The Supreme Court’s 1954 landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education—which declared that the doctrine of “separate but equal” had no place in public education in the U.S.—reverberated around the world, according to Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Speaking at one of several University events this year to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Brown, Judge Ginsburg said that the decision “propelled the human rights movement” in many countries and is also part of the “evolution toward respect in law and practice, for human dignity.”

The discussion, organized by Columbia and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, was held at the Law School.

Ginsburg, Law ’59, was introduced by Jack Greenberg, a Columbia law professor who played a crucial role on the legal team that argued Brown. Greenberg, who also worked with lawyers in South Africa to end apartheid, said that the cause of human rights had deepened over the past half century as a consequence of Brown.

Arthur Chaskalson, reporter, “I Judge decision in the South African high court and one of the authors of the historic Court of South Africa address.”

Ginsburg noted that although the Allies had destroyed Hitler and his racist regime, American troops were still racially segregated after they were freed from the war.

“In our talk, Ginsburg traced the historical background of the Brown decision in the aftermath of World War II. She noted that although the Allies had destroyed Hitler and his racist regime, American troops were still racially segregated when they entered the war. ‘While we opposed Hitler’s practices,’ Ginsburg said, ‘many Americans tolerated racism at home.’ During the Cold War, racism in the U.S. was fodder for Communist propaganda, Ginsburg added, ‘raised doubts even among friendly nations about our dedication to democracy. It was a source of constant embarrassment.’

By Ernest Beck

Columbia and Community Partners Expand Legal Services for Immigrants

By Lanna Zoh

For Sergio Cabrera, the journey to United States citizenship has been fraught with unclear regulations and increasingly harsh congressional measures. When an expunged juvenile criminal conviction was unearthed 20 years after the case, Cabrera found himself staring down the possibility of being deported. With cases like this on the rise in Northern Manhattan, there is a growing need for legal aid.

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Several thousands of other would-be citizens are on the same road. Since a 1996 ruling that lowered the maximum number of crimes legal residents can commit before they can be deported, 25,000 Dominicans have been forced to leave New York.

On Oct. 11, Columbia and partners Alianza Dominicana Inc. (ADI) and the Legal Aid Society announced the appointment of Maria Navarro as project attorney for a new community law team that will provide immigration-related legal support to residents of Northern Manhattan. The project—funded by a $300,000 University grant to be used over the course of three years—has been more than two years in the making. It provides for Navarro to support the long-term immigration work of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights.

Moses Perez, executive director of ADI, noted that the program targets needed resources to our community. This is work that must be handled by lawyers—‘which we have not had on staff until this grant from Columbia University. It’s definitely a win-win-win situation.’

By Sherr M. Whitley

University Dedicates Plaza to First African American Trustee

By Eileen Barroso


A graduate of Columbia College class of 1939, Weston was appointed the University’s first African American trustee in 1969 and served in that capacity until 1981. When he was designated a trustee emeritus, he was a tireless advocate for Columbia and the larger Harlem community, his dedication inspired the Black Students Organization and other student groups to campaign for a space named in his honor.

At the dedication ceremony included James Forbes, senior minister of The Riverside Church; Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University; Austin Quigley, dean of Columbia College; and Jessica Buchanan, president of CU Black Students Organization; Evan Davis, former University trustee; and Greg Weston, son of Moran Weston.

All of the speakers commented on Weston’s selflessness and unflappable optimism. President Bollinger noted that Weston once told a New York Times reporter, “I do nothing. I cause things to happen. If I have a gift, it is to encourage people that they can do the impossible.” Bollinger also remarked that “to walk around our campus is to trace his influence.”

Weston’s accomplishments weren’t limited to his guidance as a University trustee. His work spanned several sectors and included a wide range of successful efforts to improve the community. He served as rector of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Harlem, and his banking experience alerted him to the growing need for affordable housing.

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University Dedicates Plaza to First African American Trustee

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Columbia and Community Partners Expand Legal Services for Immigrants

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