

Towards a Greater Racial Equality: *Brown v. Board*, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Barrier of Segregation

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Introduction

In the United States of the late 1870s to mid-1950s, signs proclaiming “COLORED” or “WHITE” in large block letters were commonly hung in public spaces, making clear the distinction between the two categories. Indeed, in a photo taken in May 1940, titled *Bus Station in Durham, North Carolina*, one such sign labeling a “COLORED WAITING ROOM” looms in the background of the stark black-and-white photo.¹

On May 17, 1954, the racial segregation these signs represented was ruled illegal and unconstitutional in schools for the first time by the US Supreme Court in *Brown v Board of Education*. This landmark case overturned previous precedents supporting segregation, thus breaking down an important barrier not only physically and legally, but also psychologically and socially, to racial equality. Lacking this barrier of segregation, the racial classes of black and white were threatened. This led to violent backlash from white supremacists and failure of schools to integrate in many places, which influenced Americans nationwide and ultimately led to the Civil Rights Movement.

Origins of Segregation

Though existing for years beforehand in the North,² widespread segregation in the United States is recognized to have started barely 75 years prior to when the picture in North Carolina was taken. At that time, the North’s victory in the Civil War and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1865 brought freedom to slaves in the South. This broke a racial barrier for African

¹ See Appendix I.

² Sharp, *A Dream Deferred*, 33-34; *Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008), 183.

Americans across the nation, and, in the following ten or so years, called the Reconstruction, some measure of racial equality was obtained.³

However, this was only temporary. By the 1890s, race relations were much worse. Rapid inflation, growing national debt, global economic depression,⁴ and the rise of Southern Democrats to positions of power in the government⁵ caused federal interest in protecting colored citizens to decline. In the North, black and European migration grew, drawn by the second wave of industrialization, and caused competition over jobs and housing that increased discrimination.⁶ Despite white suppression, after the Civil War, African Americans had been “gaining success along many lines”,⁷ and whites were fearful that the rising black middle class would change the social order established by almost a hundred years of slavery.⁸

Many Southern states acted on the growing prejudice and fear, passing “Jim Crow”⁹ laws that enforced the segregation of blacks and whites.¹⁰ In the North, although these laws

³ Anne Wallace Sharp, *A Dream Deferred* (Farmington Hills: Thomson Gale, 2005), 11-13.

⁴ Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Tonya Bolden, *Dark Sky Rising* (New York: Scholastic Focus, 2019), 123; Derrick A. Bell, *Silent Covenants* (Oxford UP, 2004), 80-8.

⁵ Sharp, *A Dream Deferred*, 17-18.

⁶ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 11-12; Leon Friedman, editor, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court* (New York: New Press, 2004), 31; C. S. Manegold, *Ten Hills Farm* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010), 252-253; Hubert Henry Harrison, *The Negro and the Nation* (1917).

⁷ Quoted in Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 20.

⁸ C. Vann Woodward. “The Case of the Louisiana Traveler” (1971), *American Counterpoint* (Little Brown, 1971), pp. 162-165; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 20-21; Hubert Henry Harrison, *The Negro and the Nation* (1917), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (2nd ed., Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), pp. 213-16.

⁹ Jim Crow laws were named after a discriminatory minstrel caricature of African Americans called “Jump Jim Crow” that was popularized by white entertainer Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice in the 1830s. See Appendix II.

¹⁰ Victor H. Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book Compendium* (About Comics, 2019), 13.

were absent, unofficial segregation, already prevalent,¹¹ increased.¹² The strengthening culture of separate races made apparent that the racial barrier had, in fact, been reborn under a different name—segregation.

Plessy v. Ferguson

With the rise of Jim Crow laws and white-on-black violence, as well as disenfranchisement in many regions,¹³ African Americans all over the nation were concerned.¹⁴ As a result, when, in 1890, Louisiana introduced a Jim Crow law—the Separate Car Act¹⁵—that segregated railways, blacks in New Orleans formed the Citizens’ Committee to challenge it. They had Homer Plessy violate the law on June 7, 1892.¹⁶ After Plessy’s arrest, they filed the lawsuit *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which was appealed to the US Supreme Court.¹⁷

However, attitudes towards racial equality in the Court mirrored those of the public. The Court ruled that segregation was constitutional if facilities were “separate, but equal”,¹⁸ setting a precedent that made segregation a legal barrier to integration and true racial equality.¹⁹ The

¹¹ Amos Esty, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Greensboro: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, 2012), 18-20; Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book Compendium*, 129-130; Langston Hughes, “My America” (1944), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (2nd ed., Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), pp. 257-263; Thomas J; Sharp, *A Dream Deferred*, 33-34; *Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008), 183.

