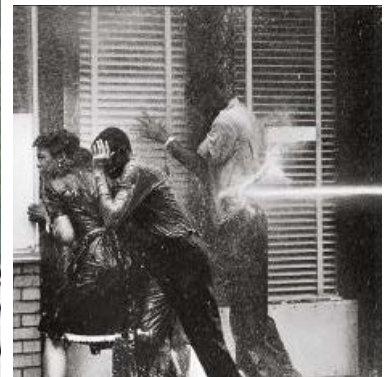
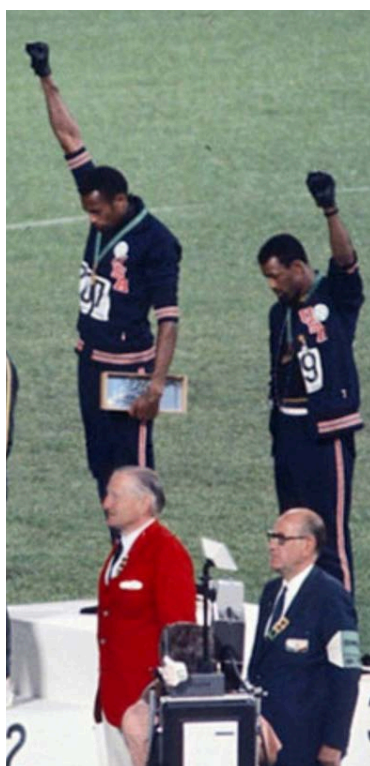
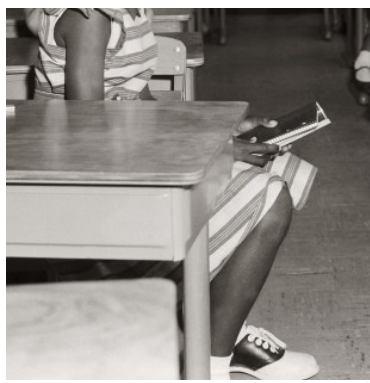
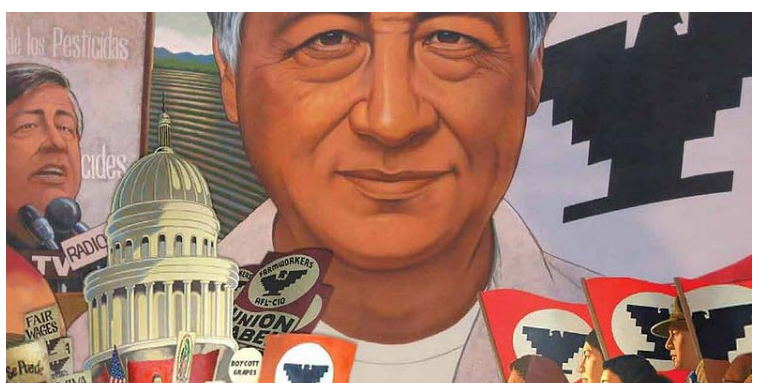




W e r e t h e  
**CIVIL RIGHTS**  
M O V E M E N T S  
of the post-war decades  
**SUCCESSFUL?**



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of the post-war decades  
**S U C C E S S F U L ?**

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

**S U P P O R T I N G   Q U E S T I O N S**

- 1**   HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?
- 2**   HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?
- 3**   WAS VIOLENCE AN INEVITABLE PART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?
- 4**   WHAT MAKES A MOVEMENT SUCCESSFUL?

D E V E L O P E D   A N D   C O M P I L E D   B Y  
J O N A T H A N   L O O M I S

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## Q U E S T I O N   S I X T E E N

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**CIVIL RIGHTS**

**M O V E M E N T S**

of the post-war decades

**S U C C E S S F U L ?**

After fighting Double V campaigns in both world war, African American troops returned home in the 1940s to an America that featured the same racial prejudices that it had for generations. However, in the 1950s, those old ways were challenged, first in court, and then on the streets in an era we remember as the Civil Rights Movement.

Led by famous and celebrated individuals such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was one of dramatic change. The Jim Crow segregation laws of the South were undone by brave champions of nonviolence. Sit-ins, freedom rides, marches, and speeches featured in what is widely remembered as one of the greatest expressions of the American spirit of freedom.

Inspired by the African Americans of the South, Hispanic farm workers, Native Americans, disabled Americans and homosexuals all initiated their own movements to gain rights and respect.

Sometimes these movements were peaceful and inspiring. At other times, they turned violent and revealed the dark side of our humanity. In some cases they produced important pieces of legislation, while in others they showed just how divided we continue to be.

Did these movements after World War II achieve their goals? Did they advance the cause of freedom? Did they make America a better place?

What do you think? Were the civil rights movements of the post-war decades successful?



# 1

## F I R S T Q U E S T I O N HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

Were the  
**CIVIL RIGHTS  
MOVEMENTS**  
of the post-war decades  
**SUCCESSFUL?**

### INTRODUCTION

The early successes of the Civil Rights Movement were mostly the work of courageous individuals. Presidents, business leaders, judges, and eventually students bravely chose justice over prejudice and made decisions that were unpopular, and sometimes even dangerous. The days of the great marches led by inspirational leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were still to come.

What made these individuals do what they did? Why did they decide to risk their lives, or public support to make change happen? Why did they look at the wrongs of the world and decide that it was up to them to make change?

And, how was it that individual Americans, sometimes only children, help overcome generations of established law and discrimination? What special abilities, talents, or powers made their efforts successful?

How did individuals advance the Civil Rights Movement?

# 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

## A LONG STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

The Civil Rights Movement of marches, boycotts, and great speeches by leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr that many Americans are at least passingly familiar with did not suddenly emerge from thin air. In fact, African Americans had been working for racial justice for many years.

As amazing as it may seem, slavery existed in the United States, or the land that became the United States, for longer than it has not. The first slaves were brought to the Virginia Colony in 1619 and slavery was not legally ended by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment until after the Civil War in 1865. That's a total of 246 years. It has been just over a century and a half since the end of the Civil War, which means, slavery existed for 100 years more in our nation than it has not, and it would be wrong to think that the subjugation of millions of people because of their skin color did not leave a lasting mark on our nation.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, three amendments to the Constitution were ratified, ending slavery, granting citizenship to Americans of all races, and granting voting rights to all men. Together, these three radical changes to America's social order and democratic norms could have formed the basis for an entirely new way of life in the South. However, after years of war, and another ten years of occupation of the defeated South, Northerners grew tired of the project of Reconstruction and in 1877 the armies of the North returned home and abandoned their project of creating a new, more racially integrated South. In their absence, White leaders reclaimed power and established a system of regulations, both through law and tradition, which reestablished White authority.

The social order of the Old South returned. African Americans were relegated to the bottom rung of society. They lived in the worst neighborhoods and had the worst jobs, or lived as tenant farmers stuck permanently on land where they always owed rent to White landlords. Across the land, African Americans and Whites dined at separate restaurants, bathed in separate swimming pools, drank from separate water fountains and went to different schools. African Americans could not vote, could not run for office, and could not change their position in life. The degradation of African Americans was complete. It pervaded jobs, schools, government and even language itself. Whites were accustomed to calling all African American men "boy" regardless of age. This new system became known as **Jim Crow**.

At first, prominent African American leaders sought to improve the lives of their people through education. Booker T. Washington, for example opened the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, but he was fearful that fighting openly for equality would lead to violence and more oppression.

It was not until the 1900s that African American leaders began openly calling for equal rights. Among the most prominent was W. E. B. Du Bois and the other leaders of the Niagara Movement. In the 1920s, the Great Migration



**Jim Crow:** The nickname for a system of laws that enforced segregation.

For example, African Americans had separate schools, rode in the backs of busses, could not drink from White drinking fountains, and could not eat in restaurants or stay in hotels, etc.



# 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

brought thousands of African Americans to the cities of the North and through the work of Du Bois and great writers like Langston Hughes, the Harlem Renaissance led to the emergence of the idea of the New Negro, and the real struggle for equality was born. Importantly, along with a new sense of pride and mission, African American leaders at the start of the 1900s also created the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to fight for their rights in the courts.

During World War II, another important leader campaigned for equality. A. Philip Randolph, the leader of the union of railroad porters successfully convinced President Franklin Roosevelt to outlaw discrimination in businesses that did work for the federal government.

Despite these gains, however, much work remained undone.

Primary Source: Newspaper

President Truman's Executive Order 9981 was an important step toward integration in the country and was undertaken in his role as Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Because of the president's power in this capacity, he did not need to win approval or public support before making the change.



## CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

In the aftermath of World War II, America sought to demonstrate to the world the merit of free democracies over communist dictatorships. But its segregation system exposed fundamental hypocrisy. How could the nation argue that it represented freedom when millions of its own citizens were denied basic rights? In fact, the leaders of the Soviet Union and communist China were eager to point out American hypocrisy whenever American politicians accused them of human rights violations.

One of the first changes to take place came from the world of sports. In 1947, the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team decided to put **Jackie Robinson** on the field and broke Major League Baseball's color barrier.



**Jackie Robinson:** First African American baseball player to play for a major league team.

## 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

Until then, the many talented African American baseball players had to play in their own leagues, the Negro Leagues, a mirror of the all-White major leagues. As African American fans flocked to see the Dodgers play, other owners followed suit and integrated their own teams.

Another bold move in the early post-war era, was the full integration of the armed forces. In 1948, President Harry Truman issued **Executive Order 9981** bringing about the end of segregation in the armed services. No longer would there be Whites-Only or Blacks-Only units in the army or other branches of the service.



**Executive Order 9981:** Executive order issued by President Truman in 1948 ending racial segregation in the military.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Emmitt Till was only a boy when he was killed for violating the racist traditions of the South. His murder brought attention to the Jim Crow system that was maintained with the threat of violence.



But the orderly rules of the baseball field and the formal structures of the military were relatively easy to integrate compared to the complexity of everyday life, especially in the deeply segregated South. And no event illustrated just how dangerous the struggle would be more so than the murder of **Emmitt Till**. Till was born and raised in Chicago and he understood racism, but Emmitt did not grow up learning the strict racial codes of the Jim Crow South. During summer vacation in August 1955, while visiting relatives



**Emmitt Till:** African American teenager from Chicago who was murdered by Whites in 1955 while visiting his family in Mississippi. His murder and open casket funeral brought national attention to the issue of Jim Crow segregation and racism in the South.

# 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

in Mississippi, he spoke to 21-year-old Carolyn Bryant, the White married proprietor of a small grocery store. Although what happened at the store is a matter of dispute, Whites in the area believed Till had been flirting with or whistling at Bryant. Several nights after the store incident, Bryant’s husband and his half-brother went armed to Till’s great-uncle’s house and abducted the boy. They took him away and beat and mutilated him before shooting him in the head and sinking his body in the Tallahatchie River.

Three days later, Till’s body was discovered and returned to Chicago where his mother insisted on a public funeral service with an open casket so the world would know what had been done to her son. Photographs of Till’s bloated, mutilated body were published in magazines and newspapers, rallying support and sympathy across the country and focusing a light on the racism and violence of the South. The men who murdered Till were acquitted by an all-White jury. The entire episode, from the Jim Crow system that condoned segregation and racial hatred, to the murder and trial showed the extent to which White power was rooted in the society of the South and perpetuated with violence and fear.

## BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION

One of the first areas of success for Civil Rights activists was in the courts. In 1896, the **Plessy v. Ferguson** Supreme Court decision declared that created segregated schools were legal, so long as they were equal.

In no state where distinct racial education laws existed was there equality in public spending. Teachers in White schools were paid better wages, school buildings for White students were maintained more carefully, and funds for educational materials flowed more liberally into White schools. States normally spent 10 to 20 times on the education of White students as they spent on African American students.

In the 1950s, the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**, led by attorney **Thurgood Marshall**, sued public schools across the South, insisting that the “**separate but equal**” clause of the **Plessy v. Ferguson** ruling had been violated.

The Supreme Court finally decided to rule on this subject in 1954 in the landmark **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka** case. The verdict was unanimous against segregation. “Separate facilities are inherently unequal,” wrote Chief Justice **Earl Warren**. Warren worked tirelessly to achieve a 9-0 ruling. He feared any dissent might provide a legal argument for the forces against integration. The united Supreme Court sent a clear message: schools had to integrate.

School leaders in the North complied with the ruling, but the Brown decision was received angrily by Whites in the South. The Court had stopped short of insisting on immediate integration, instead asking local governments to comply “with all deliberate speed.” Ten years after Brown, fewer than 10%



**Plessy v. Ferguson:** 1896 Supreme Court case in which the court declared that racially segregated schools and other public facilities were constitutional establishing the “separate but equal” doctrine. It was overturned in the **Brown v. Board of Education** case in 1954.



**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** Organization dedicated to promoting African American rights through the justice system. It was established in 1909 as part of the Niagara Movement.



**Thurgood Marshall:** NAACP lawyer who argued the **Brown v. Board of Education** case and was later appointed to be the first African American justice on the Supreme Court.



**Separate but Equal:** Legal doctrine established by the Supreme Court in the **Plessy v. Ferguson** case that segregated schools and other public institutions were legal so long as they were equal.



**Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka:** 1954 Supreme Court decision that ended segregated schools by overturning the **Plessy v. Ferguson** ruling.



**Earl Warren:** Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the 1950s and 1960s who pushed the Court to rule favorably on numerous cases related to civil rights.

