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MASTERS, ISABELL

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF OLIVER BROWN, THE FIRST LISTED
PLAINTIFF OF BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION, TOPEKA, KANSAS

The University of Oklahoma

PH.D.

1980

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF OLIVER BROWN,
THE FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF OF
BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION,
TOPEKA, KANSAS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
ISABELL MASTERS
Norman, Oklahoma

1980

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF OLIVER BROWN,
THE FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF OF
BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION,
TOPEKA, KANSAS

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DEDICATION

"California mother joins her six children in quest of academic degrees." Ebony--March, 1970.

ONE DECADE LATER

I am grateful to dedicate this study to my children, who have taken time out from their busy careers to inspire me as well as help me to overcome my bitters and sweets in such a significant, difficult, and rewarding task (as honorable mention):

Shirley Jean Masters, B.S.-Music-Psychology

Alfreda Dean Masters, M.A.-English-Actress-Poet

Cora Lavonne Wilds Masters, M.A.-M.U.S., Sociology-
Professor-Political Science

Sandra Kay Masters, B.S.-Sociology-Instructor, Spanish-
Mathematics

Walter Ray Masters, B.S.-Sociology-Deputy Officer

Thomas A. Masters-Theology, Political Science, Elder-
Pastor-Overseer

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I am elated to express my deepest gratitude to my dedicated committee: Dr. Don Udell, who was the first to accept my folder from the Dean of Education, upon my request, which encouraged me to pursue admittance into the doctoral program; Dr. William Carmack, a communication specialist and an inspiration; Dr. Paul Glad, the Merrick Professor and expert historian; Dr. Jidlaph Kamoche, an accomplished historian; Dr. Joseph Whitecotton, anthropologist, a representative for the Graduate College, and Dr. Charles Butler, my advisor, who has worked so diligently and patiently, encompassing extensive time and dedicated efforts to help me achieve specific and professional goals.

Others who have served as a source of mental, spiritual and intellectual support in my endeavor are: Dr. George Henderson, a human relations specialist, author, and a former dedicated member of my committee; Dr. Glen Snider, an education and human rights specialist who so compassionately lifted me in my hours of bereavement; Dr. Gerald Kidd, College of Education, Oklahoma University; Dr. Earl Deny,

California State University, Los Angeles; Mrs. Maurice Morse, Reading Consultant, Pasadena School District; J. B. Holland, retired school principal, Topeka, Kansas; Attorney Charles Scott, Topeka, Kansas; Missionary Mary Winchester; Evangelist Jean Tyree Cooper; Nedella Foster; Luella Burton; Ernestine Williams Harris; Cora McDaniel, mother, 90 years old, yet still a great inspiration and advisor; Matthew McDaniel (Flookie); Harry McDaniel, Oklahoma City and Itt McDaniel, Beaumont, Texas (brothers); Bishop Earl Bowie, Bishop of the Tenth District of the Church of the Living God C.W.F.F., Oklahoma City; Rev. Forrest Adams and Rev. William Mack of Syracuse, New York; and many other friends, relatives and acquaintances too numerous to mention, who contributed their dedicated services and support in the development of this study.

This is my formal way of saying: "Thanks to All of You."

PREFACE

This dissertation has, first of all, been an attempt to create a written history of a person whose actions had a significant impact on the quality of education and life in America.

This researcher, in the recreation of this history, completed an exhaustive search of all available resource materials. In the completion of the research, various obstacles and difficulties were encountered, basically because the Brown decision was controversial and because, in the creation of this history, which dealt with personal aspects of Oliver Brown's life, certain kinds of information were difficult to obtain. There was a reluctance on the part of some members of the Brown family to share any information at all, and then a reluctance on the part of still other members of the family to share crucial information which possibly only they possessed. This writer was interested in the various aspects of life of Oliver Brown that would give some insight into factors related to his decision to file the Brown suit. The research was interested, for instance, in data concerning special interest hobbies, special

abilities, anecdotal records which would have allowed her to fill in the vacuum between his birth, which was easily documented, and the time of prominence created by his involvement in The Brown case. This writer believes that some of these obstacles also existed because of continuing political and personal dissensions on the part of individuals and factions within the Topeka community.

Clearly, some of the obstacles were historical in nature. They reflect the tendencies of Black people not to record the behavior of significant Black personalities for the benefit of their posterity.

While all of the desired data were unobtainable, a significant number of pieces of Oliver Brown's life mosaic were put in place. It remains for future researchers to complete the mosaic. A necessary requirement for the full completion of the mosaic will be for Blacks or others in possession of significant data to sense the importance and necessity for insuring that important Black personalities gain their rightful places in history.

This writer acknowledges and accepts the difficulty of her task, which is no greater than its importance, if Oliver Brown and his legacy are to be understood. Readers of this study may disagree with the conclusions; aspects of it may be controversial and violations of individual privacy charged. This writer believes the facts to be true and the conclusions to be defensible. Nonetheless, this writer accepts full responsibility for them.

Finally, it is hoped that readers of this investigation will have a clearer picture of who and what Oliver Brown was.

General Overview of Study and its Objectives

During the 1950's and 1960's, seemingly, the Blacks took a new face in America. They attempted to establish the awareness of their identity. They had not been too sure of who they were at any given moment in the context of American culture.

The struggle for freedom and equality by the Blacks from the plantation age to the present Industrial Age has been a tedious journey. Whitney Young wrote concerning this continuing struggle:

Today's young people are challenging the tenets of this society and we can't write off that challenge. The hour is late, we are in a race against time to end the poverty and bigotry which distort our national life. Whether we build a new democratic society together, whether we end in an orgy of violence, or in a slow painful process of decay, depends upon the decisions we make today and the resources we shall marshal to implement them.¹

The researcher's purpose in this study was to create a history about a man who has made a significant contribution to contemporary and modern public education, about whom

¹Whitney M. Young, Jr., Planning Political and Social Change (New York: Warren and Company, 1969).

so little is known. This study intended to provide a critical analyses of information about Oliver Brown, his strategy and purpose for developing a successful social change in the lives of Americans.

Chapter One gives an introduction of the study, a statement of the problem need, the methodology and limitations of the study. Oliver's roots and the social and physical milieu of the Black community into which Oliver Brown was born and reared is discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three gives a chronological account of Oliver's life, his family background, his work and his education. His life as a minister is described in Chapter Four. Chapter Five deals with his involvement in, and institution of the case, Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas. His move from Topeka, Kansas to Springfield, Missouri to assume the pastorate of the Ready Avenue Methodist Church, his civil rights activities and community involvements are dealt with in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven focuses on Oliver's role as an agent of social change and how it relates to other agents of social change.

The summary synthesizes the preceeding chapters and attempts to place Oliver Brown in historical perspective by providing answers to relevant questions that might be raised about him. The questions of most importance, in the judgment of this writer, are enumerated in Chapter One.

The appendices include services of Oliver Brown, summation of structural interviews, letters, photographs and other documents to which one may refer for interest and verifications.



Oliver Leon Brown

1918 - 1961

The First Listed Plaintiff of Brown vs.

Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas:

African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) Minister

(Photograph submitted to the author by The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, March 13, 1980.)

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF OLIVER BROWN,
THE FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF OF
BROWN vs. BOARD OF EDUCATION,
TOPEKA, KANSAS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Fifteen years ago, a tiny Topeka girl walked twenty-four blocks to school because she was Black. Linda Brown's father objected and the suit he filed reached The United States Supreme Court, which then opened the doors of all public schools to Linda and millions of Black children in the nation.¹

The 1954 decision, Brown vs. The Topeka, Kansas Board of Education, ushered in a new era of civil rights and opportunities for Blacks and other minority citizens. Even though that decision dealt with the issue of state-required segregation of Black and non-Black students in public school education, its implication has been tremendous for segregation within other spheres of American life: employment,

¹Judy Concoran. Topeka State Journal, Topeka, Kansas, May 11, 1969.

housing, public accommodations, to name a few. That decision was, perhaps, the most important court decision relating to civil rights during this century. Its impact on attitudes and behaviors of American citizens is clearly visible.

An abundance of literature has dealt with the Brown decision from a number of different perspectives. Studies and commission/agency reports have sought to examine the effects of this decision, positively or negatively, its failures and its successes. One could anticipate that research projects of this type will continue.

Relatively little attention has been paid however, to the human actors in the Brown decision scenario. Thurgood Marshall who questioned if any state could legislate out of existence the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment, now sits on the Supreme Court because of his involvement. Spottswood Robinson was named to the District Court because of his involvement and expertise. He argued that the mandate of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments was to eliminate the disabilities that had been inflicted upon the Blacks. Kenneth Clark has earned recognition based on his court testimony. Linda Brown, the child whose admission precipitated the legal battle, has received some attention, as have many others. Nevertheless, little or no attention has been devoted to the man who mustered the courage, despite the social climate and

his own experiences, legally to contest the status quo of Topeka, Kansas school assignments in 1951. Oliver Brown, father of Linda Brown, on that fateful day in 1950, decided to take an action which was to have the practical effect of modifying Black/White relationships in this country. Indeed, the early efforts of W. E. B. Dubois, A. Philip Randolph (who organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids in 1925), and the success of Oliver Brown provided the impetus for the later efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King and other activist groups.

Need and Purpose of Study

The life circumstances that would motivate a Black man from Topeka, Kansas to "challenge the system" in the Plessy vs. Ferguson climate that permeated much of the country in general, and all of the southern states, specifically, is worthy of consideration by persons who are interested in the dynamics of social change. It should be considered by people who are interested in becoming agents in the future. Historians, particularly Black historians, owe it to the nation and the world to capture as much as possible of the life of the man who was in the forefront of the fight to improve the quality of life, not just for Black Americans, but for all Americans. Finally, the development of such a study should serve as a lasting testament and display of gratitude for the person, Oliver Brown,

who, in making a better life possible for all of us, perhaps, encountered many undesirable experiences.

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem might be put in the form of questions. The major question is: Who and what was Oliver Leon Brown, for whom the famous 1954 Brown Decision was named? Several related minor questions are pertinent to the major question:

- 1) What were the significant life experiences of Oliver Brown?
- 2) Which of these experiences might have prompted his decision to challenge the school laws of the Topeka, Kansas School System?
- 3) What was the physiological, sociological and psychological impact, if any, of the Brown Case on his life?
- 4) Were there similarities and differences in the life experiences of Oliver Brown and other change agents? If so, what were they?
- 5) Can the answers to the above questions assist us in profiling the life experiences that might allow one to identify future change agents?
- 6) Are there new change generalizations or modifications of existing generalizations that might be made, based on a study of Oliver Brown?

7) What was the impact of the life and actions of Oliver Brown on the Topeka community then, and now?

Procedures

A historical approach was utilized in this study. The intent of the author was to develop a biography of Oliver Brown in a manner designed to answer the questions enumerated above. In order to do so, this author identified both primary and secondary sources, using all resources to which she had access.

The researcher made several trips to Topeka, Kansas, and made numerous long distance calls in an attempt to obtain primary and secondary resources.

The primary resources were obtained by locating and examining written materials by Oliver Brown, e.g., sermons, letters, notes, and tape recorded statements bearing his name. Efforts were made to uncover patterns, if any, within them concerning attitudes, positions on various issues, interests, hobbies, civic activities, skills and abilities. Because of the relative absence of written documents by and about Oliver Brown, materials were obtained by: (1) interviewing members of the family, including his only surviving sister, people he worked with in the political, social and spiritual spheres of life, associate ministers, his pastor, Black and White associate church members and attorneys, (2) examining local and Black-oriented newspapers

and magazines, collecting data from "dead files", (3) collecting data from the Kansas Historical Society (archives) dated back to 1951, which included the obituary of the late Reverend Oliver Brown, (4) examining radio tapes of his church services, and (5) examining legal transcripts of case testimonies.

Other resources were obtained by interviewing cross-sections of people (from Washington, D. C. to Pasadena, California) who knew Oliver Brown concerning significant activities, hobbies, anecdotes and experiences they shared with him or otherwise knew about, or who knew of him in other perspectives. The interviews were conducted by this researcher, usually in the private homes and the offices of the interviewees. Names of some of Oliver's associates were obtained from the program of a church conference held in Topeka, dated September 13, 1957. Persons whose names appeared on this document lived in diverse areas of the country. They were reached and interviewed by long-distance telephone, and signed letters were secured to verify the information obtained. Other names were obtained based on contacts this researcher had as a result of having resided and attended high school in Topeka.

An attempt was made to solicit the cooperation of the immediate family in the retrieval of intimate private data. This attempt was rejected by several members of the family because there was certain information about Oliver

Brown that they did not desire to disclose at this time. An attempt to locate persons he worked with at the Santa Fe shops, also, proved unsuccessful.

Methodology

Because of the lack of systematized and written materials by Brown, himself and others, it was necessary to depend heavily on the interview approach, which is recommended particularly, by historians who need to overcome the limitations imposed by the absence of written documents. In this regard:

Dixon and Swanton maintain that the reliability of oral tradition cannot be contested if it is in line with the evidence derived from archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology, and ethnology. The reliability cannot be proved unless there is some measure of agreement between various independent accounts and unless the facts conveyed correspond with those postulated by cultural historical studies.²

The authenticity of the source materials must be determined by two types of criticism: external and internal.³ The former deals with the question of genuineness of the data, and the latter with the interpretation of the meanings. Particularly, the researcher assumed that data from newspapers and magazines were reliable since no evidence was

²Jan Vansina and H. M. Wright, Oral Tradition (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 9-11. [Introduction--A History of the Kikuyu 1500-1900--Oral Traditions, p. 2.]

³David R. Cook, A Guide to Educational Research (Boston: Allen and Bacon, Incorporated, 1973), p. 47.

found that tended to challenge them, and since these media are normally assumed to be accurate. The data was not inconsistent with Kluger, who perhaps did more work uncovering Oliver Brown than anyone prior to this research. In fact, the materials tended to buttress, in specificity, many of the generalities presented by Kluger.⁴

With respect to the interviews, special efforts were made to deal with the issues involved in both types of criticism. All of the interviews were conducted in two stages: a) a formal face-to-face or voice-to-voice interview and b) a follow-up interview sheet to be completed by each interviewee. A summary of the interview sheets is included in Appendix A. Each of the interviewees was asked to sign his(her) name to the sheet as a verification. This data was compared with notes of the face or voice interviews.

Limitations

This study is viewed as being limited by: a) the fact that no written document by Oliver Brown himself, was found; b) the fact that key family members refused to provide information of concern to this author, information possessed only by these key members; c) the possibility that undetected inaccuracies may exist in the data sources,

⁴Richard Kluger, Simple Justice (New York: Alfred A. Knopp, Incorporated, 1976), p. 671.

particularly the interview instrument. Selltiz, et al., write in this regard that:

The use of personal documents has been critized on the grounds that they are rarely suited for treatment by statistical techniques; that their reality is hardly ever beyond doubt; that they can be the results of deception; that they are subject to errors of memory and are at the mercy of passing moods, in addition they are by no means easy to come by.⁵

⁵Claire Selltiz, Marie Johada, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook, ed., Research Methods in Social Relations, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 327.

CHAPTER II

OLIVER BROWN--HIS ROOTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical perspective from which to know and understand the forces that gave rise to Oliver Brown and which shaped, to some degree, his personality. It is assumed that his decision to be involved in the historic 1954 court decision at the highest active level was a by-product of all his past experiences, good, bad, or neutral; that a particular coalescence of attitudes, feelings and perceptions were present on the day of his ultimate decision.

This attempt to, in a sense, create this history of Oliver Brown requires an examination of important aspects of the history, sociology and psychology of Black people in the country, the state of Kansas, in Topeka, Kansas and in Springfield, Missouri. It involves the difficult task of linking behavior and causes, of hard-headed and objective examination of data, and the logical associating of important dates and incidents. It finally involves drawing conclusions about Oliver Brown based on objective analyses of all the data.

Slavery and Migration in America to 1900

It is sufficient to indicate that most Blacks in this country were legally slaves until slavery was constitutionally abolished in 1865. One may further indicate that the African origin of the American Blacks has subjected them to a protracted undesirable experience. In America, color makes a difference. As Isaacs points out:

Nothing marks a man's group identity more visibly or more permanently than the color of his skin. Men have used these primary symbols of what has been called race as a basis for their self-esteem or lack of it.¹

The symbols of skin color have been used as a badge of the enslaved and the free, of the dominators and dominated and as the badge of master and subject. The meanings of these symbols are sensitive to each individual's involvement in political and social change. Because of the Blackness of the Negro's skin and the many tribes and cultures from which he came, there has been little unanimity in the results of the search for his true identity, even though the experience reduced them all to a common denominator. The Civil Rights Commission, quotes a historian who wrote of Blackness saying:

Black was an emotional partisan color, the handmaiden and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of dangerous repulsion . . . White and Black

¹John Hope Franklin, Color and Race (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 75.

connote filthiness, virginity and sin, Virtue and baseness, beauty, and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the Devil.²

This grim connotation of the Black man's identity may have prompted Elkins to ask, "Why was American slavery the most awful the world has ever known?"³ The slave was completely cut-off from his past culture; he was offered no hope for the future to live and behave as a human being; he had no protection from organized society. He could foresee nothing but hard work, brutal treatment and possible murder. It all started three-hundred and sixty-one years ago when the Blacks made their debut in America and were placed within the context of chattel slavery.

Their experiences were shaped by two contrasting environments. The first was the rural life where they worked on the plantation farms as slaves (less than humans) encountering abusive treatments with little or no freedom of worship, political or social activities. Later, they worked as sharecroppers, utilizing the White man's land to maintain a nominal independent livelihood. At this stage of advancement, there were still many avenues of freedom closed to the ex-slaves. They were free, however, to maintain

²U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Twenty Years After Brown (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 6.

³Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (New York: The Universal Library Grosset, and Dunlap, 1963), p. ix.

family life and religious worship. The second was the urban-ghetto life, created primarily by the migration of Blacks to the cities.

Ghetto concentration had been noted, however, before the Civil War. During this period the Blacks in the North were highly disadvantaged in that their brothers in the South were legally held as slaves. A federal government that tolerated slavery in the South was not likely to advocate equality in the North, and Black northerners, like Black southerners, had to accept their rights as they were issued to them.⁴

As the American Blacks were not accepted into the mainstream of the White culture, they developed a subculture, thereby assembling more or less in close proximity to one another and "doing their own thing". Poverty and exclusion have placed them in a subordinate status which classified them as a separate ethnic group that exists within a society.⁵

Though all Blacks were not slaves, slavery was the norm for them. Franklin Bennett, Meier, Rudwick, and Gutman, among many, have written about slavery, describing

⁴Robert E. Forman, Black Ghettos White Ghettos, and Slums (Eagle Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Incorporated, 1971), p. 7.

⁵August Meier, and Elliot M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), pp. 1-2.

in some detail the social, economic and political dimensions of it. Without question, the era and system of slavery significantly influenced the entire development of American society and continues, even today, to shape decisions that affect it now and will for sometime into the future.

The slavery experience left a legacy of discrimination that influences the behavior of Black people. Particularly, sociologists remind us of the destruction of the Black family via role reversals at variance with normative expectations and behavior. Psychologists indicate that the slave experience left Blacks with perceptions of self-insufficiency, low expectations, dependency, low self-esteem and inferiority. It left them relatively poor, relatively uneducated, relatively politically disenfranchised and relatively powerless. Nothing better could be expected of a social system which had its own maintenance as a primary goal and which resorted to base, dehumanizing measures, ranging from ignoring slaves to the wanton murdering of them.

That the slaves resisted the slave system is indicated by the many instances of slave revolts, escapees and requests for freedom.⁶ There clearly was a desire on the part of many slaves to be free of the slave system and,

⁶St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis (New York and Evanston: Harper and Rowe, Inc., 1962), pp. 35-36.

even after slavery, the memories and accruements of it. Since the official slave system existed in the southern and some border states, freedom often meant physically leaving these states for other, "better" states.

President Rutherford Hayes, however, told a group of Blacks in Atlanta in 1877 that their interests and rights were safer in the hands of the southern Whites than in the hands of the United States government.

The Southern legislatures began to pass "Jim Crow" laws to end the political gains the Blacks had achieved. They imposed special poll taxes that had to be paid in order to vote. A literacy test given by a White man to prove that the voter could read and understand the Constitution was also required. Later, the "Grandfather Clause" exempted from the literacy test those persons who were eligible to vote before 1867, when Congress gave the vote to the freedmen. Through violence, fraud and Jim Crow laws, Louisiana "was able to reduce the number of Black men eligible to vote from 130,334 in 1896 to 5,320 in 1900 and 1,342 in 1904."⁷

The Blacks soon realized that President Hayes had made an erroneous statement, given that they were also

⁷Bradford Chambers, "The Great Exodus: 1879" Chronicles of Black Protest, A Report of a Congressional Witness from Senate Report 693, 46th Congress, Second Session, Part 2, Serial Set 1900 (New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1968), p. 134.

subjected to the peonage system where they were enslaved by working to pay countless and endless debts. Black prisoners were leased out to work for the planters on chain gangs. This eliminated the state's cost of caring for its prisoners. It also provided the planters with cheap labor and gave the courts and sheriffs an incentive to arrest Blacks at will.⁸

Against this cruel system, the Black men worked to acquire land and maintain a respectable family life. The consensus of many Blacks was that there was no hope for them to educate their children and improve their living conditions in the South. Hence, they began to organize to leave.

The South, however, was unhappy about losing its cheap labor supply. The same tactics they utilized to deprive the Black man of his vote were used to try to force him to stay. Their strategies, however, were less successful.

Congress became concerned and in 1879 assigned a committee to investigate the development of the Black migration from the South. The Committee Report gives an account of the testimony of Mr. Adams, an ex-slave who helped to organize a committee to aid the Blacks in developing the "Great Exodus".⁹

⁸Chambers, p. 135.

⁹Ibid., pp. 134 - 137.

Mr. Adams explained that about 1870 the Blacks decided to organize into a committee and look into affairs to see the true picture of their race and to determine whether it was possible that they could stay under a people who had held them under bondage or not. Mr. Adams was asked if it were the object of the committee to remove the people from the South. Mr. Adams responded that their purpose was to see whether there was any state in the South where they could earn a respectable living and enjoy their rights. Subsequently, committees were organized and members were ordered to go into every state which formerly had slaves and report to members of the committees the true conditions of the Blacks. Everyone defrayed his own expense, except the ones who were sent to Louisiana and Mississippi. Their fares were paid by the committee members. They worked with other Blacks in the fields. They also slept with them to ascertain the true picture of their way of life. The committee members found that their people were still being whipped and shot, especially if they voted Republican. In 1875, the committee was named the Colonization Council.¹⁰ They organized and adopted a plan to appeal to the President of the United States to help protect the rights and privileges of the Black Americans. This effort also failed. The Blacks, then, began to leave the troubled areas of the South. They were convinced that the emancipation really

¹⁰Chambers, Ibid.

did not free them from the criminal practices that were being inflicted upon them. In Shreveport, Louisiana, Whites forced the Blacks to close their church meetings at 9 P.M.¹¹ The Blacks finally decided in 1877, that the government was in the hands of the former slave holders, and that if they could do nothing else, they could leave. In spite of all obstacles, they did so.

