

# Untying the Knot: The Entangled History of Equality in Education

This virtual resource is a reproduction of a permanent exhibit located at the Teaching Museum South in Hapeville, Georgia. It is designed to meet curriculum standards for high school Social Studies and American Government and Civics.

Scroll down to enter exhibit.  
Click on each graphic (left to right) in exhibit to enlarge.

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT  
(For younger visitors)  
Click on the graphic below to enlarge.

## IMAGINE YARN THAT IS KNOTTED AND TANGLED

Each **knot** in the yarn is a problem or something that is unfair. The more knots in the yarn, the harder it is to untangle.

This room tells the story of a time when kids were separated based on the color of their skin. White students and Black students could not go to school together.

People realized that this rule was a problem—one knot of many—that needed to be untied. They started to untangle the yarn and discovered that it would not be easy. Sometimes it was simple. Sometimes it was difficult.

With a lot of work, new laws were made to bring kids—of all colors and backgrounds—together. Explore the room to learn how schools moved toward a future where Fulton County students could learn and grow together.



As you walk around the room, look for these words

**Segregation** - A system that unfairly keeps one group of people apart from others.

**Integration** - Bringing people together. Making sure that everyone, no matter their differences, can go to the same schools, play in the same parks, and work together as equals.

**"Separate but equal"** - A rule that meant that Black students and White students went to different schools. Although the rule said that these schools should be equal, they were not. Black students did not always get the same opportunities or resources as White students.

**Protest** - When people come together to show that they are unhappy about something and want to see a change. Protesters might hold signs, march, chant, or even give speeches.

**Sit-in** - A sit-in is a type of protest where people sit peacefully to raise awareness about a problem. This is a way to stand up for what's right—by sitting down.

**Community** - A group of people who live, work and play together. They might go to the same schools or shop in the same stores and play a part in making their community special.

### Can you find a primary source?

**Primary Sources** are photos, papers, and objects from a specific time in history. If we study them, we can learn how people lived and what people thought in the past. Some primary sources include words that we do not use today. We now know that words can affect feelings. Today, we choose words that are respectful and inclusive. **Look around the room, what primary sources do you see? Here are some examples:**



## UNTYING THE KNOT

### THE ENTPANGLED HISTORY OF EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Throughout much of the 20th century, students attended separate schools based on race, under the legal doctrine that required states to provide "separate but equal" educational facilities.

The Supreme Court decided in May 1954 that racial segregation of schools was unconstitutional. The actual implementation of this decision was fraught with difficulties that would last for years in Fulton County—and in many school systems across the country. Local officials found themselves in a maze of contradictory orders from various levels of government, and conflicting views of the citizens themselves.

This exhibit looks at the complex task of desegregating Fulton County Schools, the efforts of students to change their communities, and the memories of some who experienced it firsthand.

PP-2.1

### A LAND DIVIDED

#### SEGREGATION IN THE NEW SOUTH

After the 1870s, many Progressives looked for ways to help poor white farmers and laborers. One way was to encourage them to move to the West. This led to the migration of many white farmers and laborers to the West. This led to the migration of many white farmers and laborers to the West.

## SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OUTLAWED BY U. S. SUPREME COURT

### Atlanta Daily World

#### Chief Justice Warren Reads Court's Unanimous Decision

FHA To Honor Farm Families Today At Fort Valley State

Significance of Decision Said By City Leaders

Texas Church Leaders Applaud High Court Segregation Ruling

Communist 'Lovers' Seen Great Rioters Role Stirrers

14th AMENDMENT

PP-2.2

### BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA, 1954

Some students after the decision in Brown v. Board of Education, the landmark of segregation was overturned by the Supreme Court, were seen in a classroom at the segregated school, which was in the neighborhood of the segregated school, and in the city of Topeka, Kansas.

### THE STATE OF GEORGIA RESISTS

#### THE FULTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION RESPONDS

NOTICE

### TURNING THE CORNER

#### THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The Act prohibits racial discrimination in the areas of housing, public accommodations, and employment. It also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

The Act also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in the areas of housing, public accommodations, and employment.