## 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

of southern public schools had integrated. Some areas achieved a 0% compliance rate. Rather than opening their schools to African Americans, many White leaders simply closed their schools entirely. In one county in Virginia, for example, the White county government simply stopped appropriating money for schools. Instead, they provided funding for students to attend private schools. Then, they closed the public schools and reopened them as private schools that admitted only White students.

So, despite the ruling by the Supreme Court, it took the work of many brave Americans to make integrated schools a reality.



### Primary Source: Photographs

Many White Southerners were angered by the Brown v. Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court.

### THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

Three years after the Supreme Court declared race-based segregation illegal, a showdown took place in Little Rock, Arkansas. On September 3, 1957, nine African American students attempted to attend the all-White Central High School. When it was clear that White mobs were likely to violently stop the students, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus mobilized the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the students, known as the **Little Rock Nine**, from entering the school. After a federal judge declared the action illegal, Faubus removed the troops. When the students tried to enter again on September 24, they were taken into the school through a back door. Word of this spread throughout the community, and a thousand irate White citizens stormed the school grounds. The police desperately tried to keep the angry crowd under control as concerned onlookers whisked the students to safety.

Astonished Americans watched footage of brutish, White Southerners mercilessly harassing respectful African American children trying to get an education. Television began to sway public opinion and President Eisenhower was compelled to act. Eisenhower was not a strong proponent



**Little Rock Nine:** Group of African American students who integrated the main high school in Arkansas under the protection of the National Guard.


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of civil rights. He feared that the Brown decision could lead to an impasse between the federal government and the states. However, Eisenhower did not believe the individual states had the right to contradict the Supreme Court. On September 25, he ordered the troops of the 101st Airborne Division into Little Rock and federalized the Arkansas National Guard in order to remove the soldiers from Faubus's control. It was the first time federal troops were dispatched to the South since Reconstruction. For the next few months, the African American students attended school under armed supervision.

The following year, Little Rock officials closed the schools to prevent integration. But in 1959, the schools were open again. Both African American and White children were in attendance.

### RUBY BRIDGES

Yet another challenge was made by a little girl. **Ruby Bridges** attended a segregated kindergarten in 1959. In early 1960, Bridges was one of six African American children in New Orleans to pass the test that determined whether they could go to the all-White William Frantz Elementary School. In the end, only Bridges chose to attend and federal marshals escorted her to class to protect her.

 **Ruby Bridges:** African American girl who was the first to integrate Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. She became the subject of Norman Rockwell's painting "The Problem We All Live With."

#### Primary Source: Painting

Norman Rockwell's painting "The Problem We All Live With" captured the innocence of the African American students who integrated the schools of the South, as well as the swirling mix of hatred and the power struggle between White Southerners and the federal government.



Bridges's story was commemorated by Norman Rockwell in the painting, *The Problem We All Live With* which was published in *Look* magazine on January 14, 1964. As Bridges describes it, "Driving up I could see the crowd, but living in New Orleans, I actually thought it was Mardi Gras. There was a large crowd of people outside of the school. They were throwing things and shouting, and that sort of goes on in New Orleans at Mardi Gras." Former United States Deputy Marshal Charles Burks later recalled, "She showed a

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lot of courage. She never cried. She didn't whimper. She just marched along like a little soldier, and we're all very very proud of her."

As soon as Bridges entered the school, White parents pulled their own children out. All the teachers except for one refused to teach while an African American child was enrolled. Only one person agreed to teach Ruby and that was Barbara Henry, from Boston, Massachusetts, and for over a year Henry taught her alone.

The Bridges family suffered for their decision to send her to William Frantz Elementary. Her father lost his job as a gas station attendant. The grocery store the family shopped at would no longer let them in. Her grandparents, who were sharecroppers in Mississippi, were evicted from their land.

Ruby Bridges has noted that many others in the community, both African American and White, showed support in a variety of ways. Some White families continued to send their children to Frantz despite the protests, a neighbor provided her father with a new job, and local people babysat, watched the house as protectors, and walked behind the federal marshals' car on the trips to school.

Bridges, now Ruby Bridges Hall, still lives in New Orleans with her husband, Malcolm Hall, and their four sons. After graduating from a desegregated high school, she worked as a travel agent and later became a full-time parent. She is now chair of the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which she formed in 1999 to promote "the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of all differences".

### JAMES MEREDITH

In 1961, **James Meredith** applied to the University of Mississippi and insisted that it was his civil right to attend the state-funded university. Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and that fact that the university was supported by all the taxpayers, it had yet to admit a single African American student.

In his application, Meredith wrote, "Nobody handpicked me... I believed, and believe now, that I have a Divine Responsibility... I am familiar with the probable difficulties involved in such a move as I am undertaking and I am fully prepared to pursue it all the way to a degree from the University of Mississippi."

He was twice denied admission, and with the help of Medgar Evers of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Meredith studied the university, alleging that they had rejected him only because of his race, as he had a highly successful record of military service and academic courses. The case went through many hearings, the Supreme Court, reaffirmed the *Brown* decision and supported Meredith's right to be admitted.



**James Meredith:** First African American student at the University of Mississippi.

## 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

The Governor of Mississippi, Ross Barnett, declared “no school will be integrated in Mississippi while I am your governor” and the state legislature passed a law that denied admission to any person “who has a crime of moral turpitude against him” or who had been convicted of any felony offense or not pardoned. The same day it became law, Meredith was accused and convicted of “false voter registration.”

President John F. Kennedy decided to step in and with the help of his younger brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy then ordered U.S. marshals and army troops to escort Meredith to school. When the marshals arrived with Meredith, and mob of angry Whites descended on the campus and a riot broke out. During the course of a day, over 100 federal troops and marshals were injured, and three civilians were killed. The so-called **Battle of Oxford**, ended the next day. The army and marshals never fired a shot.

Many students harassed Meredith during his time on campus. According to first-person accounts, students living in Meredith’s dorm bounced basketballs on the floor just above his room through all hours of the night. Other students ostracized him. When Meredith walked into the cafeteria for meals, the students eating would turn their backs. If Meredith sat at a table with White students, they would get up and go to another table. He persisted through the harassment and extreme isolation to graduate with a degree in political science.



**Battle of Oxford:** Rioting by White citizens and the efforts by US Marshals and army troops to keep the peace at the University of Mississippi when James Meredith became the first African American student to enroll there.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

The political stand made by Alabama Governor George Wallace (on the left) at the schoolhouse door at the University of Alabama in 1963 is remembered as a seminal moment in the effort by White Southerners to preserve the segregated school system of the Jim Crow era.

### THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

The same year Meredith graduated, three African-American students became the first to integrate the University of Alabama. Vivian Malone Jones, Dave McGlathery and James Hood had all been rejected simply

# 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

because of their race, but a federal district judge ordered that they be admitted.

Alabama's Governor **George Wallace** had made a name for himself as a staunch segregationist, promising "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." When President Kennedy ordered the U.S. Marshals to escort the students to school, Wallace made a show of standing in the doorway to block their way. In response, Kennedy issued an executive order authorizing the federalization of the Alabama National Guard. Four hours later, General Henry Graham commanded Wallace to step aside, saying, "Sir, it is my sad duty to ask you to step aside under the orders of the President of the United States." Wallace went on to give a speech promoting his racist ideas, but eventually moved, and the students were able to enroll. It was one of the most memorable standoffs in the struggle to integrate the schools and universities of the South.

## CONCLUSION

The brave decision to put Jackie Robinson on the field, and the Robinson's decision to play on an all-White team, helped break down old barriers in sports. President Truman's decision to integrate the armed forces, ended hundreds of years of segregation. The individual decisions of students and their families to stand up against hatred and prejudice and go to school, a simple task most of us take for granted, was done at enormous physical risk. Death literally stalked them on their way to class. And the decisions by Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy to support the students instead of the White leaders who ran those schools, was brave as well. No politician wants to risk losing votes, and it would be foolish to apply modern ideas about what would be popular to a time when racial prejudice was proclaimed proudly and openly by millions of White Southerners.

Yet, without these individuals, the later work of Dr. King and the marches and protests that most Americans are familiar with, probably would not have happened. So, how did individuals advance the Civil Rights Movement?



**George Wallace:** Governor of Alabama during the 1960s who was a champion of segregation. His most famous line was "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever."



## 1 HOW DID INDIVIDUALS ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

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### SUMMARY

African American have been working for their civil rights for generations. When slavery ended after the Civil War in 1865, three amendments to the Constitution were ratified that ended slavery, granted former slaves citizenship, and guaranteed voting rights to all men. However, a new system of laws was established in the South by White leaders the blocked these rights. African Americans lived as second-class citizens with no vote.

Segregation was a way of life in the South. African Americans could not eat in restaurants, go to movie theaters, or even drink from the same drinking fountains as Whites. Their children went to segregated schools and they rode in the back of city busses. This system was nicknamed Jim Crow.

In the early 1900s, African Americans had started working against this system, especially during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

Some progress was made in the 1940s after World War II. The first African Americans began playing for major league baseball teams. Also, President Truman desegregated the military and eliminated blacks-only units. However, when a young African American boy was murdered in the South, an all-White jury set his White killers free, and it was clear that segregation in the South would be hard to change.

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. This undid an older ruling. Despite their decision, most White leaders in the South refused to integrate their schools.

In Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American students tried to enroll in high school. When mobs of Whites were going to attack them, President Eisenhower ordered the national guard to escort them to school.

Ruby Bridges became the first African American girl to attend her school when she enrolled in kindergarten. Federal marshals had to escort her to school so she would not be hurt by White mobs.

James Meredith became the first African American to attend the University of Mississippi. President Kennedy ordered the National Guard to escort him to school. For three days there was rioting as Whites tried to keep him out.

At the University of Alabama, the governor tried to stand in the doorway and prevent African Americans from enrolling.



## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Jackie Robinson:** First African American baseball player to play for a major league team.

**Emmitt Till:** African American teenager from Chicago who was murdered by Whites in 1955 while visiting his family in Mississippi. His murder and open casket funeral brought national attention to the issue of Jim Crow segregation and racism in the South.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** Organization dedicated to promoting African American rights through the justice system. It was established in 1909 as part of the Niagara Movement.

**Thurgood Marshall:** NAACP lawyer who argued the Brown v. Board of Education case and was later appointed to be the first African American justice on the Supreme Court.

**Earl Warren:** Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the 1950s and 1960s who pushed the Court to rule favorably on numerous cases related to civil rights.

**Little Rock Nine:** Group of African American students who integrated the main high school in Arkansas under the protection of the National Guard.

**Ruby Bridges:** African American girl who was the first to integrate Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. She became the subject of Norman Rockwell's painting "The Problem We All Live With."

**James Meredith:** First African American student at the University of Mississippi.

**George Wallace:** Governor of Alabama during the 1960s who was a champion of segregation. His most famous line was "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever."



## COURT CASES

**Plessy v. Ferguson:** 1896 Supreme Court case in which the court declared that racially segregated schools and other public facilities were constitutional establishing the "separate but equal" doctrine. It was overturned in the Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954.

**Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka:** 1954 Supreme Court decision that ended segregated schools by overturning the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling.



## LAWS

**Jim Crow:** The nickname for a system of laws that enforced segregation. For example, African Americans had separate schools, rode in the backs of busses, could not drink from White drinking fountains, and could not eat in restaurants or stay in hotels, etc.

**Executive Order 9981:** Executive order issued by President Truman in 1948 ending racial segregation in the military.

**Separate but Equal:** Legal doctrine established by the Supreme Court in the Plessy v. Ferguson case that segregated schools and other public institutions were legal so long as they were equal.



## EVENTS

**Battle of Oxford:** Rioting by White citizens and the efforts by US Marshals and army troops to keep the peace at the University of Mississippi when James Meredith became the first African American student to enroll there.

# 2

## S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

W e r e t h e  
**CIVIL RIGHTS  
MOVEMENTS**  
of the post-war decades  
**SUCCESSFUL?**

### INTRODUCTION

Certainly the most well known champion of civil rights is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and it would be foolish to try to minimize his importance or impact. However, it would be equally foolish to think that he could have done what he did without the support of thousands of people who left the comfort of their homes, schools and jobs to march, ride, go to jail, and endure physical abuse with him. Dr. King may have been in the front and given voice to the masses, but it is the masses of African Americans and their supporters who ultimately produced the momentum that was needed to affect change. To paraphrase an old mining union slogan, “drops of water turn the wheel, singly none.”

What brought these people together, and what did they do that made the difference? What role did their leaders play in building a sense of unity, giving them focus, and maintaining cohesion in the face of brutality and hatred?

If the last reading asked you to think about individuals, this portion of history helps us think about the power and function of groups. How did people work together to advance the Civil Rights Movement?

## 2 HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

Were the  
**CIVIL RIGHTS  
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of the post-war decades  
**SUCCESSFUL?**


### THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

On a cold December evening in 1955, just a year after the Supreme Court had ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, **Rosa Parks** incited a revolution by sitting down. She was tired after spending the day at work as a department store seamstress, and when she stepped onto the bus for the ride home she sat in the fifth row, the first row of the colored section. In Montgomery, Alabama, when a bus became full, the seats nearer the front were given to White passengers. Montgomery bus driver James Blake ordered Parks and three other African Americans seated nearby to move to the back of the bus. Three riders complied, but Parks did not.




