

60 years after Brown v. Board of Education the fight goes on

By Sherrilyn Ifill, MSNBC

May 17 marks the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education, the constitutional moment that compelled our country to reckon with its history and confront the unfulfilled promise of equality first articulated in our founding documents.

Brown literally changed America. It was a mid-20th century course correction that ushered in a modern America that must grapple honestly with the promise of equality and opportunity for all its citizens.

At its core, Brown marks the beginning of the end of legal apartheid in this country. This would be enough to celebrate. But Brown is also a powerful example of how change can happen and the important role that law plays in shaping the very character of our country.

Within 15 years of the Court's decision in Brown, segregation had been declared illegal in almost every aspect of American life, from the school house to swimming pools, golf courses to public transportation and housing. These changes were not brought about by lawyers alone. The broad civil rights movement that began the year after Brown reflected a powerful demand for full citizenship for blacks throughout the South. But Brown also deployed our nation's most coveted assets – our Constitution and the rule of law – to articulate and enforce the principle of equality.

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