¹² Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 20-21; Stetson Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was* (UP of Florida, 1990), quoted in “What Was Jim Crow,” *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, Ferris State University, <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>, last modified 2012, accessed 13 Jan. 2020.

¹³ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 30-31.

¹⁴ Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier, *Reconstruction and the Rise of Jim Crow* (Tarrytown: Benchmark Books, 2000), 83; Diane Telgen, *Brown v. Board of Education* (Omnigraphics, 2005), 17; Woodward, “The Case of the Louisiana Traveler” (1971).

¹⁵ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 18.

¹⁶ Woodward, “The Case of the Louisiana Traveler” (1971).

¹⁷ Mark Elliot, *Color-Blind Justice* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006), 265; Esty, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 61-62.

¹⁸ *Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537.

¹⁹ Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 286-287.

decision invited a wave of laws that segregated all manner of public places in the South²⁰ and officially established the Jim Crow Era.

The ruling also expanded segregation into a psychological barrier to racial equality—it implied that a person had to be either black or white. Since Plessy, only one-eighth black, was treated as black by the Court, the ruling reaffirmed the “one drop rule” that those of mixed ancestry were considered black.²¹ This cemented the classes of black and white in the minds of Americans and strengthened the soon-to-be overwhelming white consensus behind preserving “racial purity.”²²

The Worsening Situation

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, racial classes continued to be reinforced. People all over the nation called the Reconstruction a mistake.²³ Popular works, like the 1915 *The Birth of a Nation*,²⁴ and important political figures perpetrated the image of blacks as sexual predators and whites as heroes—President Theodore Roosevelt even publicly proclaimed that “the Negro race is largely composed of criminals, murderers, and rapists.”²⁵ Sanctioned by government officials, violent lynchings became commonplace in the South by the

²⁰ David Cates, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Minneapolis: Abdo Publishing Company, 2013), 116; Telgen, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 13.

²¹ Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 14.

²² Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 58.

²³ Telgen, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 17-19.

²⁴ “The Birth of a Nation (1915) - LILLIAN GISH | D.W. Griffith | G.W. Bitzer,” Video file, 3:00:24, Youtube, Posted by Change Before Going Productions, October 7, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o72nGVh3t3Q>; Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *Stony the Road* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 145, 159-183; Sharp, *A Dream Deferred*, 25; *Monroe City Democrat*, “New Books,” May 26, 1910, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90061309/1910-05-26/ed-1/seq-2/>.

²⁵ *The Broad Ax*, “James Sunshine Sherman, the Ex-Democrat and Republican Vice-Presidential Candidate,” October 3, 1908, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024055/1908-10-03/ed-1/seq-1/>.

end of the nineteenth century.²⁶ As segregation acted as a physical, legal, and psychological barrier, it increased the discrimination in communities and workplaces²⁷ and became a social barrier.

A Cultural Shift

While post-Civil War race relations was reaching its violent nadir, other extralegal forces were gathering. The entrance of the US into World War 1 in 1917 and World War 2 in 1941 created jobs in the industrialized North,²⁸ causing many Southern blacks searching for employment to relocate there in the Great Migration.²⁹

Just like the migration of blacks during the Reconstruction, the Great Migration caused a job and housing crisis in the North; Numerous urban race riots erupted.³⁰ However, the Migration was overall beneficial to blacks. It substantially increased their political power by enfranchising them—blacks could vote in the North—and creating a black middle class.³¹

²⁶ Hughes, "My America" (1944); "Scottsboro Boys Appeal from Death Cells to the Toilers of the World" (1932), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (2nd ed., Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), pp. 280-81; *The Carolina Watchman*, "Negro Captured and is Lynched," August 22, 1906, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026488/1906-08-22/ed-1/seq-1/>; Thompson, R. W., "Plan of Civil Rights League," *Franklin's Paper The Denver Star*, January 4, 1913, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91052312/1913-01-04/ed-1/seq-6/>.

