

## **Lloyd Lionel Gaines (*Posthumously*)** ***Missouri Civil Rights Pioneer***

Lloyd Lionel Gaines was born in Oxford, Mississippi in 1911, and at the age of 14, moved with his widowed mother to St. Louis in 1925. Gaines was the central figure of one of the most important civil rights cases to be decided by the United States Supreme Court.

Lloyd Gaines graduated from Vashon High School in 1931, as valedictorian of his class. He matriculated to Lincoln University and was president of his senior class and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in History in 1935. That same year, he applied for admission to the law school at the University of Missouri. In April, the University denied his admission on the basis of race.

Gaines, with the aid of the NAACP and their lawyer, Charles Hamilton Houston, then sued the University of Missouri. After the Boone County court and Missouri Supreme Court both ruled in favor of the University, the argument proceeded to the United States Supreme Court. On December 12, 1938, the court, in a 6-2 decision, ordered the State of Missouri to either admit Gaines to the University Of Missouri School Of Law or provide another school of equal stature within the state borders. The decision in the Gaines case set a precedent for graduate and professional education for African Americans. The Gaines decision established the principle of “equality of education”. The case was the first of a long series of lawsuits brought by NAACP which finally led to the most momentous of them all – the 1954 decision declaring segregation in public schools unconstitutional, “Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, et.al”.

On the night of March 19, 1939, Gaines left the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity house in Chicago, Illinois, telling his fraternity brothers that he was going out to buy stamps. Lloyd Gaines, he was never seen again. Thus, Lloyd Gaines never realized his dream of attending the University of Missouri Law School of Law School and becoming a lawyer.

In 2006, Gaines was granted an honorary law degree by the University of Missouri and the Supreme Court of Missouri named him an honorary member of the Missouri Bar.