

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**THE DELAWARE COURT OF CHANCERY ANNOUNCES STUDENT ART CONTEST
TO MARK THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE COURT'S
HISTORIC DESEGREGATION RULINGS**

The Delaware Court of Chancery is proud to announce its first-ever Legal History Art Contest, open to students in grades 7-12, to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic *Brown v Board of Education* ruling desegregating public schools and the Delaware Court of Chancery's key role in that decision.

Before the *Brown* ruling, the Delaware Court of Chancery desegregated Delaware public schools in the cases known as *Belton v. Gebhart* and *Bulah v. Gebhart*, that were later incorporated into *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Delaware ruling was the only one of the state cases, that made up the consolidated *Brown* case, where the plaintiffs prevailed in their challenge to segregation.

The art contest, which is being conducted in partnership with the Court of Chancery Historical Society, invites students to submit works representing Delaware's role in the historic case and its impact. Student participants are asked to create art depicting their impressions of the *Belton* and *Bulah* cases, including people or places that were featured in the decision including litigants, judges, lawyers, or locations such as the schools or towns. Participating students can submit their art digitally by email. All submissions must be original artwork by the student and e-mail submissions must include the student's full name, email, phone number, grade, title of artwork (optional) and how the artwork addresses the theme. **All submissions must be received by June 16, 2023.**

"We are excited to have this competition and recognize the importance of these opinions and the legacy of the Court of Chancery," said Master in Chancery Loren Mitchell. "The art contest allows the Court the opportunity to celebrate these historic cases while also educating younger generations on their significance."

Winners of the contest will receive \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place and \$200 for third place. In addition, the winning students and their families will be invited to attend a reception and award ceremony at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center on June 30, 2023.

Early submissions are encouraged. The full details, including the form needed to submit for the contest, can be found on the [court's website](#).

Amidst the backdrop of segregated Wilmington in the early 1950's, African American parents challenged state-enforced segregation by fighting to have their children be able to attend their local all-white public schools. In *Belton v. Gebhart*, high school student Ethel Louise Belton was forced to travel two hours daily to a school with inferior and unequal academic offerings. In *Bulah v. Gebhart*, Shirley Bulah was not allowed to ride the bus that passed by her house with the white children every day and was prevented from attending her local public school due to her race. Both

Belton and Bulah were represented by Louis L. Redding, Esquire, Delaware's first African American attorney.

On April 1, 1952, then-Chancellor Collins J. Seitz of the Delaware Court of Chancery (father of current Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr.) delivered his opinion in the action, consolidating *Belton* and *Bulah* and concluding that segregation caused African American children, as a class, to receive "educational opportunities which are substantially inferior to those available to white children otherwise similarly situated." Chancellor Seitz also noted, "The application of Constitutional principles is often distasteful to some citizens, but that is one reason for Constitutional guarantees. The principles override transitory passions." Two weeks later, he ordered the desegregation of the two schools at issue in the case, Claymont High School and Hockessin School No. 29. *Belton* and *Bulah* were later part of the consolidated litigation leading to the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* where the United States Supreme Court declared the "separate but equal" doctrine unconstitutional.

"It is exciting to bring Delaware students into the rich history of our court. I am grateful to Master Mitchell, Master Griffin, and the Court of Chancery Historical Society for launching this fun competition," said Chancellor Kathaleen St. J. McCormick.