Paths to Equality

Courts, schools, and sit-ins in Oklahoma

OKH.C.8.1 "Evaluate the progress of the Civil Rights Movement in Oklahoma by describing the goals, strategies, and accomplishments toward equality. Examine judicial interpretation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two goals of equality, circle three strategies people used, and number two results. Use your marks to trace how actions led to change.

Changing Oklahoma

1. In 1946, Ada Lois Sipuel applied to the University of Oklahoma law school, which excluded Black applicants. In *Sipuel v. Board of Regents* (1948), the Supreme Court ruled that Oklahoma had to offer her legal education equal to that offered white applicants, without delay. Oklahoma first opened a separate law school. In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents for Higher Education* (1950), the Court rejected separating a Black graduate student from classmates within a university. Both decisions applied the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause.

2. Court rulings did not change every school overnight. After *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) rejected segregated public schools, Governor Raymond Gary urged Oklahoma districts to comply and supported peaceful integration in public schools and colleges. Tulsa Public Schools chose to desegregate voluntarily, starting at Booker T. Washington High School. Oklahoma City Public Schools delayed; a lawsuit led to court orders and federal enforcement of desegregation. These different paths show that a district's choices could speed change or make families wait for it.

3. Students also challenged inequality outside schools. In 1958, Clara Luper led young members of the NAACP Youth Council in a nonviolent sit-in at an Oklahoma City drugstore lunch counter. They sat quietly and asked for service where Black customers had been refused. Local churches and the NAACP helped organize and sustain such efforts. Some businesses eventually ended segregation, but change was uneven. Together, lawsuits, government action, and peaceful protest expanded access while showing that legal equality did not automatically produce equal treatment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the equal protection issue differ in *Sipuel* and *McLaurin*?

2. How did Tulsa's approach differ from Oklahoma City's, and what was one consequence?

3. What did Governor Gary do to advance integration after *Brown*?

4. Why could a quiet lunch-counter sit-in help change an unequal policy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence memo to an Oklahoma school board that has delayed integration. Recommend one action, use a court decision and a school district's experience as evidence, and explain why acting now is better than waiting.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two goals of equality, circle three strategies people used, and number two results. Use your marks to trace how actions led to change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the equal protection issue differ in *Sipuel* and *McLaurin*?	**Sipuel concerned access to equal legal education without delay. McLaurin concerned separating a Black student from classmates after admission.**
2	How did Tulsa's approach differ from Oklahoma City's, and what was one consequence?	**Tulsa began voluntary desegregation at Booker T. Washington High School. Oklahoma City delayed until a lawsuit brought court orders and enforcement.**
3	What did Governor Gary do to advance integration after *Brown*?	**He urged districts to comply and supported peaceful integration in public schools and colleges.**
4	Why could a quiet lunch-counter sit-in help change an unequal policy?	**Participants requested service without violence, drawing attention to refusal of service. Organized, sustained efforts helped persuade some businesses to end segregation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Board members, admit Black students to the same schools as white students now. In McLaurin, the Supreme Court rejected separating a Black student from classmates within one university. Tulsa's voluntary desegregation at Booker T. Washington High School shows that a district can act without waiting for a lawsuit. Acting now could spare families the delays Oklahoma City faced.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons and recommendations. Responses should distinguish a legal ruling from the actions people or districts took to put equality into practice.