²⁷ *Franklin's Paper The Denver Star*, "Plan of Civil Rights League," January 4, 1913, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91052312/1913-01-04/ed-1/seq-6/>.

²⁸ Laurie Lanzen Harris, *The Great Migration North, 1910-1970* (Omnigraphics, 2012), 23; Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Self-published, 2000), 43.

²⁹ Black Bolsheviks, "What the African Blood Brotherhood Stands For" (1922), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (2nd ed., Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), pp. 229-241; Gates and Bolden, *Dark Sky Rising*, 136, 139; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 62-63, 100; Sharp, *A Dream Deferred*, 77.

³⁰ Harris, *The Great Migration North, 1910-1970*, 54, 62-66; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 6-7.

³¹ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 88.

As blacks gained power, white opinion was also shifting in their favor. The ideology that the US was making “the world safe for democracy”³² in the World Wars caused whites to reflect on the state of democracy and black civil rights in the US.³³ The FDR³⁴ Administration and New Deal expanded their vision of a greater federal role in ensuring individual freedom and opportunity for all Americans.³⁵ Furthermore, a new generation—one without a history of slavery and need for racial classes—was replacing the old.³⁶

The NAACP

This shifting culture created opportunities for new protest ideologies; Membership of black civil rights groups grew exponentially during this period.³⁷ For the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,³⁸ established in 1909, this expansion of membership enabled the group to pursue multiple goals concurrently. A separate branch called the Legal Defense Fund³⁹ headed by lawyer Thurgood Marshall was created in 1940 to fight racial segregation through litigation.⁴⁰

In the beginning, the LDF only fought lawsuits to make public facilities for blacks and whites equal. They targeted schools because education was universal. In 1949, though, US

³² Quoted in Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 63; Hughes, “My America” (1944).

³³ Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II*, 224.

³⁴ A common acronym for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

³⁵ Sturkey, *Hattiesburg*, 239.

³⁶ Barbara A. Somervill, *Brown v. Board of Education* (Mankato: Child’s World, 2010), 80; Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book Compendium*, 52; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 310, 344.

³⁷ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Commemorative ed., New York: Oxford UP, 2002), 124; William Sturkey, *Hattiesburg* (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard U, 2019), 228.

³⁸ Abbreviated NAACP for the remainder of this paper.

³⁹ Abbreviated LDF for the remainder of this paper.

⁴⁰ Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2018), 84

Supreme Court victories on integration cases in higher education caused Thurgood and the LDF to decide to push for integration in their cases.⁴¹

Five Cases in One

In 1950 and 1951, the LDF became involved in five school segregation cases—*Bolling v. Sharpe*,⁴² *Briggs v. Elliot*,⁴³ *Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka*,⁴⁴ *Belton (Bulah) v. Gebhart*,⁴⁵ and *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*. As per the decision in 1949, the LDF argued for integration. All these cases were appealed to the US Supreme Court and reached the docket simultaneously. Due to their similarity, all, except for *Bolling v. Sharpe* since it was under federal, not state, jurisdiction, were consolidated into one case—*Brown v. Board of Education*.⁴⁶

Brown v. Board of Education

The initial hearing for *Brown v. Board of Education* in the US Supreme Court began on December 9, 1952. The LDF attempted to prove that segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment which promised equality to all Americans because it made it “impossible for Negro children to secure equal educational opportunities”.⁴⁷ The opposition argued that previous precedents upholding segregation, like the often-cited *Plessy v. Ferguson*, were the “best guide”⁴⁸ they had.

⁴¹ Edds, *We Face the Dawn*, 4-5; Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 145

⁴² Tim McNeese, *Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 98.

⁴³ McNeese, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 73-75; Petition of Harry Briggs, et al., to the Board of Trustees for School District No. 22. 11 November 1949; *Briggs v. Elliott*, 98 F. Supp. 529 (E.D.S.C. 1951).

⁴⁴ McNeese, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 75-81; *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 98 F. Supp. 797 (D. Kan. 1951).