Because Parks refused to move, she was arrested and fined \$10. The arrest of one woman for violating the city's bus seating rules would have been a minor incident, except that Parks and leaders in Montgomery's African American community were fed up with discrimination and had planned for her to be arrested. They wanted to rally people to fight for racial equality and needed a clear demonstration of the injustice of the Jim Crow system. The arrest of a hard working woman for sitting where she wanted on the bus proved to be just what they needed to galvanize African Americans.

The protest that followed the arrest of Rosa Parks was led by a little-known minister named **Martin Luther King, Jr.** King had been raised in an activist family. His father was deeply influenced by Marcus Garvey's Back To Africa Movement in the 1920s and his mother was the daughter of one of Atlanta's most influential African American ministers. As a student, King excelled. He

 **Rosa Parks:** African American activist in Montgomery, Alabama who was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a city bus. The event initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

#### Primary Source: Photograph

The dignity of Rosa Parks stood in stark contrast to the racial hatred and civil rights violations that she worked to expose.

 **Martin Luther King, Jr.:** Leader of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. He was a minister from Montgomery, Alabama and was assassinated in 1968. He is most famously remembered for his "I Have a Dream" Speech.

easily moved through grade levels and entered Morehouse College at the age of 15. He went on to attend seminary, where he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree. While he was pursuing his doctorate at Boston University, he met and married **Coretta Scott**. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1955, King accepted an appointment to the Dexter Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

During his time studying, King read the works of Henry David Thoreau and Mohandas Gandhi of India. Their teaching advocated **civil disobedience** and **nonviolent** resistance to social injustice. They taught that unjust laws should be broken, and that fighting by peacefully protesting could show the world that on one side of an argument there was right, while on the other side there was evil that was maintained with violence.

Name Parks, Rosa L. Classification 28 MO 72, 28 MI  
 No. 79521 Color C. Sex Female  
 RIGHT HAND: 1. Thumb, 2. Index finger, 3. Middle finger, 4. Ring finger, 5. Little finger  
 LEFT HAND: 6. Thumb, 7. Index finger, 8. Middle finger, 9. Ring finger, 10. Little finger  
 Files searched by: Rosa L. PARKS x Rosa L. Parks  
 100-7-55

Determined to put those ideas into action, King and his colleague **Ralph Abernathy** formed the Montgomery Improvement Association and organized a **boycott of Montgomery's buses**. The demands they made were simple. The city's African Americans would not ride the busses until the bus company agreed to desegregate. Until that happened, the company would lose money as their passengers walked. Both sides believed the boycott would be short. King and his fellow leaders thought the company would



**Coretta Scott King:** Civil rights activist and wife of Martin Luther King, Jr.



**Nonviolence:** The use of peaceful means, not force, to bring about political or social change.



**Civil Disobedience:** The breaking of laws to demonstrate that they are unjust.

### Primary Source: Police Document

Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus. Breaking unjust laws and being willing to go to jail in an important element to civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance.



**Ralph Abernathy:** Co-founder of the SCLC with Martin Luther King, Jr.



**Montgomery Bus Boycott:** 1955 civil rights protest initiated by the arrest of Rosa Parks in which African

Americans refused to ride city busses until they were desegregated. It was successful and helped propel Dr. King to prominence as the leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

## 2 HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

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quickly give in instead of losing money, and the White city officials thought that no one could convince African Americans to walk everywhere.

The boycott's leaders had hoped for a 50% support rate among African Americans. To their surprise and delight, 99% of the city's African Americans refused to ride the buses. People walked to work or rode their bikes. Carpools were established to help the elderly. The bus company suffered thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

Montgomery officials stopped at nothing in attempting to sabotage the boycott. King and Abernathy were arrested. Four African American churches, as well as the homes of King and Abernathy, were bombed. Still, the boycott continued.

Finally, on November 23, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the boycott. Segregated bussing was declared unconstitutional. City officials reluctantly agreed to comply with the court ruling. Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers in Montgomery had proven that non-violent protest could effect change.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott triggered a firestorm in the South and similar actions flared up in other cities. The boycott put Martin Luther King, Jr. in the national spotlight. He became the acknowledged leader of the nascent **Civil Rights Movement**.

With Ralph Abernathy, King formed the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)** to organized other protests against Jim Crow segregation. The SCLS boldly declared to the rest of the country that their movement would be peaceful, organized, and determined.

### THE SIT-IN MOVEMENT

On February 1, 1960, four sophomores at the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro entered the local Woolworth's and sat at the lunch counter. They were refused service as they knew they would be, since Woolworth's only served Whites. African Americans were not allowed to sit inside. If they wanted a meal, they had to order and take their food out from the back of the store. However, instead of leaving, they stayed and waited.

No one participated in a sit-in of this sort without seriousness of purpose. The instructions were simple: sit quietly and wait to be served. Often the participants would be jeered and threatened by local White customers. Sometimes they would be pelted with food or ketchup. Angry onlookers tried to provoke fights. In the event of a physical attack, the student would curl up into a ball on the floor and take the punishment. Any violent reprisal would undermine the spirit of the non-violent sit-in. When the local police came to arrest the demonstrators, another line of students would take the vacated seats.



**Civil Rights Movement:** Overall term for the many protests throughout the 1950s and 1960s in which African Americans sought to advance their civil rights through protests, boycotts, sit-ins, marches, etc. Martin Luther King, Jr. was its generally accepted, although unofficial, leader.



**Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC):** Organization formed by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy to organize civil rights demonstrations.

## 2

## HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

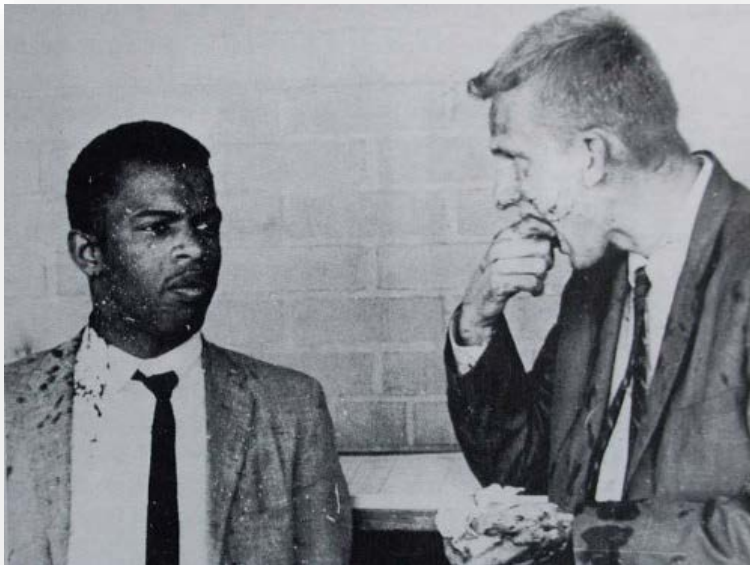
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In the end, Woolworth's owners relented and desegregated their lunch counters. As the students had predicted, they simply did not want the negative publicity. The successful six-month-long **Greensboro sit-in** initiated the student phase of the African American civil rights movement and, within two months, the sit-in movement had spread to 54 cities in nine states.

In the words of grassroots civil rights activist Ella Baker, the students at Woolworth's wanted more than a hamburger, they wanted to be a part of the struggle for equality. As a result of her actions, in April 1960, the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** formed to carry the battle forward. The sit-ins inspired other forms of nonviolent protest intended to desegregate public spaces. Sleep-ins occupied motel lobbies, read-ins filled public libraries, wade-ins happened at public pools and beaches, and churches became the sites of pray-ins.

### FREEDOM RIDES

Students also took part in the 1961 **Freedom Rides** sponsored by the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** and SNCC. The intent of the African American and White volunteers who undertook these bus rides through the South was to test enforcement of a Supreme Court decision prohibiting segregation on interstate transportation and to protest segregated waiting rooms in bus terminals. Departing Washington, DC, on May 4, the volunteers headed south on buses that challenged the seating order of Jim Crow segregation. Whites rode in the back, African-Americans sat in the front, and on other occasions, riders of different races would share the same bench seat.



**Sit-In:** A form of protest used to desegregate lunch counters in the South in the late-1950s. African American students would enter a restaurant and sit peacefully until they were served.



**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC):** Civil rights organization formed by African American students in 1960s. They organized sit-ins and joined in other protests.



**Freedom Rides:** 1961 civil rights demonstration against segregated waiting rooms at bus terminals. The protesters were attacked when they arrived in the Deep South.



**Congress of Racial Equality (CORE):** Civil rights organization that participated in the Freedom Rides and other protests.

#### Primary Source: Photograph

The Freedom Riders were attacked when they arrived at bus stations in the South. The activists who stood on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement faced a constant threat of injury or death.

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The Freedom Riders encountered little difficulty until they reached South Carolina, where a mob severely beat **John Lewis**, a freedom rider who later became chairman of SNCC and eventually a Congressman. The danger increased as the riders continued through Georgia into Alabama, where one of the two buses was firebombed. The second group continued to Birmingham, where the riders were attacked by the **Ku Klux Klan** as they attempted to disembark at the city bus station. The remaining volunteers continued to Mississippi, where they were arrested when they attempted to desegregate the waiting rooms in the Jackson bus terminal.

Despite the violence they encountered, the Freedom Rides made an impact. In September of 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) of the federal government stepped in and issued new policies. “White” and “colored” signs came down in the terminals. Racially segregated drinking fountains, toilets, and waiting rooms were consolidated.

### ALBANY

Fresh off their successes in Montgomery and the Freedom Rides, student leaders of the SNCC and Dr. King and the SCLC teamed up to try to **desegregate the city of Albany**, Georgia. There were problems from the start. The students and the older leaders from SCLC did not always agree on strategy. Dr. King was jailed, as were hundreds of other protesters and progress was slow. The White police chief in Albany avoided violence, and sent protesters to jails across the South so that his own would not become overcrowded. Eventually, the protest organizers gave up.

Some believe the Albany Movement was a failure, but historian Howard Zinn, who played a role in the Albany Movement, contested this interpretation. “Social movements may have many ‘defeats’—failing to achieve objectives in the short run—but in the course of the struggle the strength of the old order begins to erode, the minds of people begin to change; the protesters are momentarily defeated but not crushed, and have been lifted, heartened, by their ability to fight back.” In fact, their work did make a difference. Civil rights leaders learned a great deal from their time in Albany and applied those lessons in later campaigns.

### BIRMINGHAM

In 1963, SCLC **moved their efforts to Birmingham**, the largest city in Alabama. Led by Dr. King, the campaign of nonviolent direct action culminated in widely publicized confrontations between young African Americans students and White civic authorities, and eventually led the municipal government to change the city’s discrimination laws. Unlike the earlier efforts on Albany, which focused on desegregation of the entire city, the campaign focused on more narrowly defined goals: desegregation of Birmingham’s downtown stores, fair hiring practices in stores and city



**Albany Campaign:** Effort by SNCC and SCLC to desegregate the city of Albany, Georgia in 1961. They organized nonviolent protests and were arrested in large numbers, but ultimately failed to desegregate the city.



**Birmingham Campaign:** Effort by SCLC to desegregate the city of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. They were met with fierce and violent resistance from the city’s White leadership. Images of police dogs and fire hoses attacking protesters captured national attention and helped the effort succeed.



employment, reopening of public parks, and creation of a biracial committee to oversee the desegregation of Birmingham's public schools.

The brutal response of local police, led by Public Safety Commissioner **"Bull" Connor** who released police dogs and fire hoses on the young marchers, stood in stark contrast to the nonviolent civil disobedience of the activists.



**"Bull" Connor:** White police chief in Birmingham, Alabama who used fire hoses and police dogs to attack civil rights protesters.

### Primary Source: Photograph

"Bull" Connor ordered police dogs released on the marchers in Birmingham. Photographs like this were published in newspapers across the nation and stirred anger among many who were horrified to see the level of brutality and racial hatred that existed within their country.

While in jail in Birmingham, King wrote one of the most important documents of the Civil Rights Era. Because of the violent reactions of the White policemen of the city, some African American leaders and other ministers had criticized King, calling on him to stop taking direct action that could provoke violent responses in which marchers might be injured, beaten and jailed. Many Whites were openly angry that King had come to their city at all. He was an outsider, they claimed. In response, King wrote an **open letter**, answering each of these criticisms. His **Letter from a Birmingham Jail** included one of King's most quoted lines: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

After weeks of various forms of nonviolent disobedience, the campaign produced the desired results. In June 1963, the Jim Crow signs regulating segregated public places in Birmingham were taken down. Victory, however, came at a price. Four months later, someone bombed the house of NAACP attorney Arthur Shores, injuring his wife. On September 15, 1963, Birmingham again earned international attention when Ku Klux Klan members **bombed the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church** on a Sunday morning and killed four young girls. On June 12, 1963, NAACP lawyer **Medgar Evers**, who had helped James Meredith become the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi, was fatally shot outside his home in Jackson,



**Open Letter:** A letter that is released to the public for anyone to read.



**Letter from a Birmingham Jail:** Famous letter written by Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Birmingham protests in which Dr. King responds to critics who accused him of being an outside agitator and believed he was trying to make too much change, too quickly.



**16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church Bombing:** Bombing of a Birmingham church by the KKK in which four African American girls were killed.



**Medgar Evers:** African American civil rights lawyer who helped James Meredith enroll at the University of Mississippi and was later assassinated while organizing protests in the city of Jackson.

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Mississippi. He had been organizing demonstrations similar to those in Birmingham.

### THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

After the Birmingham campaign, the SCLC called for massive protests in Washington, DC, aiming to pressure Congress to pass new civil rights legislation that would outlaw segregation nationwide. Officially called the **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**, an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 people participated. It was held in August 1963, on the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the speakers addressed the crowd from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, with the statue of the great president behind them. The date was also the eighth anniversary of the brutal murder of Emmett Till.



The crowning moment of the event was Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous **I Have a Dream** speech in which he articulated the hopes and aspirations of the Civil Rights Movement, rooted them in two great documents: the Old Testament of the Bible and the Declaration of Independence. Quoting from



**March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom:** Major civil rights rally in Washington, DC in 1963 to promote the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Dr. King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the event.

#### Primary Source: Photograph

The view of the March on Washington from the Lincoln Memorial. The mass of people who came to express their frustration with racism and discrimination helped persuade Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



**I Have a Dream Speech:** Martin Luther King, Jr.'s most famous speech given at the March on Washington in 1963 in which he laid out the moral aspirations of the Civil Rights Movement.

## 2 HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

that promise of freedom, King reminded America that the Founding Fathers had written, “all men are created equal” on July 4, 1776, and that if that promise was going to be true for everyone, the nation would have to do the hard work to end racism. The march marked a high point of the Civil Rights Movement and established the legitimacy of its goals. However, it did not prevent White terrorism or dismantle White supremacy, nor did it permanently sustain the tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience.

The March on Washington did succeed in its immediate and primary goal. President John F. Kennedy called Congress to pass a new bill in his own civil rights speech, and after Kennedy’s assassination, President Lyndon Johnson helped secure passage of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**. The act remains a landmark piece of civil rights legislation that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and by facilities that serve the public.

### FREEDOM SUMMER

With the passage of the Civil Rights Act, civil rights leaders turned their attention to the next most pressing problem: voting. Politicians must respond to the needs of voters or they will lose their positions. Jim Crow laws had long prevented African Americans from casting ballots. If African Americans could vote, the movement’s leaders knew they would be able to make change without having to march in the streets.

In the summer of 1964, a coalition of the four major civil rights organizations, the NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and CORE arranged for volunteers from all over America to come and register as many African Americans in Mississippi to vote as possible. The effort became known as **Freedom Summer**, and it was one of the most violent episodes of the entire movement.

Many of Mississippi’s White residents deeply resented the outsiders and any attempt to change their society. Locals routinely harassed volunteers. Newspapers called them “unshaven and unwashed trash”. The volunteers’ presence in local black communities drew drive-by shootings, Molotov cocktails thrown at host homes, and constant harassment. State and local governments, police, White Citizens’ Council, and Ku Klux Klan used arrests, arson, beatings, evictions, firing, murder, spying, and other forms of intimidation and harassment to oppose the project. Over the course of the ten-week project, 1,062 volunteers were arrested, 80 were beaten, 37 churches were bombed or burned, 30 homes or businesses were bombed or burned, and at least four civil rights workers were murdered.

On June 21, 1964, James Chaney, an African American as well as two Jewish White volunteers from New York City, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, were abducted and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. **Their murder**, and the subsequent search and discovery that the local White police



**Civil Rights Act of 1964:** Law passed in 1964 that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and by facilities that serve the public.



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## 2 HOW DID PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

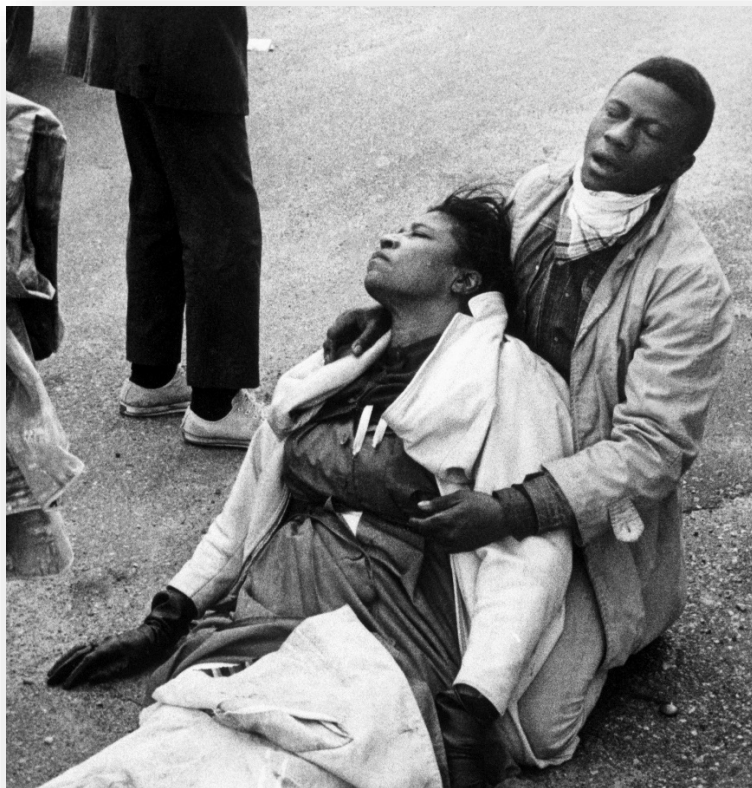
had helped the Ku Klux Klan with the murders drew massive media attention to Freedom Summer.

Throughout the search, White-run Mississippi newspapers perpetuated the common belief that the disappearance was “a hoax” designed to draw publicity, but the search of rivers and swamps turned up the bodies of eight other African Americans who appeared to have been murdered.

Though Freedom Summer failed to register many voters, it significantly affected the course of the Civil Rights Movement. It helped break down decades of isolation and repression that were the foundation of the Jim Crow system. Before Freedom Summer, the national news media had paid little attention to the persecution of African American voters in the Deep South and the dangers endured by civil rights workers. Sadly, it took the death of White volunteers from the North, to make the media notice.

### SELMA AND THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

After Freedom Summer, the leaders of the movement decided to fight for voting rights in Selma, Alabama. Nonviolent mass marches demanded the right to vote, and the jails filled up with arrested protesters, many of them students. Again, King and Abernathy were arrested.



Primary Source: Photograph

Photographs of Amelia Boynton beaten unconscious by police helped move public opinion in the nation against the White leaders of Alabama and persuaded President Johnson to support the marchers and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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After an Alabama state trooper shot and killed Jimmie Lee Jackson during a voting rights protest, close to 600 protesters attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital, to present their grievances to Governor George Wallace. Led by Reverend Hosea Williams of the SCLC and John Lewis of the SNCC, the marchers were attacked by state troopers, and deputy sheriffs who used tear gas, clubs, and bullwhips when they tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge on a day remembered as **Bloody Sunday**.

Amelia Boynton, who had helped organize the march as well as marching in it, was beaten unconscious. A photograph of her lying on the road appeared on the front page of newspapers and news magazines around the world. In all, 17 marchers were hospitalized and 50 treated for lesser injuries. Televised images of the brutal attack presented Americans and international audiences with horrifying images of marchers left bloodied and severely injured, and roused support for the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.

After many more protests, arrests, and legal maneuvering, a federal judge ordered Alabama to allow the march to Montgomery. In the end, an estimated 25,000 protesters marched to the steps of the Alabama capitol, where King spoke on the voting rights struggle. Within five months, Congress and President Lyndon Johnson responded to the enormous public pressure generated by the Selma Campaign by working with Congress to enact a new law to eliminate discrimination at the voting booth.

The legislative result of the Selma Movement was the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**. It prohibited racial discrimination in voting and Congress later amended the act five times to expand its protections. Designed to enforce the voting rights guaranteed by the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution, which had promised citizenship and voting rights after the Civil War, the act secured voting rights for racial minorities throughout the country, especially in the South. After enactment, the law immediately decreased racial discrimination in voting. The suspension of literacy tests and assignments of federal examiners and observers allowed for high numbers of racial minorities to register to vote.

### CONCLUSION

Each January we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, but it was clearly the work of both the leaders and the thousands of followers who forced those in power to grant civil rights to African Americans. No one could have conducted the Selma Campaign, or the Montgomery Bus Boycott alone, and it would have been impossible for people to work in a coordinated way without talented, inspirational, and effective leadership.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, everything that was needed to make a movement seemed to come together. What happened? How did it all happen in a way that produced results? How did people work together to advance the Civil Rights Movement?



**Bloody Sunday:** Attack in 1965 on civil rights marchers by White police officers as they tried to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge between Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. They protesters were marching to demand voting rights and the attack pushed congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.



**Voting Rights Act of 1965:** Law passed in 1965 that eliminated restrictions on voting such as literacy tests and pole taxes.

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### SUMMARY

African Americans in the city of Montgomery, Alabama boycotted the city bus system for over a year to protest segregated seating on the busses. The boycott started when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to move to the back of the bus. Martin Luther King, Jr. became famous as the leader of the boycott. Eventually they won and the city ended segregation on the busses.

Martin Luther King, Jr. believed in nonviolence and civil disobedience. He founded SCLC to organize other protests. Other groups such as SNCC and CORE also were created and used nonviolence and civil disobedience.

Students staged sit-ins at lunch counters to protest Jim Crow laws that prevented them from eating at restaurants with Whites.

Freedom riders rode busses through the South to protest segregated waiting rooms at bus stations. They were attacked in Alabama and the KKK bombed their bus. However, their protest convinced President Kennedy to call for a law to protect civil rights.

Martin Luther King, Jr. led a campaign in Albany, Georgia to desegregate the city. Large numbers of people marched and were arrested. Their effort failed, but they learned new strategies.

In Birmingham, Alabama, the White police chief ordered dogs and fire hoses to be used against civil rights marchers. Images of police brutality convinced many Americans that segregation was wrong and that they should support the civil rights marchers.

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a speech during a march in Washington, DC. He described a future for the United States when segregation and racism had been eliminated. He used the famous phrase "I have a dream." The march convinced Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act.

In 1964, activists tried to register many African Americans in Mississippi to vote. Their activities were called Freedom Summer, but they faced extreme violence from Whites. When the KKK killed White supporters of the Civil Rights Movement, President Johnson ordered the FBI to investigate.

In 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. led a march from the city of Selma, Alabama to the capital of Montgomery to protest for voting rights. Police officers attacked the marchers. Finally, President Johnson ordered the National Guard to protect the marchers and the protest convinced Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.



## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Rosa Parks:** African American activist in Montgomery, Alabama who was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a city bus. The event initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.:** Leader of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. He was a minister from Montgomery, Alabama and was assassinated in 1968. He is most famously remembered for his “I Have a Dream” Speech.

**Coretta Scott King:** Civil rights activist and wife of Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Ralph Abernathy:** Co-founder of the SCLC with Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC):** Organization formed by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy to organize civil rights demonstrations.

**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC):** Civil rights organization formed by African American students in 1960s. They organized sit-ins and joined in other protests.

**Congress of Racial Equality (CORE):** Civil rights organization that participated in the Freedom Rides and other protests.

**“Bull” Connor:** White police chief in Birmingham, Alabama who used fire hoses and police dogs to attack civil rights protesters.

**Medgar Evers:** African American civil rights lawyer who helped James Meredith enroll at the University of Mississippi and was later assassinated while organizing protests in the city of Jackson.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Nonviolence:** The use of peaceful means, not force, to bring about political or social change.

**Civil Disobedience:** The breaking of laws to demonstrate that they are unjust.

**Sit-In:** A form of protest used to desegregate lunch counters in the South in the late-1950s. African American students would enter a restaurant and sit peacefully until they were served.

**Open Letter:** A letter that is released to the public for anyone to read.



## EVENTS

**Montgomery Bus Boycott:** 1955 civil rights protest initiated by the arrest of Rosa Parks in which African Americans refused to ride city buses until they were desegregated. It was successful and helped propel Dr. King to prominence as the leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

**Civil Rights Movement:** Overall term for the many protests throughout the 1950s and 1960s in which African Americans sought to advance their civil rights through protests, boycotts, sit-ins, marches, etc. Martin Luther King, Jr. was its generally accepted, although unofficial, leader.

**Freedom Rides:** 1961 civil rights demonstration against segregated waiting rooms at bus terminals. The protesters were attacked when they arrived in the Deep South.

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**16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church Bombing:** Bombing of a Birmingham church by the KKK in which four African American girls were killed.

**March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom:** Major civil rights rally in Washington, DC in 1963 to promote the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Dr. King gave his “I Have a Dream” speech at the event.

**Freedom Summer:** Effort to register African Americans in Mississippi to vote during 1964. It was marked by violent resistance from the KKK.

**Murder of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner:** Famous killing of civil rights workers during Freedom Summer in 1964. President Johnson ordered the FBI to investigate and the event resulted in national awareness of the lawlessness of the KKK and injustice of the Jim Crow South’s legal system.

**Bloody Sunday:** Attack in 1965 on civil rights marchers by White police officers as they tried to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge between Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. They protesters were marching to demand voting rights and the attack pushed congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.



## TEXTS

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail:** Famous letter written by Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Birmingham protests in which Dr. King responds to critics who accused him of being an outside agitator and believed he was trying to make too much change, too quickly.



## SPEECHES

**I Have a Dream Speech:** Martin Luther King, Jr.’s most famous speech given at the March on Washington in 1963 in which he laid out the moral aspirations of the Civil Rights Movement.



