

# Segregated schools often received the 'throwaways'

■ Court ruling 43 years ago aimed to integrate.

**F**orty-three years ago, in the month of May, the U.S. Supreme Court declared an end to legal school segregation. There were to be no more "separate but equal" public schools. That landmark decision was known as Brown versus the School Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Oliver Brown was representing his daughter, Linda, and several other African-

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American minors. I don't know how old Linda was on that historic day. I saw her picture in the newspapers and magazines. She was dressed in her Sunday Best, ruffles and ribbons! She looked like a very young elementary student surrounded by her father, Oliver Brown and victorious lawyers. Thurgood Marshall was the chief counsel and anchorman of the legal team for the Browns. Marshall later returned to the Supreme Court as the first African-American to serve as a Supreme Court Judge.

I often wondered whatever happened to Linda Brown after that desegregation ruling. I was scared for her; worried that she might become the target of some violent act. It was a scary and dangerous time to be an African-American. Nightriders were still terrorizing black people. Lynchings, shootings and bombings were still happening. School integration and court-ordered busing only broadened the anger and outrage.

For a longtime, I was under the illusion that if Linda Brown "came North" she would be safe. Then I encountered prejudice and racism Northern-style at Goshen College, Marion College (now Indiana Wesleyan) and in an ugly incident in Plymouth, Ind.

Due to the housing pattern on Fort Wayne's westside, my elementary school, my junior high school and my high school were all integrated. So segregated schools had no impact on my life as a youngster. But, when I began teaching across town in Fort Wayne, separate but UNEqual took on real meaning. It was common for a segregated school to lack adequate school materials; to have no library, no cafeteria and sometimes no gym. Segregated schools often got the "throwaways" from the white schools: discarded books, out-of-date manuals, old typewriters, obsolete equipment, inadequate supplies. My school had a faculty made up of black and white teachers worked hard and we were dedicated to the students, but the educational inequities made a level playing field impossible.

I recently found out that Linda Brown is alive and well, and has a school-age daughter attending a segregated school in Topeka, Kansas. How ironic.

Dear Linda: The more things change, the more they stay the same.