

Brown v. Board of Education

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Imagine you are a seven year old and have to walk one mile to a bus stop by walking through a railroad switching station and then waiting for a school bus to go to a "black elementary school" or a school where only African American children went. This is what happened to Linda Brown, an African American third grader from Topeka, Kansas, even though there was a "white elementary school" only seven blocks away. A "white elementary school" was a school where only white students were able to attend.



The Lawsuit Begins

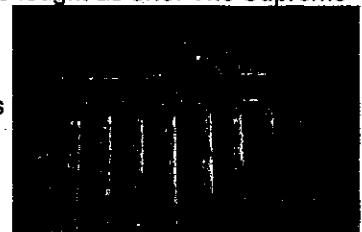
This is how the Brown vs. Board of Education lawsuit was started in 1951. Linda's father, Oliver Brown, and thirteen other parents tried to enroll their children in the local "white schools" in the summer of 1950, but were turned down because they were African Americans. They were told they must attend one of the four schools in the city for African American children. These parents filed suit against the Topeka Board of Education for their children. Oliver Brown was the first parent listed in the lawsuit, so the case was named after him. At the time of the lawsuit, Blacks everywhere were not treated fairly. For every \$150.00 spent on white children at the "white schools" only \$50.00 was spent on African American children at the "black schools." The parents of the African American children thought that their school was not treated as fairly because they were colored. They did not have the most current textbooks, not enough school supplies, and overcrowded classrooms.



After Oliver was turned down by the school, he went to the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) to fight to get Linda in the school. The NAACP hired lawyers to fight for African American children all around the United States to be able to go to the same schools as white children. This case was lost at the state level. The state courts referred to the case of Plessy v. Ferguson which allowed separate but equal school systems for black and white children. Since no court had ever overturned this case, the state courts thought there was no problem treating the black children that way. The state courts also stated that by treating the African American students like that now, they would better accept when they were treated like that when they were older. This was a time when black people of all ages were treated like they were a lower class or segregated. They were unable to eat in the same restaurants, drink from the same drinking fountains, or even ride in the same train cars as white people.

Taking the Case to the Supreme Court

After losing the case in the state courts, the NAACP decided to take the case all the way to the United States Supreme Court. They appealed to the Supreme Court on October 1, 1951. At that time there were several cases in the United States similar to this one, cases that challenged separate schools for black and white students. They were started in the states of South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. They were all joined together to be fought as one. The Supreme Court first heard from the lawyers on December 9, 1952. The lawyers for the Board of Education argued that many people, including black scholars, did not see a problem with having black students attend all black schools. The lawyers for the Browns argued that the only reason for separate education for Blacks and Whites would be if there was proof that black children were different than everyone else. The arguments lasted for three days and the Supreme Court justices talked it over for several months. At that time instead of ruling, they asked the lawyers on both sides some more questions. In the middle of this set of questions, one of the Supreme Court justices died and had to be replaced. A year after the first arguments were heard, the Supreme Court heard the case once again.



After three long years the case finally ended on May 17, 1954 with the court finding in favor of Linda Brown and the other African American children like her. The Supreme Court said that it was not fair to have black and white students separated in different schools. The judges voted on this case nine to zero. It took some states many years to put

students together in schools and have them treated the same because many people were still prejudiced against Blacks.

Brown v. Board Timeline

Year	Event
1950	The parents of black students try to enroll them in the local "white schools."
1951	The suit is started by Oliver Brown and other parents.
1952	The Supreme Court first heard from the lawyers.
1952	One justice died and had to be replaced.
1954	The case ends in favor of Linda Brown and the other Blacks near her.

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Supreme Court of the United States

No. 1 ———, October Term, 19 54

Oliver Brown, Mrs. Richard Lawton, Mrs. Sadie Emmanuel et al.,
Appellants,

vs.

Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, et al.

*Appeal from the United States District Court for the _____
District of Kansas.*

*This cause came on to be heard on the transcript of the record from the United States
District Court for the _____ District of Kansas, _____
and was argued by counsel.*

*On consideration whereof, It is ordered and adjudged by this Court that the judgment
of the said District _____ Court in this cause be, and the same is
hereby, reversed with costs; and that this cause be, and the same
is hereby, remanded to the said District Court to take such
proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with
the opinions of this Court as are necessary and proper to admit
to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all
deliberate speed the parties to this case.*

Per Mr. Chief Justice Warren,

May 31, 1955.

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