

Brown *vs.* Board of Education

Read about the case of **Brown vs. Board of Education** below.
Then follow the writing prompt on the next page.



In 1954, the Supreme Court saw *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, a court case that challenged segregation in public schools. The court eventually ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional. The decision was one of the first victories for civil rights.

Oliver Brown was a parent in Topeka. Because of segregation, his daughter had to walk six blocks to catch a bus that would take her to a school a mile away. There was another school just a few blocks away from their house, but she could not attend it because she was African American. Oliver, with the help of the NAACP, filed a suit against the city's school board.

Before *Brown vs. Board of Education* passed, the law said that providing "separate but equal" **facilities** for different races was legal. Towns and cities, as well as private businesses, could separate their buildings and services based on race, as long as the service offered to both groups were of equal quality. However, that wasn't always the case: many restaurants, waiting rooms, drinking fountains and restrooms offered to African Americans in segregated communities were of much poorer quality than the ones offered to whites.

Oliver Brown wasn't the only person to file a suit about the unfairness of school segregation. There were five cases filed about it in five different states. All had the same goal: to protest the segregation of schools and the **inferior** conditions that many students in segregated schools had to **endure**. The Supreme Court heard the evidence from all cases and ruled that separating people based on race was in and of itself an unfair practice.

Integrating the schools was not easy. Citizens who didn't like the idea of blacks and whites going to school together took matters into their own hands. For years following desegregation, citizens would show up outside integrated schools to **antagonize** black students as they walked to class by yelling at them, calling them names and spitting on them. Often times, police had to be called in to make sure fights didn't break out. In 1957, many Little Rock citizens, including the governor of the state, didn't want one of the city's high schools to be integrated. On the first day of integration for Little Rock Central High School, he called in the National Guard to prevent the students from going inside. The students were finally allowed in the school at the end of September, when the army had to **escort** them inside to protect them from angry protesters.

Brown *W.* Board of Education

VOCABULARY

Facilities: Places or things that provide a service.

Inferior: Of lower quality.

Endure: To hold strong against a challenge.

Antagonize: To tease, taunt or be unfriendly toward.

Escort: To accompany someone.



Write about a time that you stood up to others without resorting to violence.

