**Education**

**What they improved:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In 1954, the **US Supreme Court** declared that segregated schools were wrong, in the case of **Brown vs Topeka Board of Education**. Linda Brown was a 7 year old black school girl who, like many others, went to an all-black school several kilometres away instead of the local ‘white’ school a couple of blocks from her house. Although schools were meant to be ‘separate but equal’, most states spent as much as ten times more on white schools than black ones. So, the NAACP took Linda Brown’s case (and 12 other children) to the Supreme Court to argue that this made no sense for Linda. The Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were inherently unequal, and denied black children equal educational opportunities. This overruled the Supreme Court decision of 1896 (Plessy v Ferguson) which had ruled that “separate but equal” facilities were acceptable. (in law, this is called a **precedent**). This marked a victory for the NAACP’s long legal campaign to end segregation in schools and it showed that Supreme Court was on civil rights campaigners’ side, which gave civil rights campaigners hope and encouragement.

**What they could not improve:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

It is, however, one thing to pass a law; it is another to get the people to accept it. The Supreme Court gave no date for integrated schools, so by 1964 less than 3% of black children were attending desegregated schools. There was enormous resistance to integration in some southern states – White Citizens Councils formed in the South to defend segregation. Ku Klux Klan also campaigned against integration.

A key test came at **Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957**. The Little Rock Central High School incident of 1957 in Arkansas brought international attention to the [civil rights](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/civil1.htm) cause. It was an example of a state fighting against federal authority, national guard troopers facing professional paratroopers and a Governor against a President.

By 1957, some facilities in Little Rock had been desegregated, like libraries, some parks and even the police force. What happened at Little Rock surprised many as the [school](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/USAeduc.htm) board and the city’s mayor both agreed that token efforts should be made to accept the law desegregating [schools](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/USAeduc.htm). But the Governor of Arkansas, Orville Faubus, had other ideas.Nine very able Black students were allowed to attend what had always been an all-White high school. On the first day, the **Governor of** **Arkansas, Orval Faubus**, surrounded the school with State National Guard soldiers to stop the black students getting into the school.

After a court ruling, Faubus was forced to remove the soldiers and the nine students turned up for school again. Elizabeth Eckford and the other 8 students faced a mob of 1000 angry white students and adults; they spat at them and some even threatened to kill them. These scenes were captured on television and shown throughout the world. America was shocked at what it saw. In this case, the camera could not lie.

On Monday 23rd September, the nine African American students arrived at the school again. They got in to the school by a delivery entrance. When a large white mob heard that they were in the school building, their anger spilled over and black Americans in the street were attacked. The Mayor of the city phoned the White House to ask for Federal help fearing a total breakdown of law and order. The nine students were smuggled out of the school for their own safety and sent home. The 150 police in attendance clearly showed that they were in sympathy with the mob - one took off his badge and simply walked away.

The next day - the 24th September - another white hate mob turned up at the school and **Eisenhower** was forced to send in 1,100 paratroopers to establish law and order and he federalised the Arkansas National Guard and put it under Washington’s command. It was the first time since the end of the Civil War that federal troops had been sent to the South to assist the black American community there.

His actions pleased no one. The north and west felt that he had been too slow in dispatching federal troops and had not been decisive. The South turned on one of their own - Eisenhower was from the South. The paratroopers stayed until the end of November. The National Guardsmen - under Federal control - stayed for one year. Soldiers even took the students from lesson to lesson. Eight of the nine students stayed for the whole academic year and one - Ernest Green - graduated to college. The students during their year were regularly spat at by a small but nasty minority. The school’s principal had his life threatened and threats were made to bomb the school.

At the end of the year, Faubus closed all schools in Little Rock to prevent integration, but the Supreme Court ruled that this was illegal and forced him to reopen them. This was a triumph in some ways because it showed the support of the President and the legal system for Civil Rights. As part of a media circus, it proved compulsive viewing - what happened was shown throughout the western world and brought the [civil rights](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/civil1.htm) issue into the living rooms of many people who may have been unaware of what was going on in the South.

However, events at Little Rock **did not change public opinion**. For example, Orval Faubus was voted as one of America’s top ten most admired men in a public opinion poll. Faubus was re-elected for another four terms as Governor of Arkansas. In this sense, he lost the battle of Little Rock but he won the war. As late as 1964, only 3% of African American school children attended desegregated schools.

Another example of failed campaigns in education was **James Meredith,** a black student, who tried to attend the University of Mississippi, a ‘white only’ university. Up until 1961, no black person had ever been admitted to the University of Mississippi. In that year, the Governor Ross Barnett had physically barred James Meredith from entry. In June 1962, however, a federal court ruled that he was entitled to attend. This showed how much the legal progress had been made with regards to integrated education. All that was needed was someone to be the first to break this racial barrier, in mind of all of the risks.

Governor Barnett and US Attorney General Robert Kennedy disagreed about whether Meredith should be allowed to take up his place. In the end, Barnett made a secret agreement with Kennedy that he could attend if Barnett could make a public protest. However, Barnett did not keep his word to provide protection. When Meredith arrived for registration at the university the following day, angry mobs assembled and there was a delay in sending federal troops to protect him. By the time they arrived, violence had erupted as up to 170 federal marshals tried to control the disorder.

