

Civil Rights

Activism, new legislation, and the Supreme Court advance equal rights for African Americans. But disagreements among civil rights groups lead to a violent period for the civil rights movement.

Civil Rights

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Taking on Segregation

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The Triumphs of a Crusade

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Challenges and Changes in the Movement

Section 1

Taking on Segregation

Activism and a series of Supreme Court decisions advance equal rights for African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s.

SECTION

1 Taking on Segregation

The Segregation System

Plessy v. Ferguson

- Civil Rights Act of 1875 act outlawed segregation
- In 1883, all-white Supreme Court declares Act unconstitutional
- 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling: separate but equal constitutional
- Many states pass Jim Crow laws separating the races
- Facilities for blacks always inferior to those for whites

Continued . . .



SECTION

1

continued **The Segregation System****Segregation Continues into the 20th Century**

- After Civil War, African Americans go north to escape racism
- North: housing in all-black areas, whites resent job competition

A Developing Civil Rights Movement

- WW II creates job opportunities for African Americans
- Need for fighting men makes armed forces end discriminatory policies
- FDR ends government, war industries discrimination
- Returning black veterans fight for civil rights at home

SECTION

1

Challenging Segregation in Court

The NAACP Legal Strategy

- Professor Charles Hamilton Houston leads NAACP legal campaign
- Focuses on most glaring inequalities of segregated public education
- Places team of law students under **Thurgood Marshall**
 - win 29 out of 32 cases argued before Supreme Court

Brown v. Board of Education

- Marshall's greatest victory is ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka***
- In 1954 case, Court unanimously strikes down school segregation

SECTION

1

Reaction to the *Brown* Decision

Resistance to School Desegregation

- Within 1 year, over 500 school districts desegregate
- Some districts, state officials, pro-white groups actively resist
- Court hands *Brown II*, orders desegregation at “all deliberate speed”
- Eisenhower refuses to enforce compliance; considers it impossible

Continued . . .



SECTION

1

continued Reaction to the *Brown* Decision**Crisis in Little Rock**

- Since 1948, Arkansas integrating state university, private groups
- Gov. Orval Faubus has National Guard turn away black students
- Elizabeth Eckford faces abusive crowd when she tries to enter school
- Eisenhower has Nat. Guard, paratroopers supervise school attendance
- African-American students harassed by whites at school all year
- 1957 Civil Rights Act—federal government power over schools, voting



SECTION

1

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Boycotting Segregation

- 1955 NAACP officer **Rosa Parks** arrested for not giving up seat on bus
- Montgomery Improvement Association formed, organizes bus boycott
- Elect 26-year-old Baptist pastor **Martin Luther King, Jr.** leader

Walking for Justice

- African Americans file lawsuit, boycott buses, use carpools, walk
- Get support from black community, outside groups, sympathetic whites
- 1956, Supreme Court outlaws bus segregation



SECTION

1

Martin Luther King and the SCLC

Changing the World with Soul Force

- King calls his brand of nonviolent resistance “soul force”
 - civil disobedience, massive demonstrations
- King remains nonviolent in face of violence after *Brown* decision

From the Grassroots Up

- King, others found **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**
- By 1960, African-American students think pace of change too slow
- Join **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**



SECTION

1

The Movement Spreads

Demonstrating for Freedom

- SNCC adopts nonviolence, but calls for more confrontational strategy
- Influenced by Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to use **sit-ins**:
 - refuse to leave segregated lunch counter until served
- First sit-in at Greensboro, NC Woolworth's shown nationwide on TV
- In spite of abuse, arrests, movement grows, spreads to North
- Late 1960, lunch counters desegregated in 48 cities in 11 states

Section 2

The Triumphs of a Crusade

Civil rights activists break through racial barriers.
Their activism prompts landmark legislation.

SECTION

2 The Triumphs of a Crusade

Riding for Freedom

CORE's Freedom Rides

- 1961, CORE tests Court decision banning interstate bus segregation
- **Freedom riders**—blacks, whites sit, use station facilities together
- Riders brutally beaten by Alabama mobs; one bus firebombed

New Volunteers

- Bus companies refuse to continue carrying CORE freedom riders
- SNCC volunteers replace CORE riders; are violently stopped
- Robert Kennedy pressures bus company to continue transporting riders

Continued . . .



SECTION

2

continued **Riding for Freedom****Arrival of Federal Marshals**

- Alabama officials don't give promised protection; mob attacks riders
- Newspapers throughout nation denounce beatings
- JFK sends 400 U.S. marshals to protect riders
- Attorney general, Interstate Commerce Commission act:
 - ban segregation in all interstate travel facilities

SECTION

2

Standing Firm

Integrating Ole Miss

- 1962, federal court rules **James Meredith** may enroll at U of MS
- Governor Ross Barnett refuses to let Meredith register
- JFK orders federal marshals to escort Meredith to registrar's office
- Barnett makes radio appeal; thousands of white demonstrators riot
- Federal officials accompany Meredith to classes, protect his parents

Continued . . .



SECTION

2

continued **Standing Firm****Heading into Birmingham**

- April 1963, SCLC demonstrate to desegregate Birmingham
- King arrested, writes “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
- TV news show police attacking child marchers—fire hoses, dogs, clubs
- Continued protests, economic boycott, bad press end segregation

Kennedy Takes a Stand

- June, JFK sends troops to force Gov. Wallace to desegregate U of AL
- NAACP’s Medgar Evers murdered; hung juries lead to killer’s release

SECTION

2

Marching to Washington

The Dream of Equality

- August 1963, over 250,000 people converge on Washington
- Speakers demand immediate passage of civil rights bill
- King gives “I Have a Dream” speech

More Violence

- September, 4 Birmingham girls killed when bomb thrown into church
- LBJ signs **Civil Rights Act of 1964**
 - prohibits discrimination because of race, religion, gender



SECTION

2

Fighting for Voting Rights

Freedom Summer

- **Freedom Summer**—CORE, SNCC project to register blacks to vote in MS
- Volunteers beaten, killed; businesses, homes, churches burned

A New Political Party

- Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party formed to get seat in MS party
- **Fannie Lou Hamer**—voice of MFDP at National Convention—wins support
- LBJ fears losing Southern white vote, pressures leaders to compromise
- MFDP and SNCC supporters feel betrayed

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

2

continued **Fighting for Voting Rights****The Selma Campaign**

- 1965, voting rights demonstrator killed in Selma, AL
- King leads 600 protest marchers; TV shows police violently stop them
- Second march, with federal protection, swells to 25,000 people

Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Congress finally passes **Voting Rights Act of 1965**
- Stops literacy tests, allows federal officials to enroll voters
- Increases black voter enrollment

Section 3

Challenges and Changes in the Movement

Disagreements among civil rights groups and the rise of black nationalism create a violent period in the fight for civil rights.

SECTION

3 Challenges and Changes in the Movement

African Americans Seek Greater Equality

Northern Segregation

- **De facto segregation** exists by practice, custom; problem in North
- **De jure segregation** is segregation required by law
- WW II black migration to Northern cities results in “white flight”
- 1960s, most urban blacks live in slums; landlords ignore ordinances
- Black unemployment twice as high as white
- Many blacks angry at treatment received from white police officers

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

3

continued African Americans Seek Greater Equality**Urban Violence Erupts**

- Mid-1960s, numerous clashes between white authority, black civilians
 - many result in riots
- Many whites baffled by African-American rage
- Blacks want, need equal opportunity in jobs, housing, education
- Money for War on Poverty, Great Society redirected to Vietnam War

SECTION

3

New Leaders Voice Discontent

African-American Solidarity

- **Nation of Islam**, Black Muslims, advocate blacks separate from whites
 - believe whites source of black problems
- **Malcolm X**—controversial Muslim leader, speaker; gets much publicity
- Frightens whites, moderate blacks; resented by other Black Muslims

Ballots or Bullets?

- Pilgrimage to Mecca changes Malcolm X's attitude toward whites
- Splits with Black Muslims; is killed in 1965 while giving speech

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

3

continued **New Leaders Voice Discontent****Black Power**

- CORE, SNCC become more militant; SCLC pursues traditional tactics
- **Stokely Carmichael**, head of SNCC, calls for **Black Power**:
 - African Americans control own lives, communities, without whites

Black Panthers

- **Black Panthers** fight police brutality, want black self-sufficiency
- Preach ideas of Mao Zedong; have violent confrontations with police
- Provide social services in ghettos, win popular support

SECTION

3

1968—A Turning Point in Civil Rights

King's Death

- King objects to Black Power movement, preaching of violence
- Seems to sense own death in Memphis speech to striking workers
- Is shot, dies the following day, April 4, 1968

Reactions to King's Death

- King's death leads to worst urban rioting in U.S. history
 - over 100 cities affected
- Robert Kennedy assassinated two months later



SECTION

3

Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement

Causes of Violence

- **Kerner Commission** names racism as main cause of urban violence

Civil Rights Gains

- **Civil Rights Act of 1968** prohibits discrimination in housing
- More black students finish high school, college; get better jobs
- Greater pride in racial identity leads to Black Studies programs
- More African-American participation in movies, television
- Increased voter registration results in more black elected officials

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

3

continued Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement**Unfinished Work**

- Forced busing, higher taxes, militancy, riots reduce white support
- White flight reverses much progress toward school integration
- Unemployment, poverty higher than for whites
- **Affirmative action**—extra effort to hire, enroll discriminated groups
- 1960s, colleges, companies doing government business adopt policy
- Late 1970s, some criticize policy as reverse discrimination



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