

Wilson C. Riles

Principal of the Paul Laurence Dunbar School

Led Desegregation of Flagstaff Schools before 1954 Brown Decision



Photo Credit: Cline Library Special Collections

Key Quote:

“No Adversary Situation”

As Principal of the Dunbar School, Wilson Riles helped develop Flagstaff’s Southside as a viable neighborhood for African Americans, Latino/Hispanics and Native American residents. Dr. Riles helped desegregate Flagstaff public schools in 1953, and promoted educational equity in California during the 1970s when he was the first Black elected to statewide office.

Themes for Lesson Plans:

- *Education and segregation:* Does closing Black schools to achieve desegregation of public schools improve learning for African American children? (Assign student debates from Supreme Court, or recreate “Separate is Inherently Unequal” picket sign project)
- *Unequal education:* Why are Black students overrepresented in special education classes? (Students research the court case: *Larry P. v. Riles*)
- *Black migration:* Where, why, and when did African Americans leave the South to settle in the West? (Develop topographical maps, GIS locations, and design narratives, monologues and clothing/embodiment of different historical figures)

Sources:

Wilson & Louise Riles Collection, Cline Library:

<http://archive.library.nau.edu/cdm/search/searchterm/Riles%2CWilson%20and%20Louise/field/relatig/mode/exact/conn/and/order/date>

Wilson Riles Oral History: <http://archive.library.nau.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/cpa/id/78878/rec/2>