Blacks Leave the South

In Schaller's explanation of the systematic approach and alternatives for change agents, he did not fail to mention that:

. . . God is at work in human history today, just as he has been in the past and will be tomorrow. The advocate of planned social change who does not believe this, will find much in the past as in the present and the future that is incomprehensible.¹²

The Bible accounts that God is omnipresence.¹³ He was at work in human history when the runaway Blacks escaped from their captivity unharmed. There were some Blacks who were complacent with their status quo positions in the South, but there were many who sought release. It is to be noted

¹¹Chambers, Ibid., p. 138.

¹²Lyle E. Schaller, The Change Agent (Nashville, New York: Abington Press, 1972), p. 13.

¹³Psalms 139: 7 - 10 (King James version).

however, that not all slaves were savagely mistreated by their slave owners.

When the Blacks became dissatisfied with their lifestyle, they began to leave the South for various reasons and would have encountered trouble had they been apprehended. The Underground Railroad was organized to assist the run-aways. They were greatly assisted by men such as Levi Coffin, a White abolitionist from New Port, Indiana, John Fairfield and John Brown of Kansas, who abducted many slaves from Missouri and by other abolitionists.

Harriet Tubman, an escapee, was noted for her bravery and daring efforts in making several trips to the South to rescue her family and others from bondage. She brought them to the North (the Promised Land). Harriet, often called "Young Moses", began her journeys on Saturday nights, giving her ample time to gain distance before the slave owners became alerted of her absence. History has recorded her as having brought three-hundred or more slaves to freedom.

Armed with ingenuity, and guided by the North Star, some escapees began their journeys by stealing supplies from their masters and lodging with other free Blacks, or at any convenient place. The refugees were those who consciously considered the fact that they either had to get

¹⁴ August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), pp. 112 - 113.

away or be subdued by physical harm. Consequently, they sought refuge largely in the northern cities.



Harriet Tubman (extreme left) with ex-slaves she had helped to escape.

Photograph taken years after the Civil War

The migrants were referred to as Blacks who left the South for various reasons. On December 18, 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was adopted which secured citizenship for the slaves and they were given the name of Freedmen. On March 3, 1865 the Freedmen's Bureau was created, after which the Freedmen left voluntarily to settle permanently in other states.¹⁵ Many Blacks

¹⁵ Clarence Kailin, Black Chronicle (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1974), p. 8.

(Photograph taken from the Black Man in the Land of Equality.)

migrated to Canada; their safety and security were protected by the Canadian Government. They were freed slaves, now citizens. Many Blacks resided in the South on a voluntary and cyclic basis. They followed agricultural cycles, the work in which they were provided a livelihood. The Exodusters represented a special category of Freedmen who could be distinguished by the organization and direction of their migration. Oliver Brown's roots were in this migratory movement.

The Exodusters

The Exodusters got their name from what is referred to as the Great Exodus movement which was initiated in 1879, when 50,000 Blacks left Louisiana.¹⁶ Most of them migrated to the Sun Flower State, Kansas, having been affected by the Kansas Fever. The Topeka Daily Capital wrote of this fever:

Long before the Emancipation proclamation many Blacks of the South had the "fever to go to Kansas". Some of them didn't know where Kansas was, but they had heard of Kansas and the "Jayhawkers" and the freedom that it promised . . . the fever grew and helped light the fires that brought on the "Great Exodus to Kansas."¹⁷

The Exodusters came to Kansas in both organized and disorganized groups. Some came in organized groups, primarily from the State of Tennessee and Kentucky. Others

¹⁶Chambers, Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁷The Topeka Daily Capital, Topeka, Kansas, August, 1879, p.

came in disorganized groups from the states of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama.¹⁸

All Colored People
THAT WANT TO
GO TO KANSAS,
On September 5th, 1877.
Can do so for \$5.00

IMMIGRATION.

Whereas, We, the colored people of Lexington, Mo., knowing that there is an abundance of other lands now belonging to the Government, have organized ourselves together for the purpose of assisting to send them. Therefore

Be it Remembered, That we do now organize ourselves into a Company, as follows:— Any person wishing to become a member of this Company can do so by paying the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), and this money is to be paid by the first of September, 1877, in order that we may have a fund of a sum, or otherwise as may be required.

Resolved, That this Company has agreed to emigrate about with the Northernmost Towns, Southern Valley, Graham County, Kansas, and can only do so by entering the vacant lands now in their hands, which costs \$5.00.

Resolved, That this Company shall consist of seven officers—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Trustees. President—M. M. Bell; Vice-President—James T. Bell; Secretary—W. J. Hill; Treasurer—James Clark; Trustees—Jerry Lee, William Jones, and Abner Webster.

Resolved, That the Company shall have from now to the limited money, more or less, as the said may require, to cover travel and board, and the members (being to pay in the first, in advance, or taking or carrying with the above rules in one particular, will not be required to be provided by the Company.

Signs like this encouraged many of the Exodusters
 (Origin Unknown)

So massive and shocking was the exodus of the thousands of illiterate and destitute ex-slaves to Kansas, that a Congressional investigation was conducted to assess its cause and effect. Carleton Tandy, a St. Louis Black reported to the investigating Committee the results of twenty-one

¹⁸ The Wichita Eagle, Wichita, Kansas, June 14, 1879, p.

affidavits from Exodusters.¹⁹ Their objectives were simply to improve and protect themselves.

The Exodusters found a Kansas in transition. The coming of railroads had eliminated the necessity of the large and frequent cattle drives and the "cow towns" that developed in support of them. Interestingly, approximately one-third of the estimated 130,000 drovers who brought cattle to Kansas and other Northern shipping points were Black.²⁰ The Kansas trails led, generally, to Wichita, Dodge City and Abilene.

The Kansas that greeted the Exodusters was one where "Cotton was not King", where the symbolism of degradation it represented was missing and where it could be assumed the opportunity to proper growth and peace existed. Instead, they found that wheat, corn and alfalfa were Kings. Kansas' designation as the Bread Basket was well earned.²¹

They found a Kansas where there was a high literacy rate, based probably on the existence of a large number of newspapers. A compilation of a survey of newspapers

¹⁹Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1790 - 1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), p. 434.

²⁰Topeka Daily Capital, Topeka, Kansas, "Did You Know," August 1979, p. .

²¹Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State, p. 189.

from 1821 to 1936 that Kansas published 4,368 newspapers during that period. This figure surpassed the 3,309 published in New York and the 2,519 published in Pennsylvania.²² In fact, Kansas had 245 more library entries for newspapers than the Library of Congress.²³

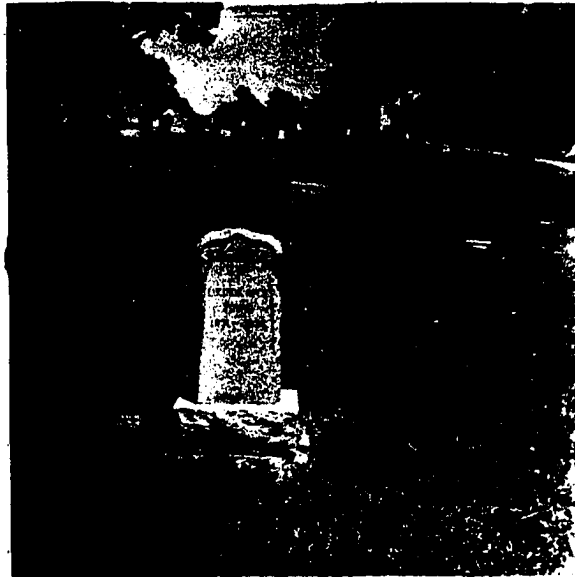
Charles Howe suggested the parallel development of the newspaper industry and the state of Kansas in discussing the establishment of the first weekly newspaper in the United States, The Kansas Weekly, when he wrote of Leavenworth, Kansas:

Four tents all on one street. A barrel of water or whiskey under a tree and a pot on a pole over a fire, under a tree a type-sticker had his case before him and was at work on the first number of the newspaper and within a frame, without a board on side or roof, was the editors desk and sanctum.²⁴

²²Charles C. Howe, This Place Called Kansas (Norman: Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), pp. 68 - 70.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.



The Gravesite and Tombstone of Lucinda Arch, White,
an Exoduster and Grandmother of this writer

She was buried by her granddaughter, Carrie Chiles (Black) in the capital city of Kansas, Topeka, in the Black Mt. Auburn Cemetery, approximately six miles east of the gravesite of Oliver Leon Brown in 1924.

The Kansas the Exodusters found was one where the small family farms were giving way to the larger farms where the growth of "Bread Basket" crops could be facilitated. It was this phenomenon that was partially responsible for the many nationalities that constituted Kansas. However,

(Photograph taken by writer, June, 1980.)

at that time no more than 13.3% of the population was foreign born.²⁵ By 1920, the population of Kansas was so constituted that 30.4 percent and 14.7 percent of the non-whites and white females, respectively were in the labor market. This compared with 81.7 percent and 85.9 percent for white and non-white males respectively.²⁶

Not every community in Kansas was receptive to the invasion of the hordes of Exodusters. Topeka was an exception to this rule. "It was in Topeka that White settlers began to stand up for the Black mass of helplessness that typified the Exodusters. It was from Topeka that many of the refugees found their support to get to other Kansas future towns."²⁷

However good or bad the state of Kansas was, Topeka must be perceived as better than most Kansas towns and cities; as much more warm and accommodating of the Exodusters. After all, it had been settled by anti-slavery settlers.²⁸ The Exodusters found a relatively young city, approximately eighteen years old.

²⁵ Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State, p. 189.

²⁶ 1950 Census of Population, Volume II, part 16, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1950).

²⁷ The Topeka Daily Capital, August 1972.

²⁸ World Book, 1967 ed., p. 259.

It was on the banks of the Kansas River (which is now Kansas Avenue, the main downtown street in Topeka) where nine men met on December 5, 1854 and drew up an agreement which later became the basis for the Topeka Association.²⁹

After a few years of pro-slavery and abolitionist conflict, Kansas territory was admitted to the Union in 1861 as the 34th state. Topeka was chosen as the capital with Dr. Charles Robinson serving as the first governor.³⁰ The tract of land for the construction of the state capital was donated by Cyrus Holliday.

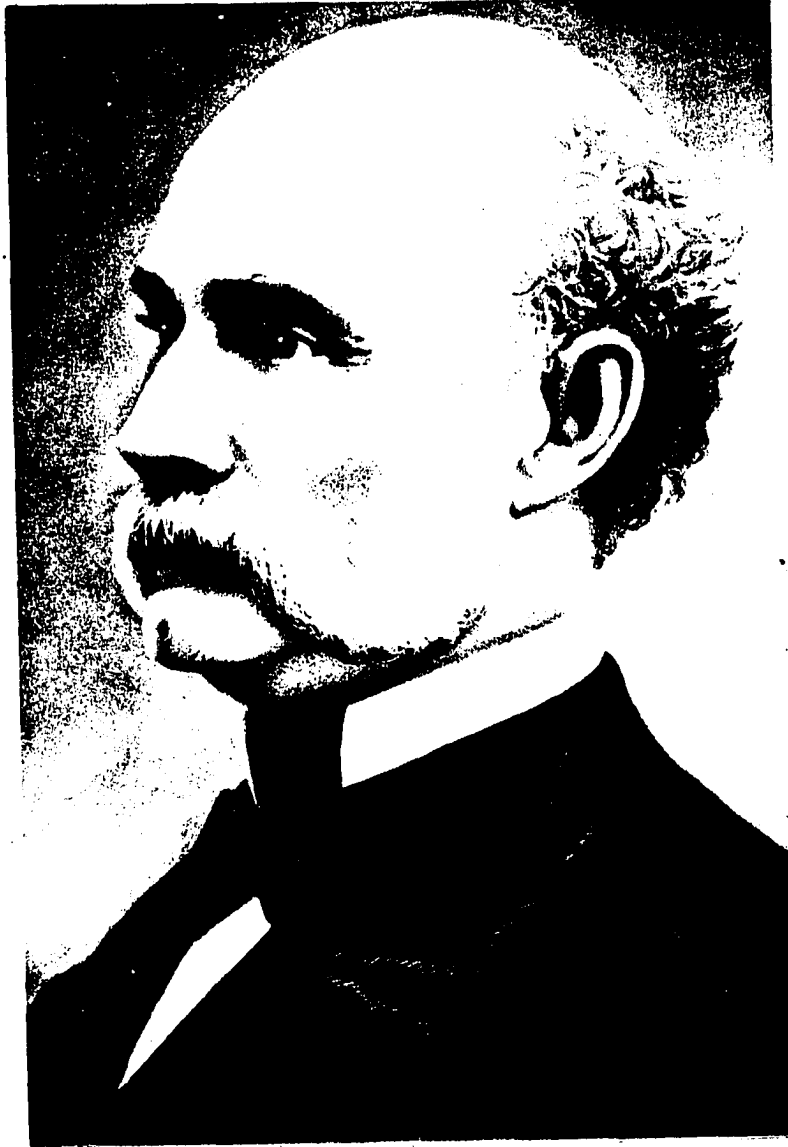
The growth of Topeka was slowed somewhat, due to the drought of 1860 and the ensuing period of the Civil War. But Topeka kept pace with a period of growth and phenomenal revival from 1865 to 1870. In 1862, Topeka consisted of 700 inhabitants.

The number of inhabitants grew to 5,000 by the year 1870.³¹ The data did not indicate the Black and White ratio at this period, but it can be assumed that the Black community grew accordingly, especially after the 1879 "Mass Flight" to Kansas.

²⁹The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Welcome to Topeka (Topeka, Kansas, 722 Kansas Avenue, 1979).

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid. (Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce.)



Cyrus K. Holliday

Founder of Topeka

Shawnee County, Kansas, of which Topeka is a part, had a White population of 56,052 in 1910. The non-White population numbered 5,722 or approximately 11 percent. The literacy rate of the County was 10 percent for non-White,

5 percent for Whites and 2.4 percent for the County overall. Interestingly, relatively equal percentages of non-White and White, children between the ages 6-14 were attending schools.³²

Clearly, the social milieu dictated an increasing necessity for the non-White female to work to help support families as a way of offsetting wage race-based differential for men. Concerning the educational levels of Topekans:

. . . there were significant differences in the literacy rates for Blacks and others in the country, 65% of the Negro citizens compared to 37% for native Whites, was illiterate among residents 10 years or older.

Though perhaps less severe, it appears that the general relative situation of Blacks was unchanged from that of the South from which they had come.³³

Having never been a cow town, Topeka enjoyed a kind of importance not possessed by other cities of the state. Kluger suggests that it had long been a Jim-Crow town.³⁴ It undoubtedly possessed some of the same racist elements that had made admission to the Union difficult. The existence of several all-Black communities attest to some of

³²Thirteenth Census of the United States, Volume II, United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910).

³³Fifteenth Census of the United States, Volume III, Part I, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933).

³⁴Richard Kluger, Simple Justice (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1976), p. 374.

these attitudes. Though not segregated by law, it can be assumed that Topeka was segregated by custom and characterized by many of the same practices employed by the legally segregated states. However good or bad Topeka was, it was better than the southern states from which the Exodusters fled.

The Exodusters found Topeka, a western town where the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway was built under the imagination and skillful work of Cyrus K. Holliday and Samuel C. Pomeroy. The railroads enhanced industry and transportation. The Santa Fe shops provided many jobs for the Topekans; the employees manufactured and repaired railway cars. The shops also provided temporary housing for some of the Exodusters.³⁵

Lutie Brown's mother, one of the Exodusters, found this kind of Topeka in the late nineteenth century. It was the climate of this Topeka which shaped the environment into which Lutie Brown and her family were born.

Kluger and this author suggest aspects of Topeka society which nurtured and shaped Oliver Brown, relating Topeka's positive and negative influences toward its Black citizens.

Though the elementary schools were segregated, they and the junior high schools maintained competent leadership and instructional staffs. The educational program included

³⁵William Frank Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), pp. 140 - 143.

cultural and recreational activities, which promoted pupil growth and development and appeared to be equal to that in the white elementary and junior high schools.³⁶

Blacks were permitted to attend beautiful Topeka High. Topeka High was considered a segregated school within an integrated school. All the classes, including the gym classes and assemblies, were integrated. Black talented students such as tap dancers, singers and orators performed during assembly sessions. Their performances were fascinating and, seemingly, enjoyed by all.³⁷

The Blacks and Whites had their social and cultural activities in different rooms in the building. However, they were free to participate in all affairs. The Blacks had their own musicians and their own annual kings and queens. They seemed to have enjoyed it like this and had no reservations about or desire to interfere with the Whites or have the Whites interfere with them. The Whites respected the Blacks and were fascinated with their intellect, their talents, their ability to perform in various situations, their speech patterns, their mode of dress, and their hair styles. The assumption was that these Blacks were different from the

³⁶This information derives from this author's experience as a student of Topeka High School and resident of the Topeka Black Community in the 1930's and 1940's.

³⁷Ibid.

typical Black Americans that they had read about.³⁸ The Blacks did not utilize the typical ghetto vocabulary such as "playing the dozens."

Even though Topeka's resources were limited and they were surviving on meager incomes, most Blacks exemplified positive self-concepts and self-identities. They were proud to be who they were. A few Blacks at that time were working for the Santa Fe Railroad Company, considered a substantial job. The majority of them, however, were non-professionals, working as porters, window washers, waiters, cooks, launderers, street cleaners, and maids. There were a few professionals, such as attorneys, physicians, school teachers and ministers. There were also a few homeowners, largely located in East Topeka. The average rent or house payment was from \$10 to \$15 per month.³⁹

By custom and practice, the public recreational facilities were segregated. In response to these practices, the Blacks organized clubs for entertainment. Sundays, after church, were special days for recreation for the Blacks. They took turns entertaining in their homes. They served food, played cards, danced and sometimes planned special social affairs. Occasionally, they took motor rides to Kansas University, Lawrence, Kansas, or Kansas Vocational School, Topeka. They also had slumber parties, played

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

tennis and sponsored dances occasionally. The majority of the Blacks usually found their way to church on Sundays.

Topeka's transportation system was not segregated, and neither were the bus and train station waiting rooms. Most Blacks in Topeka traveled by foot because of the lack of automobiles and the proximity of the neighborhood and public facilities. Usually, they rode the Tenth Street bus, mainly, to their jobs. But in many ways Topeka was segregated by custom more effectively than by law. Hardly any restaurants downtown served Black customers. This writer recalls that Gladys Sims, a classmate, and she entered a White restaurant to purchase food to be carried out, not eaten on the premises.⁴⁰

There was one Black theater, which was unable to obtain the better movies; Blacks seldom attended. They were, however, allowed to sit in a special section of an upstairs balcony of the White theater. On one occasion, this section was filled and Lucinda Todd, a Topeka school teacher and one of the plaintiffs in the Brown case, sat across the aisle in a section designated for Whites. A white police officer asked her to move.⁴¹ The swimming pool at Gage Park was also segregated.

The Topeka Blacks did not attempt to force entrance into places where they were not cordially accepted. They

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Interview, Lucinda Todd, Topeka, Kansas, 1007 Jewel, October 8, 1979.

retreated into their own world and created their own social, cultural and economic institutions. The principal Black businesses were beauty and barber shops, after-hour bars, barbecue restaurants and one Black drug store.

Demonstrating a higher level of intelligence and pride, most Topeka Blacks refused to settle for mediocrity. It is not surprising that they became part of the nation's progressive group, that initiated a social change in the lives of Blacks and Whites of America from coast to coast.

Most people who lack a personal relationship with Topeka's Blacks also lack a true insight into the Brown case, because they cannot read the significant prompting factors that lie "between the lines". Nor do they have a general insight into the nature of the Black Topekans' behavioral patterns.

Topeka Blacks never formed a typical American ghetto. In the judgment of this writer, they did not desire that type of social life, even though the majority congregated beyond the railroad tracks in the eastern section of the city. The unpaved section of the city was given the name "Mud Town." This section included one Black elementary school and several Black churches.

Among the prominent and influential Blacks was the Scott family, the father and three sons, "Attorneys Scott, Scott, Scott and Scott," as listed in the Topeka, Kansas telephone director, October, 1979. The Scotts were also important figures in the Brown case.

Charles Scott, son of Elisha Scott, said of his father:

He finished Washburn Law School in 1916 and was admitted to the bar of the state of Kansas. During that period there were very few lawyers anywhere in the country who would undertake representation of aggrieved people in civil rights cases. And he was one of few, you might say in fact, he was the only one west of the Mississippi. Other attorneys were intimidated.⁴²

The Scott family, Samuel Jackson, a law student, Lucinda Todd, a school teacher and a few other Blacks were continually fighting the permissive segregated practices in Topeka. They were often called "troublemakers" by the apathetic and complacent Blacks who were afraid to venture, mainly because of possible economic reprisals and social status.

⁴²Art Schaff, "It Started With a Stubborn Little Man and A Big Idea," Topeka Capital Journal, May 13, 1979.

CHAPTER III

OLIVER'S LIFE IN TOPEKA

In a small vestibule of the St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Topeka, Kansas hangs a bronze plaque dedicated to Reverend Oliver Leon Brown.¹ This tribute is in honor of the man listed as the first plaintiff of the case, Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas. The first plaintiff believed that integrated schools held a better future not only for one family, but for every child.² This plaque also serves as a symbol of an important historical date, May 17, 1954, the day when the "Separate but Equal Doctrine" joined the relics of the past.³

Oliver Leon Brown's parents, Frank and Lutie Brown were born in Topeka. The family's College Avenue residence

¹Observed by the researcher at the St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Topeka, Kansas, May 25, 1980.

²John Peterson, Rights Case Begins in Topeka, Rocks U. S., Topeka Capital Journal, March 15, 1966.

³Darrell Garwood, High Court Justice Outlaw Separate But Equal Doctrine, Kills Segregation, Bitter Blow to the South, The Kansas City Call, Missouri, Leader Weekly, vol. 34, No. 60, May 21, 1954.

is approximately two miles from where the bronze plaque hangs.⁴ Lutie Brown's mother was a Missouri slave who was reared by her slave master. Later, she moved to Topeka to the College Avenue address. Although she was not among the Exodusters who migrated from the deep south, she came to what was known as "The Promised Land."⁵

After Lutie's marriage to Frank Brown and the birth of their nine children (Opal, Emerald Maxwell, Beryle, Charles Sheldon, Clarence Albert, Ruby Jeanette, May, Mary Louise and William Lyle), the Browns separated. They later reunited which was not uncommon for the typical American, struggling, Black family.⁶

The Physical and Social Milieu

The Brown's separation was a typical example of the Black American's family pattern.

Basically, emerging from the South, the average Black family was yet in the process of evolving from slavery and struggling to develop a more normal family structure. The African family system was destroyed when Blacks entered the United States. Their language patterns were also destroyed. They were forced to learn English to become effective employees for their slave masters. Because there were no contractual marriages permitted, families could

⁴Telephone Interview, Ruby Brown Walker, sister of Oliver Leon Brown, February 10, 1980.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

be separated, sold, traded or otherwise dissolved (sometimes by murder) at the discretion or command of the slave masters.⁷ Female slaves were encouraged to engage in promiscuous relations with other slaves for, more or less, reproduction for economic reasons. Slave masters also indulged in sexual relationships with female slaves for various reasons. These seldom resulted in a contractual marriage. The marriage of a Black slave and a white slave owner's daughter was rare.

When the slaves were emancipated in 1865, they slowly developed family structures which often were highly disorganized, temporary and unstable. This was usually a product of their history and social status in the United States. Approximately fifty years after the emancipation, the Blacks had little opportunity to acquire the "normal" pattern of sexual behavior and family living. The Black male often has been subjected to discriminatory practices and limited to social, cultural and economic opportunities which prevented him from assuming a viable role as a respectable and resourceful father or husband.⁸ Often, the Black mother or wife lost respect for the husband or father because of her misguided expectations of his meeting certain living standards. The

⁷Alphonso Pinkey, Black Americans (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 3.

