



Water Tossing Boulders: How a family of Chinese Immigrants Led the First Fight to Desegregate Schools in the Jim Crow South

Adrienne Berard

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A generation before *Brown v. Board of Education* struck down America's "separate but equal" doctrine, one Chinese family and an eccentric Mississippi lawyer fought for desegregation in one of the greatest legal battles never told.

On September 15, 1924, Martha Lum and her older sister Berda were barred from attending middle school in Rosedale, Mississippi. The girls were Chinese American and considered by the school to be "colored"; the school was for whites. This event would lead to the first US Supreme Court case to challenge the constitutionality of racial segregation in Southern public schools, thirty years before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In this case confronting the "separate but equal" doctrine, the Lum family, along with an eccentric Mississippi lawyer, fought for the right to educate Chinese Americans in the white schools of the Jim Crow South. Through extensive research in historical documents and family correspondence, Berard illuminates a vital, hidden chapter of America's past and uncovers the powerful journey of an oppressed people in their struggle for equality.



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