## LAWS

**Civil Rights Act of 1964:** Law passed in 1964 that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and by facilities that serve the public.

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# 3

## T H I R D Q U E S T I O N WAS VIOLENCE AN INEVITABLE PART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

Were the  
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### INTRODUCTION

Despite the tremendous leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the other champions of nonviolence, as years went on, frustration among the African American community grew. Why was change taking so long?

Especially for young men in northern and western cities, the dream Dr. King articulated in 1963 seemed like a promise that would never be fulfilled. For them, leaders like Malcolm X who advocated self-reliance, separation from White America, and a readiness to use violence to protect their neighborhoods held answers that seemed more in touch with the realities of their lives.

So, despite the idealism and successes of the nonviolence protests and marches, as the 1960s progressed, violence began to increase. Was this bound to happen? Could the movement's leaders have done anything to stop this? Could White Americans have prevented the eventual turn toward violence?

What do you think? Was violence an inevitable part of the Civil Rights Movement?

### 3 WAS VIOLENCE AN INEVITABLE PART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

#### URBAN RIOTS

On August 11, 1965, the atmosphere in the Watts district of Los Angeles turned white hot. A police patrol stopped Marquette Frye, suspecting he was driving while intoxicated. A crowd assembled as Frye was asked to step out of his vehicle. When the arresting officer drew his gun, the crowd erupted in a spontaneous burst of anger.

Too many times the African-American residents of Watts had seen the White officers of the Los Angeles Police Department use excessive force. They were tired of being turned down for jobs in Watts by White employers who lived in wealthier neighborhoods. They were troubled by the overcrowded living conditions in rundown apartments. The Frye incident was the match that lit their fire. His arrest prompted five days of rioting, looting, and burning. The governor of California ordered the National Guard to maintain order. When the smoke cleared, 34 people were killed and property damage estimates approached \$40 million.



#### Primary Source: Photograph

Police stand guard across from a burned out building during the 1967 Detroit Riots. A truck of National Guardsman rolls by.

The urban uprising of the late-1960s, part of what has often been called **The Long, Hot Summer**, had actually begun in 1964. When a White policeman in Harlem shot a African American teenager, a similar disturbance flared up, although on a lesser scale than the Watt's riots. In 1967, there were riots in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Buffalo Tampa, Birmingham, Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Britain, and Rochester. The most serious riots of the summer took place in July, with the riot in Newark, New Jersey and the Twelfth Street riot, in Detroit, Michigan.

At the behest of President Johnson, the **Kerner Commission** was created to examine the causes behind the rioting. After a six-month study, the committee released its report, finding that the riots resulted from African



**The Long, Hot Summer:** Nickname for a series of urban riots that took place in African American neighborhoods of major northern and western cities between 1964 and 1968. The cause of the riots was studied by the Kerner Commission.

### 3 WAS VIOLENCE AN INEVITABLE PART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

American frustration at the lack of economic opportunity. The report berated federal and state governments for failed housing, education and social-service policies. The report also aimed some of its sharpest criticism at the mainstream media. “The press has too long basked in a White world looking out of it, if at all, with White men’s eyes and White perspective.”

The report’s most famous passage warned, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one White—separate and unequal.” The report was a strong indictment of White America: “What White Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget — is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it, and White society condones it.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. pronounced the report a “physician’s warning of approaching death, with a prescription for life.”

Its results suggested that one main cause of urban violence was White racism and suggested that White America bore much of the responsibility for the rioting and rebellion. It called to create new jobs, construct new housing, and put a stop to de facto segregation that had been common in northern cities in order to wipe out the destructive ghetto environment. In order to do so, the report recommended for government programs to provide needed services, to hire more diverse and sensitive police forces and, most notably, to invest billions in housing programs aimed at breaking up residential segregation.

Sadly, most of the Kerner Commission’s recommendations fell on deaf ears at all levels of government. Few White politicians were comfortable spending their reputations fighting to improve conditions in mostly African American inner cities, and in the 1960s and 1970s, few African Americans had been elected to public office.

#### MALCOLM X

When Malcolm Little was growing up in Lansing, Michigan, he developed a mistrust for White Americans. Ku Klux Klan terrorists burned his house, and his father was murdered, an act young Malcolm attributed to local Whites. After moving to Harlem, Malcolm turned to crime. He was arrested and sent to jail.

The prison experience was eye-opening for the young man. He began to read and educate himself. Influenced by other inmates, he joined the Nation of Islam. Upon his release, he was a changed man with a new identity. He changed his name to **Malcolm X**.

Not only had Malcolm X given up the name his ancestors were given during the time of slavery, he had also given up Christianity, a religion they learned while slaves as well. Islam, Malcolm’s new faith, is one of the world’s great monotheistic religions, but for many African Americans, Islam had added meaning. When Wallace Fard founded the **Nation of Islam** in the 1930s, he



**Kerner Commission:** Government commission appointed by President Johnson to study the urban riots of the late-1960. They found racism, lack of job opportunities, and poor education and social services as the root cause, but little was done to resolve the issues.



**Malcolm X:** Civil rights leader and spokesman for the Nation of Islam. He advocated African American self-reliance and was assassinated in 1965.



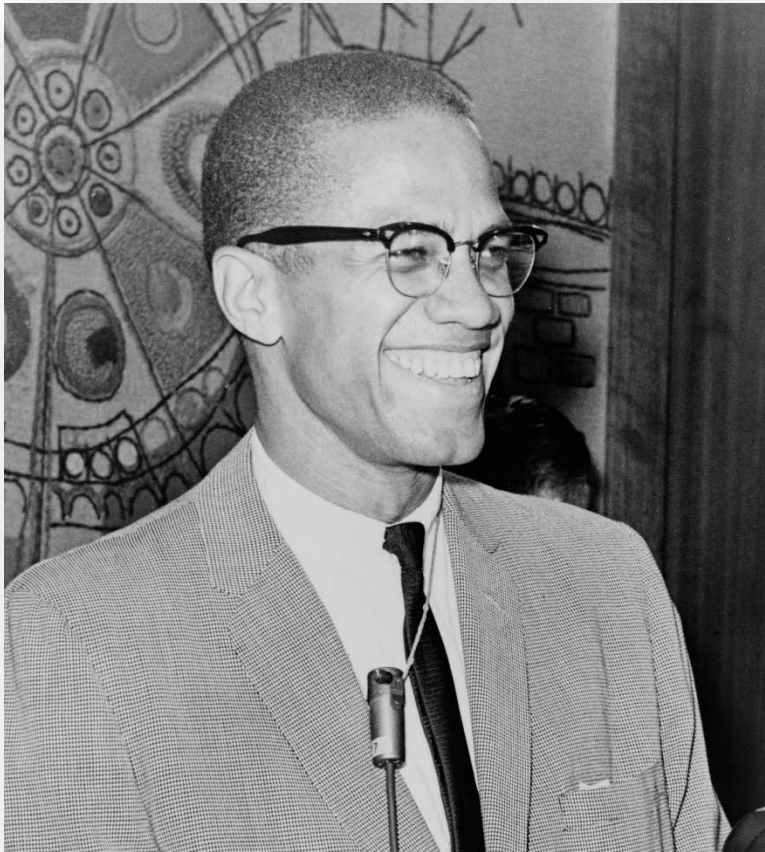
**Nation of Islam:** Organization of African American Muslims in the United States. It was led by Elijah Muhammad.




**Black Muslims:** Members of the Nation of Islam.

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declared that Christianity was a White man's faith. Although it had been founded by an Arab, Islam was closer to African roots and identity said Fard. Like Muslims everywhere, members of the Nation of Islam read the Koran, worshiped Allah as their God, and accepted Mohammed as their chief prophet. However, in America, Fard's followers mixed the religious tenets of Islam with black nationalism. Fard's followers became known as **Black Muslims**. When Fard mysteriously disappeared, **Elijah Muhammad** became the leader of the movement.



 **Elijah Muhammad:** Leader of the Nation of Islam from 1934-1975. He and Malcolm X disagreed openly, leading to Malcolm X leaving the Nation of Islam.

#### Primary Source: Photograph

Malcolm X was, and continues to be, an influential figure in the African American community. Unlike Dr. King, Malcolm X changed his opinions on racial integration and violence during his lifetime, leaving a complex legacy and a worldview that is hard to pin down.

The Nation of Islam attracted many followers, especially in prisons, where African Americans who had struggled in society looked for guidance. They preached adherence to a strict moral code and reliance on other African Americans. Integration was not a goal. Rather, the Nation of Islam wanted African Americans to set up their own schools, churches, and support networks. When Malcolm X made his personal conversion, Elijah Muhammad recognized his talents and made him a leading spokesperson for the movement.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. preached his gospel of peaceful change and integration in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Malcolm X delivered a different

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message. Whites were not to be trusted. He called on African Americans to be proud of their heritage and to set up strong communities without the help of White Americans. He promoted the establishment of a separate state for African Americans in which they could rely on themselves to provide solutions to their own problems. Violence was not the only answer, but violence was justified in self-defense. African Americans should achieve what was rightfully theirs “by any means necessary.”

Malcolm X electrified urban audiences with his eloquent prose and inspirational style. However, in 1963, he split with the Nation of Islam after publicly clashing with Elijah Muhammad. In 1964 he made the pilgrimage to Mecca and afterward showed signs of softening his stance on the need for racial division. What direction he might have ultimately taken is lost to a history. As Malcolm X led a mass rally in Harlem on February 21, 1965, rival Black Muslims gunned him down. Although his life was ended, the ideas he preached lived on in the Black Power Movement.

#### BLACK POWER

In 1966, **Stokely Carmichael** of SNCC told a group of marchers, “What we need is black power.” Crowds chanted the phrase as a slogan, and a new side of the civil rights movement began to emerge.

Carmichael and other young African American leaders were heavily influenced by the words of Malcolm X, and rejected racial integration. Carmichael believed that African Americans needed to feel a sense of racial pride and self-respect before any meaningful gains could be achieved. Like Malcolm X, he encouraged the strengthening of African American communities without the help of Whites.

Chapters of SNCC and CORE, both integrated organizations, began to reject White membership as Carmichael abandoned peaceful resistance. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the NAACP denounced black power, but black power was a powerful message in the streets of urban America, where resentment boiled and tempers flared. For many young African Americans, racism was everywhere. They lived under the constant threat of violence from White police officers and the rules White America had established were clearly designed to keep African Americans in poverty. Dr. King’s message of love, nonviolence, and integration into White society simply did not resonate with the youth of the ghetto.

African American students began to celebrate African American culture boldly and publicly. Colleges teemed with young African American teenagers wearing traditional African colors and clothes. Soul singer **James Brown** had his audience chanting “Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud.” Young African Americans proclaimed, “**Black Is Beautiful!**”



**Stokely Carmichael:** Leader of SNCC who advocated for Black Power.



**James Brown:** African American soul singer and founder of funk music. His famous song “Say It Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud” was a hit during the Black Power era.



**Black is Beautiful:** Phrase that captured the self-pride element of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

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The **Black Power** movement turned popular fashion and aesthetics on end. In the 1930s, skin lighteners and hair straighteners were used by fashionable African American women in an effort to look Whiter. By the end of the 1960s, being proud of the African heritage dictated that afros and dark skin were desirable.



**Black Power:** Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s which emphasized African American self-reliance. It deemphasized the nonviolent protests led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and was embraced by more militant, younger activists such as members of the Black Panther Party.

**Primary Source: Photograph**

The black power salute at the 1968 Olympics by Tommie Smith and John Carlos captivated the nation. Some felt that it was disrespectful to the flag, while others celebrated it as a powerful message of resistance to racism. It was the first, but not the last time African American athletes would use the opportunity they had as televised celebrities to send a political message.

That same year, **Huey Newton** and **Bobby Seale** took Carmichael's advice a step further and formed the **Black Panther Party**. Openly brandishing weapons, the Panthers decided to take control of their own neighborhoods to aid their communities and to resist police brutality. Soon the Panthers spread across the nation. The Black Panther Party borrowed many tenets from socialist movements, including Mao Zedong's famous creed "Political power comes through the barrel of a gun." The Panthers and the police



**Huey Newton:** Along with Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panther Party.



**Bobby Seale:** Along with Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party.

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exchanged gunshots on American streets as White Americans viewed the growing militancy with alarm.

For African Americans, the hypocrisy was thick. Whites proudly proclaimed their Second Amendment right to own guns and Ku Klux Klansmen in the South shot African Americans with impunity. However, the moment Black Panthers carried guns and announced that they would defend themselves, they were branded terrorists.

For many Americans, the Black Power movement arrived in their living rooms while watching the **1968 Olympics**. During their medal ceremony in the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City, Tommie Smith and John Carlos each raised a black-gloved fist during the playing of the The Star-Spangled Banner. While on the podium, Smith and Carlos, who had won gold and bronze medals respectively in the 200-meter running event, turned to face the American flag and then kept their hands raised until the anthem had finished. It was one of the most overtly political acts at the Olympic Games, and the first of many political statements African American athletes would make at televised sporting events.

#### THE DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The peaceful Civil Rights Movement was dealt a severe blow in the spring of 1968. On the morning of April 4, 1968 **Martin Luther King, Jr. was gunned down** as he stepped out of his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee. King had come to Memphis to support striking sanitation workers.

Ironically, the night before, King had talked about the threats of violence he faced both then and throughout his activist life. Toward the end of the speech, King foreshadowed his impending death, but reaffirming that he was not afraid to die saying, “Well, I don’t know what will happen now... But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because **I’ve been to the mountaintop**. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life; longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

As news of King’s murder spread, rioting erupted in urban areas across the country as mourners unleashed their rage. For most African Americans, the murder of Dr. King, a man who embodied understanding and peace, felt like the ultimate betrayal. In fact, with King’s death also died much of the energy for the protests and marches of the Civil Rights Movement. Although his followers continued to pursue racial justice, the nature of the movement changed and the momentum on the streets of the South, the courtrooms, and the halls of power dissipated.



**Black Panther Party:** African American political organization founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in the late 1960s. They carried guns in an effort to protect African Americans from police and government violence.



**Black Power Salute at the 1968 Olympics:** Famous political statement made by Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two African American runners, who raised closed fists during the National Anthem after winning medals the 1968 Olympics.



**Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.:** Killing of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by rioting in most major cities.



**I’ve Been to the Mountaintop:** Martin Luther King, Jr.’s last speech on April 3, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. In it he seemed to predict his own death.

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Dr. King is remembered as one of the nation's greatest citizens. Time magazine had named him "Man of the Year" in 1963. In 1964, he won the Nobel Peace Prize and was described as "the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence." In 1977, he was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest award a civilian American can earn. In 1983, his birthday became a national holiday, creating an annual opportunity for Americans to reflect on the values he dedicated his life to advancing.

#### NIXON'S SOUTHERN STRATEGY

The violent urban protests, which had first broken out in the summer of 1965, and recurred occasionally for the rest of the decade, sparked a conservative backlash in public opinion. A majority of fearful White Americans began to prioritize "law and order" over the advancements of civil rights. In 1968, Republican **Richard Nixon** decided to run for president and promised a return to law and order. Nixon had been vice president in the 1950s, and had lost one of the closest presidential elections in 1960s to John F. Kennedy. However, in 1968 he saw an opportunity to return to the national stage.

Nixon also courted northern, blue-collar workers, whom he called the silent majority, to acknowledge their belief that their voices were seldom heard. These voters feared the social changes taking place in the country. Some felt left behind, as the government seemed to be focused on the problems of African Americans. Nixon's promises of stability and his emphasis on law and order appealed to them. He portrayed himself as a fervent patriot who would take a strong stand against civil unrest.

Nixon also employed a **Southern Strategy** in 1968. Denouncing segregation and the denial of the vote to African Americans, he nevertheless maintained that southern states be allowed to pursue racial equality at their own pace and criticized forced integration. Nixon thus garnered the support of South Carolina's senior senator and avid segregationist Strom Thurmond, which helped him win the Republican nomination. Nixon went on to defeat Hubert Humphry and win the presidential election easily.

Since the end of the Civil War, the vast majority of White Southerners had voted for democrats. Lincoln, of course, had been a Republican. However, the **1968 Election** saw a major realignment of the national parties as White Southerners switched their allegiance to the Republicans under Nixon and African Americans cemented their support for Democrats.

#### BUSSING AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Once elected, Nixon did not prioritize civil rights to the extent of the previous Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. Public support for civil rights had peaked in the mid-1960s, galvanized by Martin Luther King's leadership and media coverage of overt repression in the South. With King gone, and Black



**Richard Nixon:** Republican president elected in 1968. He gained the support of White Southerners by promising to reduce the involvement of the federal government in implementing civil rights laws in the South.



**Southern Strategy:** President Nixon's strategy to gain the support of White southern voters by promising to limit the use of federal power to implement civil rights changes. Because of this, White Southerners have mostly supported Republicans, while African Americans have mostly supported Democrats.



**1968 Presidential Election:** Watershed election in American history in which the coalitions that supported each party shifted. Due to Nixon's Southern Strategy, White Southerners switched to the Republican Party and African Americans switched to the Democratic Party.



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Power on the rise, Nixon did not feel the same pressure to act that his predecessors had.

The Nixon years witnessed the first large-scale integration of public schools in the South. Nixon sought a middle way between segregationists and liberal Democrats who supported integration. He supported integration in principle, but he was opposed to the use of **bussing** to force integration. Bussing was a controversial effort to integrate school in cities where neighborhoods were racially segregated. Since most students attended neighborhood schools and were therefore racially segregated simply because of housing patterns, busses would transport students across town to create racially mixed student populations.

Nixon's goals were partly political. He hoped to retain the support of southern conservatives, many of whom had voted Republican for the first time in 1968. These southern voters had been alienated from the Democratic party by Kennedy and Johnson's civil rights legislation.

Nixon, however was not a Southerner, and was not entirely opposed to improving the lives of African Americans or pursuing racial justice. Although he oversaw a slowing of civil rights progress, he did not try to stop the civil rights movement. In fact, Nixon implemented the first significant federal **affirmative action** program. The program required government contractors to hire minority workers and was a successful way to combat discrimination that prevented equitable hiring of African Americans. Although the program had been started many years before, Nixon is credited with greatly expanding it and making it official government policy. Affirmative action was subsequently applied to other areas of American life, including college admissions.

#### THE WAR ON DRUGS AND MASS INCARCERATION

As Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, violent crime in the United States was reaching an all-time high. While there were different reasons for the spike, the most important one was demographic. The primary category of offenders, males between the ages of 16 and 36, reached an all-time peak as the Baby Boomer Generation came of age. But the phenomenon that most politicians honed in on as a cause for violent crime was the abuse of a new, cheap drug dealt illegally on city streets.

Crack cocaine, a smokable type of cocaine popular with poorer addicts, was hitting the streets in the 1980s, frightening middle-class Americans. Reagan and other conservatives led a campaign to "get tough on crime" and promised the nation a **war on drugs**. Initiatives like the "Just Say No" campaign led by First Lady Nancy Reagan implied that drug use and drug-related crime reflected personal morality rather than addiction or broader social ills such as chronic poverty.



**Bussing:** Government policy of transporting students from one area of a town to another to attend school in order to create integrated school populations when neighborhoods were mostly segregated.

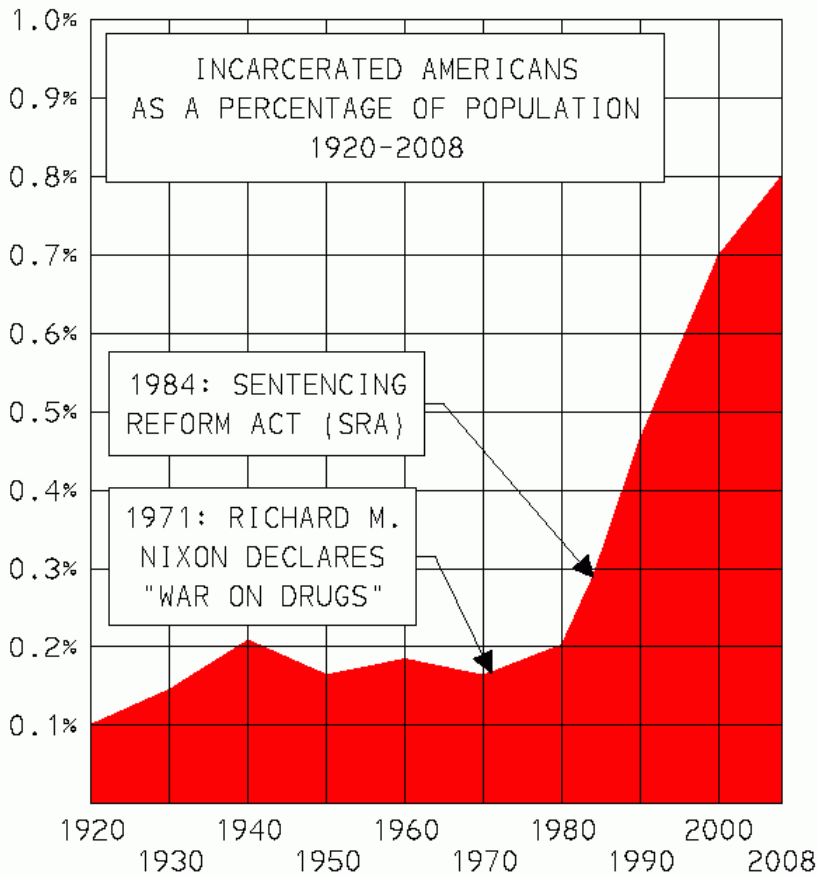


**Affirmative Action:** Government program in which certain numbers of minorities are hired in order to match the racial makeup of the surrounding population.



**War on Drugs:** Nickname for a collection of programs and laws passed in the 1980s to fight the spread of crime related to the use and sale of drugs. It especially was known for the passage of strict sentencing laws that resulted in overcrowding of jails.

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Secondary Source: Graph

The rate of incarceration skyrocketed in America due to the War on Drugs. Many of those who were convicted were African American, and the effect on some neighborhoods has been catastrophic.

Nixon had first used the term in 1971, but in the 1980s, the war on drugs took on an ominous dimension, as politicians enacted harsher sentences for drug offenders so they could market themselves as tough on crime. State after state switched from variable to mandatory minimum sentences that were long and particularly harsh for crimes related to the sale of illegal drugs. There was a racial aspect to this new focus on street drugs rather than crimes such as fraud or money laundering since the drug trade was carried out primarily by minorities. The federal government supported the trend with federal sentencing guidelines and additional funds for local law enforcement agencies. This law-and-order movement peaked in the 1990s, when California introduced a **three strikes law** that mandated life imprisonment without parole for any third felony conviction, even nonviolent ones. As a result, prisons became crowded with drug offenders, and states went deep into debt to build more.

By the end of the century, the war began to die down as the public lost interest in the problem, the costs of the punishment binge became politically burdensome, and scholars and politicians began to advocate the

 **Three Strikes Laws:** Nickname for state laws passed during the 1980s and 1990s that called for lifetime sentences for drug offenders convicted for their third time. It resulted in jails filling up with non-violent criminals and the social destruction of some neighborhoods.


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decriminalization of drug use. But the damage was already done. Hundreds of thousands of people had been incarcerated for drug offenses and the total number of prisoners in the nation had grown four-fold. Particularly glaring were the racial inequities of the new age of mass incarceration, with African Americans being seven times more likely to be in prison. The effects on communities were devastating. The traditional social fabric in some neighborhoods disintegrated as large numbers of young men were incarcerated and were unable to work, support families and serve as parents.

#### RODNEY KING AND THE LA RIOTS

On the evening of March 3, 1991, **Rodney King** and two passengers were driving west on the Foothill Freeway through the Lake View Terrace neighborhood of Los Angeles. The California Highway Patrol attempted to initiate a traffic stop. A high-speed pursuit ensued. When King finally stopped, the two officers arrested him and his passengers.

After the two passengers were placed in the patrol car, five White Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers surrounded King, who came out of the car last. They tased him, beat him dozens of times with their batons, and tackled him to the ground before handcuffing him. Unknown to the police and King, the incident was captured on a camcorder by local civilian George Holliday from his nearby apartment.

 **Rodney King:** African American man beaten by Los Angeles police officers during an arrest in 1991. The beating was filmed and when the officers were found not guilty, the LA Riots ensued. He is famous for saying, "Can we all just get along?"



#### Primary Source: Video Still

The video of Rodney King being beaten by LAPD officers was shocking, not because the beating happened because African Americans knew such events were common, but because it was captured by a bystander on his video camera. In the days before cell phones, such video evidence was almost unheard of.

The footage of King being beaten by police became an instant focus of media attention and a rallying point for activists in Los Angeles and around the United States. Coverage was extensive during the first two weeks after the incident. The Los Angeles Times published 43 articles about it, The New York Times published 17 articles, and the Chicago Tribune published 11 articles.

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Eight stories appeared on ABC News, including a one-hour special on Primetime Live. In the days before the Internet and social media, it was an incredibly persistent news story, driven in part by the existence of the video, which in the days before cell phone cameras, was almost unheard of.

Before the release of the Rodney King tape, minority community leaders in Los Angeles had repeatedly complained about harassment and excessive use of force by LAPD officers. It was a complaint that had been noticed by the Kerner Commission 26 years before but had never been addressed. In 1991, however, the Rodney King tape was the first time video evidence existed to support the community's accusations of excessive force.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney charged four police officers with assault and use of excessive force. The jury in the subsequent trial was composed of nine White members, one bi-racial man, one Hispanic, and one Asian American. On April 29, 1992, after seven days of deliberations, the jury acquitted all four officers of assault and acquitted three of the four of using excessive force.

**Rioting began the day the verdicts were announced**, and peaked in intensity over the next two days. Many of the disturbances were concentrated in South Central Los Angeles, where the population was majority African-American and Hispanic. A total of 63 people died during the riots and more than 2,000 people were reported injured. Approximately 3,600 fires were set, destroying 1,100 buildings, with fire calls coming once every minute at some points. Widespread looting also occurred.

During the riots, Rodney King went on television and summed up the frustration of many. Pleading with the police and rioters, he said, "People, I just want to say, you know, **can we all just get along?** Can we get along? Can we stop making it, making it horrible for the older people and the kids?... It's just not right. It's not right. It's not, it's not going to change anything. We'll, we'll get our justice ... Please, we can get along here."

Rioters also targeted stores owned by Koreans and other ethnic Asians that were mixed into the predominantly African American neighborhoods where the rioting took place. Many Korean Americans in Los Angeles refer to the event as Sa-I-Gu, meaning "four-two-nine" in Korean, in reference to April 29, 1992, the day the riots started. The week of riots is considered a major turning point for the development of a distinct Korean American identity and community in Los Angeles.

