# 70th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education: Reflecting on Progress and Challenges in School Integration



Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, celebrated its 70th anniversary, marking its impact as a seminal Supreme Court decision that declared racial segregation in education unconstitutional in the United States. Civil rights leaders acknowledge the progress made toward school integration due to this ruling, while also pointing out the ongoing challenges to achieving desegregated education.

Gary Orfield, a UCLA professor, noted that more students attend "intensely segregated" schools today compared to 30 years ago, attributing this to the Supreme Court's 1991 decision in Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, which allowed desegregation orders to lapse. As schools revert to neighborhood zoning, de facto segregation often persists, influenced by residential and economic divides.

Resistance to integration historically included significant opposition, such as the 1956 "Southern Manifesto" signed by southern lawmakers and the violent resistance encountered by the Little Rock Nine in 1957.

Ongoing legal battles for desegregation, like the one Dianna Cowan White's family waged for over 50 years against the Bolivar County Board of Education, highlight the extended challenge of integrating schools. Such cases underscore persistent disparities in educational resources between majority-White and majority-Black schools.

As of 2020, over 700 school districts remain under legal desegregation orders. Civil rights groups, including the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, continue to litigate to uphold the principles established by Brown v. Board of Education. Despite integration efforts, issues such as racist bullying and unequal access to educational programs persist.

President Biden marked the anniversary by meeting with plaintiffs and their families at the White House, acknowledging their sacrifices and highlighting the ongoing struggle for racial equality in education amidst a backdrop of political and social challenges.