

# An end to brown v. board of education essay

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



In the article “ Don’t Mourn Brown v. Board of Education,” Juan Williams argues that the court case that ended the doctrine of separate but equal educational facilities in the United States failed to achieve its primary purpose of providing equal educational opportunity for all children, regardless of race, and that the time for its enforcement is past. While Williams notes correctly that segregation still exists in American schools, thus supporting his contention that the purpose of the court ruling was not achieved, in other ways the case accomplished many worthy goals albeit more as a by-product of the court ruling. However, Brown v. Board of Education has largely reached the end of its shelf life and so no longer needs to be enforced.

Anyone who spends time in enough public schools in the United States can attest that some racial segregation still exists. As someone who lives in a large metropolitan area that consists of several school districts, I can confirm that many of the schools in my city are largely white, while some are largely African-American. Others are largely Hispanic. Almost all, though, contain a mix of races and ethnicities. On the other hand, none has a completely equal mix of races and ethnicities; the schools here are not one-third Caucasian, one-third African-American, and one-third Hispanic. As Williams pointed out, current segregation in public schools is no longer an outcome of a racist doctrine to allow only white children to attend one school while African-American children must attend a separate school; racial segregation occurs now as a by-product of class segregation. Minorities are over-represented in poverty-stricken groups, and so schools in poorer sections and districts of this city tend to have more minority students. On the other hand, wealthier

school districts tend to be populated by predominantly Caucasian families, and so the better-funded schools skew Caucasian. Also, Brown did not fully achieve its goal because of “white flight;” as stated by Reber, “Within a decade after plan implementation, these plan-induced reductions in white enrollment offset about one-third of the initial reductions in segregation” (560).

Williams does neglect one benefit of Brown v. Board of Education, though. Prior to Brown, an African-American child living in a wealthy, mostly Caucasian neighborhood would still have been required, in many states, to attend a school designed specifically for African-American students. The difference between 1954 and 2013 is extremely apparent in such a situation; in 2013, only the most ardent racists would object to the African-American child attending the same school as every other child in the neighborhood. Because of years of forced racial desegregation, most U. S. students today simply cannot conceive of being told they cannot attend their neighborhood school because of their race. Blatant racial segregation in education no longer exists as an option for these students, much less as the default position; it is an idea outside their box, so to speak. These students and their parents understand they may attend schools that do not perform as well as, or that are not as well maintained as schools in other districts, but they also understand the primary reason for the disparity is the tax base of their local district.

In the discussion of the history of Brown, Williams mentions an interview he conducted with Thurgood Marshall, in which Marshall stated his own goal in supporting the case was that if white and black children were forced to

attend the same schools, then money would be spent on those schools to ensure they met the standards white parents demanded for their children. Williams does not adequately explore this goal, which needs more examination. I can provide at least anecdotal evidence that Marshall was correct in his assumption. I grew up in a state known for its racist attitudes but was fortunate enough to have parents who did not exemplify those attitudes. By the time our city schools had stalled desegregation as long as they could, I was just about to enter the 10th grade. Our city was fairly small, and so there was one predominantly white high school and one predominantly black high school. My mother was appointed to the committee charged with drawing up the desegregation plan for our city schools to be submitted to court for approval. As the committee met, she discussed with me what their plans were for desegregating the high schools; they decided that all students in grade 10 would attend the previously black high school; and all students in grades 11 and 12 would attend the previously white high school.

On the first day of 10th grade, many parents of white students, my mother included, came to the formerly black high school to inspect the school their son or daughter would be attending. On that day and over the next two months, any delusions these parents had that the school facilities had been “separate but equal” disappeared. The buildings were in poor repair; classrooms used obsolete and dangerous heaters; bathrooms were antiquated. As Marshall had predicted, the parents demanded and got changes in the school budget to improve the school. Going forward, allocations for school budgets were not based on whether a school was in a

black neighborhood or white neighborhood; allocations were based on total enrollment and need. It may be pointless to speculate what would have happened in this school district had Brown never been implemented, but nevertheless I firmly believe that while those budget inequities would ultimately have been resolved, it would have taken much longer. Although my evidence, as stated, is anecdotal, it corresponds with similar experiences across the country in states that implemented court-ordered desegregation. Former U. S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige offers an excellent summary of the impact of Brown: “ Because of the Brown decision, we are a stronger, more equitable, more just nation. But we have a long way to go before we become as equitable and just as our constitutional heritage demands and our country deserves” (8).

Despite the good that Brown has yielded, its time has passed. Major inequities in the quality of education still exist, and largely along racial and ethnicity lines that mirror socioeconomic lines. Brown cannot solve the issues of economic and political differences. It cannot guarantee that a child in 2nd grade in a poor rural school will receive as good an education as another child in 2nd grade in a wealthy suburban school. It cannot guarantee that a 10th grader in one state that forces “ abstinence only” so-called sex education on its students will have the same knowledge about human sexuality as a 10th grader in another state that requires a fact-based sex education curriculum. Brown v. Board of Education created a bridge between the problems of blatant racism in education and a more complicated set of problems about the overall quality of education and inequities based on socioeconomic standing. Now that we as a society in the U. S. have crossed

that particular bridge, it is time to blow it up and build another, better bridge to an education system that provides high quality education to all students.

## **Works Cited**

Paige, Rod. " The Legacy of Brown Versus Board of Education." *Society* 41. 5 (2004): 7-11. Web. 27 Jan. 2013.

Reber, Sarah J. " Court-Ordered Desegregation." *Journal of Human Resources* 40. 3 (2005): 559-590. *Business Source Complete*. Web. 27 Jan. 2013.

Williams, Juan. " Don't Mourn Brown v. Board of Education." *Nytimes. com* (29 June 2007). Web.