Over 2,300 mom-and-pop shops run by Korean business owners were damaged. Korean Americans not only faced physical damage to their stores and community surroundings, but they also suffered emotional, psychological, and economic despair. In reaction, many Korean Americans worked to create political and social empowerment. A week after the riots, in the largest Asian American protest ever held in a city, about 30,000 Korean American marchers walked the streets of the Los Angeles Koreatown, calling



**1992 Los Angeles Riots:** Urban riots that followed the not guilty verdict in the beating of Rodney King by officers of the LAPD.

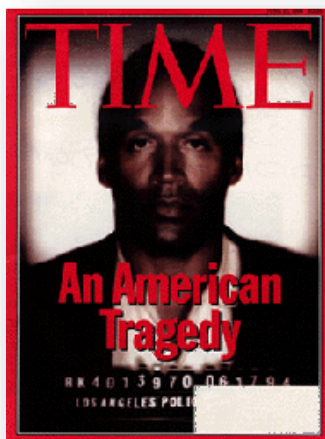
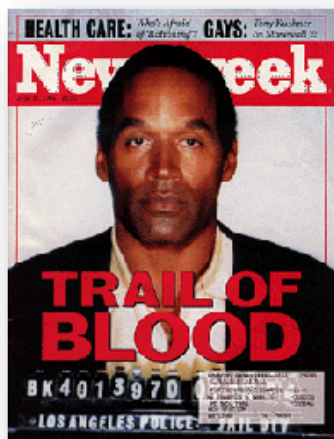


**Can we all just get along?:** Famous question posed by Rodney King during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.

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for peace and denouncing police violence. This cultural movement was devoted to the protection of Koreans' political rights, ethnic heritage, and political representation. New leaders arose within the community, and second-generation children spoke on behalf of the community. Korean Americans began to have different occupation goals, from storeowners to political leaders.

Despite efforts from the community and government, the majority of the local stores affected by the riots were never rebuilt. Store owners had difficulty getting loans. Myths about the city, or at least certain neighborhoods of it, arose that discouraged investment and preventing growth of employment. Few of the rebuilding plans were implemented, and business investors and some community members rejected South Los Angeles.




#### Primary Source: Magazine Covers


Both Newsweek and Time Magazines used OJ Simpson's mug shot on their covers. However, Time darkened the image, leading to accusations that they were perpetuating the stereotype that darker skin should be equated with criminality and violence.

#### THE OJ SIMPSON TRIAL

On June 12, 1994, Nicole Brown Simpson and her boyfriend Ron Goldman were found stabbed to death outside her condo in Los Angeles. Nicole Brown Simpson's ex-husband was the football hall of fame legend **OJ Simpson** and was suspected immediately by police. Simpson did not turn himself in, and on June 17 he became the object of a low-speed pursuit as he fled police in a white 1993 Ford Bronco. TV stations interrupted coverage of the 1994 NBA Finals to broadcast live footage of the chase taken from news helicopters. An estimated million Americans watched as OJ ran from the police. The pursuit, eventual arrest, and subsequent trial were among the most widely publicized events in American history.

OJ's trial that followed, often characterized as the **Trial of the Century** because of its international publicity was televised live on cable television. Many people watched the proceedings as if they were a soap opera. When the trial culminated after eleven months on October 3, 1995, 100 million

 **OJ Simpson:** Heisman Trophy winning running back who was accused and found not guilty of murdering his ex-wife and her boyfriend in 1995. His trial showed how racially divided the nation remained after the Civil Rights Movement.

 **Trial of the Century:** The highly publicized trial of OJ Simpson in 1995 for the murder of his ex-wife and her boyfriend. He was found not guilty. The trial revealed how racially divided the nation remained.

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people watched or listened as the jury rendered a verdict of not guilty for the two murders.

The verdict showed just how divided America remained after all the work of the Civil Rights Movement. According to a 2016 poll, 83% of White Americans and 57% of African Americans believe Simpson was guilty. In the view of many, the trial was a clear miscarriage of justice. In the eyes of many White Americans, a murderer went free because of mistakes by the police and prosecutors and because Simpson had the money to hire the nation's best lawyers. However, for many in the African American community, the OJ Simpson verdict was a cause for celebration as one of their own had finally beaten the White man's criminal justice system.

#### CONCLUSION

The Kerner Commission pointed out the source of African American frustration, although anyone who lived in the ghettos of America's great cities could have explained the causes of the violence that marked the later part of the Civil Rights Movement. Lack of employment, police brutality, discrimination, and government neglect were obstacles that Dr. King and the champions of nonviolence tried to tackle. However, for the young African American men and women of the late-1960s and in the decades that followed, nonviolence was simply too slow or too ineffective. And being human, sometimes anger boiled over into violence before those with sufficient moral influence had time to reign in pent up anger.

Should Americans in the early 1960s have predicted that the Civil Rights Movement would take this turn? Should those who held up Dr. King and the model of a good protester have known that his influence would not extend to every corner of every city? Should we, as people, know ourselves better?

What do you think? Was violence an inevitable part of the Civil Rights Movement?

#### SUMMARY

African Americans in northern and western cities had suffered for decades. Their neighborhoods were poor and they had few job opportunities. Although they did not live in the South, their children attended poor schools and they faced discrimination when looking for jobs. Frustration boiled over in the 1960s and there were riots in cities such as Detroit, Los Angeles, and Newark.

A government commission studied the riots to understand what caused them and to make recommendations to prevent future riots. In the end, however, elected leaders did not implement the commission's recommendations.

Malcolm X was a leader of the Nation of Islam, an organization of African American Muslims. He believed that African Americans and Whites could

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not live together and that the best way to improve their lives was to become self-reliant. After he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and left the Nation of Islam, he began preaching a more inclusive message, but was killed by members of the Nation of Islam.

Some African Americans started to advocate Black Power in the later 1960s. They wanted African Americans to become self-reliant and to be proud. Some rejected nonviolence. One group, the Black Panthers, carried guns and promised to defend their neighborhoods from White police officers. The Black Power movement scared many Whites.

In 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. Riots broke out in many cities as the news spread. King is remembered as one of America's greatest leaders.

President Richard Nixon won election in 1968 by promising Whites in the South that he would not use the power of the federal government to promote civil rights. This was different from Democrats Kennedy and Johnson who had promoted new civil rights laws and had used the courts and National Guard to enforce civil rights. Nixon was not totally opposed to civil rights. He opposed bussing but promoted affirmative action.

In the 1980s, drug use increased and politicians promised to crack down. They past strict laws and people arrested for selling and possessing drugs ended up in jail with long sentences. These laws affected African American neighborhoods much more so than Whites.

In 1991, Rodney King was beaten by Los Angeles police when he was arrested. The attack was captured on video, however, the police officers were acquitted when they were put on trial. When the verdict was announced, a long riot broke out.

In 1995, football star OJ Simpson was put on trial in Los Angeles for murder. He was also acquitted. The OJ Trial was a media obsession. Many African Americans celebrated the outcome even though they believed he was guilty since is seemed like the first time one of their own could win in the justice system that had been biased toward Whites for so long.



## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Kerner Commission:** Government commission appointed by President Johnson to study the urban riots of the late-1960. They found racism, lack of job opportunities, and poor education and social services as the root cause, but little was done to resolve the issues.

**Malcolm X:** Civil rights leader and spokesman for the Nation of Islam. He advocated African American self-reliance and was assassinated in 1965.

**Nation of Islam:** Organization of African American Muslims in the United States. It was led by Elijah Muhammad.

**Black Muslims:** Members of the Nation of Islam.

**Elijah Muhammad:** Leader of the Nation of Islam from 1934-1975. He and Malcolm X disagreed openly, leading to Malcolm X leaving the Nation of Islam.

**Stokely Carmichael:** Leader of SNCC who advocated for Black Power.

**James Brown:** African American soul singer and founder of funk music. His famous song "Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud" was a hit during the Black Power era.

**Huey Newton:** Along with Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panther Party.

**Bobby Seale:** Along with Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party.

**Black Panther Party:** African American political organization founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in the late 1960s. They carried guns in an effort to protect African Americans from police and government violence.

**Richard Nixon:** Republican president elected in 1968. He gained the support of White Southerners by promising to reduce the involvement of the federal government in implementing civil rights laws in the South.

**Rodney King:** African American man beaten by Los Angeles police officers during an arrest in 1991. The beating was filmed and when the officers were found not guilty, the LA Riots ensued. He is famous for saying, "Can we all just get along?"

**OJ Simpson:** Heisman Trophy winning running back who was accused and found not guilty of murdering his ex-wife and her boyfriend in 1995. His trial showed how racially divided the nation remained after the Civil Rights Movement.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Black is Beautiful:** Phrase that captured the self-pride element of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

**Black Power:** Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s which emphasized African American self-reliance. It deemphasized the nonviolent protests led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and was embraced by more militant, younger activists such as members of the Black Panther Party.

**Southern Strategy:** President Nixon's strategy to gain the support of White southern voters by promising to limit the use of federal power to implement civil rights changes. Because of this, White Southerners have mostly supported Republicans, while African Americans have mostly supported Democrats.



## EVENTS

**The Long, Hot Summer:** Nickname for a series of urban riots that took place in African American neighborhoods of major northern and western cities between 1964 and 1968. The cause of the riots was studied by the Kerner Commission.

**Black Power Salute at the 1968 Olympics:** Famous political statement made by Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two African American runners, who raised closed fists during the National Anthem after winning medals the 1968 Olympics.

**Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.:** Killing of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by rioting in most major cities.

**1968 Presidential Election:** Watershed election in American history in which the coalitions that supported each party shifted. Due to Nixon's Southern Strategy, White Southerners switched to the Republican Party and African Americans switched to the Democratic Party.

**War on Drugs:** Nickname for a collection of programs and laws passed in the 1980s to fight the spread of crime related to the use and sale of drugs. It especially was known for the passage of strict sentencing laws that resulted in overcrowding of jails.

**1992 Los Angeles Riots:** Urban riots that followed the not guilty verdict in the beating of Rodney King by officers of the LAPD.

**Trial of the Century:** The highly publicized trial of OJ Simpson in 1995 for the murder of his ex-wife and her boyfriend. He was found not guilty. The trial revealed how racially divided the nation remained.



## SPEECHES

**I've Been to the Mountaintop:** Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last speech on April 3, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. In it he seemed to predict his own death.

**Can we all just get along?:** Famous question posed by Rodney King during the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.



## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS & LAWS

**Bussing:** Government policy of transporting students from one area of a town to another to attend school in order to create integrated school populations when neighborhoods were mostly segregated.

**Affirmative Action:** Government program in which certain numbers of minorities are hired in order to match the racial makeup of the surrounding population.

**Three Strikes Laws:** Nickname for state laws passed during the 1980s and 1990s that called for lifetime sentences for drug offenders convicted for their third time. It resulted in jails filling up with non-violent criminals and the social destruction of some neighborhoods.



# 4

## F O U R T H Q U E S T I O N WHAT MAKES A MOVEMENT SUCCESSFUL?

W e r e t h e  
**CIVIL RIGHTS**  
**M O V E M E N T S**  
of the post-war decades  
**SUCCESSFUL?**

### INTRODUCTION

The African American bid for full citizenship was surely the most visible of the battles for civil rights that took place in the post-war decades. However, other minority groups that had been legally discriminated against or otherwise denied access to economic and educational opportunities began to increase efforts to secure their rights as well. Mexican Americans, Native Americans, disabled Americans, and homosexual Americans all sought ways to improve their lives and win justice and respect.

Like the African American Civil Rights Movement in the South, some of these movements featured charismatic leaders, marches, legal victories, and captivating protests. Some were violent, while others embraced nonviolence. Some were successful, while others faced setbacks and ended with dreams unfulfilled.

In the end, we can look at these movements as a group and consider what factors made them similar and different, and in a larger sense, why some succeeded while others faltered.

What do you think? What makes a movement successful?

## 4 WHAT MAKES A MOVEMENT SUCCESSFUL?

### THE MEXICAN AMERICAN FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Like the African American movement, the Mexican American civil rights movement won its earliest victories in the federal courts. In 1947, in **Mendez v. Westminster**, the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that segregating students of Hispanic descent was unconstitutional. In 1954, the same year as *Brown v. Board of Education*, Mexican Americans prevailed in **Hernandez v. Texas**, when the Supreme Court extended the protections of the Fourteenth Amendment to all ethnic groups in the United States.

The highest profile struggle of the Mexican American civil rights movement was the fight that **Cesar Chavez** and **Dolores Huerta** waged in the fields of California to organize migrant farmworkers. In 1962, Chavez and Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). In 1965, when Filipino grape pickers led by Filipino American **Larry Itliong** went on strike to call attention to mistreatment of farmworkers in California's Central Valley. The Filipino American and Mexican Americans who picked the nation's food worked for tiny wages, had no health care, could not send their children to school, and endured humiliating working conditions. In many cases, there were no bathrooms and men, women and children had no choice but to relieve themselves in front of the other workers in the fields.