⁸Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark: A Foreword-- Lyndon B. Johnson, The Negro American (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 48.

husband or father became discouraged because of his inability to function adequately and productively in a limited society. Subsequently, these inconsistencies resulted in frequent separations and divorces.

According to Stanley Guterman the majority of mothers in the Black ghetto communities head their family households.⁹ It is usually her sole responsibility to socialize her children and achieve for herself and children, a normal social economic and spiritual life, as did Lutie Brown. Often, it is necessary for the married Black women to work to supplement her husband's income.¹⁰

Another difficulty the Blacks encounter in family adjustment is inadequate housing. According to Scheiner and Edelstein,¹¹ the Black metropolis reflects an overcrowded, dirty, low-class frustrated people congregated into a Black Belt with similarly negative reputations. The city concludes that a Negro living anywhere will become a focal point from which to create another little Black Belt. Scheiner and Edelstein felt that:

⁹Stanley S. Guterman, Black Psyche: The Model Personality Patterns of Black Americans (Berkeley, California: The Glendessary Press, Inc., 1972), p. 51.

¹⁰E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), p. 343.

¹¹Seth M. Scheiner and Tilden G. Edelstein, The Black Americans (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Dallas, Montreal, Toronto, London, Sidney: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp. 363 - 364.

To allow the Black Belt to disintegrate would scatter the Negro population. To allow it to expand will tread on the toes of vested interest, large and small, in the contiguous areas, to let it remain the same size means the continuous worsening of slum conditions there. To rennovate it requires capital, but this is a poor investment . . . Real estate interest oppose public housing within the Black Belt, which would drive rents down and interfere with the ultimate plan to make the Black Belt middle-class and White.¹²

Housing, therefore, was also a major problem in the development of family structure.

There were various calamities striking the families particularly in the South, during this pre-World War I historical period. The depression, floods and the boll weevil-stricken cotton crops in the South in 1915 left thousands of Blacks homeless and destitute. They were ready to accept anything except their life style. Meanwhile, there was an increasing demand for industrial workers in the North. The northerners were recruiting Blacks as well as Whites to come to the North and work as laborers. The Black newspapers also were persuading the Blacks to leave the South and abandon their second-class citizenship. "The Chicago Defender exclaimed, 'To die from the bite of frost is far more glorious than at the hands of a mob'."¹³ "In 1917, the Christian Recorder wrote, 'If a million Negroes move North and West in the next twelve months, it will be one

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, Vintage Books Edition, March, 1969, pp. 472 - 473.

of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation'."14

It was within this kind of social and physical milieu that on August 2, 1918, Oliver Leon Brown was born. He was the tenth child to be born to Frank and Lutie. Below is the Brown's home where their ten children were born. Presently, it stands as a symbol of the Brown family. The Browns shared many activities and relationships in the long-time family home. The houses that used to sit across the street from the house have been moved. A beautiful Safeway market has been built on Tenth Street and College Avenue, only a few doors from where the Brown's historical house is located. One may also view the sophisticated Stormont Vale Medical Center from the old family homesite. Oliver was the last child to be born into the family's household. At the tender age of three months, his parents separated again.¹⁵

The responsibility therefore, of rearing the children and shaping their lives devolved upon the shoulders of Lutie. Lutie was a great warrior, enthusiastic, industrious, civic minded and religious. According to Attorney Charles Scott and Ruby, Lutie was a member of the Eastern Star, a Worthy Matron, and she attended many of the Eastern Star conventions.¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Telephone Interview, Ruby Brown Walker, sister of Oliver Leon Brown, February 2, 1980.

¹⁶Ibid.



The Brown Home for fifty-two Years

935 College Avenue

Even though she instilled valuable traits in her children, she also acted as a child with them. They played together, had fun, and enjoyed family holiday dinners. According to Ruby, the family attended church regularly and was a cohesive group. They were taught that a family that "prays together, stays together."

Oliver was called "Ollie" by his family, and the neighborhood children were known as the "Old College Avenue Bunch." They had a piano in the home. They also had an old time, handle-turned phonograph that was transferred to the different homes of the "Old College Avenue Bunch." Ollie and the gang played ball and marbles in the streets. The Spears family, who lived nearby, also had fun with

the parents and children of the "Old College Avenue Bunch."

There was no running water in the home.¹⁷ Water was brought in from a neighbor's house across the street. Ms. Brown and the children used an out-house for their toilet necessities. It was not until the fifties, when the children left home and established themselves in jobs, that they installed modern facilities in their mother's home.¹⁸

The family was very poor, often supping on beans and cornbread. They worked in domestic services. Often, the mother took laundry in the home where the children could help in order to maintain a livelihood.¹⁹

Oliver attended the segregated grade schools. His teacher, Ms. Mamie Williams, who taught him at the all-Black elementary school, was rated by "wide assent" the best Black teacher in Topeka.²⁰ She taught at Columbia University and also Lane College in Tennessee, where she taught Alex Haley's mother.²¹ Ms. Williams learned how to cultivate pupils' interest in every subject "from a toad frog on up to God."²² In a letter to the author, Ms. Williams gives her philosophy of the total educational process in percentages, as follows:

¹⁷ Ibid. ¹⁸ Ibid. ¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 377.

²¹ Interview with Ms. Mamie Williams, October 5, 1979.

²² Kluger, p. 378.

Fifty percent in formal training, thirty-three and one-third percent in common sense (if one goes to school with it, he will come out with it. If he goes to school without it, he will come out without it.) Sixteen and two-thirds of the pupils' time is spent in socializing and playing around.²³

Ms. Williams' main purpose in teaching was to utilize her skills in eradicating emotionalism, arrogance and ignorance. She also emphasized teaching concepts and methods in many other artistic areas and other areas basic to Oliver Brown and his fellow students.

Ms. Williams's teaching qualities reflected expertise, yet she was unable to observe anything unusual or special about Oliver Brown (a man who is acclaimed by many as a national hero of public education). Ms. Williams describes Oliver as an average student, with a pleasing personality.²⁴

Attorney Charles Scott was a companion and schoolmate of Oliver. Scott remarks: "We played marbles and ball together as typical, normal children."²⁵ Alvin Todd, who worked on the usher board with Ollie at the St. John A.M.E. Church, describes Oliver as being friendly and quiet.²⁶ Mrs. Lucinda Todd also describes Oliver as being quiet.²⁷

²³Letter from Ms. Mamie Williams, February, 1980.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Interview, Charles Scott, Topeka, Kansas, October 25, 1979.

²⁶Interview, Alvin Todd, Topeka, Kansas, November 4, 1979.

²⁷Interview, Mrs. Lucinda Todd, February 3, 1980.

Evidence seems to suggest that his personality reflected an attitude of secretiveness, which apparently gave him satisfaction and gratification.

He apparently internalized many of his frustrations and attitudes. He did not stop striving for greater heights, nor was he able to avoid greater depths. According to Felix Dancy:

Oliver possessed a strong determination and Bull Dog tenacity. He was not easily dissuaded or discouraged by challenges, no matter how great or difficult.²⁸

During his early adult life, Ollie, as he was sometimes called, had a relatively brief career in the boxing ring. He was about six feet tall, weighed approximately two hundred pounds. He had a robust physique with a broad chest area, portraying a strong physical body. Because of these special physical features, he continued to box until he was knocked out, after which he retired from his boxing career.²⁹

At this point in Ollie's life, the assumption is that he had lost two significant battles. He had lost a mental, intellectual, social and spiritual battle by the absence of a father in the home to offer him the father-son relationship of communication, direction, affection and guidance. Even though he had a strong-willed mother, she

²⁸Interview, Felix Dancy, August 7, 1980.

²⁹Telephone Interview, Walker, Brown's sister, February 16, 1980.

was unable to serve the role of a father, too. He had also lost a physical battle in the boxing ring, a place where, at that time, Blacks had an opportunity to gain prominence and acclaim.

During the period of 1930-1940 in which Oliver Brown grew into young manhood, Frank and Lutie saw significant growth in Topeka. The Black population of approximately 6,000 constituted 7.7 percent of the population in 1930. By 1940 the Black population of 5,679 constituted 8.4 percent of the Topeka population. The Black male labor force, however, constituted only 5 percent, indicating the tendency towards displacement of the Black male workers, perhaps as a function of the depression. In fact, for the period 1930-1940, the percent of non-White male workers in the labor force dropped from 83 to 69, while the corresponding figures indicated no change for non-White females. Thirty-four percent of the non-Whites were unemployed, compared to 12.1 percent of the Whites in the State of Kansas in 1940.³⁰ At least comparable percentages are assumed for Topeka.

At this point in Oliver's life he was apparently dealing with two crucial problems, psychological and economic. He was trying to substantially support himself in a city with a population of approximately 78,000, of an average

³⁰1950 Census, Volume II, United States Commerce Department, Bureau of Census (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1950).

income of \$3,255 per total family.³¹ He was working on various odd low-paying jobs such as a porter at the Elks Club, which was one of his first jobs.³² He dropped out of school. Later, he found employment at the Santa Fe shops which paid a respectable salary. He decided to become a family man and proposed to an attractive lady, Leola Williams, who was Topeka High's queen one year at their annual celebration. They were married, date unknown. To this union three girls were born, Linda, Terry, and Cheryl.³³ Kluger describes Oliver Brown's life style:

Oliver was a loving and dedicated father, and very definitely the master of his home, a one-story five-room stone house at 511 First Street . . . The highlight for the girls was when their father would come from from the job as a welder, repairing box cars at the Santa Fe Shops about a mile east on First Street. He would toss his goggles aside, sometimes to catch a quick nap to overcome the fatigue that his job induced, and then joke with his children over the dinner table, though, normally he was a stern man. On Friday nights, they popped corn and Leola and Oliver would reminisce about their childhood days. Later Oliver would be there to hear their bedtime prayers. It was a religious household, grace before meals, the child's prayer and later the Lord's prayer before retiring. They attended Sunday School without fail. Oliver gave them what time and energy he could save from his work as a welder.³⁴

³¹1950 Census Population, Volume II, Characteristics of Population, Part 16, Kansas, Table No. 34.

³²Telephone interview, Walker, Brown's sister, March 13, 1980.

³³Kansas Historical Society, Topeka State Capital Journal, June 21, 1961.

³⁴Richard Kluger, Simple Justice (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967).

Seemingly Oliver Brown did an excellent job teaching his children, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. They seem to have been highly accomplished in the field of music and active in the church.³⁵

Apparently to elevate himself, his family, and his service to mankind, as a pastor, Oliver made the significant decision to resume his education at Topeka High School. He graduated in 1953 at age 35. He continued his education at Washburn College, where he took courses in Theology and English.³⁶

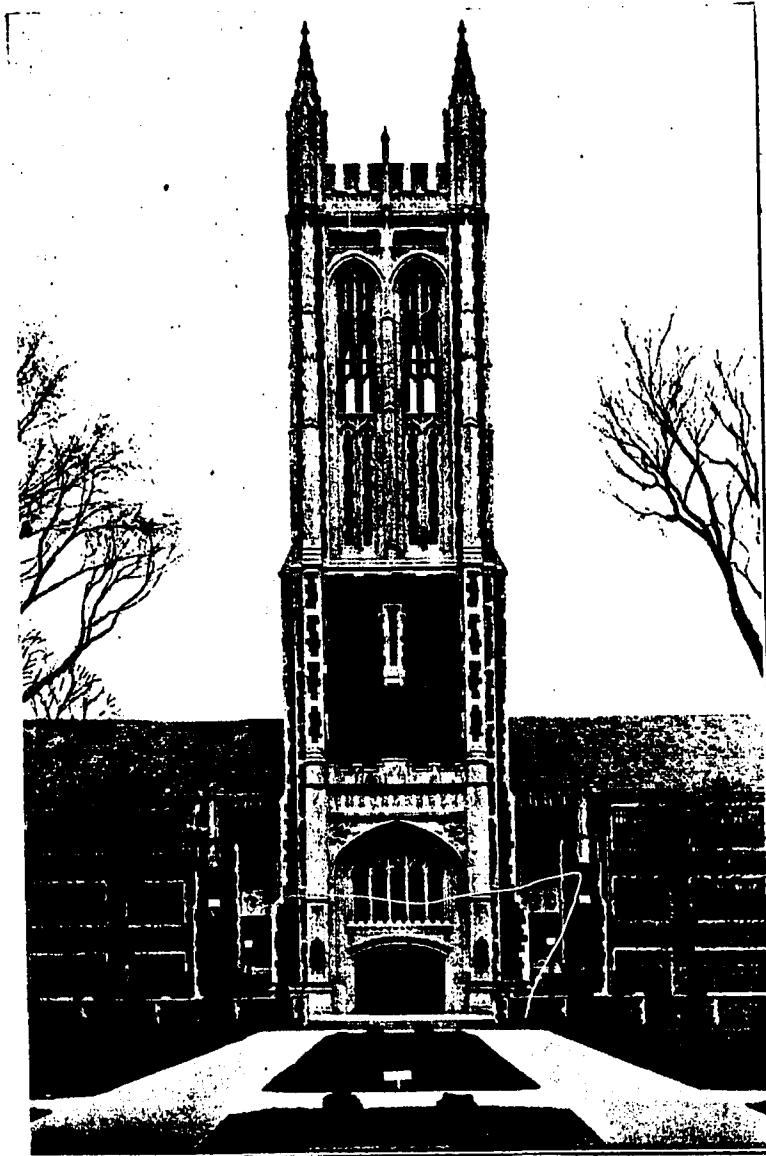
Apparently, Oliver realized the fact that improper language usage and Black language had been considered sub-standard in our American schools and particularly in our society. This may have accounted for his study in English. The A.M.E. Methodist Church, in which he was to become a Pastor, also required competency in certain academic areas in order to serve as pastor. Black speech patterns used by most Blacks are often barriers or used as barriers against Blacks in obtaining or maintaining comparable positions.

Dr. Ruth Golden, a Detroit school teacher, did a one year study of the speech patterns of the Blacks in the inner school system of Detroit, Michigan. She was concerned

³⁵Letter from Mrs. Charles C. Burton, Springfield, Missouri, March 19, 1980.

³⁶Kansas Historical Society, Topeka State Journal, Topeka, Kansas, June 21, 1961, Col. 3, p. 18.

that Blacks were not hired in positions, such as clerks and telephone operators, because of their substandard Black language. The rationale was that they could not be understood.



Topeka High School

Beautiful Topeka High with its Gothic Towers stands as a historical symbol for the Brown Family. Before Brown, Topeka High was

(Photograph taken from Sixty-Two Years of History in the Topeka High School.)

the only integrated school in the city of Topeka. Oliver Brown and his sisters and brothers attended the school. Ironically, the Browns encountered no transportation problems nor any known segregation problems during the time of Brown's attendance. The family lived only a few blocks from the school and one-half block from Tenth Street, the main thoroughfare that leads to Topeka High. The school stands out as one of the most beautiful buildings in the city with its magnificent structural features. Topeka High is presently composed of approximately sixty percent White and forty percent minorities.

There have been many studies of Black culture and Black language, mainly because of the adverse consequences Black children encounter in American schools. Historically, Black language was transmitted by the slaves from Africa to the plantations to the urban ghettos and has been labeled as poor English.

Ossie Davis calls the English language his enemy because it is the prime carrier of racism, and the idea is perpetuated that the Caucasian race is superior to others. Racism is embedded in the English language through the usage of terms such as: "blackmail", "black heart", "black days", and "black magic". "The Black child is forced into sixty ways to despise himself, and the White child sixty ways to aid and abet him in the crime."³⁷ Though the language and cultural gaps have narrowed, the language of most Blacks remains distinct and unique. Many of their folkways remain after three-hundred years in America.³⁸

³⁷Ossie Davis, A Writer and Actor, American Teacher, volume 51, No. 8, April 1, 1980.

³⁸J. L. Dillard, Black English, Its History and Usage in the United States (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 5- 34.

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³⁷Ossie Davis, A Writer and Actor, American Teacher, volume 51, No. 8, April 1, 1980.

³⁸J. L. Dillard, Black English, Its History and Usage in the United States (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 5- 34.

Be that as it may, communication for Black Americans is often ineffective because White Americans view their language patterns as substandard.

After dedicated study, however, Oliver Brown improved immensely. He achieved refined command of the English language and skills in bringing his audiences toward comprehension of his arguments.

CHAPTER IV

THE MINISTRY

Brief History of the Black Church

In America, the Black ministers and the Black church play a dominate role in shaping the lives and directions of their people into viable goals, socially, economically and politically. The church is the most important institution which the Blacks built in America.¹ It is the only institution over which they have complete control.

During the latter quarter of the eighteenth century, the free Blacks in New York and Philadelphia organized the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. There were 12,000 congregations and about two million members in these three organizations. The Bishops of the various Episcopal churches exercise autocratic powers to appoint pastors to the different churches. During this same period, the Blacks were also establishing

¹E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeois (New York: Free Press, The Crowell Collier Publishing Company, 1965), p. 87.

Baptist Churches. In 1965, there were approximately 35,000 Baptist Churches and 7,000,000 members.² Each church operates independently. The individual Baptist church appoints its pastor. Each method of selecting pastors has its advantages and disadvantages. The Methodist Bishops and ministers cater to the middle-class members, and are required to comply with specific educational standards. There are relatively few middle-class Black Baptist ministers, though middle-class Blacks are largely represented in the National Baptist Conventions.³ Most Black religious institutions hold an annual assembly or conference to hear the president's annual address, to take care of the church's business, to assign or reassign pastors, to fellowship and to socialize. It is usually a joyous event to which they yearly look forward.

In early history when a few Blacks were gaining their freedom, the church was their only means of social release and prestige. The roots of the establishment of the Black church were the efforts of the free Blacks to gain their independence of worship, to escape from the inferior position they encountered in the White church, to make their invisible plantation church, visible, and to participate in the control of their own institution.⁴ It was also an exhilarating experience for them--it gave them a sense of self-identity and self-esteem.

²Ibid., p. 88.

³Ibid., p. 89.

⁴Ibid., p. 87.



Church Services on a South Carolina Plantation

As religious worship was an important part of Black life during slavery it was equally important during the life of Oliver Brown who highlighted its importance by entering the ministry of the Black Church. The raised dais in the picture symbolizes the status of the Black minister in the Black community, even in contemporary times.

(This drawing, from the illustrated London News for December 5, 1863, was made by an English artist while visiting a plantation near Port Royal, South Carolina. The "state of almost patriarchal simplicity," which characterized the planter's positions reflects the sympathetic attitude that many Englishmen had toward the Confederacy during the Civil War.)

(Photograph taken from Slavery to Freedom.)

But today, the Black church and Black minister have extended their services beyond self-esteem and self gratification. They reach out to the families--counseling and going into courthouses and jails in defense of their people. They reach out to the community to improve the living standards of their people. They reach out to the local, national and international governments to secure and insure for their people freedom and justice. The Black churches and leaders also exercise great influence in politics, which channels their power strategies into significant goals. Some of the Black political officials such as mayors, city councilmen and coungressmen have been elected through the efforts of the Black churches.

Most Black ministers maintain high credibility in the Black communities. Most Blacks look to their leaders for divine guidance, which highly influences their behavior in diverse situations.

Brown's behavior and service towards his church were most rewarding.⁵ According to his church associates, he was humble, dedicated and cooperative with his church and humanity.⁶ Brown was a member of St. John A.M.E. Church, the beautiful, downtown church, which is located approximately two miles northeasterly from the educational institutions from which he received his education.

⁵ Interview, Harvey Vaughn, February 11, 1980.

⁶ Interview, Felix Dancy, August 7, 1980.

⁷ Interview, Alvin Todd, May 29, 1980.

Rev. Cyrus Keller, pastor of St. John A.M.E. Church was among the first to be informed by Oliver Brown that he had been called to the ministry by "Divine Inspiration" and the Holy Spirit. Reverend Keller describes Oliver Brown as follows:

An active sharer in the total life of the congregation, serving as Sunday School teacher, class leader and Jr. Steward. His involvement in these areas of parish life was total and exemplary. We shared many moments as parishioner and pastor. These sessions always filled my life with a real blessing and joy.⁸

Reverend Keller permitted Oliver Brown to preach his first sermon and recalls that:

The Sunday morning when he presented his "Trial Sermon" was a joyous day in the life of St. John. He was accepted as a candidate for Holy Order and subsequently licensed to preach by Dr. Harvey Vaughn Sr., Presiding Elder of the Topeka District, at the Kansas Conference in 1951.⁹

Reverend Keller was impressed with Reverend Brown's messages and immediately assigned him assistant pastor. Reverend Keller states that, "The Rev. Brown was of a high caliber, both as a preacher and as an individual. His messages were of Biblical sound nature. He gave the word and let it stand on its own."¹⁰

He further stated that:

⁸Letter from Reverend Cyrus Keller, March 20, 1980.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Interview, Reverend Cyrus Keller, April 13, 1980.

Oliver Brown served with me in the leadership of Worship, preaching whenever the opportunity presented itself in general parish duties. His experiences had sensitized him to the need of a Sunday, or a witness on the part of the church. We often talked about the social inversions in which we lived.¹¹

Subsequently, he was assigned the pastorate at the St. Mark's A.M.E. church in North Topeka.



The St. Mark's A.M.E. Church
Topeka, Kansas

Oliver Brown's First Pastorate

When the Rev. Brown assumed his duty as pastor of the St. Mark's Church in the middle 1950's, there were only a few Black churches in the City of Topeka. The churches, however, continued to grow. Later, there were Black churches represented in nearly every section of town. The

¹¹Ibid.; Keller to the author, March 20, 1980.

(Photograph taken by this author May 25, 1980).

Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce published the following in 1979:

The Churches of the Topeka area cordially welcome you whether you are a visitor or intend to make this community your home. The church of your choice and the pastors invite you to worship and fellowship at any of the 141 churches representing 30 denominations or at the synagogue where men, women and children of every faith seek to foster time-tested value or new beliefs.¹²

Reverend Brown and other Black ministers and churches were free to fellowship with mixed congregations, which was an asset to the progress of their ministries. Though at one time, certain areas were segregated, from this author's experience and research, Topeka was one American city where few Blacks, if any, have been publicly called "niggers." Topeka was a city, therefore, where one could worship as he pleased. Reverend Brown believed in integration and brotherly love.

He met the Rev. Maurice Lang III, (White) through a business transaction and invited him to visit his church. Reverend Lang, and Reverend Brown became attracted to each other and developed a cordial lifelong relationship.¹³

It is traditional in many Black churches to invite visiting ministers to preach in the morning services.

¹²The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Welcome to Topeka, 722 Kansas Avenue, 1979.

¹³Interview, Rev. Maurice Lang III, October 5, 1979.

Reverend Lang was invited to deliver the sermon in 1957 after which, he and his family united with the church.¹⁴



Reverend Maurice Lang III
Personal Friend of Oliver Brown

¹⁴Ibid.

(Photograph sent to author by the Reverend Lang, who was with Rev. Brown at the time of Brown's death.)