⁴⁵ McNeese, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 82-88.

⁴⁶ John A. Stokes, and Louis Wolfe, and Herman J. Viola, *Students on Strike: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Brown, and Me* (National Geographic Society, 2008), 49, 63, 106.

⁴⁷ Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, 3-4, 11, quote on 14.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, 33; Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 16

Unlike when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was decided, the extralegal forces and cultural shift mentioned earlier led the Justices to struggle with the issue throughout the opening months of 1953. They were badly divided, with three opposed to integration, four in favor, and two undecided.⁴⁹ Worried about the “catastrophic”⁵⁰ impact of a divided decision, a reargument focusing on the Fourteenth Amendment was scheduled for October 12, 1953.⁵¹

However, on September 8, Chief Justice Vinson suddenly died from a heart attack. The reargument was postponed until December 7, after Earl Warren replaced Vinson.⁵²

The reargument, though later declared by Warren to be “inconclusive,”⁵³ did show that Warren would vote for integration.⁵⁴ With the other four judges who had previously indicated their support, integration was now cemented as the majority opinion.

The Justices understood that the South wouldn’t receive the ruling easily; Any internal conflict in the Court would be exploited by resisters. In addition, they knew that the continuation of segregation would undermine the self-proclaimed democracy of the US in the

⁴⁹ Both books referenced Burton’s and Jackson’s conference notes. Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, xii; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 300.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 301 from a letter from Frankfurter to Reed on May 20, 1954.

⁵¹ McNeese, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 107; Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, 177 which is a reprint of 345 U.S. 972, Miscellaneous Orders.

⁵² Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 302; Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, xii.

⁵³ Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, 327; Also quoted in Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 16.

⁵⁴ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 302; Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, xii;

ongoing Cold War against communism.⁵⁵ This helped sway the undecided and dissenting judges, whose votes were now irrelevant, to vote against segregation.

Consequently, on Monday, May 17, 1954, the Court announced that it had unanimously decided that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”⁵⁶ Segregation, and the precedent set for it by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, was no longer a barrier to racial equality in litigation.

Brown II

After the ruling, the US Supreme Court called for another reargument, known as *Brown II*, to discuss the implementation of school desegregation. The LDF urged the Justices to avoid the gradualist approach that the opposition supported, as it would lead to purposeful delays. However, the Justices were concerned about violent resistance to their decree; Southern state lawyers claimed that gradual relief with no set deadline was the only practical way to desegregate schools in their region.⁵⁷ So, on May 31, 1955, the Court ruled that schools desegregate “with all deliberate speed” and gave school authorities “the primary responsibility” for overseeing the process.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 60-61, quoting Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, 3-17; Thurgood Marshall, “Segregation and Desegregation” (1954), *Let Nobody Turn Us Around*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (2nd ed., Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), pp. 332-339.

⁵⁶Friedman, *Brown v. Board: The Landmark Oral Argument Before the Supreme Court*, 330, quoting Final Decision on the Merits 347 US 483.

⁵⁷Telgen, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 70

⁵⁸*Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955)

A National Response

For close to a year after the *Brown* decision, the entire nation seemed to be under a spell. The violent reaction predicted in the South was strangely absent. Instead, Southern newspapers and politicians urged people to remain calm and abide by the law.⁵⁹ Though some localities were reluctant, most of the North and border states “accepted and successfully put into operation”⁶⁰ the Supreme Court’s ruling, breaking the physical barrier that segregation presented in schools.⁶¹

However, the most important consequence of *Brown*—mobilizing opposition to segregation—was still to come. Despite this period of peace, trouble was brewing in the Deep South.⁶²

Massive Resistance

The idea of “pure” whiteness was strongly associated with “a southern way of life”—a general term that encompassed the racial and social hierarchy of the Jim Crow Era.⁶³

Segregation in schools, especially ones in lower education, universally influenced children. As such, they were crucial to the preservation of the “southern way of life” and

⁵⁹ *The Daily Record*, “Dixie Leaders Opposing End of Segregation,” May 18, 1954, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88063132/1954-05-18/ed-1/seq-1/>; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 389; Gareth D. Pahowka, “Voices of Moderation: Southern Whites Respond to Brown v. Board of Education,” *The Gettysburg Historical Journal* 5, no. 6 (2006): 50-56. <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=ghj>.

