

# SEPARATE IS NOT EQUAL

## BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION

### Teacher Briefing Sheet: Washington, D.C., Case *Bolling v. Sharpe*

**Your community is:** Washington, D.C.

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

Well-paid federal jobs drew thousands of African Americans to Washington and helped support a large community of well-educated professional and skilled workers. However, Washington had a segregated school system. As the population grew in black neighborhoods, the gap between white and black schools widened and overcrowding became a serious problem. Many African American schools went to multiple shifts, eroding the quality of education.

#### **The Name of the Court Case was:**

*Bolling v. Sharpe*

#### **Who was/were the plaintiff(s)?**

Spottswood Bolling Jr., a 12-year-old student and four other students from Washington, D.C.

#### **Who was/were the defendant(s)?**

Melvin Sharpe, President of the Board of Education

#### **What was the complaint?**

Black students were segregated in overcrowded schools and denied admission to new, well-equipped schools for whites only.

#### **What lawyers tried the case?**

James Nabrit and George E. C. Hayes. The NAACP became involved in *Bolling v. Sharpe* after Gardner L. Bishop contacted Charles Hamilton Houston and asked for support.

#### **What court heard the case? What was the decision?**

Judge Walter Bastian of the U.S. District Court heard the case and dismissed *Bolling v. Sharpe* on the basis that "separate but equal" remained the law of the land.

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

Gardner L. Bishop was the father of a student at Browne Junior High School. In 1947 school authorities responded to crowded conditions at Browne by choosing two run-down former white primary schools for satellite classes. The school's PTA objected and demanded that white schools be opened for all students.

Distrustful of the PTA's leadership, Bishop called on parents to boycott the school. With others, he formed the Consolidated Parent Group to present their grievances to the school board.