Reverend Brown responded graciously to Reverend Lang's sermon:

Certainly, I want to thank Brother Lang for this very thought-provoking message, preaching from letters and what they mean. There is a great meaning in the words that we express, the words that we use. Now we are going to extend the right hand of fellowship to Brother Lang and his family. Certainly we want them to know that by coming into our church that this (is not a Negro Church, nor a White Church) but this is a Church of a True and Living God. When we were ordained, He said, "go ye into all the nations and teach, preach and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching all nations to observe these things in which I have taught you." He didn't say you had to go to an A.M.E., or a Four-Square, or Jehovah Witness; but he said to into all the nations everywhere, to the hedges and the highways and persuade people to come to Christ, for if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.¹⁵

Reverend Brown extended a cordial welcome to the visitors and the new members. He made a plea for them:

to stay with God, for he would bring them up out of the pitfalls and place them upon a solid rock to stand. Opposition and competition is what makes a man stay on his knees. People are people wherever they go regardless of the color, race or creed. There will be a number for you and a number against you, as they were with Jesus Christ. Reverend Brown also extended a welcome to visitors who were in need to his home and his food, even though the menu might have been greens and corn bread.¹⁶

His remarks reflected congeniality, a sense of humor and sensitivity to the welfare of others.

¹⁵ Reverend Oliver Brown, Tape Recorded Services at St. Mark A.M.E. Church, Topeka, Kansas, 1957.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Reverend Brown closed services with the following fervent prayer:

Eternal and Everlasting God, we gather together here this morning to find Hope, Peace and Joy. Consecrate our hearts, our souls this morning in order, Oh God, that we may serve Thee better each day. We come this morning, Oh God! not on merits of our own, not because you have poured out your love and your mercy for us. Make us Oh God to be humble, with contrite hearts and help us Oh God to be better children for Thee.¹⁷

Reverend Brown's pastorate terminated at the St. Mark A.M.E. Church in 1959. He served well in the administrative and spiritual capacity. He was dedicated to the cause, providing spiritual and divine guidance among his members and associates.

The St. Mark A.M.E. Church presently stands as a historical symbol to Topekans who remember it as the first church assigned to Oliver Leon Brown, the first listed plaintiff of "Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas." The church is presently occupied by an all-Black congregation engaged in regular Sunday School and church services. His daughter, Linda Brown Smith, currently serves as church pianist, a reflection of the legacy left by Oliver Brown.

¹⁷ Ibid.

This author visited the St. Mark A.M.E. Church, approximately 10:00 A.M., May 25, 1980 with the intention of attending morning worship services, and, further, to obtain information from some of the older members about the late Reverend Oliver Leon Brown. She received a very casual reception from the present pastor. He stated, "There will be no information given by any members concerning the late Reverend Brown without the consent of Linda or her mother." Upon this note, this author left. The pastor followed this author to the outside church steps, forbade a former acquaintance of the Reverend Brown to maintain conversation with this author and invited him to come into the church.

CHAPTER V

BROWN vs. BOARD OF EDUCATION - TOPEKA, KANSAS

Black Education

The early 1950's was a critical period in American history. The United States found itself mired in an undeclared war in Korea. The newly elected Republican President, Dwight D. Eisenhower was engaged in negotiations for a cease fire.

The war had very significant societal implications. First, it was the first war in which United States Army officially fought on racially desegregated basis. The moral inconsistency, suggested for people who could fight together, but could not eat, live or attend school together, was put in bold relief. Moreover, the ascension of the Republican Party to national leadership was significant. This party, historically viewed by Blacks and others as being less than hospitable to issues affecting them, was under some pressure to show proof that it deserved the leadership mantle for all the people which had been thrust upon it.

It was during the era of these social forces that the legal battle began in Topeka, Kansas to eliminate the

practices of segregation and substandard education accorded Blacks in America.

As Parsons and Clark state: "The Blacks were initially disadvantaged with the dependence on weak schools. Migration compounded their difficulties and poverty adds to their handicaps."¹ Benjamin Hooks stated in his introductory speech at the Governors Association held in Washington, D. C., February, 1978, that when one gets behind, he/she will stay behind unless there is a way to catch-up.² At this time, 1951, the Brown case was initiated as a means of providing equal educational opportunity by eliminating segregated schools, which resulted in inadequate education for Black students. It was presumed to be a mechanism for allowing Black students to catch up, but also to keep from falling further behind.

Knowles and Prewitt do not criticize the people, however, who made the decisions about how Black children were to be evaluated. They viewed them as having little understanding of the Blacks and their culture.³ Because their policies seemed to view Blacks as potential Whites;

¹Talcott Parsons and Kenneth Clark, The Negro American, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 671.

²Address by Benjamin Hooks to the Governors' Association Meeting, Washington, D. C., February 1978. (The author was in attendance).

³Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, Institutional Racism in America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969), pp. 31 - 33.

they tended to education them out of their Blackness.⁴ The educational system also fails to teach the White children to understand, recognize and deal with the racial issues that prevail in our society. They taught them to readily accept America's racism, yet they taught freedom, justice and equality for all.⁵ The main reason was that the Blacks primarily, have been sub-educated and the Whites miseducated. Blacks have been acutely affected by their sub-standard education, yet the U. S. Department of Commerce states that Black parents consistently show higher educational aspirations for their children than White parents."⁶

The importance of education to Blacks is reflected in the tremendous strides they have made in educational achievement. One out of ten Blacks 25 to 30 years old was a high school graduate in 1940. The increase since 1940 has been remarkable; the proportion was approximately three out of ten in 1960.⁷ Though they have been economically, culturally and socially disadvantaged, they have made nominal progress since the DuBois and Washington Age. They have made marked progress since the Brown decision.⁸

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., pp. 46 - 47.

⁶Manual D. Plotkin, Director, U.S. Department of Commerce, The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790 - 1978, p. 87.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

Two outstanding personalities who influenced the development of Black education in early history were Booker T. Washington and William Edward Burghardt DuBois.



Booker T. Washington



William Edward Burghardt DuBois

(Photograph taken from Black Man in the Land of Equality)

(Photograph taken from Black Man in the Land of Equality)

W. E. DuBois, first Black Harvard Ph.D. graduate, in an essay entitled "Educating The Talented Tenth," is reported by Franklin to have said:

If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skills the object of education we may possess artisans, but not, in nature, men. Men, we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools--intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it--This is the curriculum of that higher education which must underlie true life.⁹

Booker T. Washington, an obscure slave of West Virginia and a Hampton Institute graduate, encouraged educational progress for the Blacks at the White man's pace.¹⁰ At the Atlantic Exposition in 1895, he emphasized that Blacks could be as separate as their fingers, socially, yet one as the hand, progressively. One hand, however, can only span one octave. Washington also encouraged Blacks to cast down their buckets wherever they were, take advantage of their opportunities and not press the White man for freedom or equality. "Washington's influence sometimes for better and sometimes for worse, was so great that there is considerable justification in calling the period, 'The Age of Booker T. Washington'."¹¹

⁹John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Vintage Books, Third Edition), pp. 393 - 395.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 395.

¹¹Ibid., p. 397.

These two men differed significantly regarding both the types of education needed by Blacks and the purposes for which the education would serve. However, it might be suggested that the influence of Washington resulted in the "Separate but Equal" time announced in the 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision. White America accepted the separate, but rejected the equal.

There have been numerous attempts to obtain quality education for the Blacks since slavery. These attempts have been made by litigation, integration, and liberation. But it was not until Oliver Leon Brown, and the local and national Chapters of the N.A.A.C.P. challenged the "Separate but Equal" Doctrine on the basis of the constitutionality of the Fourteenth Amendment that substantive results come. It all started when Oliver Brown and others were no longer willing to accept second class citizenship. "Oliver Brown wanted to be a whole man," remarked Samuel Jackson, a law student at Washburn College, Topeka.¹² A suit was filed.

Who Filed the Case?

Research bears out varied opinions of who filed the suit. Peterson stated:

A Supreme Court decision which touched off racial fire works across the country originated in Topeka when a Negro minister's daughter was refused enrollment in a school two blocks from their home. The suit was filed by the Rev. Oliver Brown on behalf of his 9 year old daughter, Linda Brown.

¹²Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 395.

The Rev. Brown initiated the suit after his daughter was refused admission to all-White summer school. She was forced to attend the Negro Monroe elementary school more than 20 blocks from her home. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sponsored the case with a legal team and in the early 1950's, the case joined several others on the Supreme Court docket. The cases were placed on the docket with the Brown case first.¹³

An editorial in the Topeka Sunday Capital Journal, in discussing the role of Monroe School, the all-Black elementary school Linda attended, indicated that:

She (Linda) and the school gained nationwide attention when her father, the late Rev. Oliver Brown, filed suit in her behalf against the Topeka Board of Education charging racial discrimination. . .¹⁴

But, according to Charles Scott, one of the plaintiff attorneys and legal counsel for the Topeka Chapter of the NAACP, the suit was initiated and filed by the local NAACP Chapter.¹⁵

Lucinda Todd, who had written a letter (Appendix C) to Walter White, then Executive Secretary of the National NAACP as early as August 29, 1950, asking the assistance of the national office in the problem of Topeka elementary school segregation, wrote this author concerning who filed the case:

¹³John Peterson, "Rights Case Begins in Topeka, Rocks U.S.," Topeka Capital Journal, March 15, 1966, p. 5B.

¹⁴Topeka Sunday Capital Journal, May 25, 1980, p. 8.

¹⁵Interview, Charles Scott's office, Topeka, Kansas, October 5, 1979, June 4, 1980.

It is regrettable that the Brown school case is going down in history in error. The press continues to write that the Brown case was filed by the Rev. Brown, which is entirely mistaken.

The Brown Case was filed and prosecuted by the Topeka, Kansas Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. In fact, the Rev. Brown was very reluctant to participate in the case. He had to be persuaded. Reverend Brown was one of the thirteen plaintiffs in the case. The attorney chose the name since Brown begins with a "B".

I am convinced that if the Rev. Brown were alive, he would clarify the matter.¹⁶

Mrs. Todd's letter to Mr. White, written in her capacity as secretary of the Topeka NAACP, indicated the intent of the local chapter to seek legal remedies in the school segregation issue.

Brown Era Demography of Topeka

At around the time the Brown case was filed, Topeka had a population of 78,791, an increase of 16.2 percent over 1940. Of this population 8.3 percent was non-White. While the median income of Topeka was \$3,255 per family, 22.1 percent of the families had incomes of \$5,000 or more. Only 36 percent were employed in trade and manufacturing; the bulk of the population was employed in service industries. By this time, the median age was 32.3 and persons over 25 had completed 11.9 median years of schooling.

The metropolitan area encompassing Topeka, was 84.5 percent urban, in which 32.3 percent of the dwellings did not have running water and private toilets or were

¹⁶Letter, Lucinda Todd, Topeka, Kansas, April 20, 1980.

delapidated. By this time, only 69.1 percent of the non-White males were in the labor force, fully 10 percentages points less than for White males.

Black enrollment in the Topeka public schools was 13.2 percent of the total, on which an average of \$182 per student was spent for education. The 427 teachers in the school system earned an average of \$3,638, barely beyond the median salary for the city.¹⁷

In contrast with Washington, D. C., from which a suit similar to Brown's was filed, Blacks, worked for the government--Blacks fared better than they did in Kansas. Many were hired as clerks; others were janitors. 2,500 were cooks, 2,000 were taxi drivers, 8,000 were waitresses, 200 were bookkeepers, and thousands were service attendants in the public lodging industry. Between 1930 and 1950, the Black population grew to 280,000, or 35% of the total population. The Black community's elite was also relatively the largest in the nation. There were 150 lawyers and judges, 300 Black physicians and surgeons, 50 electrical engineers, 2,000 school teachers, and more than 150 faculty members and professors at Howard, the country's largest Black University.

The Black family in the District earned 63 percent as much as the average White family in 1950, which was vastly

¹⁷County and City Data Book, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957).

better than most Southern families, Black or White. The average Black family in the District earned one-third more than the average for all families in South Carolina. Crime, segregation and inadequate schooling were prevalent in the nation's capital city. The schools were very well equipped; but, they were no palaces.¹⁸

It was in reflecting on these economic, political and social forces, that Linda remembers her father's frustrations and the circumstances that likely led him to file charges against Topeka's school system. She wrote:

Both of my parents were extremely upset by the fact that I had to walk six blocks through a dangerous train yard to the bus stop . . . only to wait, sometimes up to an half an hour in the rain or snow for the school bus that took me and the other Black children nearly two miles to "our school." Sometimes I was just so cold that I cried all the way to the bus stop . . . and two or three times I just could not stand it, so I came back home.¹⁹

Reverend Brown's momentous reaction by taking the walk to Sumner School occurred after Linda made one of those return trips home, crying because of the adverse weather conditions. Linda recalls, "Mother said she had never seen

¹⁸Kluger, Simple Justice, pp. 508 - 509.

¹⁹The United States Commission on Civil Rights, Twenty Years After Brown (Washington, D. C., 1977), p. 1.

him so angry. He was so fed-up with the cruelty and injustice of it all that he decided, then and there, this was going to have to stop."²⁰



George McLaurin, an educator and resident of Oklahoma was denied admission to Oklahoma University solely, because he was Black. He was ordered admitted to the University by the U.S. Supreme Court, but was segregated in a separate section of the class away from the other students. Cases like this set important precedence for the Brown decision.

(Photograph taken from The School Segregation Cases by Janet Stevenson).

²⁰ Ibid.



Linda Brown second from the left in the back row is shown with her kindergarten class at the All-Black Monroe Elementary School of Topeka, Kansas, 1949.

The first day of the battle which Oliver Brown was to wage with the Topeka Board of Education, the day Linda did not pass Sumner school, began in the office of the school. Linda waited in an outer office while her father conversed with the principal. Linda observed from the tone of her father's voice that he was very upset. The walk home was tense and brisk, much different than the walk to school. She could feel the tension from the grip of his hand and the expression on his face. She knew something was wrong, but she didn't know what.

Linda's mother recalls that the principal gave the expected excuse--there wasn't anything the principal could do about it, Negro children could not attend Sumner because of the school board's policy.

The Browns tried to explain to Linda that the problem they were facing in getting her admitted to Sumner School was because of her color. Since the neighborhood in which they lived was predominantly white, Linda could not understand how or why she could play with White children, but not attend school with them.²¹ She could not and did not understand the inconsistencies of American democracy. It was these inconsistencies plus those dictated by Brown's belief that must be considered in any analysis of his possible motivations in taking a leading and active role in the suit against the Topeka Board of Education.²² It might be surmised that he felt a move against injustice was an effort to erase the inconsistency and to allow him to meet his charge (challenge).

Kenneth McFarland reared in the little town of Carey, Kansas, near Oklahoma, became superintendent of schools in Topeka in 1942. "Arrogant, 'demagogic', and 'racist'" are the words leading members of the Black community used to describe him.²³ Dr. McFarland was an orator and gave as many as 200 speeches a year on his book titled, Eloquence

²¹Bettinita Harris, Some personal Thoughts out of the Past (of Linda Brown Smith), Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka Magazine, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 1977, pp. 30-32.

²²Scriptural paraphrase of a tape-recorded service of the St. Mark A.M.E. Church, Topeka, Kansas, by The Rev. Oliver Brown.

²³Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 381.

in Public Speaking. McFarland noted in one of his speeches:

In the Sermon on the Mount, "Jesus never told his listners, 'you've got a bad deal'! He wasn't for getting the people out of the slums--he was for getting the slums out of the people! Equality in America means equality of opportunity -- that's all that's guaranteed by our system. Not happiness, but the pursuit of happiness.²⁴

His brutal denial of the equality of opportunity inspired the emergence of a new generation of Black Topekan, ready to suppress McFarland's aggressiveness. McFarland hired Herman Caldwell, a Black man, as the Director of Black schools and to aid him in his racial attacks on the Black community. Merrill Ross described Caldwell as "a con man, a bigot, but quite articulate."²⁵ Caldwell implemented a program that many parents viewed as resegregation. Caldwell was held responsible for what happened, not only in the four Black elementary schools, but for the segregation policy that he implemented in the high schools, as well.

Mr. Caldwell inaugurated a system of two bells for assemblies. The first bell called White students to the auditorium. The second, "the nigger bell," called Black students to an upstairs assembly to listen to a talk by Mr. Caldwell. Caldwell isolated the Black athletes and set up a Jim Crow schedule for them. Black female students

²⁴ Ibid., p. 383.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 382.

were no longer included in the regular domestic science classes, but were farmed out as unpaid mothers' helpers in the homes of Black housewives.²⁶

According to Mrs. Lucinda Todd, Caldwell also segregated the senior prom activity. He greeted the Black students at the door on the night of the senior prom and refused to permit them to enter the building. They had to wait in the adverse weather conditions until other Black parents arrived with some of their children. They were then directed to a segregated elementary school for the affair and danced to the music of a juke box while the Whites danced to the music of an orchestra.²⁷

Mrs. Todd, one of the middle-class members of Topeka's Black community, was also one of the first parents to attack Caldwell in a successful effort to eradicate his new program.²⁸ She and other members of the Black community worked tenaciously in obtaining fifteen hundred signatures on a petition asking an end to segregated schools. Obtaining these signatures was also a substantial basis for filing

²⁶ Janet Stevenson, The School Segregation Cases, Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka and others (New York: Franklin Watts Incorporated, 1973), pp. 33-38.

²⁷ Interview, Mrs. Zelma Henderson, Topeka, Kansas, October 5, 1979.

²⁸ Interview, Lucinda Todd, Topeka, Kansas, January 1, 1980.



Mrs. Lucinda Todd

Mrs. Todd, one of Topeka's highly qualified school teachers, was also one who labored fervently to outlaw segregation within the Topeka School System.

(Photograph submitted to the author by Mrs. Todd, Topeka.)

the suit in Topeka.²⁹ Some of the doctors and graduate students at the Menninger Foundation were also instrumental in the process of obtaining signatures from residents.³⁰ Other plaintiffs who worked tenaciously in the segregation battle were Mrs. Vicki Coffee, Mrs. Zelma Henderson, Mrs. Maude Lawton, Mrs. Vivian Scales and Mrs. Shirley Hodison.³¹ Mrs. Esther Brown, a White Topekan was also a diligent worker. She was the chief organizer of the school desegregation suits.³²

While there was a number working to outlaw segregation in Topeka public schools, there was a group working to counter-act legal procedures to desegregate the schools. This group represented the apathetic Black residents who were afraid of economic reprisals. They circulated a petition obtaining signatures against those persons who were seeking legal actions. Subsequently, the struggle for quality education by Oliver Brown, Lucinda Todd, Charles Scott, the Burnetts, the N.A.A.C.P. and others reflected, not only a conflict with the Topeka School System, but also with Herman Caldwell and other Black citizens.

²⁹Janet Stevenson, School Cases, p. 38.

³⁰Interview, Lena Burnett, Topeka, Kansas, June 2, 1980.

³¹Atlanta Constitution News Report, May 16, 1979.

³²Interview by Kluger with Esther Brown, New York City, May 31, 1971, p. 796.

It was in this climate that Brown and others filed the historic case, though the action is still a subject of some debate in the Topeka community. It is clear, however, that the efforts of Brown would not have been successful without the N.A.A.C.P.

Highlight Procedures of the Case

The partially filled courtroom was a strong testimony to the confused emotions of the Topeka community over the N.A.A.C.P.-sponsored case when the three-judge panel took its place on the morning of June 5, 1951, to hear Brown vs. Board of Education.³³ The attorneys for plaintiffs were Charles and John Scott, Topeka, Kansas; Robert L. Carter, New York City, New York; and Charles Bledsoe, Topeka, Kansas. The attorneys for defendants were George Brewster and Lester Goodell, Topeka, Kansas. The three-judge panel which heard the case was composed of Federal Judges, Walter Huxman, Delmas C. Hill and John P. Mellott.

Among community residents present in the courtroom were a few angry and proud Blacks who were ready to do something about their degraded standing in the community.³⁴ There were educators, lawyers, school teachers, and others who spent a lot of time educating the young themselves.

³³Brown et al. vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Civ. No. T-316 United States District Court, p. 797.

³⁴Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 376.

"We spend little time looking for signs of mistreatment and prejudice. We are consciously trying to improve ourselves remarks Ms. Williams." Some have been quoted as saying, "Lincoln lived in a dirt house, but he was not a dirt man."³⁵

The attorneys called witnesses to verify such schooling conditions, as the crowded school buses and the long distances the children had to travel to get to school.³⁶

Linda was not present the Monday morning in June, when her father, Oliver Brown testified. Oliver appeared tense and failed to disclose basic information which was relevant to the case. Judge Huxman urged Brown to speak fluently. Kluger records the following sequence of the testimony involving Oliver Brown directly:

Question: You say your child goes four blocks to the bus pick-up point?

Brown: She goes six blocks to the pick-up point.

Question: Six blocks, pardon me. Don't you know as a matter of fact that in many instances there are children that go to the White schools in this town that go thirty and thirty-five blocks and walk to get there?

Carter: I object to that.

Brown: Where at?

Carter: I see no materiality to this question.

Judge Huxman: Objection will be sustained. That is not proper cross-examination of the witness.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 378.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 406.

"On that note Oliver Brown was excused. It was 11:15 when he left the witness stand and passed into American History."³⁷

Several other plaintiffs testified to similar questions.³⁸ The plaintiffs explained the limitations and the discrimination practices exercised within the Topeka School System, encompassing the physical inconveniences, the psychological and mental effects it created for the parents and children.

Ten year old Katherine Carper, a pianist, alert, and very eager to be a witness, was asked by Attorney John Scott to explain the bus conditions.³⁹ Kathy said, "It is loaded and there is no place hardly to sit."

Question: And are the children sitting on top of each other?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Goodell: We object to this whole line of leading questions of Counsel testifying rather than the child.

Judge Huxman: They are slightly leading, but try not to lead the witness. The objection is overruled.

Question: Katherine, do you live in the neighborhood with White children?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Question: Do you play with them?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Question: What schools do they go to?

Answer: Randolph.⁴⁰

Attorney Scott's line of questioning was relevant according to the basic premise of the N.A.A.C.P. lawyers and Judge Huxman.⁴¹

³⁷ ibid., p. 410. ³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 407.

⁴⁰ ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

In an attempt to justify segregation, Defense Attorney Goodell argued that Negroes had made great achievements in all-Black schools. He questioned Wilbur B. Brookover, a social psychologist from Michigan State College who had argued that segregated education was inferior. Goodell asked Brookover if he had heard of Bethune, Richard Wright, G. W. Carver, W. E. B. DuBois, Walter White and others, all of whom had been partly educated in segregated schools. These exceptions to the rule did not disturb Brookover's general view. Goodell asked, "Isn't it true that many White youngsters also undergo emotional stress and strain in school, due to being left off the football team or not being invited to parties or the like?"⁴² Goodover responded that the differences implied by Goodover were not enforced differences.⁴³

Louise Holt, a Kansas University Professor testified that the practiced results of enforced segregation created on the part of Black students a sense of inferiority. This, she claimed, would affect their ability to learn. Importantly, she indicated that the earlier these attitudes were developed, the more difficult they were to change. This was an important reason to desegregate at the earlier elementary levels. She further added that the problem is magnified when it has the sanction of the law.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., p. 416.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Kluger, pp. 421 - 422.

Louise Holt's testimony was well accepted by Blacks and others and sent vibrations all the way to Washington.

