

Law School Case Briefs

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Brown v. Board of Education

347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Keyword Subject

Separate but Equal, Education

Facts

Segregation in public education, under separate-but-equal laws.
Brown challenged the constitutionality of segregation in public schools.

Procedural History

District court upheld segregation under *Plessy v. Ferguson*

Issue

Does segregation violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment?

Holding: Yes

Principal

Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal

Reasoning

Segregation generates a feeling of inferiority, harmful to education

Separate Opinions

Concurring opinions emphasized psychological harm

Plessy v. Ferguson

163 U.S. 537 (1896)

Keyword Subject

Separate but Equal, Train

Facts

Plessy, a man of mixed race, sat in a “whites only” train car and was arrested under Louisiana’s segregation laws.

Procedural History

State courts upheld the conviction; Plessy appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Issue

Does state-imposed racial segregation violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment?

Holding: No

Principal

Laws requiring racial segregation do not imply the inferiority of either race and are therefore constitutional.

Reasoning

The Court held that “separate but equal” facilities did not violate the Constitution, legitimizing segregation.

Separate Opinions

Justice Harlan dissented, warning the decision would become as infamous as Dred Scott.

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