themselves were victims of racism, fighting against similar policies in Nazi Germany.

Military necessity helped break down racial barriers. Due to a lack of fighting men, African American troops were asked to fight alongside white troops beginning with the Battle of the Bulge. Despite the fact that they served in separate platoons, this experience displayed the abilities of African American soldiers and helped encourage the Army to break with its segregationist policies.

In 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, directing the US Armed Forces to desegregate as quickly as possible. By the end of the Korean War in 1953, the US military was almost completely integrated.

Lesson Development:

Motivation:

Students will read President Clinton’s speech commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the integration of the armed forces (**Student Resource Sheet 1**). Students will then respond to the questions at the end

Teacher Resource Sheet 1: President William (Bill) Clinton’s speech

Activities:

1. Read the narrative to the class, stressing the focus question at the end.

From the time Africans first set foot on American soil, most of them were indentured servants and slaves and thus were prevented from becoming members of mainstream society. In *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) the U.S. Supreme Court re-affirmed that African Americans were not citizens of the United States and therefore not entitled to any protection or rights accorded to citizens by the U.S. Constitution. It wasn’t until segregated military units were created in 1862 during the Civil War that black men were allowed to enlist in the U.S. Army. As a result of the Civil War and the push for equal rights afterward that, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were adopted. The 13th ended chattel slavery in the U.S.; the 14th made African Americans citizens of the U.S., prohibiting states from denying equal protection; and the 15th granted universal suffrage to men (including black men). These advances, however, were short lived as southern states passed laws and implemented Black Codes, with northern support, that undermined African American civil rights and black men’s voting rights

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Focus Question: **To what extent was Truman’s executive order to desegregate the United States Armed Forces a turning point for African Americans?**

2. In order to answer the focus question you will examine several documents independently (**Student Resource Sheets 4-10**). Analyze each document by answering the following questions on your graphic organizer (**Student Resource Sheet 2**):

1. How do I know this information is reliable?
2. When was this document written? Who wrote it? What was its purpose?
3. Explain the author’s point of view.
4. How can this document help me answer the focus question

3. Now that the documents have been analyzed, students will have the opportunity to discuss the documents and the focus question with the other students in their groups. As they discuss interpretations of the documents, they will need to cite evidence for their opinions. Multiple interpretations can emerge and may or may not be accepted by all. Write group responses in the appropriate section of the graphic organizer (**Student Resource Sheet 3**).

Note: As an alternative to having students complete two organizers for each source (one for individual analysis and one for group analysis), teachers may wish to have the students conduct their initial analysis of the sources in small group discussions, making sure that students understand that they are likely to develop a different perspective on each source than their peers. If this method is followed, provide each *group* of no more than 2-3 students with a single copy of the primary sources and each *student* with his/her own source analysis organizer.

Assessment:

Once student historians complete their research, they will formulate a thesis that answers the focus question. Each student’s summary should answer the focus question below and be supported with details from the documents.

The Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

Focus Question: **To what extent was Truman’s executive order to desegregate the United States Armed Forces a turning point for African Americans?**

Describe what society was like before and after the executive order. Use the sources in your document pack to support your answer.

Thoughtful Application:

Students will research other Executive Orders. In a well-developed essay, each student will evaluate the influence of one of the researched Executive Orders on United States history.

Lesson Extensions:

- Visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. View military exhibits of African American troops in Maryland. Identify examples of African Americans participating in the US military. How did African Americans soldiers contribute to the Civil War?
- Research Frederick Douglass’s role in enlisting black soldiers in the Union Armies during the Civil War.

- View the film *Proud* about Black soldiers serving on the USS Mason.
www.proudtthemovie.com

- The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
 - *Journey in History Theater* provides living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum’s gallery.
 - Take the theme tour, *The Fight for Justice* and examine the contributions made by Maryland African Americans in the battle for equality from Jim Crow through the Civil Rights Movement.
 - Contact group reservations for schedule updates.

Student Resource Sheet 1

President Bill Clinton's Speech, July 26, 1998

On July 26, 1948, with the stroke of a pen, President Harry Truman changed the course of American history. By signing Executive Order 9981, "Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services," he officially declared "there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin." His action reflected the growing realization by more and more Americans that our Nation could no longer reconcile segregation with the values we had fought a war to uphold.

