

Equal Rights — A Cornerstone of Democracy

From the time the Supreme Court decided that segregation of students in public education based solely on race violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the 1954 *Brown v. Board* ruling to now millions of students' educational access have been affected as a result.

One could argue that the outcome of the *Brown* case helped pave the way for the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, directly impacting policies and practices still in place today and highlighted in the cases reviewed in this series.

While we don't know what the impact of educational case law currently before the Court will have, we can find comfort in the fact that our form of government is dependent on a public forum of open ideas and debate. We have checks and balances to allow for new legislation to be enacted to address injustices. After all, when our founders formed the Constitution, they understood it to be merely a starting point in striving for "a more perfect Union" as envisioned in our Constitution's preamble.

It's up to us to continue to work toward that lofty goal. And to be truly a part of "We the People," each person must be actively engaged, understanding the rights and responsibilities of as participants in our democracy, valuing the humanity of each other despite our differences, and collaborating to address our challenges and creating opportunities for all people.

Newspaper Activities: Look for current examples in the news of inequality under the law. What, if anything, is being done to change the situation? Can you find examples of the cornerstones of democracy — civics, civility and collaboration in action?

Look for news reports of individuals or groups of people standing up for what they believe is fair. Select one. Do you agree or disagree with them and why?

If interested, this series has a corresponding teaching guide with graphic organizers, audio podcasts and a Spanish translation version online at <https://nynpa.com/nie/lawday.html>.

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