⁶⁰ *The Mississippi Enterprise*, “A. J. C. Urges Action Against Hoodlums,” October 16, 1954, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87065258/1954-10-16/ed-1/seq-12/>.

⁶¹ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 344-347.

⁶² Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 389-390.

⁶³ Abby Elizabeth Motycka, “White Southerners Respond to Brown v. Board of Education: Why Crisis Erupted When Little Rock, Arkansas, Desegregated Central High School,” *Honors Projects*, (2017): 82-88. <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/honorsprojects/82>. Accessed 13 Jan 2020.

ensuring that segregation remained a psychological and social barrier to racial equality.⁶⁴

Consequently, school segregation had always lay at the top of the preferences of white supremacists; only a few states in the far North with miniscule black populations permitted integration, and the most violent racial episodes in the past involved school desegregation.⁶⁵ Therefore, the *Brown* ruling was an uncommonly big threat to the “southern way of life” and the racial classes that, now established, whites were unwilling to let collapse.⁶⁶

As a result, once *Brown v. Board* was decided, whites in the Deep South reacted more violently. Even the smallest amount of integration was not to be tolerated anymore.⁶⁷ Southern whites banded together in White Citizens’ Councils and launched “Massive Resistance” — an organized campaign to oppose integration.⁶⁸ Membership of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist hate group which had earlier seemed “set to disappear,”⁶⁹ soared. The southern states, after grudgingly tolerating the NAACP for decades, launched a legal assault on the organization.⁷⁰ Schools, like those in Prince Edward County, were closed rather than integrated;⁷¹ Numerous black teachers were fired.⁷²

⁶⁴ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 391; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (20th Anniversary ed., New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 882.

⁶⁵ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 289; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 25, 391, 421; *The Detroit Tribune*, “Asks Supreme Court to Ban Anti-NAACP Law,” September 30, 1961, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92063852/1961-09-30/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁶⁶ Rachel Devlin, *A Girl Stands at the Door* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), xxiii; Sturkey, *Hattiesburg*, 252.

⁶⁷ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 392, 394.

⁶⁸ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 289, “Massive Resistance” quoted on 289;

⁶⁹ Quoted in Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 392

⁷⁰ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 383-384.

⁷¹ Fredreka Schouten, “50 Years After Landmark Court Decision, Painful Legacy Lingers in Va,” *Gannett News Service*, 27 Apr. 2004, *SIRS Discoverer*, [explore.proquest.com/sirsdiscoverer/document/2267875627?searchid=1572497075&accountid=2402](https://www.proquest.com/sirsdiscoverer/document/2267875627?searchid=1572497075&accountid=2402).

⁷² National Archives and Records Service, *A 1953 letter from the Superintendent of the Public Schools of Topeka to a black teacher*, Photograph, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/prologue/images/spring-2004-school-letter.jpg>; Connor, Douglas,

This reaction radicalized Southern politics. In order to gather votes, politicians competed to see who could most “blatantly and uncompromisingly cling to segregation”.⁷³ Government officials and local judges wrote segregationist documents like the “Southern Manifesto” and *Black Monday* that claimed integration was “contrary to the Constitution”.⁷⁴

Massive Resistance would continue all the way until the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement.⁷⁵

The Civil Rights Movement

Many claim that *Brown v. Board of Education*'s greatest impact was that it overturned the legal precedent of segregation and desegregated schools, which inspired African Americans and instigated the Civil Rights Movement. However, this seems unlikely. *Brown v. Board* is undoubtably connected with the Movement, but the length of time between the Movement in 1964 and the *Brown* decisions of 1954 indicates that *Brown* didn't have as much influence in inspiring blacks to protest as often credited; The effects would have been more immediate otherwise.⁷⁶

handwritten notes, “School Desegregation Meeting” (10 Sep. 1969), Box 1, Connor (Douglas) Papers, <https://cdm16631.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/charm/id/24980>; Richards, Janelle, “65 years since Brown v. Board of Ed, School Segregation Persists,” *NBC News*, 17 May 2019.

⁷³ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 390-391, quoted from 390; Sturkey, *Hattiesburg*, 251.