The United States had emerged from World War II with a new understanding of the importance of racial and ethnic diversity to our Nation's strength and unity. Nazi racism and the horrors of the concentration camps shocked Americans and revealed the true dangers of prejudice and discrimination. Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens from many different ethnic and racial backgrounds served and sacrificed in the war. The valor of segregated African American soldiers -- from the Tuskegee Airmen and the 761st Tank Battalion to individuals like General Benjamin O. Davis and General Daniel "Chappie" James -- could not be ignored. These heroes risked their lives for our country overseas, and yet still faced discrimination here at home. By signing Executive Order 9981, President Truman set America on the path to right this wrong.

We have come a long way in the subsequent 50 years, and the United States Armed Forces have been in the vanguard of our crusade to abolish discrimination in our society. Today our men and women in uniform represent so many aspects of the diversity that has made our Nation great, and they have proved that different people, sharing the same values, can work together as a mighty force for peace and freedom at home and around the world. We still have much to accomplish in our journey to become a society that respects our differences, celebrates our diversity, and unites around our shared values, but we should proudly mark the milestones on that journey and rejoice in the progress we have made thus far.

1. What might President Clinton be referring to when he says that "we still have much to accomplish in our journey to become a society that respects our differences...?"
2. Why did President Truman order the U.S. Armed Forces to be integrated?

Student Resource Sheet 2

Individual Analysis

	How do I know this is reliable information?	When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?	Explain the author's point of view	How can this document help me answer the focus question?
Student Resource Sheet 4				
Student Resource Sheet 5				
Student Resource Sheet 6				
Student Resource Sheet 7				

Student Resource Sheet 2

Individual Analysis

	How do I know this is reliable information?	When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?	Explain the author's point of view	How can this document help me answer the focus question?
Student Resource Sheet 8				
Student Resource Sheet 9				
Student Resource Sheet 10				

Student Resource Sheet 3

Group Analysis

	How do we know this is reliable information?	When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?	Explain the author's point of view	How can this document help us answer the focus question?
Student Resource Sheet 4				
Student Resource Sheet 5				
Student Resource Sheet 6				
Student Resource Sheet 7				

Student Resource Sheet 3

Group Analysis

	How do we know this is reliable information?	When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?	Explain the author's point of view	How can this document help us answer the focus question?
Student Resource Sheet 8				
Student Resource Sheet 9				
Student Resource Sheet 10				

Student Resource Sheet 4

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981

Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces.

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense:

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.
2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.
3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into the rules, procedures and practices of the Armed Services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.
4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.
5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.
6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

Harry Truman
The White House
July 26, 1948

Student Resource Sheet 5

Letter from Americans Veterans Committee

HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY
Official File



93-13

American Veterans Committee (AVC)

INCORPORATED

TO ACHIEVE A MORE DEMOCRATIC AND PROSPEROUS AMERICA AND A MORE STABLE WORLD

National Offices • 1751 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W. • Washington 9, D. C. • North 0581

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November 9, 1951

The Honorable Harry S. Truman
President of the United States
The White House
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Mr. President

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received from General ^{Anthony C.} McAuliffe, Assistant Chief of Staff, Department of the Army, and a copy of my reply. This correspondence relates to the elimination of segregation in the Army. *x 12-55-13 this*

All the members of the American Veterans Committee were delighted when you issued your Executive Order to eliminate segregation in the armed forces, and we are very much concerned with the failure of the Army, after three years, to carry out this order.

Yours very truly,
Michael Straight
Michael Straight
National Chairman *x 1142*

file
B-FILE

National Corporate Offices, R-2009, 15 William Street, N. Y. 5, N. Y.

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1951/daf212-1.htm

The Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

Student Resource Sheet 6

Letter from Stewart A. Street

2543 15th Street, NW,
Washington 9, D.C.
January 2, 1951

President of the United States
White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Truman;

My entry into military service for the second time is drawing near. During my enlistment in the last war, I encountered a great deal of segregation, both on military bases and on liberty. It is my understanding that segregation in the armed forces has been abolished, but nothing has been done to assure service men that they will not be segregated while on leave.

