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Intro to Teaching

Written Assignment

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Plessy Vs Ferguson and Brown Vs Board of Education

Both of these cases had a considerable and lasting impact on the educational landscape of our country. Their effects are still felt in classrooms and homes across our country. I believe that the underlying issues of prejudice, equality, oppression, and tolerance will continue to be huge factors influencing the practice of education for decades to come. As our society becomes increasingly global and culturally diverse, the issues of how we adequately and fairly teach, and relate to, those who are different than ourselves will need attention from teachers, administrators, and legislator.

Plessy Vs Ferguson, in 1886, legalized the concept of racially “separate, but equal” services – including education. The equal part never seems to have been achieved. The very act of separating races fostered a spirit of inferiority and superiority among the races in our country. According to the textbook, in the 1940’s Mississippi spent $52.01 per white student on education, but only $7.36 per black student (373). There was nothing equal about the segregation of America. The video stated that Plessy Vs Ferguson was an important opportunity for the US to jump forward towards equality and civil rights, but instead the court’s ruling allowed for the systematization of oppression and inequality.

This imbalance of resources and implicit subjugation of non-white peoples lasted in our country for nearly 70 years before the court reversed their stance with Brown Vs Board of Education, opening the door for integration and civil rights. The damage done by Plessy Vs Ferguson was not undone with the decision of Brown Vs. Board of Education in 1954. The desegregation of schools was met with incredible resistance. Relearning how to relate to other races after hundreds of years of discriminatory practices did not happen overnight or without pain. It is a shame to our nation that we did not sooner embrace the ideals of freedom and tolerance that have their inception in the earliest ideals of those who colonized our shores.

Some people think of the civil rights struggle as an object of the historical past. However, I believe that there are many aspects of race relations and equal access to education in our country that give testimony to the long standing systems of imbalance. In urban districts and economically depressed areas, we see far less than equal education when compared to more affluent areas. These lingering inequalities of race and economic status have their roots in our systems of segregation.

I can’t even imagine the state of injustice that would now face us if we had not overturned Plessy Vs Ferguson. Denying blacks and other minorities access to quality education is a way to relegate their whole people group to a state of slavery. Perhaps, they would not legally be “owned,” but without education, they could not expect upward mobility in social or economic class and would spend their lives as menial laborers. We have come a long way in the past 51 years; however, we must continue to work to provide equal and adequate education to each student regardless of their economic, racial, or cultural background. There is still much room for improvement in our educational systems.