

Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:**

Asian American Action against Separate and Unequal Education

by Sohyun An

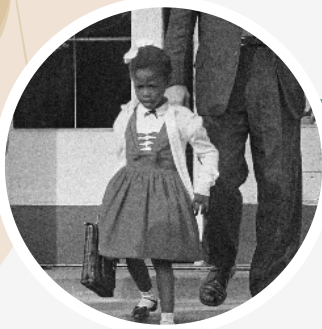
GA Social Studies Standards

SSCG7: b. Define civil rights as equal protections for all people.

SSCG12. Describe the tools used to carry out United States foreign policy, including diplomacy and treaties; economic, military, and humanitarian aid; and sanctions and military intervention.

SSUSH13: c. Connect the decision of Plessy v. Ferguson to the expansion of Jim Crow laws and the formation of the NAACP.

Despite being hardly known, Asian Americans were not strangers to the history of school (de)segregation. Here are three pre-Brown court cases of Asian American struggles against school segregation.



Tape v. Hurley (1885): Mamie Tape was an eight-year-old Chinese American girl who was denied attendance at a San Francisco public school because of her Chinese descent. In 1884, Mamie and her family went to court to fight against discrimination.



Aoki v. Deane (1907): Responding to the anti-Japanese movement, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered Japanese American students, who had been attending white schools, to go to the segregated "Oriental School." The Japanese immigrant community appealed to the Japanese government. To maintain a good relationship with Japan, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt intervened. On the morning of January 17, 1907, a 10-year-old Japanese immigrant student, Keikichi Aoki, was accompanied by representatives of the US Attorney's office and went to San Francisco's Redding School to request admission to the school. Principal Deane refused. After this prearranged confrontation, the Attorney General filed his brief in both Federal District Court and the State Supreme Court through Aoki v. Deane of 1907.





Lum v. Rice (1927): A Chinese American student in Rosedale, Mississippi, Marth Lum and her sister were denied the opportunity to attend all-white Rosedale public school in their neighborhood. The Lum family filed a lawsuit to challenge the order.

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The Bricks before Brown / *The Chinese American, Native American, and Mexican Americans' Struggle for Educational Equality*



In fact, there are more than 100 court cases prior to the Brown v. Board of Education, in which families of Color went to court to challenge separate and unequal education.

Even the first court case of school (de) segregation is Roberts v. Boston of 1849. This is when a 5-year-old Sarah Roberts and her family sued the city of Boston, Massachusetts for segregating African American children in unequal schools.

Use QR code for the complete article, lesson plan, and primary sources!

Inquiry Questions:

- In what ways does the political system in the United States address or not address the needs of the diverse people of the nation?
- What were the experiences of immigrants and their children in America? How were those experiences affected by the context in which they lived?
- How have individuals and groups fought to expand the protection of civil rights in the United States?

Do you want to include more stories of Asian America into your lessons? Check out this fabulous book, *Teaching Asian America in Elementary Classrooms* by Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, Sohyun An, & Ester June Kim.

Complete Article and Lesson Plan



Written by Sohyun An
Design by Justine Chung
Photo credit:
(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Ruby Bridges
2. Tape Family Photo
Sourced from National Park Service website
3. Harvard University Library, Image Delivery Service. Author: William Allen Rogers (1854–1931)
4. Gee, Alvin and Lum Family. "Lum Family." Cleveland, MS: Delta State University Archives. *The Lum Family, Berda, Biscoe, and Martha, front row, and Gong and Kate, back row. Image #5.*
5. Martinez-Cola, Marisela. *The Bricks Before Brown: The Chinese American Native American and Mexican Americans' Struggle for Educational Equality.* University of Georgia Press 2022.

