

SEPARATE IS NOT EQUAL

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Teacher Briefing Sheet: Kansas Case *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*

Your community is: Topeka, Kansas

What kind of a community did this case take place in?

Topeka was an economic center for the surrounding farmlands. Many African American families had migrated to the city after the Civil War in search of land and opportunity outside the South. Eight percent of the city's residents were black. Buses and railroads were integrated, but most restaurants, hotels, and other public places were strictly segregated—by practice, not by law.

The Name of the Court Case was:

Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

a. Who was/were the plaintiff(s)?

Oliver Brown and 13 other parents from Topeka

b. Who was/were the defendant(s)?

The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

c. What was the complaint?

Segregated elementary schools and the harmful psychological effects of segregation on African American children

d. What lawyers tried the case?

Charles and John Scott and Charles Bledsoe of Topeka, joined by Robert Carter and Jack Greenberg. The national office got involved when the president of the local chapter wrote to the NAACP, seeking help in preparing a lawsuit against the school board.

f. What court heard the case? What was the decision?

A three-judge federal court ruled against the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs' appeal reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

What local community members and institutions were important to this case? Explain their importance. See what biographical information you can find about each person.

McKinley Burnett was an outspoken critic of racial injustice. As president of the Topeka NAACP, he had repeatedly petitioned the Topeka Board of Education and had grown frustrated with their refusal to end segregation. In August 1950 he wrote to the NAACP, seeking help in preparing a lawsuit against the school board.

Lucinda and Alvin Todd were the first to volunteer for the lawsuit.