

READING

Judge Orders Immediate Desegregation of Boston Schools

After efforts at the city and state level to desegregate Boston schools and achieve educational justice had been exhausted, the NAACP sued the Boston School Committee in federal court in 1972. The case is known as *Morgan v. Hennigan*.

In May 1974, federal judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled in favor of the plaintiffs (the NAACP) in the case. In his ruling, he wrote:

The court concludes that the defendants [the Boston School Committee] have knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city's students, teachers and school facilities and have intentionally brought about and maintained a dual school system. Therefore the entire school system of Boston is unconstitutionally segregated.

Garrity ordered that desegregating the school system must happen immediately, which meant that thousands of students would be assigned to different schools at the beginning of the 1974–75 school year, just a few months after the ruling. Designing a plan to assign students to new schools and schedule buses to bring them there would be extraordinarily complicated to do in less than four months. Therefore, the judge ruled that for the first year of desegregation (Phase 1), the city would follow an existing plan that had already been designed a few years before by the state of Massachusetts. That would give the court time to consider new and possibly better desegregation and busing plans for the following 1975–76 school year (Phase 2).

Judge Garrity's ruling in May 1974 did not mention or account for Boston's Latinx and Chinese American students. He focused only on the numbers of Black and white children in each school.