

Handout B: Eisenhower's Position on Segregation and the Little Rock Crisis

People were naturally curious about the President's stance on *Brown v. Board* and integration. President Eisenhower refused to publicly reveal his personal views regarding the matter, believing that personal opinion should have no influence when it came to performing his job as President.

At a personal level, his views on integration were complicated. On one hand, Eisenhower "definitely agreed with the unanimous decision" of the Supreme Court. On the other hand, he did not believe that the government could "cure all of the evils in men's hearts" just by passing laws.

Knowing that the decision to send Federal troops into a state would be controversial, Eisenhower addressed the nation on the same day the 101st Airborne Division arrived. Below are excerpts from the speech given on Sept 24, 1957.

"It is important that the reasons for my action be understood by all our citizens. As you know, the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that the separate public education facilities for the races are inherently unequal and therefore compulsory school segregation laws are unconstitutional.

Our personal opinions about the decision have no bearing on the matter of enforcement; the responsibility and authority of the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution are very clear. The very basis of our individual rights and freedoms rests upon the certainty that the President and the Executive Branch will support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the Federal Courts, even when necessary, with all the means at the President's command.

Unless the President did so, anarchy would result.

Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts.

If resistance to the Federal Court orders ceases at once, the further presence of Federal Troops will be unnecessary and the City of Little Rock will return to its normal habits of peace and order.

Thus will be restored the image of America and of all its parts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Summarize the message of the President in one to two sentences: