

Amending the Constitution

"My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total." The speaker was Barbara Jordan, the first African American elected to Congress from Texas. In her rich voice, Jordan recited the first words of the Constitution:

"When that document was completed, on the seventeenth of September in 1787, I was not included in that: We, the People. . . . But through the process of amendment, interpretation, and court decision I have finally been included in: We, the People."

—Barbara Jordan, testimony before the House Judiciary Committee,
July 25, 1974

Jordan lived in a different world from that of the framers of the Constitution. They did not know how the nation would change. But they knew it would change and that the Constitution would have to change with it. The formal amendment process that they designed has helped make the Constitution a living document.

Follow-Up Questions:

1.) What does Barbara mean by her speech?

2.) Since the Bill of Rights what other changes have been made to protect people's rights?

3.) What are some other changes that you think could be made to help protect people's rights?