

Case Summary – An Example

Title of Case: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (must always be italicized or underlined)

Petitioner: Brown (the side that is appealing their case to the SCOTUS)

Respondent: Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

Decided by the: Warren Court (Courts are known by the last name of the Chief Justice)

Decided on: May 17, 1954

Background of the Case (doesn't have to be this long)

In 1950 the Topeka NAACP, led by McKinley Burnett, set out to organize a legal challenge to an 1879 State law that permitted racially segregated elementary schools in certain cities based on population. For Kansas this would become the 12th case filed in the state focused on ending segregation in public schools. The local NAACP assembled a group of 13 parents who agreed to be plaintiffs on behalf of their 20 children. Following direction from legal counsel they attempted to enroll their children in segregated white schools and all were denied. Topeka operated eighteen neighborhood schools for white children, while African American children had access to only four schools. In February of 1951 the Topeka NAACP filed a case on their behalf. Although this was a class action it was named for one of the plaintiffs Oliver Brown.

Part(s) of the Constitution in Question: Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment

Previous Case (if any) in Question: *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Usually, you will not need this line.)

Question(s) Presented to the Court

Does the segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race deprive the minority children of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment?

Decision of the Court

Yes. Despite the equalization of the schools by "objective" factors, intangible issues foster and maintain inequality. Racial segregation in public education has a detrimental effect on minority children because it is interpreted as a sign of inferiority. The long-held doctrine that separate facilities were permissible provided they were equal was rejected. Separate but equal is inherently unequal in the context of public education.

Unanimous (Your case could be 5-4, 6-3, 7-2, or 8-1.)

Significance of the Case

The *Brown* decision dismantled the legal basis for racial segregation in schools and other public facilities. By declaring that the discriminatory nature of racial segregation ... "violates the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees all citizens equal protection of the laws," *Brown v. Board of Education* laid the foundation for shaping future national policies regarding civil rights. (Sometimes, you will also need to include how the Dissenting Opinion has become significant.)

Classifications

civil rights, education, federalism, segregation, discrimination

Most Popular Quotations from the Case

"Separate but equal is inherently unequal in the context of public education." -- Unanimous Decision

(Which Decision are you quoting? Unanimous, Majority, Dissenting, Concurring)