

The Supreme Court is a highly effective and important machine in today's society. The Supreme Court is a division in the judicial branch with it being the final stop for all court cases. "Established by the Constitution and the Judiciary Act of 1789" The Supreme Court has made a lot of impactful decisions for this country in many ways, good and bad.¹

Before we can dissect how the supreme court has changed the United States we first have to know how it works and the people behind it. Supreme Court justices serve for life and go through a process of being nominated. First the president has to select the justice and then the Senate has to approve of the justice. After this has happened the Justices are sworn in for life. This process in my opinion leaves the opportunity for a lot of corruption or unfairness. For instance many qualified Justices have been skipped over because of the President that has nominated them. This also allows for a president to pack the court full of people that support his agenda which can cause mass harm for this country. Another important point of the Supreme Court is the fact that there is no definite number of seats established. This allows for the option for presidents to pack the court. For instance, President Roosevelt attempted to pack the court and had 15 justices in the court in an effort to get the new deal passed; however, his attempt did not succeed. Overall, the supreme court is a vital structure in this country but leaves a lot of space for its power to be abused.²

Now that I have established what the Supreme Court is and what it does, it's time to give you my version of the history and cases over the years it's handled. The Supreme Court has had many lead justices which has helped dictate the decisions and how the court functions. This allowed for a lot of different outcomes over the years and allowed for a lot of different opinions to rain over the judicial branch. For instance the first major court was the Chase court which oversaw reconstruction and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. This period was a turning point which painted how the country started to reshape. After the Chase court we had the Waite court which is most notable for getting rid of public forms of discrimination however, it did not speak on the private forms of discrimination. This allowed for many divides in the country which created issues throughout and allowed for an uprising to come to help shape the country in the future over civil rights. The Waite court is also notable for separation of church and state which helped shape many laws in today's world. For example abortion. The next major court holding was the Fuller court. The Fuller court is responsible for separate but equal. This is a step in the civil rights movement but primarily didn't help change the country or any of its massive

¹ Robert Fuller, "The Supreme Court since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

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problems in social injustice. After the Fuller court the White court started which basically just shot the workers class in the foot by rolling back workers rights and protections. This caused many difficulties and strikes and helped shape all the entitled employees today. The next major player was Taft. Taft's court is notable for "*Buck v. Bell (1927)*: The Court ruled 8-1 that the forced sterilization of the 'feeble minded' and unfit did not violate the Constitution". This allowed for the dog eat dog world to continue and helped strengthen the workforce in this country. However this was achieved in some harsh ways which did not play out well in the years following. The next court was the Hughes court. This court was a defining moment because it had the first instance of court packing with FDR. Even with the efforts it didn't pass but helped lay out a foundation of what can be achievable by future presidents. This played a role in current history because every election people are scared about presidents packing the court to support and overturn laws that the president sees fit. The next two in line were the Stone court and the Vinson court which made little to no decisions and therefore nothing important happened. The next important Court was the Warren Court. This was the most liberal court in history today and has helped change some policies and laws and set precedent for many cases today. It did this through its most notable cases of "*Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*: Overturned "separate but equal", *Engel v. Vitale (1962)*: Ended official school prayers, *Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States (1964)*: Banned racial discrimination in public accommodations like hotels, *New York Times v. Sullivan (1964)*: Strengthened freedom of the press, *Miranda v. Arizona (1966)*: Police must inform citizens of their rights, *Loving v. Virginia (1967)*: Legalized interracial marriage in all states, and *Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969)*: Protected free speech, even for the KKK". All of these court cases have shaped many ways the law is interpreted and has made many social and quality of life changes that we still see in today's society. Then we had the Burger court which is most notable for leaving abortion up to the mother. However today in society some states have reverted this case. It also left the question open for when does human life begin and when does it turn to murder. The next in line is the Rehnquist court which basically started to give the power to the states instead of the federal government and was a mostly conservative court. This has allowed for many states to come up with and change laws to their liking which has had some consequences but overall has allowed for a better present and hopefully a better future with so much reliance on the federal government. The last and most present court is the Roberts court. The Roberts court is most notable for extending freedom of speech to corporations and allowing same sex marriage. This has allowed for the LGBTQ+ movement to take form and to have a month and holidays surrounding it. The corporations have not taken much advantage of free speech however. Overall all the court eras have allowed for the current state of the country and have given and taken many points of view in the right direction and the wrong direction.³

³ Robert Fuller, "The Supreme Court since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

In conclusion, the Supreme court has given and taken many things from this country and has helped shape it in many ways. This story does not resemble any key author because history is messy and has a lot of moving parts and changes. Overall, a lot of important decisions have helped form and change our current society and future and made for a massive mess of history in the past. However without this history we wouldn't be as informed or prepared of the world today and be able to move forward as well or fast as we are today.