⁷⁴ Quote from “The Southern Manifesto,” APM Reports, accessed 13 Jan 2020, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/marshall/manifesto.html>; Tom P. Brady, pamphlet, “A Review of Black Monday” (Brookhaven: Association of Citizens’ Councils) 28 Oct. 1954, Box 3, Folder 21, M393 McCain (William D.) Pamphlet Collection, https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile_37990b03-cf0c-44ae-a281-77ec4ec67047/.

⁷⁵ Moss, John Hope Franklin Alfred A., Jr, *From Slavery to Freedom* (7th ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 495-496.

⁷⁶ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 368-370.

Evidence suggests, instead, that the most important impact of the decision was how it influenced whites. By declaring segregation unconstitutional, *Brown* broke down a physical, legal, psychological, and social barrier; already weakened by extralegal forces, this finally destabilized the racial classes. This agitated whites and mobilized opposition to integration, which, though exacerbating racial inequality in the short term, caused effects that ultimately led to the Civil Rights Movement and greater equality.

One such effect stemmed from the fact that the opposition evoked was often extremely violent, like the lynching of Emmet Till and Mack Parker.⁷⁷ Moreover, the recent popularization of technologies like the television enabled greater spread of information.⁷⁸ So, for the first time, images and film of the brutality of racism were able to capture nationwide attention and sympathy in most communities outside of the South. This caused a resurgence of white support and evoked resistance in blacks.⁷⁹

In addition, the opposition prevented many schools from integrating in the South and showed the limits of litigation. Though the violence of the resistance hindered direct-action protesting,⁸⁰ the failure of the law to help blacks integrate, especially in the south, caused an overall increase of blacks who turned to it.⁸¹ This involved the entire black population and

⁷⁷ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 289-291; Sturkey, *Hattiesburg*, 254, 263.

⁷⁸ *Evening Star*, "Yes, Phillip's Prices Are Low...", January 20, 1950, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1950-01-20/ed-1/seq-61/>; *The Chronicle*, "Bar Television for Ruby Trial," December 20, 1963, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87065526/1963-12-20/ed-1/seq-1/>; *The Detroit Tribune*, "Bell & Howard Unmoved by Southern Threat," September 30, 1961, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92063852/1961-09-30/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁷⁹ *The Detroit Tribune*, "Cong. Diggs Blasts Mississippi Justice," October 1, 1955, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92063852/1955-10-01/ed-1/seq-3/>; Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 425.

⁸⁰ Direct-action is a form of protesting that uses public, mass protest to achieve goals instead of negotiation. See Appendix III.

⁸¹ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 380, 467-468; Sturkey, *Hattiesburg*, 251, 255.

shifted them from the mindset that only a select amount of educated African Americans could have an effect on civil rights. Direct-action protests, like sit-ins and bus boycotts, would eventually characterize the Civil Rights Movement.⁸²

Essentially, by rallying white resistance, the *Brown* decision gave blacks both the motivation and means to obtain their civil rights, which enabled the formation and success of the Civil Rights Movement. This was important because the Movement and resulting Civil Rights Act of 1964 profoundly changed the US; among other things, it explicitly outlawed all racial discrimination, ending the Jim Crow Era.⁸³