Perhaps the men (including yourself) who run this government do not realize the significance of the present conflict in Korea. It is not a mere communistic effort to combat democracy, but it is a racial war to push the whites out of Asia. The problem of racial conflict probably does not enter your mind, except at such time when you are immediately presented with a civil rights situation. But it does enter my mind, not only in brief moments, but twenty-four hours a day. You see Mr. Truman, I am a Negro.

I have been living in this capital of democracy for three and a half years while attending Howard University. In June I am scheduled to graduate and to seek my professional ambitions. But my ambitions will have to be cut short because of your mobilization plans. Yes, I am one of the thousands of Negroes who constitute part of your reserve forces.

While dwelling in this capital of democracy, I have been confronted with every type of segregation that it is possible to conceive of. Your democracy

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has failed and has done so in the shadows of its own essence. It is not my desire to serve in the armed forces, giving my life if necessary, and to be subjected to the most depriving segregational policies existing in any capital in the world.

As a veteran, as a citizen, as a Negro, and as an American I urge you to use your resources to abolish segregation of any type against any member of the armed forces in the United States and in foreign continents as will.

Sincerely,

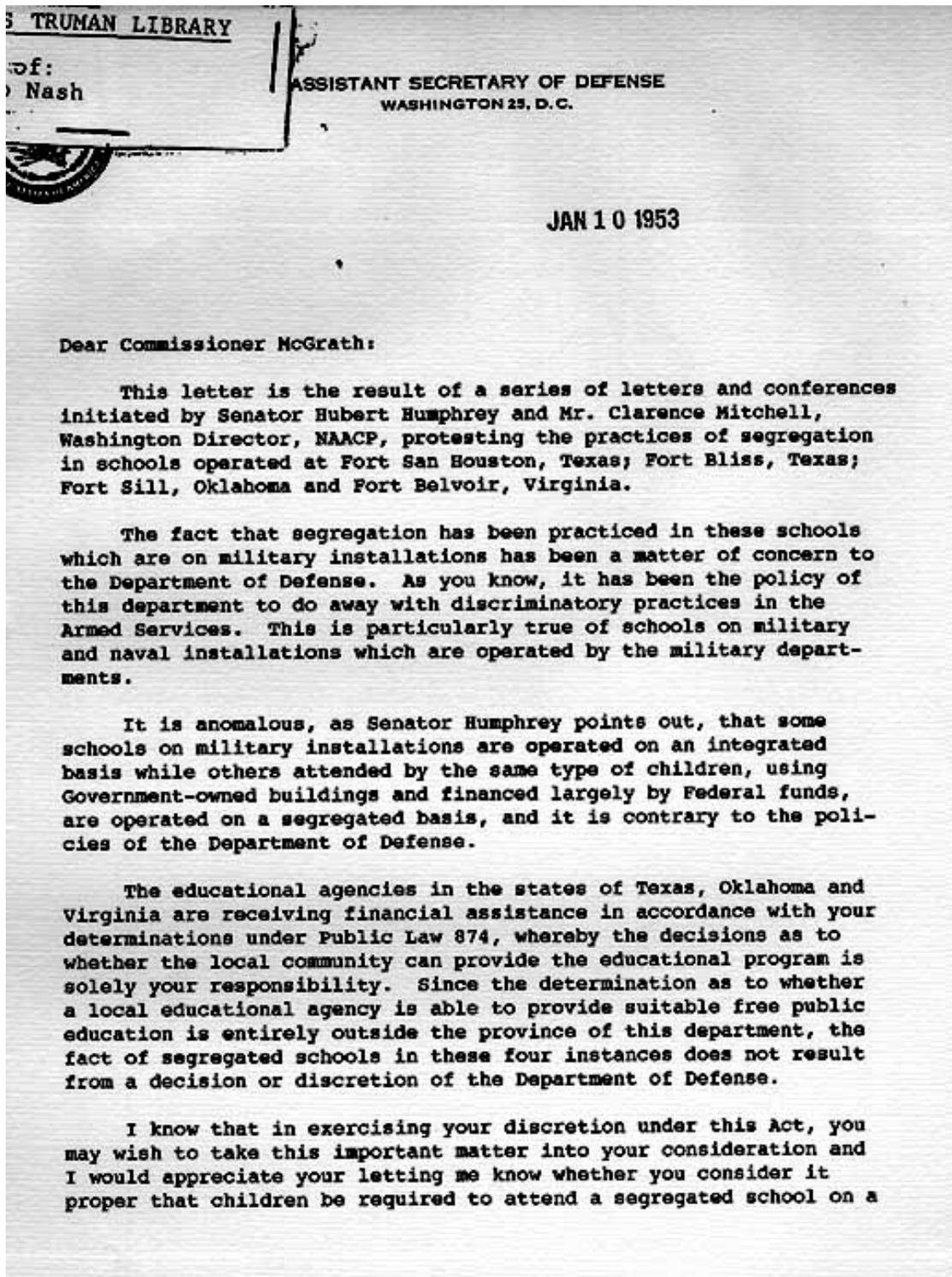
Stewart A. Street

Stewart A. Street

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1951/daf50-3.htm

Student Resource Sheet 7

Letter from Assistant Secretary of Defense



http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/desegregation/large/1953/daf424-1.htm

The Maryland State Department of Education and Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

Student Resource Sheet 8

“SOUTH IN TURMOIL OVER SWEATT RULE”

Austin American, June 6, 1950

ATLANTA, June 9 (AP) Governor Herman Talmadge of Georgia shouted defiance Monday in first southern reaction to Supreme Court decisions hitting at racial segregation.

Others hailed the opinions as putting the south "in the parade of democracy."

The court ruled that a Negro law student must be admitted to the all-white University of Texas because separate facilities for Negroes there are not equal.

It said white and Negro students in graduate work at the University of Oklahoma cannot be separated. And it ruled out racial segregation on railroad dining cars.

Declared Talmadge: "As long as I am governor, Negroes will not be admitted to white schools.

"The line is drawn. The threats that have been held over the head of the South for four years are now pointed like a dagger ready to be plunged into the very heart of southern tradition."

W. A. Folkes managing editor of the Atlanta Daily World, Negro newspaper, said the decisions "certainly will be a means by which the South will join in the parade of democracy."

And George Mitchell, director of the Southern Regional Council, said "the Supreme Court made it perfectly clear that unequal facilities are illegal. It remains the South's duty to provide equality. The right way to do that will be for our institutions of higher learning to welcome qualified Negroes who seek admittance."

