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Looking at Desegregation through Local Narratives: A Case Study at Tulsa Central High School

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I teach 11th grade US History in urban Tulsa. Last year as I showed my students the video clip *Eyes on the Prize: Little Rock Nine*, my students asked me about our own school's history; they wanted to compare Little Rock's Central and our Central High. It was then that I decided to look at desegregation and indeed the whole Civil Rights Movement as it happened in our school. In 1917, Central was built. The four story building showed the wealth and privilege of the oil boom years. By 1938, Central was the second largest high school in the US, with 5000 students. Now, Central is one of the smallest high schools in Tulsa with only 500 students. Central was 100% white, now it is 85% black. It was once nationally renowned; now it fights to stay off the "failing schools" list. What happened to reverse the Central's fortune? How did desegregation, federal mandates, Supreme Court cases and the Civil Rights Movement affect the school, individuals, communities, and the whole history of Tulsa?

(Developed for U. S. History, grade 11, AP U. S. History, grades 11-12, and African American History, grade 12; recommended for U. S. History, AP U. S. History, and African American History, grades 10-12 and Oklahoma History, grades 9-12)

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