

## A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair

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"Argument of William W. Ellsworth, in the case of the State of *Connecticut vs. PRUDENCE CRANDALL* [excerpts]." Delivered before the Supreme Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut, July, 1834.

.... The defense of Miss Crandall will be rested upon the unconstitutionality of this statute law of Connecticut, and may be embraced under these two heads.

1. These pupils are citizens of their respective states.
2. As citizens, the constitution of the United States secures to them the right of residing in Connecticut, and pursuing the acquisition of knowledge, as people of color may do, who are settled here....

To the first position then.

Are these pupils citizens of their states respectively? If they were white, it is conceded they would be.

1. A distinction founded in color, in fundamental rights, is novel, inconvenient, and impracticable. Hitherto we have seen no such distinction; none in the ancient common law of England which justly boasts of her equal principles; none in that immortal instrument which our republican fathers put forth as the groundwork of all just government — the Declaration of Independence. There, we read 'we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'...
2. Such were not the ideas of our fathers, when the colored soldier stood in the ranks of that army which achieved for us our liberty....
3. These pupils are human beings, born in these states, and owe the same obligation to the state and the state's governments, as white citizens.

PEARL, Jr. Chairman.