



## What happened at Little Rock Central High School?

Black Americans campaigning for their rights faced great difficulties and dangers. Here is just one example.

In 1951 in Topeka, Kansas, a black girl named Linda Brown had to walk one mile to get to her black elementary school, even though a white elementary school was nearby. Her father, Oliver Brown, tried to enrol her in the local white school, but the principal of the school refused. Schools were rigidly segregated (separated according to race). White schools had better buildings, equipment and facilities. Much less money was spent by the state on education for black children.

Brown asked his local branch of the NAACP (National Society for the Advancement of Coloured People) to help. They took the Board of Education to court in 1952. The Brown case was joined with similar cases in South Carolina, Delaware, Kansas, the District of Columbia and Virginia. More than 200 people brought similar court actions in these states. In court, the NAACP argued that segregated schools implied that black children were inferior to white children. Separate meant unequal. They argued that this was wrong.

In May 1954 segregated schools were made illegal. The Supreme Court overturned the 'separate but equal' principle set down in a court case dating back to 1896. This was an important victory. Black people could now argue that other forms of segregation in public transport, restaurants, theatres and housing were unjust for the same reasons.

Many of the southern US states ignored the changes in the law. Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas was one such place. The school board took three years to work out a gradual plan for integration starting in September 1957. Black students from years 10 to 12 would be the first to join the school.

The majority of white citizens in Little Rock thought that integration would destroy the quality of white education. They did not want black and white children mixing together. What happened next?



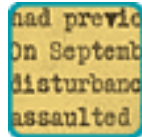
# HEROES & VILLAINS

King & civil rights > Little Rock

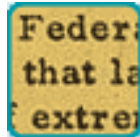
Examine these sources to find out more:



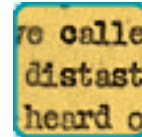
Telegram on integration at Little Rock, 1957



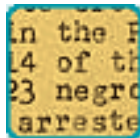
Telegram on trouble at Little Rock High School



Eisenhower's statement on events at Little Rock



British view on attitudes in the South, 1957



Report on race relations in Chicago, 1957