The fight to end racial segregation in schools began more than a century before Brown.

More than a century before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in 1850, Benjamin F. Roberts challenged Boston's racially segregated public schools. Mr. Roberts asserted that Boston's school segregation policy harmed his five-year old daughter Sarah, who had to walk past five all-white schools, before reaching the nearest “Negro” school. When Mr. Roberts tried to enroll Sarah in a nearby all-white school, she was denied admission and even physically removed from the school. Although Mr. Roberts' legal challenge to the constitutionality of Boston's school segregation law was not successful, it laid the groundwork for *Brown* and helped prompt the Massachusetts State Legislature to pass a law banning racial segregation in public schools. Read more about Sarah Roberts' story in our report, *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity*.

African Americans are not the only people who suffered the effects of racially segregated schools.

Gong Lum, a Chinese American grocer and resident of Mississippi sued to enroll his nine year-old daughter, Martha Lum, in the Rosedale Consolidated High School, their local school (*Gong Lum v. Rice*, 275 U.S. 78 (1927)). Martha appeared at the school and was told at noon recess that she was would not be allowed to return to the all-white school because of her Chinese descent. Although Mr. Lum paid taxes that supported the local school district, Martha was denied admission under the state constitution's mandate for racially segregated schools for white children and children of color. Finding that racial segregation laws were within the discretion of states, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Martha's denial of admission and found no Equal Protection violation. This ruling effectively condoned state and local laws allowing for racial segregation in public schools.

The “Doll Test” often associated with the *Brown* case began fourteen years before the filing of the case.

Spouses and psychologists, Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark, researched the effects of racial segregation on the self-esteem of African-American children. Drs. Clark used four dolls, identical except for color, to test children's racial perceptions. Their subjects, children between the ages of three to seven, were asked to identify both the race of the dolls and which color doll they prefer. A majority of the children preferred the white doll and assigned positive characteristics to it. The Clarks concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem.
The Court cited the Clark’s research in the *Brown* decision, noting that “To separate [African-American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” Dr. Kenneth Clark was dismayed that the court failed to cite two other conclusions he had reached: that racism was an inherently American institution, and that school segregation inhibited the development of white children, too. Read more about the Clarks’ research here: [http://www.naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test](http://www.naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test).

As a young female lawyer, Constance Baker Motley drafted the original complaint for the *Brown* case.

Following her graduation from Columbia Law School, Baker Motley worked for Thurgood Marshall at LDF. She drafted the original complaint for the *Brown* case and was the only female member of the *Brown* legal team. She went on to become the first African-American woman elected to the New York State Senate in 1964, and the first African-American female federal court judge, a position she held until her death in 2005. Read more about Constance Baker Motley and other trailblazing African American women in our report.

*Brown v. Board* is the consolidation of five cases argued by the legal arm of the NAACP: Thurgood Marshall, Director-Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.; Harold Boulware—*Briggs v. Elliott* (South Carolina); Jack Greenberg, Louis L. Redding—*Gebhart v. Belton* (Delaware); Robert L. Carter, Charles S. Scott—*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Kansas); Oliver M. Hill, Spottswood W. Robinson III—*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (Virginia); James M. Nabrit, Jr., George E. C. Hayes—*Bolling v. Sharpe* (District of Columbia).