America’s president **John F Kennedy** had to send 500 US Marshalls to the university. Meredith survived but two onlookers, including a French journalist, were killed. Petrol bombs were thrown at officials and a lead pipe cut down one marshal. A TV reported was also brutally attacked in his car.

Although Meredith continued to attend the university, he was segregated on campus, eating alone for example. School segregation in Mississippi remained almost completely intact. In fact, in 11 southern states, only 31,000 out of 3 million school pupils were integrated in schools.

Martin Luther King Jr had expressed admiration for Meredith, but nonetheless felt that his success smacked of tokenism. Whilst allowing a limited number of black people into all-white university or school might break the colour bar, King argued that this was merely a token gesture. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s generally fought against such measures, as they wanted equal opportunity for all.

As with a number of protests and breakthroughs, whilst the Supreme Court could make rulings to desegregate facilities, education and transport, it needed the enforcement of the federal government to have a significant impact.

**Transport**

**What they improved:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Arguably the greatest of all SC rulings were in the area of public transport. As Chief Justice, Earl Warren brought a less cautious approach and made it very clear that he regarded *Plessy v Ferguson* as belonging to another era. The court’s decisions in public transport had the most impact because they were easier to enforce. Violations of the rulings could be seen easily, and enforcement was not expensive. By 1963, desegregation in public transport and facilities, in lunch counters, buses, swimming pools, cinemas, had taken place in 161 cities.

In December 1955 Rosa Parks, a former NAACP secretary, sat down in a ‘whites only’ seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. When she refused to give up her seat to a white person she was arrested. Local black leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. organised a boycott of the local bus company. He believed that the method of ‘civil disobedience’ would show the dignity of black people and expose the brutality and violence of white authorities (police) in trying to enforce unfair laws. They boycotted the buses for over a year (381 days) and the bus company lost 65% of its profits.

The campaign reached international media and paved the way for Martin Luther King Jr’s strategy of non-violent protest and civil disobedience. The boycott presented a legal challenge. In April 1955, before the boycott, a lower federal court had ruled that the *Brown* ruling applied to buses as well as schools. In June 1953 a federal district panel also agreed that bus segregation was unconstitutional. On 13th November 1956 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was illegal in *Browder v Gale* (a black woman v the Montgomery Major). In December 1956, the **Supreme Court** ruled that the Montgomery bus law was illegal. This was another **legal precedent**, which meant that other states would now have to integrate buses too.



**What they could not improve:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In 1960 the Supreme Court also ruled that there should be no segregation on buses travelling between states, in *Boynton v Virginia*. One civil rights group (CORE) wanted to test this; they wanted to know whether it would be enforced if Black and White passengers sitting together met any opposition whilst travelling.

In 1961, black and white students set out on ‘Freedom Rides’ across America, from Washington DC to New Orleans. They rode together on Greyhound buses through southern states like Alabama and Mississippi. Either consequence was seen as beneficial; if they were attacked then their aggressors would be exposed as acting illegally and bigoted via the media, and if they were allowed to ride unharmed then the institution of segregation would be dealt a major blow. The ‘Freedom Riders’ were beaten up, buses were set on fire and there was a riot in Montgomery. One bus was firebombed, and whites tried to block the exits. White police forces made little attempt to find or punish the attacked. The worst attacks occurred in Birmingham, Alabama where the infamous Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor failed to organise protection for the riders. White riders, considered ’race traitors’, were the worst affected.

A lot of publicity was gained for their cause and crucially, this led to federal government action. JFK sent federal marshals to Montgomery and brought out an injunction against the KKK who had been attacking the riders, whilst his brother Robert Kennedy (US Attorney General) organised the desegregation of all inter-state travel. Unfortunately, federal government also did deals with state governments, where they allowed the latter to arrest riders so long as they effectively prevented white attacked on the protestors. The publicity generated from arrest and imprisonment was not as effective and evocative as white mobs attacking black protestors would have been

**Public facilities**

**What they improved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Although Black Americans in the South could but goods in the department stores they were not allowed to use the lunch counters.

In 1960, in Nashville, Black students who were part of the **SNCC** decided to challenge this. They selected a number of stores and sat at the lunch counters. The staff refused to serve them, but they continued to occupy seats at the counters every day. At first, they were sworn at and had ketchup poured on them.

The most famous of these peaceful protests was in **Greensboro**, North Carolina, in a Woolworths department store lunch counter. One day a white mob attacked and savagely beat a number of lunch counter protesters. Police ignored this. They waited until the mob had done its work – then arrested their Black victims! This pattern was repeated as more students came to sit at the counters. Ordinary black citizens now decided to boycott the stress and even white customers stayed away because they feared violence.

The store owners, of course, were losing a lot of money. Eventually, the lunch counters were opened to blacks as well as whites. Sit-ins in other cities were also successful.

**What they could not improve:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Despite peaceful tactics, protestors were met with violence from white mobs and police did little to protect them.

