

School Experience in a Historical Context

David Harold Blackwell was born on April 24, 1919 in Centralia, Illinois. Centralia is a town of 12,000 people located on the Mason-Dixon line. Blackwell entered the school system around the year 1925 and finished with his Ph.D. in 1941. Blackwell was in school for 22 years. He was very lucky though during his early years because he went to a mixed school and was not subject to racism which in turn set him up with a promising future.

Until the 1950's racial segregation was common in public schools. Not until the verdict on the Brown vs. Board of Education case was segregation found illegal. This verdict was made on May 17, 1954. This decision was a turning point in the history of our educational system. This decision did not however tell when schools had to desegregate and that would soon become a new problem. As you see Blackwell graduated in 1941 with his Ph.D. which was 13 years before this decision was made.

Blackwell stated, "Southern Illinois was probably fairly racist. But I was not even aware of these problems -- I had no sense of being

discriminated against.” Racial segregation was very common when he was growing up but he was lucky enough to not have to deal with any of these problems. Blackwell attended the University of Illinois and made no mention of racial issues with the university. Blackwell was lucky to be a rare black man that did not have to deal with immorality of segregation in schools.

Included is a link to the University of Illinois home web page. You can search through this site to learn more about the campus as well as the math program. You can find the requirements needed to major in mathematics. I am sure the requirements have changed since Blackwell attended the university. If you continue to search through the website you can find requirements for graduate studies as well.

[University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](http://www.uiowa.edu/)

References

Cozzens, Lisa. “Brown v. Board of Education” 6-29-98. 4-30-01.
<http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/early-civilrights/brown.html>

Williams, Scott W. “David Harold Blackwell”. 3/29/99. 4-30-01.
http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/PEEPS/blackwell_david.html