A Notre Dame Professor and his aide were the last of the N.A.A.C.P. witnesses. The Professor testified that segregation stopped the upward mobility of Blacks. His aide testified as to the difficulty of desegregating adolescent students.⁴⁵

The case closed with great relief that the defense had not been able to find a Negro witness to speak out in favor of continued segregation.⁴⁶ There were racial solidarity and pride in Black Topeka, reflecting a feeling not to oppose the N.A.A.C.P.'s standing up in court against the man (White). Concluding opinions were given by Judge Huxman of Topeka, Kansas, Shawnee County who stated:

We have found as a fact that the physical facilities, the curricula, course of study, qualification of, and quality of teachers, as well as other educational facilities in the two sets of schools are comparable. The evidence, however, established that the school district transports colored to and from school free of charge. No such service is furnished to White Children . . . We conclude that in the maintenance and operation of the schools there is no willful intentional or substantial discrimination in the matters referred to above, between the colored and White schools. . . . In fact, while attorneys have not abandoned this contention, they did not give it great emphasis in their presentation before the

⁴⁵ Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 422.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 423.

court . . . They relied primarily upon the contention that segregation in and of itself without more violates their rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. . . .⁴⁷

We are accordingly of the view that the Plessy case has not been overruled, and that it still presently is authority for the maintenance of a segregated school system in the lower grades.

The prayer for relief will be denied.⁴⁸

Immediately a letter was written to Washington, stating that Huxman's opinion against the N.A.A.C.P. puts the Supreme Court on the spot, and seemed to have been written with that end in view.

Huxman admitted at his Pembroke Lane home in Topeka, "We were not in sympathy with the decision we rendered." "If it weren't for Plessy vs. Ferguson, we surely would have found the law unconstitutional. But there was no way around it. The Supreme Court had to overrule itself."⁴⁹

In subsequent legal action, the Supreme Court was given the opportunity to reverse its Plessy vs. Ferguson decision by hearing appeals from four other class-action suits based on the same constitutional issues and questions. The four cases from the states of Delaware, South Carolina, Virginia and the District of Columbia were combined with the appeal from Topeka, Kansas and docketed under the name

⁴⁷Brown et al. vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Civ. No. T-316 United States District Court, p. 798.

⁴⁸Kluger, Simple Justice, p. 423.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 424.

of Oliver Brown, presumably based on the alphabetized order of the principal petitioner's names. Thus, the chance inheritance of a surname was decisive in determining Oliver Brown's historical placement.

While each of the cases was based on different facts, local conditions and principles, the chief issue remained: could states violate the Fourteenth Amendment by requiring the segregation of Black and White students?

The impressive array of legal talents which represented the plaintiffs and the N.A.A.C.P. included Thurgood Marshall, Robert Carter, Jack Greenberg, Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson III, Charles Bledsoe, Charles and John Scott. Louis Redding, George Hayes and Jame Nabrit.

More than fifty experts, representing chiefly the social sciences of education and sociology testified for the plaintiffs, pointing out the detrimental social, psychological and educational consequences of state-mandated segregated schooling. Among those testifying were Henry Garrett, Kenneth Clark, Fredereck Wertham, Otto Klienberg, Jerone Bruner, Robert Redfield, David Krech, Barbars Johns, Silas Fleming, Lucinda Todd, Katherine Carper and Louise Holt.⁵⁰

The N.A.A.C.P. foes in the battle before the Supreme Court were represented by John W. Davis and Robert Fegg

⁵⁰ Janet Stevenson, The School Segregation Cases, Preface.

of South Carolina, and Paul Wilson, assistant Attorney General of Kansas. Their defense was based on state rights and inconclusive evidence of the harmful effects of segregation.⁵¹

Chief Justice Earl Warren, less than eight months a member of the Supreme Court and less than three months the unanimously confirmed Chief Justice, was ready to issue a formal decision in the Brown case after hearings that began December 7, 1953. His preparation had required the frustrating task of creating a unanimity on the court regarding the need to dismantle the segregated school system.⁵²

At 12:52 P.M. after new lawyers were admitted to the Federal Bar and decision in two other cases, United States vs. Border Company and Capital Service vs. National Labor Relation Board were issued, Chief Justice Warren spoke. "I have an announcement," he said, "the judgment and opinion of the Court in No. 1-Oliver Brown et al. vs. Board of Education of Topeka."⁵³

Beginning with the institution of slavery in the United States, Chief Justice Warren traced the twisted paths that brought America and one-hundred years of American history to the bar of justice. He stated, "The Fourteenth Amendment said clearly that no state shall make or enforce any law

⁵¹ Ibid., Kluger, pp. 544 - 581.

⁵² Supreme Court Reporter, Brown et al., 347 U.S. 483, p. 691.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 702.

which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States."

After a lengthy discourse citing changes in the society at the time, the nature of the testimony and evidence provided Chief Justice Warren concluded that there was no place for "Separate but Equal" in public education--that inherent equality existed in segregated facilities.⁵⁴

Reactions to Supreme Court Decision

The momentous decision affected many people across the country. To some, it was catastrophic; to others, it was gratification. But the bare effects of the diverse social and mental consequences cannot be measured with certainty.

The United States Civil Rights Commission wrote that the decision was "a pronouncement second in importance only to President Lincoln's Emancipation on Proclamation," and the extensive shock it caused in the South was attributed to its simple recognition of the fact that Negroes are citizens of the United States. Hodding Carter of Mississippi wrote that "a Supreme Court ruling against segregation would be revolutionary in character." Brown, in fact, did evoke the anticipated reaction in the South, where the day of the court's decision already had been labeled Black Monday.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Lerone Bennett Jr. The Day Race Relations Change Forever, Ebony Magazine, May 1977, pp. 133 - 134.

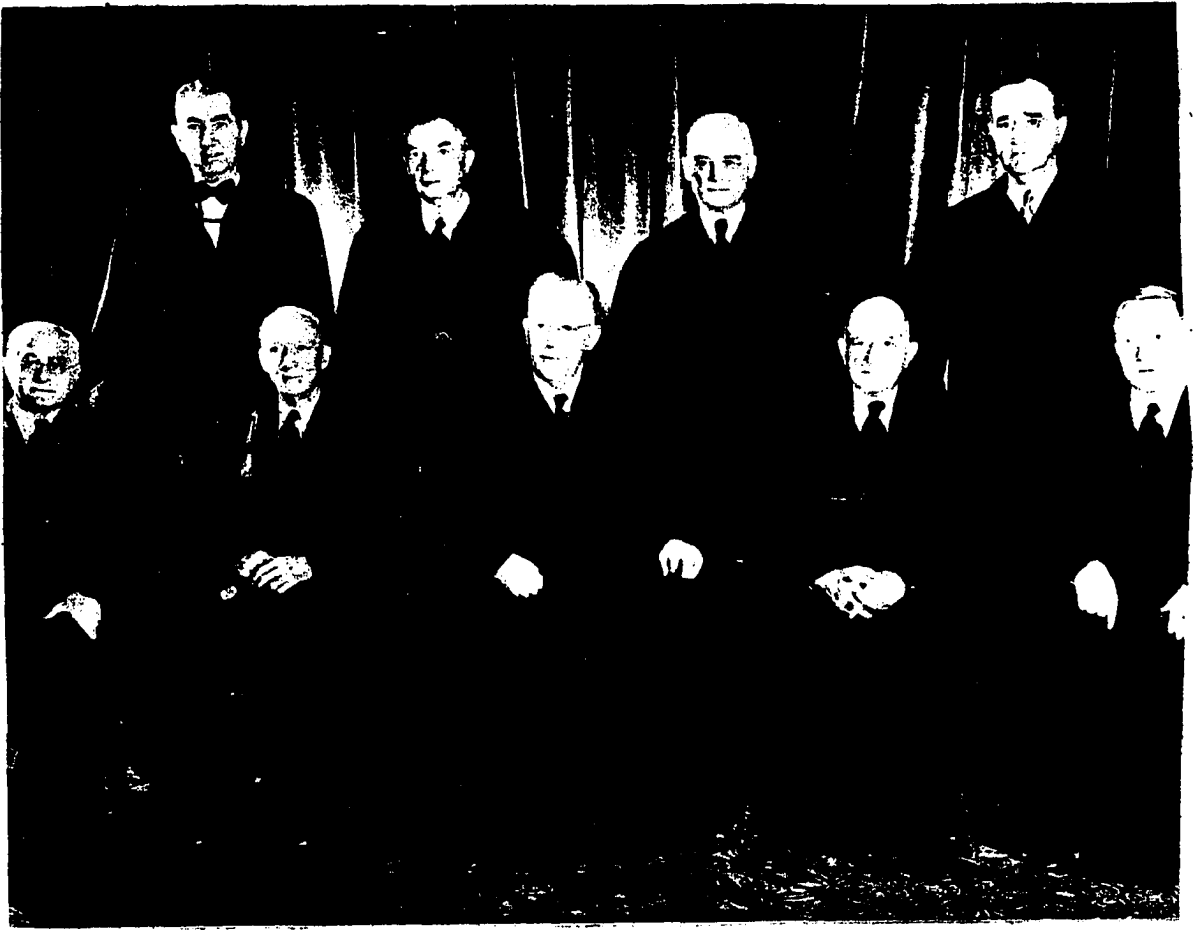
⁵⁵The United States Commission on Civil Rights, Twenty Years After Brown (Washington, D.C.: 1977), p. 4.



Thurgood Marshall and Spottswood Robinson III

The two Black attorneys argued the Brown Case before the Supreme Court were later named to the Federal bench. Marshall a 1933 graduate of Howard University, an all-Black law school and N.A.A.C.P counsel, joined Earl Warren on the Supreme Court. Robinson, an accomplished N.A.A.C.P. counsel was assigned to the United States District Court.

(Photograph, The School Segregation Cases by Janet Stevenson.)



The Supreme Court that Rendered the
1954 Decision

The Supreme Court that rendered the Brown Decision was
composed of: Left to right, front row:
Felix Frankfurter, Hugo L. Black, Chief Justice Earl Warren,
Stanley F. Reed, and William O. Douglas.
Back Row: Tom E. Clark, Robert Jackson, Harold H. Burton,
and Sherman Minton.

(Photograph, School Segregation Cases, by Janet
Stevenson.)



Awaiting Court Argument

A crowd of people lined up in the Supreme Court Building in Washington, December 7, 1973, to enter the Courtroom for the second round of arguments challenging the constitutionality of school segregation in the Brown case.

(Photograph taken from School Segregation Cases, by Janet Stevenson.)



Chief Justice Earl Warren
Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren announced the decision
at 12:52, May 17, 1954.

(Photograph, Ebony, May 17, 1977.)

The Kansas City Star reported it to be an embarrassing situation for the historically free state of Kansas to lead the fight to maintain segregation. It viewed the case as being paradoxical. They named three personalities who filed the action: Oliver Brown, Mrs. Samuel Emanuel and Mrs. Richard Lawton.⁵⁶ Attorney General, Harold R. Fatzer of Kansas City, Kansas was reported as saying that his office would see that the ruling was complied with to the fullest.⁵⁷

The Nation Magazine viewed the decision as the climax of an Era: It wrote:

Even the communist powers we suspect, must have applauded the decision. In Kenya, a spokesman for the Lus Tribe voiced the growing world-wide sentiment against all forms of racial discrimination when he said: "America is right . . . If we are not educated together, we will live in fear of one another."⁵⁸

The photographs of the five plaintiff Negro children were published by Life Magazine. Life Magazine wrote of the photographs of the five children (Ethel Belton, Delaware; Harry Briggs, Jr., South Carolina; Dorothy Davis, Virginia; Linda Brown, Kansas and Spottswood Boiling, Washington, D. C. that they:

⁵⁶Alvin S. McCoy, Bar to School Segregation, The Kansas City Star, Kansas City, Missouri, May 17, 1954, p. 1.

⁵⁷The Kansas City Kansan, Kansas City, Kansas, May 17, 1954.

⁵⁸The Nation Magazine, vol. 178, No. 22, New York, May 29, 1954.

. . . did not look like children whose names would go down in history along with those of Dred Scott and other historic litigants whom the United States Supreme Court had seen faithfully to elevate to mortality.⁵⁹

A Newsweek editorial indicated that:

the decision was the most momentous court decision in the whole history of the Negro's struggle to achieve equal rights in the United States. The Supreme Court smashed the last of the legal barriers that stood for generations between White and Negro Americans. . . . Personal prejudice against the Negro, of course, lingers on, for although a court decision can control the actions of man, it can not change, over night, the way he thinks. Prejudice, however no longer will be institutionalized; "Jim-Crow" will become an outlaw.⁶⁰

Newsweek viewed the court's decision as being greeted calmly by some southerners and were dismayed by others. It quoted Governor Herman Talmadge of Georgia as saying: "I do not believe in Negro and Whites associating with each other, socially or in school systems, and as long as I am governor, it won't happen."⁶¹

The U. S. News and World Report asked the simple question: Will the South end segregated schools over night because of a Supreme Court decision?⁶²

⁵⁹Life Magazine, vol. 35, No. 22, May 31, 1954.

⁶⁰Newsweek, May 24, 1954, p. 25.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²U. S. News and World Report, vol. XXXVI, No. 22, Washington, D. C., May 28, 1954, pp. 94 - 97.

According to Time Magazine, the momentous decision was The Last Turning.

Disappearing acts at such campuses as the University of Oklahoma and North Carolina, and early discriminatory practices (e.g., separate seats in the dining halls or at football games have gradually disappeared. But gradually or not, change is bound to come with the long sweep of history of school cases before the Supreme Court.⁶³

On May 18, 1954, one hundred and fifty Black citizens celebrated their victory. The citizens applauded Mrs. Esther Brown for her major support in the significant historical case. "The Centennial History Congregation accredits Mrs. Brown as having raised funds for the case and found the family in whose name it was brought to court (the Oliver Browns). This White, Mrs. Esther Brown persuaded attorneys for the national N.A.A.C.P. to enter the case."⁶⁴

"Some personal thoughts of Linda," published by the Topeka Magazine, give her impression of her parents reaction to the Brown decision. According to the article, her mother, Mrs. Leola Brown Montgomery was somewhat in the background during the court battle. Linda remembers her parents reactions to the Supreme Court decision. On May 17, 1954, her parents, Reverend and Mrs. Oliver Brown were

⁶³Editor Ashmore, Time Magazine, May 24, 1954.

⁶⁴Frank J. Adler, The Centennial History, Roots in a Moving Stream, pp. 252 - 254.

very elated about the Supreme Court decision. Linda said, "They both cried."⁶⁵



The Oliver Brown Family

The Brown family at home in Topeka, Kansas in 1954 (Left) the Rev. Brown counsels with the family; Leola, wife, Linda sitting beside her father and the younger daughter, Terry, trying to comprehend the essence of it all.

⁶⁵ Bettinita Harris, "Some Personal Thoughts Out of the Past of Linda Carol Smith, Topeka Magazine, January 1978.

(Photograph taken from Ebony, May, 1979.)

The Rev. Oliver Brown's reaction to the 1954 Supreme Court decision was a relatively simple one. He said:

This decision holds a better future, not only for one family but for every child. This will no doubt bring about a better understanding of our racial situation and will eliminate the inferiority complexes of children of school ages. Thus, did the Father of the first listed plaintiff hail the historic Supreme Court decision which ended the legal school segregation.⁶⁶



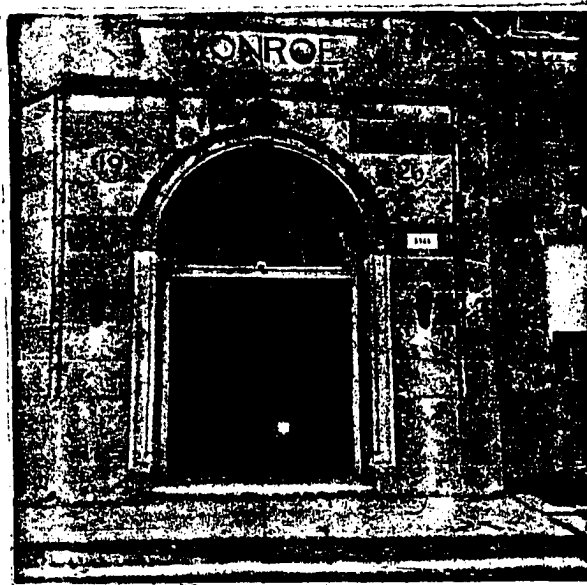
Linda Brown, 1954

At the time of this photograph, Linda was too young to comprehend the storm which raged about her. It seems that Rev. Brown made a special attempt to shield Linda from the controversy as much as possible.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Michele Burgen: Linda Brown Smith: Integration Unwitting Pioneer, Ebony Magazine, May, 1979, p. 188.

(Photograph taken from Ebony Magazine, May 1979 with permission of Johnson Publishing Company.)

⁶⁷ Ibid.



All-Black Monroe School



All-White Sumner School

The two schools will be recorded in American History as historical symbols of the defeat of "Separate but Equal." The Monroe School is no longer in service. The Sumner School has presently a well integrated group of students in attendance.

(Photograph of Monroe School was taken by Author, June, 1980.)

(Picture of Sumner School was taken from Ebony Magazine.)

CHAPTER VI

REVEREND BROWN'S MOVE TO SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

Oliver Brown's vindication by the High Court was gratifying; it did not thwart his growth in the ministry. During the ordeal of the trial, Reverend Brown continued to perform his pastoral duties: visiting the sick, burying the dead, helping the needy and comforting the weary. He remained dedicated to St. Mark AME, despite the opposition and bad feelings on the part of some of the parishioners to his involvement in the case. His love and sincerity of purpose concerning the church was expressed to the St. Mark Church when he said:

What a man puts into the ministry is only what he gets out of it. I couldn't ask for a better congregation than I have right here at St. Mark. I might have a larger one some day, but I don't think I could have a better one.¹

Brown's dedicated service did not escape the attention of his superiors. He would, indeed, have an opportunity to guide a larger congregation.

¹Tape recording of Services at St. Mark A.M.E. Church, Topeka, Kansas, 1957.

At the October 1959 Diocese Conference in Topeka, the presiding Elder, The Rev. H. Frances McClure asked the Rev. Felix Dancy if he would accept the pastorate of the Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church, Springfield, Missouri. Rev. Dancy, then 28 years old, accepted. Later Rev. McClure had a conversation with Oliver Brown regarding his possible reassignment. Near the end of the conference, Elder McClure changed his mind and offered the Benton Avenue Church to the Rev. Brown who accepted also. In Elder McClure's explanation of the change of mind to Rev. Dancy, McClure indicated that Brown was more seasoned, had demonstrated a greater ability to build and assume the great responsibility of the pastorate of Benton Avenue. As a compromise, Rev. Dancy was offered the smaller, sister church in Springfield, the Ready Chapel A.M.E. Church, where the responsibility was assumed to be less.² Rev. Dancy accepted and voiced the following concerning the decision and Oliver Brown:

Even though I was only 28 years old, I felt I could do the job. However, after having met Oliver Brown, I found him to be a dynamic personality. Even his stature added real presence when Oliver was there.³

Rev. Dancy and Rev. Brown were to enjoy a close friendship during the time of their pastorate in Springfield, despite this shaky beginning.⁴

²Interview, Reverend Felix Dancy, Pasadena, California, December 12, 1980.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.



Reverend Oliver Leon Brown
His Family and Church Members of
Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church
October, 1959

(Photograph submitted by members of the A.M.E. Churches
in Springfield, Missouri.)

Oliver's First and Final Move

Before moving to his new assignment, Oliver was asked by the Rev. H. Frances McClure to go to Springfield to assess the environmental elements of the city, the community and the church.

Oliver arrived at the home of Ms. Lea Etta McAdams about 9:00 P.M. one evening in October, 1959. He presented to her a letter of identification and recommendation given to him by the presiding Elder, the Rev. H. Frances McClure. He was a welcomed and interesting guest in her home for two days.⁴

The Benton Avenue Church was in suspense as to the identity of their new pastor. The answer to that question was revealed the first Sunday after the conference in October, 1959. A very handsome, fair complexioned man with short-cut, brown curly hair and a beautiful smile greeted the congregation from the pulpit and announced that he was Oliver Brown, the new pastor. He then introduced his wife, Leola and their three children, Terry, Cheryle and Linda.⁵

Oliver was articulate in his delivery. He demonstrated his ability as a good administrator by exercising wisdom in decision-making policies and democratic leadership in accomplishing viable goals. He was very warm, direct and humble.

⁴Interview, Lea Etta McAdams, Topeka, Springfield, Missouri, January 9, 1980.

⁵Interview, Georgia Burton, Springfield, Missouri, 2 February 1980, 10 March 1980, 10 March 1980, 18 March 1980.

The latter quality was revealed by Lea Etta McAdams:

I have never met a more humble, yet a more able person than Reverend Brown. His Christian life exemplified the highest traits of Christian character and dedication. He was a dynamic speaker and an asset to the community. I believe Reverend Brown's philosophy was: To serve my present age, my calling to fulfill, Help me to watch and pray, assured in my trust betray, I shall forever die.⁶

Reverend Brown's friendly and congenial attitude created for him many friends and admirers. He manifested concern and sensitivity to the needs and welfare of others. He spoke with precision and confidence.

Reverend Felix Dancy views Brown as having no self-aggrandizement and did not hail the fact that he had made such great accomplishment in his involvement and success in the Brown case. Neither did he allow his daughter to express such attitude.⁷ He indicated the fact that he was happy with the accomplishment, but not because of himself as the initiator.⁸

Oliver was industrious and did not shun work, even though he was a sick man and had been hospitalized several times he continued his work. Receiving a salary of \$75.00 a week from his pastoral services, he supplemented his salary by working part-time at the buick company.⁹ This was an

⁶ Interview, Lea McAdams, March 8, 1980.

⁷ Interview, Rev. Dancy, November 3, 1980.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

effort to supplement the income of the church and also his household.¹⁰ It was quite a task to remodel the church and at the same time make the church note payments. He remodeled the church. He also pursued a course of public service in the community, serving humanity in varied capacities. He was a member of the local N.A.A.C.P. Chapter and the Springfield ministerial alliance. With Oliver's attitude, ability, fortitude, and perseverance, apparently he had only begun a tedious journey on an anticipated career in civil and spiritual achievements. It appeared that his intentions were to implement positive forces in civil rights and church activities, and to serve humanity in its fullness.

Because there was not a great influx of people coming into Springfield at that time, he had to rely largely upon the resources and members who were already there. Most migrants came in from Arkansas to Springfield, which was a lovely, clean city with a comparatively small Black population. Springfield was as segregated as the typical American city at that time. According to the Rev. Felix Dancy, when Oliver's level of discontent grew concerning segregation, he decided to integrate Springfield.¹¹

In 1960, Nixon's campaign party, which was scheduled to come to Springfield, --included-- one Black reporter who would not have been allowed to stay at the White hotel.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

In many of the stores, Blacks were not allowed to stand at the counter. Neither could they eat or drink a cup of coffee downtown. The decision by Reverend Brown and the Rev. Dancy was to demonstrate publicly using mass marches and pickets.¹²

There was a mass meeting held at Ready Chapel and the leadership planned to make it as large as possible. The coordinating support and the publicity were enormous. Reverend Dancy was the redress chairman.¹³ Many residents contributed their support to the cause. The announcements were made that the supporters were going to expose the All-American city of Springfield, and the world would know it. Oliver and the supporters were asked What were they going to do. According to the Rev. Felix Dancy, the supporters refused to disclose their plans. Within forty-eight hours, sixty-two establishments announced in the newspapers that they were changing their policies.¹⁴ The Black reporter did stay at the hotel. The two ministers, Reverend Oliver Brown and Reverend Felix Dancy were the initiators in facilitating social change in integrating Springfield. States the Rev. Dancy:

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

. . . inspiration and motivation came largely from Oliver Brown, who had been through a legal entanglement. This experience helped to implement this approach. When they understood who he was, they had more confidence in what he was trying to do.¹⁵

Reverend Brown expanded the church treasury by sponsoring programs, inviting singers and singing groups, such as Mehalia Jackson, The World Singers, the Soul Stirrers and local talents. He sponsored basket dinners to coordinate the members and to promote social interaction. Reverend Brown purchased carpet, new office furniture and a new organ, which his daughter, Terry, was the first to play. Many improvements were accomplished under Reverend Brown's leadership. He was a great source of spiritual inspiration to the church family and community.¹⁶ Undoubtedly his church members and many friends suffered a great loss by his sudden death.

