



NEWS RELEASE
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**U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS CELEBRATES
THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION**

WASHINGTON, DC -- The United States Commission on Civil Rights celebrates the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in the groundbreaking case of *Brown v. Board of Education* that ended the lawful status of state-sanctioned segregation in American schools.

Although there had been sporadic legal challenges to segregated schools for over a hundred years leading up to the 1954 decision and some states had in fact outlawed school segregation, no legal challenge had succeeded on an elementary and secondary school basis until *Brown*.

In mounting the landmark challenge, parents of Topeka, Kansas schoolchildren who had been denied enrollment in neighborhood public schools persuaded the Court with the help of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to overturn the doctrine of "separate but equal."

The Court overruled many contrary precedents and found that segregated schools were inherently unequal, regardless of educational resources, because of the harmfulness of segregation. The great jurist and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall argued the case as the NAACP LDF's chief counsel, and newly-appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren succeeded in bringing his colleagues into unanimity for the decision to strike down segregation.

The United States Commission on Civil Rights honors this great moment in American history and encourages all Americans to reflect on the inspiring history of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Constitution's guarantee of equality before the law.

Chairman Martin R. Castro states, "One of our most important civil rights is the right to an education, for it is not only the great equalizer, but the most effective exit strategy to poverty. When *Brown* opened the schoolhouse doors to African Americans and others it created a positive, seismic shift in the futures of millions of Americans. We must remain ever vigilant that the gains of *Brown* are not reversed by conditions which may exist in our educational system today."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin R. Castro and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney, and Michael Yaki. Commission meetings and briefings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is

<http://www.usccr.gov>

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