The council is an inter-racial organization of southerners formed to promote equal opportunities.

The decisions found the South with many glaring educational in-equalities. Not a single southern state supports a Negro medical school. A Ph. D. degree is not available at any southern Negro university.

In Georgia alone, state school Superintendent M. D. Collins estimated it would cost \$100,000,000 to equalize Negro public schools.

In a Maryland case, a state court already has held that sending Negroes to out-of-state schools does not solve the problem. It held that equal, facilities must be provided within each state.

In New York, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People issued the following statement:

"THE SUPREME COURT decisions emphasize once more that the courts of the land are far in advance of the Congress in recognizing the legal and moral obligations of our government to grant civil rights to all citizens regardless of race, creed or color.

"...segregated educational facilities on the graduate and professional levels have been declared not to be equality within the meaning of the 14th Amendment. This is a great step forward."

Student Resource Sheet 9

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)
MR. CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN delivered the opinion of the Court.

In each of the cases, minors of the Negro race, through their legal representatives, seek the aid of the courts in obtaining admission to the public schools of their community on a nonsegregated basis. In each instance, they had been denied admission to schools attended by white children under laws requiring or permitting segregation according to race. This segregation was alleged to deprive the plaintiffs of the equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. In each of the cases other than the Delaware case, a three-judge federal district court denied relief to the plaintiffs on the so-called "separate but equal" doctrine announced by this Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Under that doctrine, equality of treatment is accorded when the races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though these facilities be separate. In the Delaware case, the Supreme Court of Delaware adhered to that doctrine, but ordered that the plaintiffs be admitted to the white schools because of their superiority to the Negro schools.

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. 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 which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Student Resource Sheet 10

Civil Rights Act of 1964

AN ACT

To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Civil Rights Act of 1964".

Student Resource Sheet 11

Create an Opening Statement!

Directions: Convince a jury of your peers. Draft an opening statement. Use evidence from the documents to support your response.



Truman's executive order to desegregate the United States Armed Forces WAS a turning point for African Americans.

Truman's executive order to desegregate the United States Armed Forces WAS NOT a turning point for African Americans.