Reverend Brown's Death

Reverend Oliver Brown's pastorate terminated at Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church, in an automobile driven by Reverend Maurice J. Lang III, from Springfield, Missouri en route

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Interview, Georgia Burton, Benton Avenue Church, Springfield. Also see letter in Appendix, March 18, 1980.

to the St. Frances Hospital, Topeka, Kansas. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital, Tuesday, June 21, 1961.¹⁷ Reverend Maurice Lang III explains that Rev. Brown did not anticipate the nearness of his death as they sat in the living room of Reverend Brown's Springfield home that gruesome afternoon. He didn't feel well and desired to postpone his trip to Topeka to get his family, who was attending the 50th anniversary of Mrs. Brown's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Williams, 518 East First Street, Topeka. Reverend Lang was impressed by God that they should not wait until the following day. Reverend Brown consented, and they began their trip to Topeka. Reverend Brown's sense of humor was constant in the presence of his White friend. Knowing that Reverend Lang was fearful of fast driving, it amused Reverend Brown to observe Reverend Lang's facial expression when the warning buzzer came on indicating "80 miles per hour". When Reverend Brown became progressively worse, he asked Reverend Lang to drive. They held hands as they prayed together. Reverend Brown then told his friend to get him home quickly--that he wasn't going to make it. Being aware of his home-going and unable to conquer death, Reverend Oliver Leon Brown died at the age of 42, only seven years after the 1954 Brown decision and ten years after he initiated the suit in 1951. This was a devastating

¹⁷ Interview, Reverend Maurice Lang III, March 17, 1980.

experience for Reverend Lang III, who also had to deliver the sad news to Brown's mother and his family.

Reverend Lang recalls visiting the Topeka Bowser Mortuary where he viewed the body and asked the attendant to properly place the clerical collar the deceased Rev. Brown wore. He sat on the pulpit during the funeral services at the packed St. John A.M.E. Church, where Brown started his ministerial career.¹⁸ Rev. Brown was buried on that rainy day in the Mt. Hope Cemetery next to Lutie, his mother. Of his death, Mrs. Georgia Burton said about Rev. Brown that "a great leader had passed from labor to reward."¹⁹

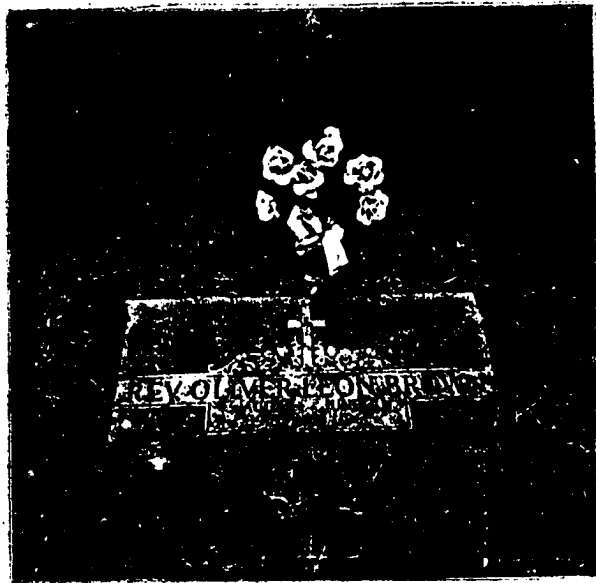
Rev. Lang wrote "to him":

Rev. Brown, my dear brother in Christ, you have passed on to your reward. You were a dear friend and fellow minister and I miss you very much. We will meet and be together again in a perfect place where only love abounds.²⁰

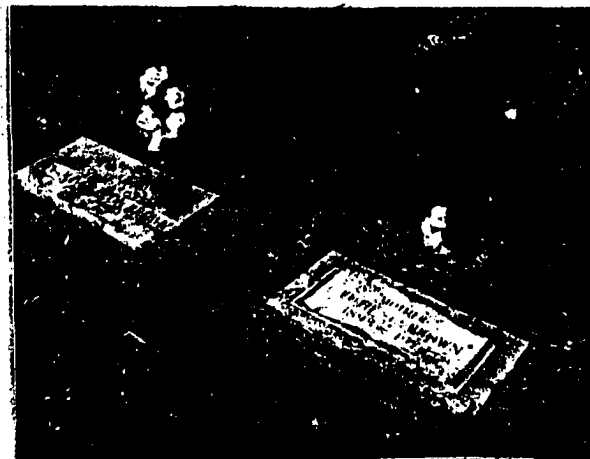
¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Letter, Mrs. Georgia Burton, Springfield, Missouri, March 18, 1980.

²⁰ Letter, Reverend Lang, Appendix D.



Final Resting Place of Reverend Oliver Leon Brown,
The First Listed Plaintiff of Brown vs. Board of
Education, Topeka
1918 - 1961



Reverend Brown's Mother, Lutie Brown
1898 - 1976

Reverend Oliver Leon Brown is buried next to his mother, Lutie, in the Mt. Hope Cemetery approximately four miles west of downtown Topeka. The flowers were placed on the graves by the researcher, May, 1980.

(Photographs taken May, 1980.)

CHAPTER VII

OLIVER BROWN: THE LEGACY

This chapter will attempt to synthesize the findings of this investigation by focusing on the major question and the minor questions enumerated in the statement of the problem of the study.

The collection of the data is relatively simple, but the interpretation of it is often much more difficult. What does it all mean? What can one learn from it? To ask such questions is to be concerned with making judgments that may ultimately prove inaccurate. To answer major questions about the meaning of Oliver Brown's life and what can be learned from it requires investigation of related minor questions.

(1) What were the significant life experiences of Oliver Brown?

The data seem to indicate several significant experiences in the life of Oliver Brown. Underlying them all was the fact that he lived as a Black man in the United States during the segregated, "Separate but Equal," era of the nation's social history. It appears that Reverend Brown had developed a strong antipathy to the segregated life style and the disabilities that he suffered because of it. His childhood in a broken home undoubtedly sharpened his aware-

ness of being Black and segregated. The financial difficulties his father experienced in providing for a family of ten proved insurmountable in a segregated society, and he left home. The difficulties of all Black Americans were compounded for Oliver as he struggled to live with the extra burden of not having a father in the family.

While little is known about his short boxing career, it should be viewed as a significant indicator of Brown's desire to elevate himself socially and economically. During this period, boxing was one of the avenues open to Black males as a way of becoming financially stable and achieving status. The ministry was another. Both boxing and the ministry represented career options which minimized White control over the lives of Blacks, and young men seeking opportunities to demonstrate their ability were drawn to boxing or the ministry. Oliver tried his hand at both, but it was as a minister that he achieved success. His clerical calling was his most significant life experience.

The writer believes that Brown's friendship with Reverend Lang also had a significant effect on his life. Their close relationship appeared to have helped Oliver maintain strong ties with the White community of Topeka, perhaps a source of some bitterness for Oliver, given his difficulties there. Watching his daughter, Linda, facing the hazards and hardships of getting to her segregated Black school was certainly a significant life experience, for his resentment

and frustration led him to take action.

It is clear to this author that Brown's involvement in the Topeka's suit and its ultimate success, was a significant experience in his life. While the involvement helped him to advance in the ministerial ranks and gain more prestige and status, it clearly created some enemies, many of whom remain resentful. It appears that his success in the case only whetted his desire to become more active in the struggle for Black civil rights.

(2) Which of these experiences might have prompted his decision to challenge the school laws of the Topeka, Kansas School System?

This author believes that the evidence indicates that any or all of his previous life experiences may have prompted Oliver Brown to challenge the Topeka School System's segregated school policies. His decision was probably a combination of self-interest and service concerns. On the one hand, there is no evidence that Brown acted out of a general concern for the Black children of Topeka. He acted when his daughter had suffered as a result of the segregationist policies and when he had observed as much of the suffering as he could. Furthermore, the evidence seems to indicate that Reverend Brown was not a willing participant in the suit. He was pressured into the action.

It can be assumed that his status as a member of the clergy carried certain moral and religious expectations.

morally, he was committed to achieving justice for all people. It is expected also that since Black ministers have only their congregations to whom they must be accountable, they should lead out on issues that affect Black people, especially their parishioners. It is doubtful that Reverend Brown could have resisted the pressure to act when he was influenced by important members of the Topeka Black community. To have done so would have jeopardized his leadership status and alienated him from the more active, more sensitive potential parishioners.

Religiously, it is difficult to conceive of a minister, particularly a Black one, not feeling a religious commitment to achieve the goals that appear to be linked directly to the teachings of Christianity as expressed in familiar sayings: "God is no respecter of persons," "God likes justice and is a just God," "God acts through human agency," to name a few. The evidence clearly indicates that Oliver Brown was deeply committed to Christian principles. The pressure he felt, coupled with the religious commitment he had, appears to have moved him to action. It could be argued that his faith in God and love for his fellow man, together with pressures he felt from the Black community induced this quiet, soft spoken man to act.

(3) What was the physiological, sociological and psychological impact if any of the Brown case on his life?

The evidence suggests that the Brown case affected

Reverend Brown psychologically in that it led to his activism later in Springfield. Perhaps the sense of power over his own destiny, and that of his people, was heightened by the Topeka success. This writer is of the opinion that his relationship with the Reverend Lang was strengthened and developed because of his heightened sense of his own potency and his new status resulting from the case.

Sociologically, it can be argued that Brown's involvement in the Topeka case led him to a better understanding of American society and to a clearer awareness of options for achieving change. Perhaps he was a better minister and teacher of his people. Perhaps his success and knowledge of the system "rubbed off," motivating others. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Brown was more comfortable, socially, with a greater variety of people as a result of his actions in the case and in Springfield.

Physiologically, the data is less conclusive. It is clear that Brown was a robust and cheerful person. Though Brown and his family had a history of heart trouble, it appeared not to have affected his activities. It is difficult, however, to imagine that his body was immune to the pressures of the case, the Springfield action, the ministry, and the family. This writer believes that Brown's early death at the age of 42 can be partially attributed to the above factors.

(4) Were there similarities and differences in the life experiences of Oliver Brown and other change agents? If so, what were they?

It is tempting to compare Brown and King since during these times, their names and actions are so frequently associated with civil rights and the Black struggle for equality.



Martin Luther King Jr.

The clearest similarities of King and Brown relate to the ministry, both being pastors and rising to prominence with the pulpit as a platform. It might be concluded that the pulpit provides either security for controversial actions or that it provides the moral base and the sense of urgency for such action. Both men appear as unexceptional ministers prior to their ascent to prominence. Their civil rights activity suggests that it was regenerative and did not stop at the specific action that first motivated their behavior.

King went from Montgomery to Washington, D.C. via Chicago, Detroit and other cities in the pursuit of his moral imperatives. Brown's calling led him to Springfield, suggesting a pattern and a measure of their commitment.

Both men were apparently excellent and dynamic speakers with the ability to persuade others, particularly their congregations. Because of this, the congregations were willing to provide moral and financial support for the actions of their leaders. Both represented major Black Protestant denominations. Denominational ties had little influence, however, for a commitment to social action was not typical of the denominations they represented.

Both enjoyed the support of their families. In fact, it might be argued that social action tends to bind families closer together. Evidence of family friction resulting from the civil rights movement was not found. While King was a middle-class citizen, Brown was considered a poor struggling minister. Brown's economic status, however, did not seem to disrupt the family solidarity.

Dr. King and Reverend Brown were both catapulted to prominence at young ages, both under thirty-five. Such an occurrence would appear to lend credence to the idea that action of this sustained and controversial nature are best taken by young men with energy and idealism. Both perceived a world that had not existed for them. The physical and emotional toll exacted by continuing and strong pressure

might be better born by younger men.

Ironically, both died at early ages without having the opportunity to view the outcome of their struggles. It is axiomatic that persons in the forefront of major social or political change rarely have the opportunity to benefit directly by those changes. "Che" Guevara of Cuba is an example, and so is Patrice Lumumba of the Congo.

While both were the products of segregated school systems, Reverend Brown was less fortunate than Dr. King in socioeconomic terms. Brown was not as well educated as King, having graduated from high school as an adult. Dr. King had the opportunity of studying in Boston College and obtaining a doctoral degree. Their relative impact on society is in proportion to the education each man received. Brown, the lesser educated, is nearly forgotten. Martin Luther King will never be. Options and opportunities to influence were open to the more educated. King's education allowed him to visualize his impact on the world; it is doubtful that Oliver Brown ever did. Brown's failure to record his activities and significant facts about his life perhaps attests to his historical myopia. It is not clear that his education would even have allowed him to leave the kind of record he might have desired. In American society, Black men's range is always to an extent restricted by their color and by their education.

Perhaps because of differences in opportunity as well as ability, King leaves a legacy of goodwill in his Black communities of toil, while Brown leaves one of division and jealousy. One suspects this also stems from the differences in patterns of discrimination found between Blacks of the imperatively segregated South and the permissively segregated North. While northern Blacks may be more desirous of assimilation into a highly competitive American culture, southern Blacks have a stronger sense of Black identity. The true litmus test for Black Americans lies in the question of whether or not desegregation will result in Black American individuals or individual Black Americans.

(5) Can the answers to the above question be of any assistance in profiling the life experiences that might allow identification of future change agents?

The literature regarding change and change agency is linked closely to that concerning leadership. The above question, therefore, is really concerned with profiling and identifying leaders. To the question, this researcher must answer negatively. Particularly, nothing was uncovered in the life of Oliver Brown that, in the judgment of this author, would have suggested that Oliver Brown would become a leader or change agent. This is especially so because data regarding his early life is meager.

(6) Are there new change generalizations or modifications of existing generalizations that might be made based

on a study of Oliver Brown?

Though the data did not allow a positive response to the question above, it does allow a response to this question.

The evidence appears to support the accepted generalization that certain qualities are associated with effective leadership. It is also generally accepted that all of these qualities are generally not found in the individual having contradictory qualities. Brown did not have the characteristics of a national leader. His teacher, Ms. Williams, indicated that he was simply an average, ordinary child with no special gifts and talents. This raises the significant question of whether or not leaders/change agents are born or learn to be such. Assuming Ms. Williams is correct, it must be argued that Oliver learned these leadership traits. Thus, it must be concluded that consistent with the accepted notions about leaders, leaders can be trained.

There is also another generalization regarding leadership, namely that it is a function of the situation, or that leaders are products of social needs peculiar to a given time. It is not difficult to conclude that Oliver Brown was a product of the "Zeitgeist," that he was simply a product of time. The time was right and Brown was in the right place. Also highlighted is the generalization that leadership is a product of the group--that the group produce its own leaders. Oliver Brown was "produced" for a leadership/change agent role by his Parishioners, by the local N.A.A.C.P. in Topeka,

and the Springfield Black community.

An extension to the idea of group production of leadership is the notion of leadership transferability. Specifically, it is generally felt that leadership is not automatically transferred from one group or setting to another. Apparently, Oliver Brown was able to transfer his leadership role from Topeka to another situation in Springfield.

To suggest new generalizations, it might be hypothesized that non-coercive social change related to Black-Americans is apt to be facilitated by the Black clergy or those with visible and acceptable religious credentials. Clearly Dr. Martin Luther King is a prime example. He, as Oliver Brown came to understand, clearly understood the words of Frederick Douglass, who according to Bennett said:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roaring of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be physical, or it may be moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will.¹

(7) What was the impact of the life and actions of Oliver Brown on the Topeka community?

Among Black Topeka leaders, particularly those involved in the Brown case, there remains the question of

¹Lerone Bennett, Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, Johnson Publishing Company, 1962), p. 274.

whether Oliver Brown deserves the special recognition accorded by Kluger, this writer and the activities of his daughter, Linda Brown, who barely understood the powerful issues that thrust her into the national limelight. These leaders appear to ask: "What about us?" Can a man who had to be 'dragged' to court, be deserving of more consideration than those of us who did more than go to court?" Perhaps these questions are but manifestations of the dearth of recognition that characterizes Black communities and, indeed, Black society. So few and rare is national or state recognition that the natural desire for it is often thwarted by jealousies on the part of others. One of the prime participants in the Brown case, Mrs. Todd, was recently (October 10, 1980) invited to Georgia by Georgia Representative, Julian Bond, for a special tribute in recognition of her contributions in the Brown case.² A "conspiracy of silence" appears to exist in Topeka relative to Reverend Brown. On the one hand, anti-Brown people refuse to give any information that might gain further recognition for Brown. On the other hand, pro-Brown persons withhold information out of loyalty to Linda Brown, who they feel has been exploited and ought to have a chance to reap some of the benefits of her father's name by writing about him herself. It could be hypothesized that in Northern communities the size of Topeka, actions such as Brown's will split a community when the question of

²Interview, Lucinda Todd, September 22, 1980.

recognition arises. In a sense, part of this reaction reflects the "small town" mentality in communities of this size. All of the division is not generated by the lack of recognition for other participants in the case but by division regarding the results of the Brown action. An analysis of the interview data (Appendix A) reveals sharp division on the question of the degree to which the Brown case promoted desegregation. Much of this assessment relates to the loss of Black teachers and de-emphasis on Black culture. The question of the cohesiveness of the Black community is also a matter of debate. In fact, the general statements reflect varying opinions regarding Topeka and its quality of life.

This researcher detected another significant dimension related to Linda Brown Smith, the daughter of Oliver Brown. She is apparently the center of resentment toward Brown for what is perceived as his undeserved recognition. This resentment was sensed in some of the interviewees, who apparently felt Schaaf was correct when he wrote:

This year, she's crying exploitation and on the silver anniversary of her own. She's hired an attorney, Joseph Johnson, to arrange speaking engagements and interviews for a substantial sum (\$1,500 is the going rate). She used to shy away from the role of the Civil Rights activist some tried to thrust upon her. Now she says she's ready to speak out on rights issues.³

Conversation with Ms. Smith indicated to this writer that

³Art Schaaf, "Brown--Twenty-Fifth Anniversary," Topeka Capital Journal, May 13, 1979, pp. 22-23.

life has not been easy for Mrs. Smith, still a resident of Topeka. It could be speculated that she has been a victim of her father's actions and of divisions within the Topeka Black community. Nonetheless, she was not among a group of guests invited by President Carter to Washington for a ceremony honoring Brown case supporters.⁴

Interestingly, Mrs. Smith filed a legal action which reopened the Brown case on behalf of her children, Charles and Kimberly. Her suit contended that the Topeka School District had not adequately desegregated their schools as mandated a quarter of a century earlier.

This chasm within the Black community is reflected by a similar gap between the White and Black communities. It is clear from the research that the White community does not consider Oliver Brown to be a significant historical character. The news media and Kansas historians have recorded relatively little concerning this man who in 1954 put Topeka in the limelight.

The final legacy is a continuing one. It is a legacy of Black people failing to record their own history. For a variety of reasons, it seems to this writer that some Black person from the Topeka community should have recorded some of the activities of the Brown era for posterity. It is ironic that without the work of Kluger, a White, the country

⁴Interview, Lucinda Todd, September 22, 1980.

would be relatively ignorant of Oliver Brown. This study represents perhaps a first step in filling an important need; it is to be hoped that Linda Brown Smith will substantially extend this first effort. The opportunity exists for the Black community of the United States to recognize a hitherto neglected Black hero. Such a rare opportunity should be seized whenever possible. Particularly should these opportunities be seized in the Southwest, where Blacks are outside the North/east communication network.

It is the hope of this author that Blacks will be active in recording their own experiences and in preserving the data of Black history. It can be assumed that if Blacks themselves do not care and do not take action, others are not likely to do so. In spite of the efforts made by Brown and others to desegregate public schools, there can be no definitive conclusions about the results of the Brown case. "Seventy percent of Blacks are still segregated in predominantly Black schools in the North and West."⁵ Much work remains to be done, and it will be done more effectively if the historical record is complete.

The Commission on Civil Rights adequately described the existence situation as follows:

Discouraging aspects of the desegregation picture should not negate the results achieved and the lesson learned. Recent studies by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights indicate that desegregation

⁵Interview, Civil Rights Commission, Washington, D.C., July 3, 1980.

remains the most certain guarantee of equal opportunity for all children, improved programs of public education and construction race relations throughout American Society.⁷

⁶U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Twenty Years After Brown, p. 61.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The Walk to Sumner School

Oliver's walk to the all-White Sumner school was an attempt to facilitate a social change in the Topeka School System.

This study has been directed primarily toward the plight of Oliver Brown, his life and legacy, and other Afro-Americans who made outstanding contributions in the effort to emerge from inferior status in American society.

Oliver Leon Brown, the respected, though not universally admired pastor who had a taste for the better things--new cars every year and stylish apparel--left a legacy. The precise nature of the legacy is yet murky, though perhaps less so. It remains for future historians to further clarify the legacy. It is clear that the name of this man, a product of a broken home, of broken promises of equality, of broken dreams of a better world, is a symbol of major social change. Whatever his influence, he left an example to motivate Blacks who come from similar backgrounds.

Like most change agents, he was himself changed as he wrought change in others. The impact of the change on Oliver Brown, will perhaps never be known. Though no

evidence exists, Brown's early death at 42 could have been in part a result of the tension and stress associated with his involvement in the Brown case and subsequent activities in Springfield. Though he was no 'fire-eating activist,' he was intense, dedicated and tenacious, qualities often associated with early death.

It should be apparent that he helped to create a climate in Topeka which even today negatively affects his family, particularly Linda Smith. He is clearly a scapegoat for the division that still exists in the Topeka Black community. Even if he had to be persuaded to enter the case, his courage in agreeing to do so, given the times and the circumstances, merits recognition. A goal of this study has been to see that his historical role be recognized.

APPENDIX A
TABULAR SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW DATA
OLIVER BROWN'S TAPED SERVICES
CHURCH PROGRAM OF OLIVER BROWN'S TEXT 1957

TABULAR SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW DATA

From Completed Interview Sheets

Question

1a) Born in Topeka

Yes	No	No Response
9	2	7

b) Cohesiveness of Topeka Black Community 1940-60

Cohesive	0
Fairly Cohesive	5
Not Cohesive	3
No Opinion	1
No Response	10

2) Cohesiveness of Topeka Black Community 1960-80

Cohesive	2
Fairly Cohesive	9
Not Cohesive	1
No Opinion	4
No Response	3

3) Knew Oliver Brown

Yes	No	No Response
12	5	2

4) Category of Acquaintance With Oliver Brown

a) Religious	7	f) Companion		j) Historical	
b) Social	3	g) Litigation	2	k) Casual	
c) Kindred	1	h) News Media	3	l) No Response	1
d) Political	.	i) Economical			
e) Educational	2				

5) Special Observation Concerning Brown

Quiet	3	Tenacious	1
Dedicated to family	1	Courageous	1
Dedicated to church	4	Matter of fact (blunt)	1
Intelligent	1	Intense	1
Concerned for Young People	1	No	6
Friendly	2	No response	5
Even Tempered	1		
Dynamic	1		

6) One Thing Most Vividly Remembered About Oliver Brown

Always happy and smiling 1
 Involvement in Brown Case 3
 Community respect 1
 Childhood relationships 1
 Jolly laugh 1
 Independent in convictions and action 1
 Fearful of superior 1
 Religiosity 2
 Family man 1
 Stubborn 1
 Tenacious 1
 No Response 3

7) Factors Inducing Brown to File the Brown Suit

Persuasion by others 6
 Christian Beliefs 3
 Concern for Black improvement 1
 Search for justice 2
 Concern for his children 1
 His being victimized by segregation 3
 No Response 3

8) Reasons for Interviewees Involvement

Quest improved education for Blacks 3
 Justice 1
 Community involvement 2
 Not involved 8
 No Response 5

9) Do You Think Integration Occurred Effectively as a Result of the Brown Decision

Yes	No	To an Extent	No Response
4	9	4	2

10) General Statements of Interviewees

- Loss of Black teachers undesirable
- Partial decisions by Bd. of Education undesirable
- Even though a friend, did not know of Brown place in history
- Brown had strong self-concept and always desired the best
- Need for White cooperation for continued Black progress
- Brown was one of the best decisions made--it opened other doors
- Topeka is improving for Black people
- Brown decision did not deal with defacto segregation--currently a major problem

Tape Recorded Church Services at the St. Mark A.M.E.
Church in 1957--Pastor and officiator, Rev. Oliver Leon Brown.

