



Education and Justice gallery with an interactive exhibit displaying the five lawsuits.

Monroe Elementary School was one of four segregated elementary schools for African Americans in Topeka. Unlike Southern states that required segregation, Kansas law only permitted segregation in elementary schools and only in cities with more than 15,000 residents. Linda Brown attended this school rather than Sumner School in her neighborhood because she was African American. Her father Oliver Brown and twelve other parents joined a lawsuit against the Topeka School Board in 1951. The case became known as *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The history told here of the landmark 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court illustrates the determination of a group of people to overcome injustice and achieve equality in our society. It reflects the struggle of all Americans to attain the promises set forth in the Bill of Rights and the 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution. The success of this effort continues to inspire people around the world with the idea that a sustained commitment to challenge oppression by peaceful means can bring about permanent change.

Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the *Brown v. Board of Education* opinion of the “separate but equal” doctrine, “Today [education] 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.”



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
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Brown v. Board of Education
National Historic Site

Orientation Guide



Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site commemorates the U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended racial segregation in America's public schools. On May 17, 1954, the court announced its unanimous opinion in the case of Oliver L. Brown et al v. Board of Education et al: "We conclude in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

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| 1 Auditorium - <i>Race and the American Creed</i> | We recommend starting in the auditorium. See the film "Race and the American Creed" as it traces the history of racism and segregation. The film is a dialogue between a young girl and a long-time | friend of her grandfather. The student is seeking to learn about the long struggle to provide freedom and equality to all Americans. |
| 2 Education and Justice | This exhibit examines the barriers African Americans faced while trying to receive a formal education from the early 19th century to the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision. Investigate why leaders in the black community fought so hard and | took risks to integrate schools. Photos, exhibits, and interpretive media are combined to offer a summary of these hardships due to racial injustice. The exhibit features seven short films. |
| 3 The Legacy of <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> | In this interactive gallery, you will be able to explore exhibits relating to the civil rights movement that followed in the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court decision. The civil rights movement rallied thousands of citizens dedicated to eradicating | prejudice and racial discrimination from all forms of public life. This room also features exhibits on the international impacts of the Brown decision and continued work to be done to ensure social equality in all walks of life for all people. |
| 4 Expressions and Reflections | The Monroe School Kindergarten is representative of what a kindergarten would have looked like in the Topeka public schools in the early 1950s. We have added a few modern twist to make the room more useable for children today. Please feel | free to explore the room and remember what your school looked like and try your hand at some of the activities that the children who once came here to learn spent their day doing. |
| 5 Bookstore - Western National Parks Association | Western National Parks Association operates the bookstore and develops publications for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. | Discover a wide range of educational publications and products that explore the history of this important decision. |