PP-2.3

For younger visitors

*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge."*

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."*

- Frederick Douglass



*"[Eva Thomas High School], like the other nine all-Black schools in the Fulton County system, must be desegregated."*

*"However, we are opposed to, and tired of, the indiscriminate closing of Black schools to achieve desegregation."*

Morris Dillard, NAACP

*"In a **democracy** such as ours, we must make sure that **education** wins the race."*

- John F. Kennedy

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can **change the world**; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

- Margaret Mead



For younger visitors

#### A PUBLIC WAR OF WILLS

Between 1957 and 1964, the Fulton County Board of Education and the state government fought a public war of wills over the desegregation of Fulton County schools. The NAACP and other civil rights groups fought back, leading to a landmark Supreme Court decision in 1954 that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

#### Idea to Close Eva Thomas High School Came From HEW Offices

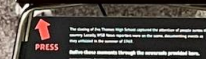
The idea to close Eva Thomas High School came from the HEW offices in Atlanta. The school was one of the nine all-Black schools in the Fulton County system that were targeted for closure as part of a desegregation plan.

#### MARCHES & PETITIONS

Students and parents organized marches and petitions to demand the school be kept open. They held a large march in front of the school and collected thousands of signatures on a petition.



Click on tv screen to view 4-minute video



#### ONE LAST DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

The students and parents made one last demand for justice: that the school be kept open. They held a large march and collected thousands of signatures on a petition.



#### MORRIS DILLARD

Morris Dillard was a prominent leader in the fight for desegregation. He was a member of the NAACP and played a key role in organizing the fight to keep Eva Thomas High School open.

#### EVA THOMAS LIVES ON

The school's legacy lives on through the Eva Thomas High School Foundation, which provides scholarships and support for students in the community.



#### EVA LOUISE THOMAS

Eva Louise Thomas was the daughter of the school's namesake. She was a student at the school and later became a prominent leader in the community.

### WHY DID THEY PROTEST?

Why would students protest the closing of a segregated school or the plan to desegregate the city's segregated schools? There is a long history of resistance to desegregation in the South. In the 1950s, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional. In the years following the decision, many schools in the South were closed or converted to all-white schools.

**Desegregation in History**

In 1854, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that African Americans were not citizens and therefore could not sue in federal court. This decision was a major barrier to the civil rights movement.

**Desegregation in Georgia**

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional. In the years following the decision, many schools in the South were closed or converted to all-white schools.

**FRANK McCLAIN**

Frank McClain was a prominent African American leader in the Atlanta area. He was a member of the NAACP and a leader in the civil rights movement. He was also a member of the Atlanta City Council and served as Mayor of Atlanta from 1967 to 1971.

PP-4.1

### ONE TOWN, TWO SCHOOLS

In the 1950s, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional. In the years following the decision, many schools in the South were closed or converted to all-white schools.

**MILTON HIGH SCHOOL**

**Bailey-Johnson High School**

**Russell High School**

**SOUTH FULTON HIGH SCHOOL**

**EVIL THOMAS HIGH SCHOOL**

**COLLEGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL**

**FAIRBURN HIGH SCHOOL**

**CAMPBELL HIGH SCHOOL**



*"We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go."*

—Morgan Hill, Evil Thomas High School, class of 1976

### A LONG TIME COMING

THE END OF THE DUAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

On September 11, 1971, the US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in *Keyes v. School District No. 1* that the dual school system in Denver was unconstitutional. This was the first time that the Supreme Court had ruled that a dual school system was unconstitutional.

**A DIFFICULT KNOT...**

The knot was a symbol of the struggle for desegregation. It was a knot that was difficult to untie, and it represented the challenges of the civil rights movement.

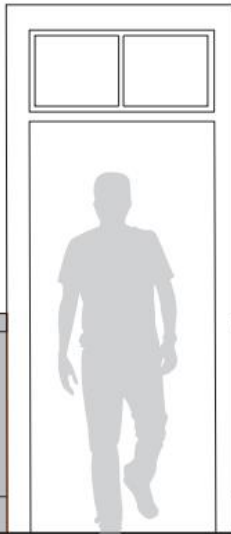
**This knot came a long way, but we still have a long way to go.**

Morgan Hill, Evil Thomas High School, Class of 1976

PP-4.2



For younger visitors



### FULTON IN THE 21st CENTURY

2014-2015 Facts at a glance

**104** SCHOOLS

**82,262** STUDENTS

**104** SCHOOLS

**82,262** STUDENTS

**104** SCHOOLS

**82,262** STUDENTS