Topeka, Kansas

The White Minister, Rev. Maurice Lang, was the guest speaker for the morning services. Rev. Lang and his wife also united with the church in this particular service.

Words spoken by Rev. Oliver Brown in his prayer and remarks in these services were humorous, touching, informative, intellectual and spiritual.

The words that impressed me most were: "Times are changing now, we are confronted and challenged with many things today so it behooves all of us to adjust ourselves with the things we are confronted with. Through trials, tribulations, suffering, and patience in working for Jesus Christ, there is victory.

The most complicated matters we have in this life isn't always the person who is next door to us. The greatest warfare we have in this life is the warfare within ourselves, and if we can keep ourselves in nurture and love with Jesus Christ, we have a great job to do.

Reverently and quietly shall we pray with Rev. O. L. Brown. (Softly, organ prelude.) Silence--

Eternal and everlasting God, we gather together here this morning to find hope, peace and joy, consecrate our

hearts and our souls this morning in order, Oh God, that we might serve Thee better each day. We're thankful this morning Heavenly Father, for this edifice in which to worship more, thankful for this choir this morning as they sing, and the accompanists as they play. We're grateful to Thee heavenly Father this morning for all the Blessings which Thou have granted to us, many times unknown and then Oh God, we praise Thee, we Glorify Thee this morning, but we beseech Thee Oh God, this morning to grant to this God, man as he stands in the pathway this morning to deliver Thy word. Give him strength in his physical body, crown him with knowledge and charge his feet with the preparation of the gospel. We come this morning Oh God, not on merits of our own, not because we're so worthy of Thy goodness, but because you have poured out your love and your mercy for us. Make us Oh God, to be humble with contrite hearts, help us Oh God, to be better children for Thee. We pray this morning, Oh God for every sick and for every shut-in this morning who are in the hospitals and who are in the homes, we come this morning Heavenly Father because we need the inspiration, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We need to bind ourselves together in love, in fellowship, and in harmony. But, Oh God! we're thankful that Thou have brought us from one degree of Grace unto another. We're thankful Oh God! that we have strength this morning to speak up on Thy Holy word, for those who are seated in the pews that we might look up and take a glimpse of Jesus Christ

that hanged on Calvary Rugged Cross, and may the music as the choir sing this morning re-echo in Heaven. And then guide us as we shall journey on the highway today and Oh God! we send up invitation this morning for the persons who are homeless because of the tornado, but make us aware of the fact Oh God! that we have a charge to keep and a God to Glorify. This we ask and all other blessings we ask in Jesus name. AMEN. Song.

Let it Breathe on me, Let the Breath of the Lord now Breathe on me.

The Rulers of the Jews offended by Peter's sermon

1. Scripture Lesson, Acts 4th Chapter 1-12 verses. And as they spake unto the people the priest and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them. 2. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Imprison Him and John

5. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders, and scribes, 6. And Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, by what power, or by what name have ye done this? 8. Then Peter filled the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, 9. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man by what means he is made whole; 10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel--that by

the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12. neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

And God spake all these words saying, I am the Lord Thy God that brought me out of the house of bondage. Thou shall have no other God before me. Hear What Christ Thy Savior sayeth.

Thou shall love the Lord with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it. Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets.

Oliver Brown

2. I wish to call your attention to our weekly calendar very briefly this morning. I want to thank the choir for the fine selection. I want to thank the accompanists this morning for their very fine support. Today at 1:30 we shall leave by motorcade going to Ottawa, Kansas. There, we shall engage in eating some physical food for our physical body and then we will continue on to the spiritual side of the food around 3 or 3:30, and I'm sure we have ample room for everyone. We're inviting everyone to go. We have enough automobiles, if not, we have two or three more that are to be offered.

Certainly if we were to secure a bus, it would cost us somewhere in the neighborhood of 2 or 3 round trips, however, it would have been alright I'm sure with you, but it would have been such a late hour and then would have had to have a capacity and still pay for the same amount for the bus, however, we were too late in securing one. We're going to ask that whoever is riding or whoever is driving, will you kindly give the driver at least \$1.50 for his gas and we're asking the youth to pay 50 cents in order that it will supply your automobile with gas! Because it cannot run on air, nor can it run on water, nor can it run on coal oil unless its a wreck like mine, it can run on anything. Anyway, we're asking you to support this cause to go with us and share in this divine worship service. We're going to ask you to govern yourselves accordingly by reading your weekly calendar that's on the weekly bulletin. You need not to go over that but I do want to say one or two things that Sis. Alberta Bell, one of our very fine members who has recently transferred her membership to Minnesota, we learned the other day that she has been confined to the hospital with a heart attack. We don't know how fatal it is, but we do solicit your prayers for her that she might recover. We were pleased to send her a letter but yet we regret to lose her as a very fine member. And there are others, Sister Mary Johnson has been confined to the hospital, I haven't learned as yet whether she has returned home or not, but we may do so and remember them in

our prayers. We ask you to read your announcement. On Wednesday night the Church is invited to go to the Church of God in Overton St. and share in the anniversary service. At the bottom of the page of your bulletin, we're going to ask that you read this and please govern yourself accordingly because its important to the church, important to the persons around us, so let's govern ourselves accordingly by using the Lord's house as a place of divine worship and keeping it clean and worshipping in reference and quietness. I believe that's all we have in the way of announcements this morning.

I don't see too many visitors but I do see one unfamiliar person in our congregation. I'm sure that Sister Lang would be able to identify her to the congregation. Brother Lang says she doesn't know her. Well, I see, well then that Brother Lang seems to know about most of the ladies so we will let him introduce her. Bro. Lane speaks. I might say Mother Hayden as I call her, is my spiritual mother in the Lord. She and I sat together the entire three years that we went to Bible school as students. She is a graduate minister of the L.I.C. Bible College. As a child evangelist at the Four Square Church. I know that she loves the Lord and I don't think she would mind if I ask her to stand and just say a word for the Lord. Mother Hayden stood and expressed words which were not audible by tape. Rev. Oliver Brown responds, "We do not do these things to embarrass anyone, but this is our way of showing you that you're so very, very, welcome when you come to

to fellowship with us and certainly we want you to come back when you find it convenient to do so and share with us. We have found fellowship and harmony with Brother and Sister Lang and we trust that the step he's making the decision on, will not be a wrong step, but a step to the height and Glory of God. Times are changing now, we are confronted and challenged with many things today so it behooves all of us to adjust ourselves with the things we are confronted with and I'm sure that if Brother Lang makes up his mind and I'm going to let him do it, I'm not going to persuade him and that he will not only find good fellowship but through trials and tribulations and suffering and patience in working for Jesus Christ, there is victory. We certainly pray for Sister Hayden for her work and maybe some day we will have the opportunity to meet again. We want you to come back when you find it convenient to do so. I was pleased to see some of Brother Lang's work and I found that he was a high average student. I would say an A student at the Seminary from which he was graduated. He had said to me "Well Brother Brown, all of that work was good but there's just something about the Seminary or something about the Lord's work that I couldn't get in the Seminary. And I agreed with him on that. Certainly when we're working for the Lord he instills us with something that we can't find in a school and if we don't know him, that is one of the most complicated matters that we have in our life and it isn't always the person that lives next door to us.

(The greatest Warfare we have in this life is the warfare within ourselves.) And if we can keep ourselves in nurture and love of Jesus Christ we have a great job to do.

That's all that we have. We're going to ask the officers if they will come and lift the offering. Take the missionary offering.

Rev. Brown Blesses the offering with prayer. "Eternal God we reference Thee this morning in quietness, in spirit and in love. We give Thee but thy own, whatever the gift may be for all we have, Lord, is Thine alone, a Trust in Thee. Bless now both gift and giver in Jesus name. AMEN.

Organ Prelude Playing Softly

Rev. Brown--The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk thru the valley and the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, Thou prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

Rev. Brown continues--

We're going to ask the congregation to turn to hymn 182, remain standing and sing three stanzas of Pass me Not Oh Gentle

Savior, following the response.

All things come of Thee Oh Lord of Thine we have given
Thee--Pass me not Oh Gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry, while
on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by-- Savior, Savior,
Hear my humble cry while on others Thou art calling Do not
pass me by. Let me at Thy throne of mercy, find a sweet
relief, Kneeling there in deep contrition, Help my unbelief.

Choir sing softly, Pass me not Oh Gentle Savior.

Rev. Brown introduces speaker (Rev. Lang, White minister who
drove Rev. Oliver Brown from Springfield, Missouri to Topeka,
Kansas as he became gravely ill and died in his automobile
before they reached the hospital. Rev. Lang and wife also
united with the Church in this particular consecrated service.)
Rev. Brown--It is my privilege and our opportunity together
this morning to present to some and introduce to others, one
that needs no introduction, for we are aware of the fact
that he is a called minister of God, so at this opportune
moment, I will give you none other than the Rev. Maurice Lang,
our brother in Christ, will come and break the bread of life
with us this morning.

I might say Brother Brown, at the conclusion or the
acceptance or the invitation of Christ, that my family and I
will unite with the A.M.E. Church. This is a decision that
I could say No to. This is a decision that I could say Yes
to which I've done. I have felt more concerned over this
step more than anything in my life. It is a step that it

could either mean Glory for God or disgrace to him. There is nothing in a monetary sense that I could gain for joining the A.M.E. Church, nobody paying me two or three thousand dollars an hour to join, but there is one thing that I can do for God and that is fulfill that Calling, that desire and that yearning. The Church that I came out from don't wear such garments as this (a robe). Brother Brown asked me to put it on this morning, the moment I put it on I felt at home. I said to myself, if this robe makes me feel that particular way, then surely I belong here. What the future holds, what it will bring, what criticism I will receive even this very morning, when I said I was going to preach at a Negro Church they turned their faces in disgust and said "What do you want to do that for?" I said for one thing is, God's word is for all, God so loved the world and that included every race, color, and creed. I looked my relatives right in the face and I said, there is one thing about it, no matter if you turn me out of your door, if you don't ever want to speak to me again what I feel is God's Will for me or what is going to make me happy is the thing I'm going to do. I'm not concerned if my friends appreciate what I do or the efforts I make. I'm concerned about one thing, What does God think of me? They're not my judge, they are not the one that's going to condemn my soul to hell if I don't fulfill that thing that God had given me to do. It is my responsibility to see to it that I do that, that God has called me to do. I always like to ask

God to help me when I preach, because in myself the words that I could say nothing unless the Holy Spirit Blesses it, so I want you to bow your heads with me while I petition God to Bless this sermon this morning. Father in Heaven, I might have eloquence of speech, I may speak perfect English, every word may come out perfectly, but Father God, if you don't Bless it, it's just like good seeds planted in poor soil. Now I pray this morning Lord that this sermon that I give in parts in elliptic clay, will be Blessed. Let some heart Lord will be receptive. Father, God, this sermon is for every Christian here even for me. Father all I ask is that you Bless it, now, you promise me that your word could not become void so I'm claiming that promise this morning for in Jesus Name, I pray. AMEN.

Brother Lang preached from the Title "What's in a Name." I may mention some familiar names that you would immediately recognize for instance Eisenhower, I'm sure all of you recognize it whether you are a Republican or Democrat; Eisenhower means to us one thing, when the word is mentioned to us that he is the President of the United States, And you good folks know when I say Rev. Oliver Brown, that I'm referring to this gentleman here, now of course, I don't know what all of you think about him, some of you think good, and perhaps some of you think bad. In his message, Rev. Lang analyzed the meaning of the word Christian in which he explained that a Christian is most important, he is C converted from

sin under Christ that is the primary ingredients of the word, Christian. He asserted that any one who practices integration has to start with the Christian first, and that all Christians shall be at the right hand of God if they're interested in things eternal.

The sermon is concluded by the Lord's prayer led by the Rev. Brown: followed by the song, "Pass me not Oh Gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry--while on others Thou art calling, Do no pass me by."

Rev. Brown Responds

Certainly, I want to thank Brother Lang for this very thought provoking message, preaching from letters and what they mean. There is a great meaning in the words that we express, the words that we use. Now we're going to extend the right hand of fellowship to Brother Lang and his family, certainly we want them to know that by coming into our church that this (is not a Negro Church, nor a White Church) but this is a Church of a True and Living God, for when we were ordained, He said, go ye into all the nations and teach, preach and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching all nations to observe these things in which I have taught you. He didn't say you had to go to an A.M.E., or a Four Square, or Jehovah Witness, but he said go into all the nations everywhere, to the hedges and the highways and persuade people to come to Christ for if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me. And certainly by

their coming we want to commend them. Brother Lang, "I wish to extend to you the right hand of fellowship and may God Bless us to be together in this fellowship." "Sister Lang, we welcome you. We want you to feel, not like a stranger, not like one of us, but as a Child of God. There is a need for both of you here at the A.M.E. Church. There is a place for you in the A.M.E. Church, and we don't want you to be discouraged by any way, for this is a step that Brother Lang has said has placed upon his heart and so that will be him and God from here out. Let us come now and extend the right hand of fellowship to Brother and Sister Lang's family. (Song while shaking hands.) What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms. Oh how sweet to walk in this Pilgrim Way, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms. Oh how great the path grows from day to day, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.

Rev. Brown Responds--AMEN. Let the Church say AMEN. I want to again commend Brother Lang for this very fine message of ingredients. I am sure if we place the right ingredients in the right place, we will come out alright. If we put too much baking powder in our biscuits, we know what will happen, or too much flour in the cake or not enough, but certainly we have had food for thought, a very fine message this morning, full of truth. The truth shall make you free and even though it's crushed to the ground, they tell me it rises again. Brother Lang (I want you to know that you didn't pull

any punches and that's what I like about a preacher that doesn't pull any punches) (Just tell it until it hurts, even if it hurts me, it hurts anyway if its the truth.) It makes me want to live better. It makes me want to find some more ingredients to go in the right place. For the Bible says-- All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God. Unless our hearts are in tune, we're going to play a discord that doesn't sound too sweet and if we put compound lard in a cake I don't know what would happen instead of shortening. I want to express my appreciation, I want Brother and Sister Lang to know that coming into the A.M.E. Church is no different from any other church. There will be a place for Brother and Sister Lang. There's one thing that I'm glad that he spoke of this morning, that he's not coming in because he feels somebody is going to give him two or three thousand dollars for pastoring a church. Many times, ministers sacrifice a whole lot and that is what our ministry exists of in anyone's Church.

There are going to be days, Brother and Sister Lang in the A.M.E. Church that aren't always going to be pleasant days. Of course, Brother Lang knows what I'm talking about, he's pastored. And Sister Lang as he said is not experienced as a minister's wife as some are. But there are many times 'Sister Lang, when the devil will get busy on you, when he can't move Brother Lang, and that same devil in the A.M.E. Church is in every other church.' And if you go over to the

First Methodist on 6th and Harrison, the devil will be there too. But just keep on preaching and praying. There are going to be days when money is going to be short. Maybe the food in the parsonage isn't as pleasurable as we desire and sometimes you may go to a parsonage that you can't sleep in it because its so cold--AMEN--Sacrifice but there is one thing that when we stay with God he will bring us up out of the pitfalls and the snares and place us upon a solid rock to stand. What a man puts into his ministry, is only what he gets out of it. If you go and win your people, the most of them. I would like to see a man who has a hundred percent behind him, but you won't find it, Brother and Sister Lang in anybody's church. There will be a number for you and there will be a number against you, but stay with God, he won't let you suffer. The A.M.E. Church is not going to let you suffer either, even though we're scorned many times. Our hands are scorned, bitterness comes, but there will be a way opened for you. They may do better by you than they do by me, who knows, but certainly I couldn't ask for a better congregation than I have right here at St. Mark. I might have a larger one some day, but I don't think I could have a better one and yet opposition and competition is what makes a man stay on his knees. And people are people, ~~wherever~~ they go regardless of the color, race, or creed, some will be for you and some will be against you, as they were with Jesus Christ. So I want to pray our Blessing upon him. Certainly he has already, a fine

men's chorus under way and I want you to hear them too. When they're ready, I'll let Brother Lang present them to you. You ladies think you can do everything, but you can't do everything. We will show you something. You better get ready for women's day and men's day, because the men are marching on. He now laughs. Praise God! and I want to say to our sister evangelist, that we want you to know that you are a sister among us. You're not just another evangelist, you are a sister of ours. A sister in Christ, in the Christ family. And we want you to know that the Church doors are always open. The parsonage is always open. If you come through Topeka and you need a meal or hungry come over, we'll share with you. It may not be anything but greens and corn-bread, but Brother Lang likes them. I know you can eat them. But certainly you're welcome to come.

May God Bless us and shall we get ready to carry on and I will take charge of Brother Lang from here on and put him in the harness. It's a pleasure to work with him and Sister Lang.

Closing Song--Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow. AMEN.

1959

A Program; Rev. Oliver Brown Delivered
the Sermon at the Annual Kansas
Conference September 23, 1959

KANSAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION
HELD AT TOPEKA KANSAS
BISHOP R. R. WRIGHT, JR. PRESIDING
BISHOP E. L. HICKMAN, ASSISTING

REV. A. L. SIMPSON	PRESIDING ELDER WICHITA DISTRICT <i>Starling Kansas</i>
REV. H. C. McMILLIAN	PRESIDING ELDER TOPEKA DISTRICT
REV. E. WOODY HALL	HOST MINISTER
RES. INZA BROWN	DIRECTRESS

SEPTEMBER 23, 1959

10:00 A.M. THE PROCESSIONAL... ST. JOHN COMBINED
CHOIRS

THE DOXOLOGY	CHOIR & CONGR.
THE CALL TO WORSHIP	REV. E. WOODY HALL
THE OPENING HYMN	CHOIR & CONGR.
PRAYER	REV. J.H. MATLOCK
MUSICAL SELECTION	CHOIR
SCRIPTURE... PRAISE HYMN	REV. J.R. HARRIS
THE DECALOGUE... GLORY PATRI.	REV. H.C. McMILLIAN
MUSICAL SELECTION	CHOIR
MISSIONARY OFFERING	REV. H.H. BROOKINS
PRESENTATION OF THE BISHOP	REV. H.C. McMILLIAN
SERMONIC HYMN	
THE ANNUAL SERMON	REV. O.L. BROWN
INVITATION	REV. C.L. WILLIAMS
GENERAL OFFERTING	FINANCE COMM.
HOLY COMMUNION	
THE BISHOP'S WORD	
CLOSING DOXOLOGY	
BENEDICTION	REV. O.L. BROWN

R E C E S S I O N A L

Document--Compliments of Alberta Ferguson, a relative
of the writer, also a member of the A.M.E. Church.

Scripture: Isaiah 59: 3-8
 Subject: A Cockatrice Serpent with
 a Deceptive Head

SCRIPTURE
 Isaiah 59: 3-8

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,
 that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy
 that it cannot hear;
 But your iniquities have separated between
 you and your God, and your sins have hid his
 face from you, that he will not hear.
 For your hands are defiled with blood, and
 your fingers with iniquity; your lips have
 spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered
 perverseness.

None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth
 for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak
 lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth
 iniquity.

They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's
 web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and
 that which is crushed breaketh out into a
 viper.

Their webs shall not become garments neither
 shall they cover themselves with their works;
 their works are works of iniquity, and the act
 of violence is in their hands.

Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to
 shed innocent blood; their thoughts are
 thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction
 are in their paths.

The way of peace they know not, and there is
 no judgement in their goings; they have made
 them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein
 shall not know peace.

APPENDIX B
BIOGRAPHY OF LINDA BROWN SMITH

Biography of Linda Brown Smith was given to the researcher, at the home of Mrs. Alberta Ferguson, 2135 Jefferson Street, Topeka, Kansas, October 5, 1979.

BIOGRAPHY

Linda Brown Smith was born in Topeka, Kansas, February 20, 1943, where she lived with her parents, the Rev. Oliver Brown and Leola Marie Brown, and two sisters. She attended the all black Monroe Elementary School for four years, until the family moved to North Topeka when her father was given a charge at an A.M.E. Church in the northern part of the city. She then attended McKinley Elementary school which was also an all black school.

In the fall of 1954, she attended Junior High School, which at that time was on an integrated basis in Topeka, thereby never obtaining the opportunity herself to benefit from the suit which had been instigated by her father along with several other parents through the local N.A.A.C.P. for the purpose of outlawing segregation in the public schools of Topeka. This suit made it's way through the court system until it finally reached the Supreme Court at which time it became known as Brown vs. Board of Education, and resulted in the historical Supreme Court decision of 1954, out-lawing segregation of schools throughout the land. This decision in the future was to change the whole complexion of black history in the field of education, and other related fields such as employment, housing, etc.

Linda Brown Smith attended Central High School in Springfield, Missouri where the family had moved upon the

receiving of a charge at an A.M.E. Church there by her father. She graduated from Central in 1961 with honors and received two scholarships to attend colleges in Springfield.

Upon the death of her father in the spring of 1961, the family returned to Topeka where Linda attended Washburn University, Majoring in Music.

Linda now resides in Topeka, and is the Mother of two children, Charles and Kimberly. She is employed by The Good-year Tire and Rubber Company in the field of Data Processing.

She is a member of the Local N.A.A.C.P. and other Civic Organizations.

She is also a very active member in the New Mount Zion Baptist Church of the City where she has served as minister of music for the past five years.

Linda is very interested in furthering her education in the field of education and social work. She is also very interested in becoming active in the field of Civil Rights.

Linda Brown Smith is so very thankful that she had a small part in bettering the future of Black America in the field of education through the efforts of her father and the case of BROWN vs. BOARD OF EDUCATION.

APPENDIX C
LETTERS

St. Peter's A. M. E. Church

153

4730 Margaretta, St. Louis, Missouri 63115
314/381-3345

March 20, 1980

Mrs. Isabel Masters
513 24th Ave. No. West # B
Norman, OK 73069

RE: Oliver Brown

Dear Mrs. Masters

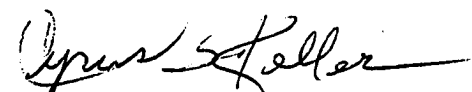
I am pleased to share with you my impression of the Reverend Oliver Brown. I know him as Pastor and associate during my tenure at St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Topeka, Kansas. Oliver Brown was discovered by me as an active sharer in the total life of the congregation, serving as a Sunday School teacher, Class Leader and Jr. Steward. His involvement in these areas of Parish life was total and exemplary. We shared many moments as pastitioner and Pastor. These sessions always filled my life with a real sense of blessing and joy.

