

“Separate but Equal” No More

Brown v. Board of Education is a famous court case in which the Supreme Court overturned the "separate but equal" policy that had been in place in America since Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896. "Separate but equal" meant that blacks and whites did not have to share public resources, as long as both were provided with equal opportunities (for education, transportation, etc.) In reality, though, the conditions were separate, but they were hardly equal, and Brown v. Board of Education ruled that "separate but equal" public schools for black and white children were unconstitutional.



The case was actually a consolidation of cases from South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., Delaware, and Kansas. In *Briggs v. Elliot* in South Carolina plaintiffs demanded equal treatment in transportation, buildings, teachers' salaries and educational materials. In Prince Edward County, VA, a group of 450 students led by a 16-year-old student went on strike, demanding a new school for blacks. In *Bolling v. Sharpe*, in Washington D.C., a law suit was filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) not about equalizing schools, but attacking the very concept of segregation, when a black girl was prohibited from attending a white school near her home that had hundreds of openings. In Wilmington, Delaware, a case was brought by parents who had to drive their daughter to a one-room schoolhouse miles away when white schools were available in her community. In Topeka, Kansas, conditions in segregated black schools were nearly equal to those in white schools, and public transportation was available to all children; nonetheless a case was brought regarding a seven-year-old who walked six blocks to catch a school bus to her segregated school when a white school was only seven blocks from her home. This was an ideal "test case" for the NAACP's tactic of attacking the segregation.

DIRECTIONS: Explain the relationship between the 5 court cases that were aggregated into Brown v. Board of Education and why.
