

### Law of Ignorance

According to the fourteenth amendment, “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.” Segregation abridged the privileges of every African American person. In public schools, forced busing was used to desegregate, and in universities, affirmative action was used to desegregate. Both were well intentioned, yet neither were particularly successful.

In 1954, cases from Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington D.C. were heard together in the Supreme Court as *Brown v. Board of Education*. This case declared segregated schools unconstitutional overturning the 1896 decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, separate but equal. *Brown v. Board* became the pathway to school integration. However, this ruling was not specific about how schools had to integrate, leaving it up to the school districts to decide that factor. Boston’s solution for desegregation was forced busing. In June of 1974, W. Arthur Garrity Jr. ruled in favor of forced busing for Boston schools. African Americans of the Roxbury community would have to send their children to South Boston and whites of South Boston would have to send their children to Roxbury. The people of South Boston were enraged to say the least. They did not understand why families could not just send their kids to the neighborhood schools, why this would be the solution to desegregation. On September 12th, 1974, the first day of school, the African Americans who would be attending South Boston were met with extreme hostility. When the bus from Roxbury arrived a mob of white protesters were waiting outside the school. The students that were not protesting had stayed home. Needless to say, the black students were not welcomed. That afternoon, as the bus left the parking lot, it was egged and stoned as white students and parents shouted atrocities at the black students. The white students that attended Roxbury, on the other hand, were not met with any sort of hostility. Black students just wanted to be treated with equality. Why were they seen as a threat? Why were they perceived as less than? A year after desegregation almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of white students left the Boston Public School system. The idea of forced busing was a good one in terms of integration. However, integration cannot be successful if people do not have an open mind about it, and that is why desegregation attempts failed in the 1970s.

The battle of equality would soon move up to higher education. On June 26, 1978, the courts came to a mixed decision about *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*. This suit came from Allan Bakke, a 30 year old man who had been rejected twice by the University of California. Bakker's GPA was comparable to the GPA of other applicants and his MCAT score was significantly higher, yet he was still declined admission. As a result of unfair treatment of minorities, universities adopted admission policies. University of California Davis School of Medicine adopted a policy where they would require 16/100 spots to be for minorities. Bakke and others were enraged because this would mean minorities could, in theory, make up 100% of the enrollment while whites could only make up to 84% (even though, realistically, minorities would never make up that percentage). The courts ruled that instead of meeting a quota, schools had to look at race holistically. However, that did not end the discussion about affirmative action. In 2003, the courts saw two cases against the University of Michigan. *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*. In 1995 Gratz was denied admission into the University of Michigan, and in 1996, Grutter was denied admission. In the case of Jennifer Gratz, the courts ruled in her favor. The University had been using a point system in which points for race heavily outweighed anything else granting automatic admission to minorities. This system was found to be unconstitutional, therefore Michigan had to stop using this system. In 1996 Barbara Grutter was denied admission. This case was to see if universities could use race at all in the admission process. It was ruled, by the difference of one vote, that race could be considered as a factor in college admissions. The idea that minorities have an advantage in the admissions process is ridiculous. This is the idea of equality vs. equity. If we wanted to be equal we would not take race into account. However, we want to be equitable meaning a fair platform for all. Until the majority culture accepts being white gives them privilege, they are going to feel like undo privilege is given to minorities. White people need to understand the equity of the situation. Even with affirmative action in place, people still feel as if they are treated unjustly.

I agree with the decisions the courts have made. I recognize that they cannot do much about how people perceive their rulings. The milestone we have to get over now is figuring out how we can get people to accept the laws the courts have put in place. People will continue to be treated unfairly until we educate the ignorant, and that is the real challenge.

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