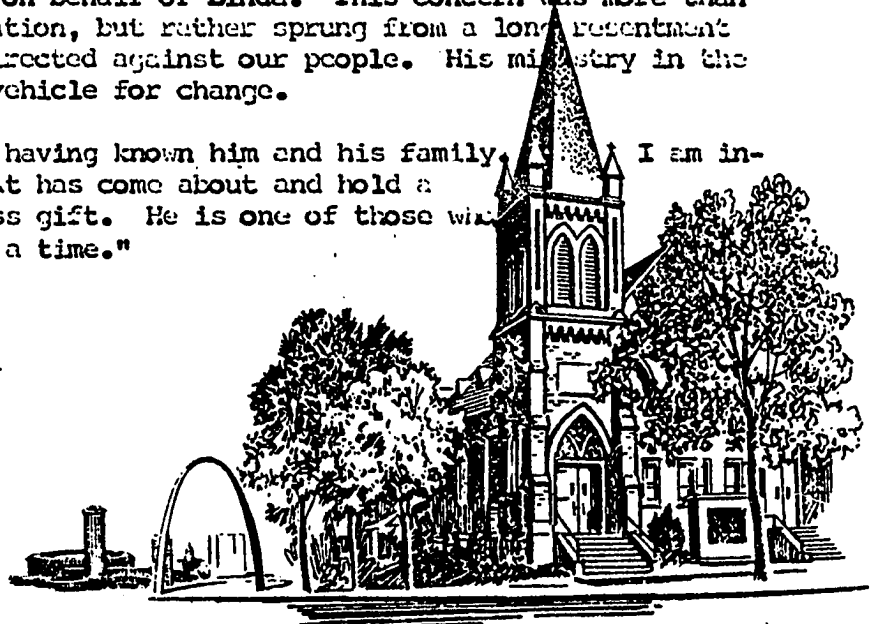
The day is not readily recalled, it may have been a Sunday or a weekday afternoon, when he came to me to inform his Pastor of his response to God's call to the Ministry. The Sunday morning when he presented his "Trial Sermon", was a joyous day in the life of St. John's. He was accepted as a candidate for Holy Order and subsequently licensed to preach by Dr. Harvey L. Vaughn, Sr., Presiding Elder of the Topeka District, the Kansas Conference. Oliver Brown served with me in the leadership of Worship, preaching whenever the opportunity presented itself and general Parish duties. His experiences had sensitized him to the need of a Sunday, or a witness on the part of the church. We often talked about the Social Inversions in which we lived.

This concern about the quality of life for our people, I believe, impelled him to challenge the status Quo on behalf of Linda. This concern was more than a reaction to a momentary frustration, but rather sprung from a long resentment of mistreatment and prejudice directed against our people. His ministry in the A. M. E. Church was his chosen vehicle for change.

I am personally richer for having known him and his family. I am indebted to him for the change that has come about and hold a legacy of his life as a priceless gift. He is one of those who came "to the Kingdom for a such a time."

Yours truly


Cyrus S. Keller, Sr., Pastor



Mrs. Charles C. Burton
1208 N. Hillcrest
Springfield, Mo. 65802

Dear Ms. Masters

In reference to your phone call about the late Oliver Brown.

I am sending this information furnished by members and past members of the Benton Ave A.M.E. Church. Benton at Central. Enclosed is a polaroid picture. Would like for you to have a copy made and returned if possible.

Mrs. Gladys O Neil furnished the pictures of Rev. Brown. I asked for them and Mrs. McAdams got them from her and said she would send them instead, as she had a letter ready to mail you.

However I am sending the Church and other information. I hope you have received the material from Mrs. McAdams.

After the late Rev. D. O. Meadows was transfered from Benton Ave A.M.E. Church at Conference in the year of 1959, the Members wondered who would fill the pulpit.

The answer to that question was made known on the first Sunday after the Conference in October 1959.

A very handsome, fair complexioned, man with short cut brown curly hair greeted the Congregation from the pulpit with a beautiful smile, and announced, he was Oliver Brown our new pastor. He introduced his wife Leola, and his three daughters, Linda, Terry and Shurell.

He began his job of building the membership of the Church.

He was a good mixer in the community.

He joined the Ministerial Alliance and held an office in this group.

He visited the shut-ins and the hospitals and prayed for the sick.

With \$1500.00 in treasurer raised while Rev.D.O. Meadows was pastor, Rev. Brown started a program to increase this amount so he could renovate the church.

Some of the programs were;
Mahalia Jackson, The Ward Singer, the Soul Stirrers
and local talent. Basket Dinners to get the members closer
together.

The Church took on a new face.

New carpet was laid. New office furniture, a new
organ, which his daughter Terry was the first to play.

A Communion Table given by Mrs. Roberta Bartley in
memory of her husband Ralph.

20 lovely chairs by Mrs. W. P. Campbell in memory of
her husband.

Mrs. Evelyn Cain and Ms. Le Anna Farris, Front doors
for the Church.

New Hymnals by Mrs. Georgia Burton in memory of her
father Caron Franklin.

And many more too numerous to mention.

On July 31, 1960 a program was given to dedicate our
remodeled church.

The children attended Central High school across from
the Church.

Rev. Brown was still the pastor of Benton Ave. when
he was stricken and died on his way to Topeka, Kansas to
attend the Anniversary of his wife's parents, June, 1961.

The Church mourns his death.

A great leader have passed from labor to rest.

Submitted by Georgia Q. Burton
Benton Ave. A.M.E. Church
Springfield, Mo.
March 18, 1980

You may change the formation in any way you want to.

Excuse mistakes, but I want to put this in the mail
tonight.

Sincerely yours
Mrs. Charles C. Burton or
Georgia Q. Burton

Springfield, Mo.

March 17, 1980

Rev. Oliver Brown, arriving in Springfield, Mo. about 9:00 p.m., came to my home, 1130 Sherman with a letter from our presiding Elder Rev. H. Frances McClure identifying him. I accepted him in my home for a couple days while he looked over the city and Benton Ave. A.M.E. Church. I was and am a member of the sister Church, Reedy Chapel A.M.E. Church, our pastor was Rev. Felix D. Dancy.

I have never met a more humble, yet able person than Rev. Brown. His Christian life exemplified the highest traits of Christian character and dedication. He was a dynamic speaker and an asset to the community. He completely redecorated Benton Ave., bought new pulpit furniture, organ and carpet. He was a member and I believe was president of N.A.A.C.P. Helped with the integration problems of Springfield.

I believe Rev. Brown's philosophy was
 "To serve my present Age,
 My calling to fulfill,
 O may it all my powers engage
 To do my master's will."

"Help me to watch and pray
 And on thy self rely
 Assured if I my trust betray
 I shall forever die."

Most Sincerely
 Lea Etta McAdams
 1130 Sherman
 Springfield, Mo. 65812

Enclosed picture from one of the members, but I don't think you will get much more. I ask them yesterday evening and they said I haven't found it yet. I told them you need it this week, so don't expect too much.

Attorney Samuel Jackson

In a telephone interview, March 8, 1980, with Attorney Samuel Jackson, Washington, D.C., he made special comments concerning Oliver Brown, other plaintiffs and accounts involving the institution of the case. I recorded his remarks which I asked if I might use in my dissertation, explaining that the focus of my study was on Oliver Brown. He answered "you may not use them unless you send me the names of all plaintiffs so that I may discuss each of them and give my interpretation of the case involvement." I called him again March 16, 1980. He asked me to have Cora Masters, (an acquaintance, a D.C. College Professor and politician) contact him at 8 A.M.-8:30, March 17th, 1980. Ms. Masters has been unsuccessful in contacting him; he has not returned her call, therefore due to these circumstances, I will not disclose any remarks he made.

Attorney Jackson was a law student at Washburn College in Topeka, Kansas when the Brown's case was filed. According to Richard Kluger, Simple Justice, Samuel Jackson made the statement in 1951 that "Oliver Brown didn't want to be a three-fifth man, he wanted to be a whole man." Samuel Jackson is presently a federal attorney in Washington, D.C.



SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE AND ACTION, INC.
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES 603 TOPEKA AVENUE
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66603 • PHONE 913-235-9561

JACK ALEXANDER
PRESIDENT

REF. NO. 70003

LAWRENCE C. WILSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 3, 1980

Isabel Masters
P. O. Box 2534
Norman, Oklahoma 73070

Dear Ms. Masters:

Enclosed please find the information you requested. If you need any further information or if I can be of any further assistance, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lawrence C. Wilson

Lawrence C. Wilson
Executive Director

LCW/smw
Enclosure

N.A.A.C.P. LEGAL DEFENSE AND
EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.



*Am referring
immediately to
our legal office*

Topeka, Kan.
Aug. 29, 1950
1007 Jewell

Mr. Walter White
Executive Sec.,
N.A.A.C.P.

*{ Carbon of ltr. to
please }*

19166 SEP 11 '50

Dear Sir,

I am writing in behalf of
the local branches. But first
let me identify myself. I am
Mrs. Todd, you stayed in my
home when you were through
Kansas in the Spring of 1948. I
don't know if you remember
our particular problems here
in our elementary schools or
not. But we have segregated
schools headed up by a Negro
who was hired to "keep the
Negro in his place." Our situa-

tion has become so unbearable,
that the local branch has decided
to test the permissible law which
we have here in Kansas. Our
legal redress committee informed
us that the law will not stand
up under a test case. So we
wonder if the National Office
would help us on this case,
we feel that if we could have
legal help from the splendid
lawyers in the national organi-
zation, we could not but win.

Will you please give our case
your personal consideration
please? We plan to take some
action immediately after the
beginning of school this Fall.

Please may we hear from you?

Sincerely Yours,
Lucinda Todd

schools - Kansas

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**N. A. A. C. P. LEGAL DEFENSE AND
EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.**

September 13, 1930

Dear Mrs. Todd:

I have your letter of August 29 in connection with the situation in the elementary schools. I immediately referred it to our Legal Department and you should be hearing from them in a few days.

Cordially.

Walter White
Executive Secretary

Mrs. Lucinda Todd
1007 Jewell
Topeka, Kansas

KM:erb

(enclosed copy of my letter)

Topeka, Kansas

April 20, 1980

Dear Mrs. Masters,

It is regrettable that the Brown school case is going down in History in error. The press continues to write that the Brown case was filed by the Rev. Brown. This is entirely mistaken.

The Brown case was filed and prosecuted by the Topeka, Kans. Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. In fact Rev. Brown was very reluctant to participate in the case. He had to be persuaded.

Rev. Brown was one of the thirteen plaintiffs in the case. The Attorneys chose the name Brown for the case because alphabetically Brown was first among the plaintiffs names since Brown begins with a "B".

I am convinced that if the Rev. Brown were alive he would clarify the matter.

Sincerely,

Lucinda Todd
Lucinda Todd

APPENDIX D

REVEREND MAURICE LANG'S III EXPERIENCE WITH
THE LATE REVEREND OLIVER LEON BROWN IN THE
LAST HOURS OF HIS LIFE

JUNE 20, 1961

OLIVER LEON BROWN'S OBITUARY

March 18, 1980
Topeka, Kansas

Subject: The final hours and tribute to the late Rev. Oliver Leon Brown.

To Whom It May Be of Interest:

Little did either of us realize as we bade goodbye to loved ones in Topeka and headed for Springfield, Missouri, that Rev. Brown would never see his family in this life again.

As a White minister friend, I counted Rev. Brown as one of my closest black minister friend. We talked of intimate matters in our lives and found we were both just men of like passion, struggling to please God.

I ministered that Sunday in his Church and visited with him in his home as he conducted Church affairs.

The following Tuesday he had completed his business for the Church and while he sat in an overstuffed chair in front of me, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "Look upon his face as it will look in death."

He was not feeling well and wanted to postpone returning to Topeka until the next day. When he saw my sincerity that I was impressed of God that we should return that Tuesday afternoon, he opened his eyes, raised his head and said, "Let's go!"

His sense of humor was constant around me and as he drove he would find it very amusing when the warning buzzer on his car came on at 80 miles an hour. 60 miles an hour was my limit and 80 genuinely frightened me.

Darkness had set in and just outside of Lawrence, Kansas, he asked me to drive.

As I drove we talked and he spoke of the annoying cough he had. I suggested we join hands. He pray in his way as an African Methodist and I would pray as a Pentecostalist that God would relieve the reason for the cough.

I prayed against demon powers afflicting him and rebuked their presence. What he prayed I do not know as we both did so silently as I drove with one hand and kept my eyes on the road.

Immediately upon releasing hands he suddenly turned and began to cough up huge quantities of phlegm, expectorating

out the open window.

After two violent coughing sessions he turned to me and said, "Lang, I'm so sick!"

Though a good sized man he did not want me to stop so he could get in the back seat and he proceeded to crawl over the front seat and literally flopped on the back seat.

Because he was always kidding me I had no idea he was close to death though he labored in his breathing.

Just before Perry, Kansas, he spoke to me and said, "Lang, I'm not going to make it. Get me home quickly!"

I thought he was kiddingly trying to frighten me. Yet, something in me felt I should take him serious so I suggested he begin to praise God out loud along with me that God would spare and keep him and let us get home safely.

We both prayed and praised and I think I even sang to encourage him, hymns of faith as we approached Topeka.

His breathing was more labored and since I really felt he was kidding me I decided I would waste time looking for a physician in Perry, Kansas, and drove on. Besides, it was dark.

As I turned on North Kansas Ave., headed into uptown Topeka I could tell by his breathing he was not kidding so I drove at normal speed expecting to get him to his wife and let her determine what to do.

As I approached the intersection of St. John and North Kansas Ave., I heard that familiar death gurgle and final exhalation of air. I looked back and he was hunched down in the corner of the seat, his face contorted in death. A sight I will never forget.

I then turned back to my driving and said outloud to God, "I'm through praying now God. Get me through the inter-sections safely."

Driving faster I went through red lights, beeping the horn in an emergency fashion and as I turned West on 6th Street to the St. Francis Hospital, a police car turned on its siren and red light and began to pursue me. I told the Lord, "He'll have to arrest me at the hospital."

I learned later he knew I had an emergency and was wanting to escort me, but God had his angels go before me and

I did not meet one car at any red light.

As I drove up to the emergency door of the hospital it was apparent the policeman had radioed my coming and we were met by other police, Sheriff cars, a local radio station car and medical personnel.

Two medical men got in the back and began to apply what I know now as C.P.R.

The one breathing into Rev. Brown's mouth let out a curse and I saw that he had been splattered with the phlegm coming from his lungs. I think it also got on me a little.

After a while they turned to me and said, "He is gone," which I already knew.

Detectives talked to me as they removed him to a curtained area in the emergency room.

When they had finished I remembered what God had said to me so I went to see his face in death. Apparently someone had closed the eyes and mouth and he looked the same as he did sitting in the chair. All in the matter of a few hours and the reason God impressed me we must return to Topeka and not wait.

I was so shaken I asked a policeman to drive me to his wife at her mother's home.

When I got in the home I asked her to be seated and then I told her "Your husband has gone home to be with the Lord."

After explaining in detail what had happened I then was taken to his mother's home and upon hearing the news she became very upset and explained she had a premonition something was going to happen.

Upon the day of his funeral I was preparing to attend and a local radio station gave a weather forecast of no rain. God spoke and told me to call the station and tell them it was going to rain.

I did so without giving my name and as I began to drive to the Church it began to rain so hard I had to use my windshield wipers.

At the packed St. John A.M.E. Church, I sat on the platform in order to give my tribute but I was so hurt and

choked at the loss of my dear brother I could not speak. I finally just sat down and cried.

I forgot to add, prior to the funeral my wife and I went to the mortuary to view his body and I said they did not have his clerical collar on correctly. I explained to an attendant how it should be done and he corrected it later.

Like all persons, Rev. Brown had those who did not see eye to eye with him but the packed church showed he had left an influence on a lot of people's lives. I found him to be an intimate friend, of which, I have very few due to my straight forward character and personality. He liked my truthfulness.

To my knowledge he never once discussed the case, Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education. In fact, I never realized he was such a man of history until some years after his death.

He was down to earth in his approach to people and I found him always pleasant to be around. What he was like to live with I do not know.

In my presence angels took his spirit back to God. I was given the privilege of escorting his earthen vessel to the safety of a hospital. An honor for which I will always be grateful.

Hoping he can hear me I wish to express my deepest regard and respect by saying this--

"Rev. Brown, my dear brother in Christ, you have passed on to your reward. You were a dear friend and fellow minister and I miss you very much. We will meet and be together again in a perfect place where only love abounds.

I will meet you in the morning, only by the grace of Him in whom we both have faith."

In Christ's Service,
Rev. Maurice J. Lang III
1424 N.E. Jefferson
Topeka, Kansas 66608
1-913-234-5154



Christians Evangelistic Association, Inc.



Office of the President and Founder

REV. MAURICE J. LANG III, D.D.

March 18, 1980

Dear Sis. Masters

I hope this meets with your approval. If you want more, please call and I will dictate it in my idiom so you can add it in an appropriate place.

Love abounds instead of abides, is what I meant to say. Love abides here on earth, but--does not abound.

Capitalized Him is a name for God as I have used it.

Please send a photo copy of your typed pages for my book.

If you want it personally signed, return and I will do so and then return it. I will then make copies for myself.

Correct spelling and punctuation if necessary.
Idiom construction leave.

Thanks!

Kansas State Historical Society

120 West Tenth • Topeka, Kansas 66612 • 913/296-3251

March 13, 1980

Isabel Masters
513 24th Avenue, N. W., Apt. B
Norman, Oklahoma 73069

Dear Ms. Masters:

In our telephone conversation yesterday you asked me to look for articles published in Topeka newspapers concerning the death of Oliver Brown on June 20, 1961.

Enclosed is a photocopy of an obituary I found in the Topeka State Journal of June 21, 1961. The Topeka Daily Capital published nothing about his death, unless I overlooked it.

You mentioned that you were looking for a picture of Mr. Brown. A very small one was published with this article. Our staff photographer could make a photographic print of this picture, although it might not provide a very satisfactory portrait. Our photo curator recommended a 2" x 3" print, which would cost \$2.00 plus 35¢ for postage and handling. A 4" x 5" print would be \$2.50 plus the 35¢ mailing charge, but it probably would be less clear than the smaller photo.

Please send pre-payment if you would like for us to make such a photograph. Unfortunately, there might be a delay of several weeks before we could fill the order.

I hope that your dissertation research is going well and that the enclosed information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Terry Harmon

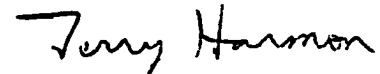
Terry Harmon

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Please send pre-payment if you would like for us to make such a photograph. Unfortunately, there might be a delay of several weeks before we could fill the order.

I hope that your dissertation research is going well and that the enclosed information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,



Terry Harmon
Assistant State Archivist

TH:cks

Enc.



JOSEPH W. SNELL, Executive Director
ROBERT W. RICHMOND, Assistant Executive Director
PORTIA ALLBERT, Librarian
EUGENE D. DECKER, State Archivist
MARK A. HUNT, Museum Director
THOMAS A. WITTY, State Archaeologist
PATRICIA A. MICHAELIS, Curator of Manuscripts
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THOMAS P. BARR, Historic Properties Supervisor
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OBITUARY

DEATHS AND
FUNERALS

Oliver Leon Brown

The Rev. Oliver Leon Brown, 42, of Springfield, Mo., former pastor of the St. Mark A.M.E. Church of Topeka, was pronounced dead on arrival at a Topeka hospital Tuesday. He had previously been ill at Springfield and became worse during the last 20 miles of an automobile trip to Topeka. The car was driven by the Rev. Maurice J. Lang III, 723 Jefferson.

The Rev. Mr. Brown was born Aug. 2, 1918, in Topeka, was graduated at Topeka High School and attended Washburn University. He was employed at the Santa Fe shops 15 years.

For 3½ years he was assistant minister of the St. John A.M.E. Church and for 6½ years pastor of the St. Mark A.M.E. Church, 400 W. Norris. About two years ago he became pastor of the Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church at Springfield, Mo. He was an active member of the N.A.A.C.P.

At the time of his death, he was on his way to meet members of his family who were in Topeka for the 50th wedding anniversary of Mrs. Brown's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Williams, 518 E. 1st.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Leola Brown, and three daughters, Linda, Terry and Cheryl, all of the home; his mother, Mrs. Lutie Brown, 935 College; three brothers, Emerald Brown of Detroit, Charles Brown of Minneapolis, Minn., and William Brown, 1033 Plass; two sisters, Mrs. Ruby Harris and Mrs. Opal Johnson, both of Kansas City; three uncles, Ed Bass, 1008 MacVicar, Richard Bass, 1734 Harrison, and George Brown of Los Angeles; two aunts, Mrs. Lila Butcher and Mrs. Ruth Williams, both of Los Angeles; several nieces and several nephews, including William David Brown, 1033 Plass.

Cousins in Topeka include Mrs. Marian Everett, 1101 Clay, Charles Butcher, 1233 Lawrence, Harry Carper, 106 W. 15th, Clyde Carper, 1332 Linn, Marian Carper, 1020 Woodward, and Mrs. Nadine Lewis and Richard Bass Jr. both of 1845 Bran-ner.

Bowser Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements. Friends will be received at the home of Mrs. Lutie Brown, 935 College.¹

¹Topeka State Journal, June 21, 1961, p. 18, col. 3.

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- Letter from Mrs. Lucinda Todd, addressed to Walter White, Executive Director of NAACP and Legal Defense Fund Inc., August 29, 1950.
- Letter from Walter White, addressed to Mrs. Luncinda Todd, Secretary of NAACP, September 13, 1950.
- Letter from Reverend Maurice J. Lang III, Minister Christians Evangelistic Association, Inc., Topeka, Kansas, March 18, 1980.
- Letter from Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, March 13, 1980.
- Letter from Lawrence C. Wilson, Executive Director of Shawnee County Community Assistance and Action, Inc., Topeka, Kansas, March, 1980.
- Letter from Reverend Cyrus Keller, St. Louis, Missouri, March 20, 1980.
- Letter from Ms. Lea Etta McAdams, Springfield, Missouri, March 18, 1980; March 19, 1980.
- Letter from Ms. Mamie William, Topeka, Kansas, February, 1980.

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name of the Rev. Oliver Leon Brown who delivered
a sermon from the text Isaiah 59, . . . The Cocka-
trice, in September 23, 1959 was submitted to the
writer by Mrs. Alberta Ferguson, November 10, 1979.

Tape recorded prayer and services of Reverend Brown rendered
at the St. Marks A.M.E. Church, Topeka, Kansas,
1957.

Information from this author's experience as a student
of Topeka High School and resident of the Topeka
Black Community in the 1930's and 1940's.

Photographs taken by the author of St. Marks A.M.E. Church
and the Brown family home May 25, 1980.

Address by Benjamin Hooks to the Governor's Association
Meeting in Washington, D. C., February 1978, the
author was in attendance.

Scriptural paraphrase of tape recorded series of the Reverend Brown.

Esther Brown (White) (now deceased) was interview by Richard Kluger, May 31, 1971 in New York City. Kluger, p. 796.

A Bronze plaque hangs in the vestibule of St. Marks A.M.E. Church as a tribute to the late Reverend Oliver Leon Brown.