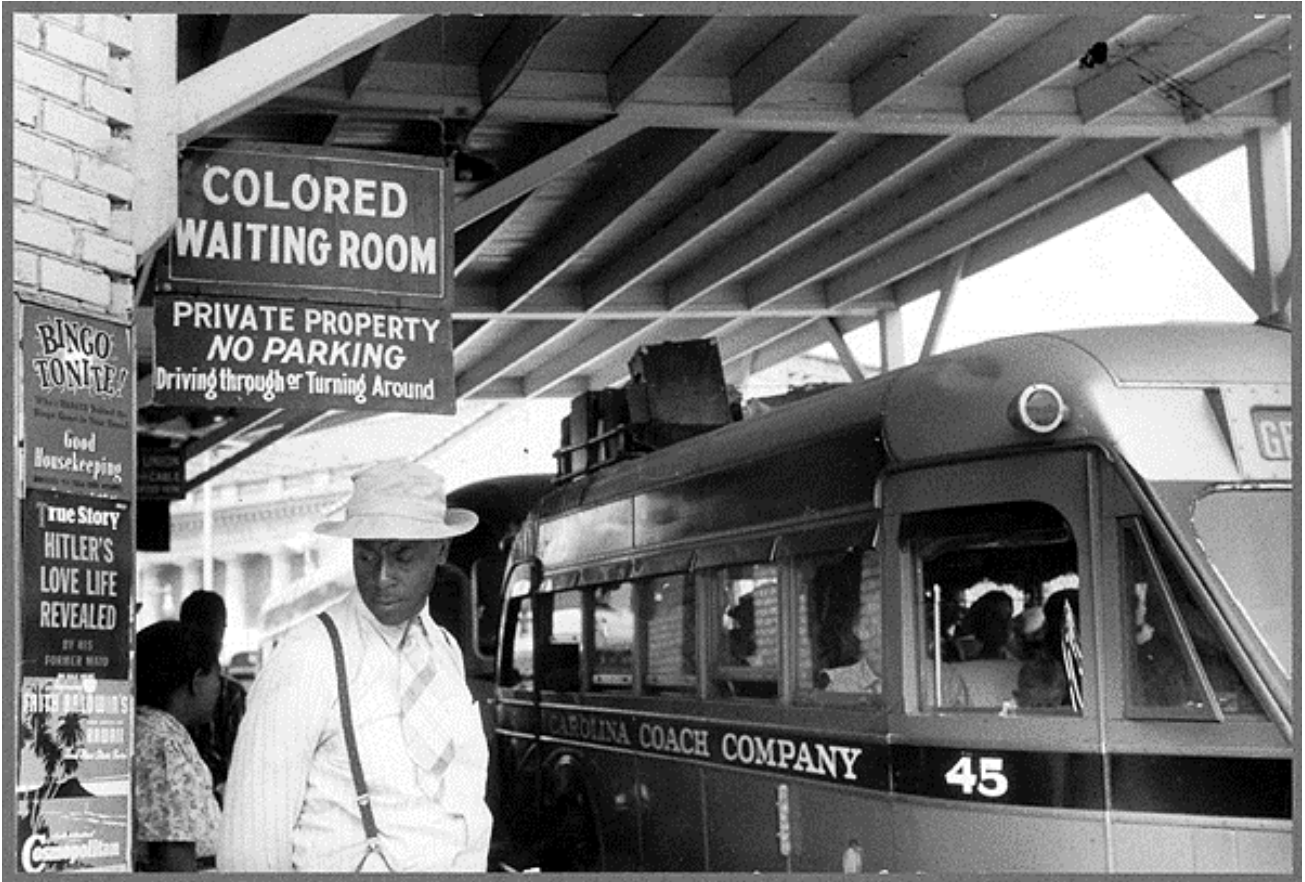
Conclusion

When slavery ended, segregation replaced it as a racial barrier. *Brown*, through breaking this barrier, further opened the way to racial equality, which provoked massive resistance from white supremacists. This, in turn, instigated the Civil Rights Movement. As such, *Brown* played a crucial role in defining not only the Civil Rights and Jim Crow Eras but also new conceptions of race and identity for many Americans. Consequently, no matter how racial issues evolve in the future, *Brown v. Board of Education* is—and forever will be—a milestone that broke barriers and launched America towards a greater racial equality.

⁸² Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book Compendium*, 210.

⁸³ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 294.

Appendix I



An African American man at a bus station in Durham, North Carolina, taken in 1940.

Source: Delano, Jack. *At the bus station in Durham, North Carolina.* Nitrate Negative Image. May 1940. Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c25806/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2019.

Appendix II



A print showing an African American man in tattered clothes walking or dancing as animal dressed as humans walk in the background.

Source: Hodgson, 111 Fleet Street & Turner & Fisher. *Jim Crow*. Photograph. 1835. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669584/>. Accessed 13 Jan. 2020.

Appendix III



A school desegregation demonstration and direct-action protest during the Civil Rights
Movement in 1964.

Source: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Newspaper. *Desegregation Demonstration – School Board*. Negative Image. Online Archive of California.
<https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb6r29p13z/?order=4&brand=oac4>. Accessed 1 Jan. 2020.