



Summary of Milliken v. Bradley 1974

A class action suit was filed in August 1970, by parents of students in the Detroit, Michigan school system and the Detroit Branch of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) against the Michigan State Board of Education and various other state officials of the state of Michigan. The suit alleged that the Detroit school system was racially segregated as a result of policy, in particular, a state statute known as Act 48, which put the state of Michigan in a position to unconstitutionally interfere with a plan to desegregate schools.

After reviewing the case, the District Court ruled that the Detroit Board of Education submit desegregation plans for the Detroit-area schools only. The court also ordered the state to submit desegregation plans for a three-county metropolitan area, excluding 85 outlying school districts in the three counties because there was no claim that these outlying schools had committed constitutional violations.

Subsequently, the District Court found that the plans submitted by the Detroit Board of Education were inadequate to accomplish desegregation. In addition, the court determined that schools should not be allowed to deny students of their constitutional rights simply based on school district lines. As a result, the court appointed a panel to create a desegregation plan that would apply to the Detroit schools as well as 53 of the 85 outlying schools.

Respondents appealed, and the Court of Appeals affirmed, in part, the decision of the District Court that a plan for desegregation in the Detroit schools and the 53 outlying schools was appropriate. However, the Court of Appeals remanded the decision to exclude the remaining outlying schools and ordered that all school districts be included in the plan so that the impact of implementing such a plan on these schools could be examined.

On a petition for certiorari to the United States Supreme Court, the Court reversed and remanded the decisions of the District Court and Court of Appeals stating that the decisions of these courts were based solely on discrimination found only in the Detroit schools and that no evidence of discrimination in the outlying schools was found. These facts do not permit a federal court to impose a remedy for a specific school area on a district wide basis. The lower courts were directed to issue a decree to create a desegregation plan in the Detroit area schools.

Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise is available on DVD and VHS.

To order, visit www.firelightmedia.org, call 1-800-343-5540 or write Firelight Media, P.O. Box 1084, Harriman, NY 10926