

US Supreme Court Rulings: Brown v. Board of Education

When the United States Supreme Court issued its ruling in 1954 in Brown v. Board of Education, they explained their decision. What did they say? Read the following excerpt from the ruling, and answer the questions.

<p><i>We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible factors” may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does...</i></p>	<p>What is the question?</p>
<p><i>To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generated a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The effect of this separation on their education opportunities was well state by a find in the Kansas case by a court which nevertheless felt compelled to rule against the Negro plaintiffs:</i></p>	<p>What is the answer?</p>
<p><i>“Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to (negatively affect) the education and mental development of the negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system.”</i></p>	<p>What is the argument for the ruling?</p>

....We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate education facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and other similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Why is separate but equal, inherently unequal?