Chavez, Huerta and the Mexican American farmworkers voted to join the strike and the two organizations merged to form the **United Farm Workers**. The farm workers under Chavez's leadership used many of the same tactics that the African American protesters were using in the South. In 1966, they embarked on a 300-mile pilgrimage from Delano, California to the state's



**Mendez v. Westminster:** 1947 court case that ended segregated schools for Hispanic students.



**Hernandez v. Texas:** 1954 Supreme Court case in which the court concluded that Fourteenth Amendment protections should be extended to all ethnic groups. Specifically in this case, Hernandez argued that he should not be tried by an all-White jury.



**Cesar Chavez:** Leader of the United Farm Workers and champion of the rights of Hispanic farm



**Dolores Huerta:** Co-founder of the National Farm Workers Association and champion of the rights of Hispanic farm workers.



**Larry Itliong:** Leader of the Filipino farm workers in California who merged his union with the Hispanic farm workers union led by Cesar Chavez to form the United Farm Workers.

#### Secondary Source: Mural

A mural depicting Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers black eagle logo, as well as the marches and farmworkers he led.



**United Farm Workers:** Union of Filipino and Hispanic farm workers in California led by Cesar Chavez.

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capital of Sacramento in an attempt to pressure the growers and the state government to answer the demands of the Mexican American and Filipino American farm workers. The pilgrimage brought widespread public attention to the farm worker's cause. The farmworkers also gained the support of the powerful AFL-CIO union.

However, despite the ongoing strike by the farmworkers, it was ultimately a boycott of California grapes that made the difference. Farmworkers convinced many Americans to stop buying grapes grown in California and grape sales dropped year after year. The **Delano Grape Strike and Boycott** finally ended in 1970 when California growers recognized the right of farmworkers to unionize. The farmworkers had been on strike for eight years. Most had lost everything, but felt that it had been worth it to regain a sense of human dignity.

The equivalent of the Black Power movement among Mexican Americans was the **Chicano Movement**. Proudly adopting a term that had once been used to insult Mexican Americans, Chicano activists demanded increased political power for Mexican Americans, education that recognized their cultural heritage, and the restoration of lands taken from them at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. One of the founding members, **Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales**, launched the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1965, to provide jobs, legal services, and healthcare for Mexican Americans. From this movement arose **La Raza Unida**, (Spanish for the United Race, or United People) a political organization that attracted many Mexican American college students. Elsewhere, **Reies López Tijerina** fought for years to recover lands that Hispanics lost to Whites when Mexican territory was taken by the United States in the 1840s. He also co-sponsored the Poor People's March on Washington in 1967.

Some female Chicano activists worked on issues concerning Chicana women specifically. They formed the Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional and became involved in the case **Madrigal v. Quilligan**, obtaining a moratorium on the compulsory sterilization of women and adoption of bilingual consent forms. These steps were necessary because many Hispanic women who did not understand English well were being sterilized in the United States at the time, without proper consent. The prevalence of bilingual government documents is due in part to the work of these Chicano activist women.

The Chicano Movement was important in the development of a sense of communal identity and pride. Part of that identity is based on the legacy of the American Southwest as the ancestral home of the Mexican people. This idea was promoted by Aberto Baltazar Urista Heredia who used the name **Aztlán** to refer to the lands of Northern Mexico that were annexed by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War. Combined with the claim of some historical linguists and anthropologists that the original homeland of the Aztec peoples was located in the southwestern United States. The idea of Aztlán became a symbol for Chicano activists who



### **Delano Grape Strike and Boycott:**

Major strike and boycott during the 1960s in California by the United Farm Workers to win guarantees of humane treatment of workers and better pay.



### **Chicano Movement:**

Movement of Hispanic Americans beginning in the 1960s that focused on civil rights. It involved the development of political institutions and was marked by an increased sense of community pride as well as a flowering of artistic expression and literature.



### **Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales:**

Mexican American boxer, poet, and one of the first political activists of the Chicano Movement.



### **La Raza Unida:**

Chicano political organization that was founded in the early 1970s and became prominent throughout Texas and Southern California where its members ran for office in local elections.



### **Reies López Tijerina:**

Chicano political activist who helped Hispanics reclaim lands their families had lost when the United States took the Southwest from Mexico in the 1840s.



### **Madrigal v. Quilligan:**

Court case in which Spanish-speaking women had been sterilized after signing documents they could not read. The case resulted in forms being published in multiple languages.



### **Aztlán:**

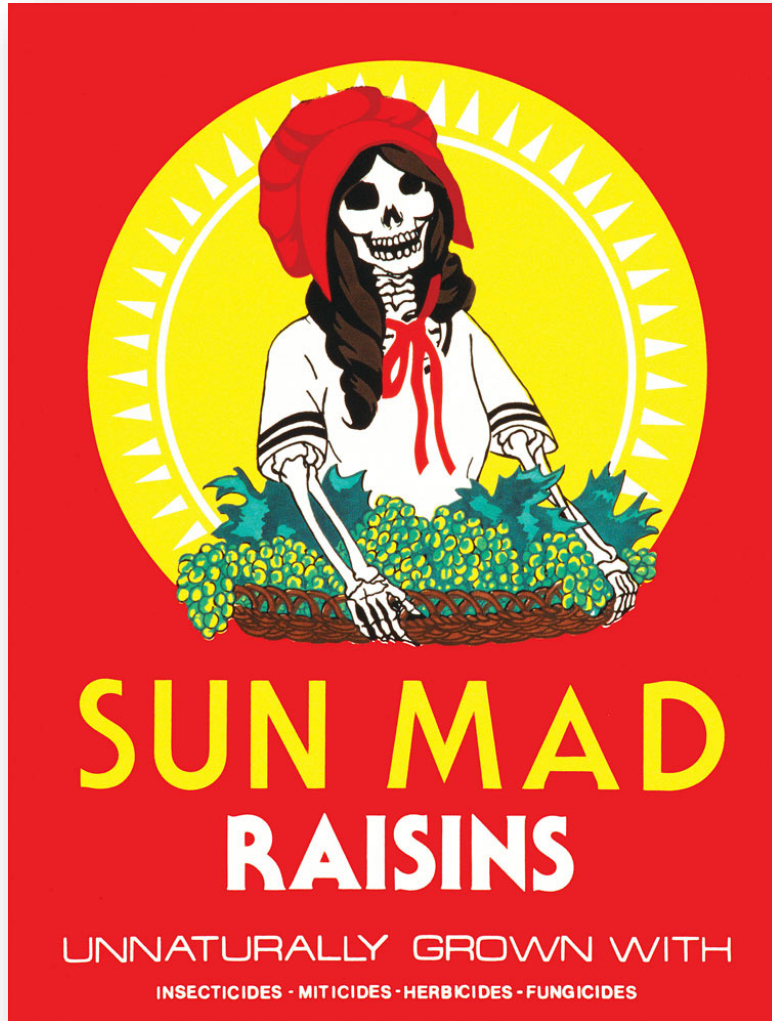
Mythical name for the lands of Northern Mexico that were annexed by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War. The idea of Aztlán has been used to develop a sense of communal identity by Chicano activists.

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believed they have a legal and primordial right to the land. In this sense, Hispanic immigrants moving into Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and California are returning home rather than immigrating.

### Primary Source: Painting

Artwork with political themes is common in the Chicano Movement. This painting by Ester Hernandez criticizes the role of big business and government in the lives of farmworkers.



Like the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, the Chicano Movement was pushed forward by the work of talented artists and writers. Chicano artists have sought to affirm cultural identity by mixing Mexican, American and indigenous cultures. For example, the Virgin of Guadalupe, an important figure in Mexican culture, is used in a socio-political context by Chicano artists as a symbol of both hope in times of suffering, and empowerment, particularly when embodying an average woman or portrayed in an act of resistance. One of the most celebrated holidays in Mexican culture is the Day of the Dead and the symbols of the holiday have become a major component of the visual expression of the movement. Chicano art has

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drawn much influence from prominent muralists from the Mexican Renaissance, such as Diego Rivera and José Orozco, and has been similarly influenced by pre-Columbian art, where history and rituals were encoded on the walls of pyramids.

A favorite topic of Chicano artists is life in the barrios of Western cities. These Spanish-speaking neighborhoods have long histories of dislocation, marginalization, poverty, and inequity in access to social services. Chicano artists also use graffiti as a tool, to express their political opinions, indigenous heritage, cultural and religious imagery, and counter-narratives to dominant portrayals of Chicano life in the barrios.

### THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT

The story of the first inhabitants of North America is long and tragic. Confronted with diseases from Europe, Asia and Africa, roughly 90% of all Native Americans died simply as a result of the joining of the Old and New Worlds. Over the centuries, Native Americans lost their land in a long series of failed wars and broken treaties. In the late 1800s, the last groups of Native Americans were forced onto reservations as their traditional way of life were destroyed. Official government policy was the assimilate them into mainstream White society, but they faced enormous hardships including poverty, lack of education, racism, and the fact that most Native Americans did not want to abandon their way of life.

In the 1930s, a set of laws known as the Indian New Deal were passed which officially ended the effort to destroy Native culture. While this was a positive step in the right direction, it did little to address the overwhelming poverty on the reservations. In 1970, the average life expectancy of Native Americans was 46 years compared to the national average of 69. The suicide rate was twice that of the general population, and the infant mortality rate was the highest in the country. Half of all Native Americans lived on reservations, where unemployment reached 50%. Among those in cities, 20% lived below the poverty line.

In 1968, a group of Indian activists, including **Dennis Banks** and **George Mitchell** convened a gathering of two hundred people in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and formed the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**.

A year later, a small group of Native American activists landed on **Alcatraz Island**, the site of a notorious former federal prison, in San Francisco Bay. They announced plans to build a Native American cultural center, including a history museum, an ecology center, and a spiritual sanctuary. Supporters on the mainland provided supplies by boat, and celebrities visited Alcatraz to publicize the cause. More people joined the occupiers until, at one point, they numbered about 400. From the beginning, the federal government negotiated with them to persuade them to leave since the island was the property of the federal government. They were reluctant to accede, but over time, the occupiers began to drift away. Government forces removed the



**Dennis Banks:** Native American activist and co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) along with George Mitchell.



**George Mitchell:** Native American activist and co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) along with Dennis Banks.



**American Indian Movement (AIM):** Native American political organization founded in 1968. They organized various protests including the occupation of Alcatraz Island, Trail of Broken Treaties and occupation of Wounded Knee.


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final holdouts by cutting off all water and electricity. Though fraught with controversy and forcibly ended, the 19-month occupation is hailed by many as a success for having attained international attention for the situation of Native Americans in the United States.


The next major demonstration came in 1972 when AIM members and others marched on Washington, DC in a journey they called the **Trail of Broken Treaties**. There, they occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The group presented a list of demands, which included improved housing, education, and economic opportunities in Native communities, the drafting of new treaties, the return of lands, and protections for Native religions and culture. One positive outcome of the political activism was the passage of the **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975** which granted federal funds to tribes as grants which they could then administer as they believed was best suited for their needs. It was an important step in giving Native Americans control over their own affairs.



The most dramatic event staged by AIM was the **occupation of the town of Wounded Knee**, South Dakota. In February 1973 they took control of the trading post and church and declared the town independent from the United States. Wounded Knee had historical significance for AIM since it was the site of a massacre of members of the Lakota tribe by the Army in 1890. The federal government surrounded the area. Armed only with rifles, the occupiers faced off with marshals, FBI agents and police armed with machine guns, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers. A siege ensued that lasted 71 days, with frequent gunfire from both sides, wounding a marshal as well as an FBI agent, and killing two Native Americans. When one of the


 **Occupation of Alcatraz Island:** Political occupation of an island in San Francisco by members of AIM in 1969-1970.

 **Trail of Broken Treaties:** Pilgrimage from California to Washington, DC in 1972 organized by AIM and other Native American activists. Once in DC, they occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and presented a list of demands to be read by President Nixon.

 **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975:** Law passed in 1975 that gave federal money to Native American tribes in the form of grants that the tribes could spend as they wished. It was an important step in allowing Native Americans great self-government.

**Primary Source: Photograph**

Members of AIM guard their positions outside the church at Wounded Knee during the standoff there in 1973.

 **Occupation of Wounded Knee:** Violent 71-day standoff between AIM activists and the federal government in 1973.



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occupiers, was killed by a government sniper tribal elders called an end to the occupation. Both sides reached an agreement to disarm and the occupiers began to leave the town.

Two AIM leaders, Dennis Banks and **Russell Means**, were arrested and put on trial, but charges were dropped when the jury was ready to acquit and the judge in their case ruled that the government had committed serious misconduct in the course of the trial.


By this time, the Nixon administration had already taken steps to address concerns AIM and other Native American activists had brought to their attention. The government restored millions of acres of land to tribal ownership, increased funding for Native American education, healthcare, legal services, housing, and economic development, and hired more Native employees in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The greatest outcome of the standoff, however, was an increased sense of pride among Native Americans and public awareness of the plight of the nation's first peoples.


The relationship between Native Americans and the federal government continues to be fraught. For many, the government is still viewed with suspicion. One member of AIM, **Leonard Peltier** has become a symbol of this mistrust. In 1977, he was convicted and sentenced to two consecutive terms of life imprisonment for the shooting of two FBI agents during a conflict on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Peltier's conviction has been the subject of much controversy due to irregularities in his trial and campaigns to "Free Leonard Peltier" continue among Native American communities.

Contemporary Native American activists have criticized the use of mascots in sports, as perpetuating stereotypes. There has been a steady decline in the number of secondary school and college teams using such names, images, and mascots. Some tribal team names have been approved by the tribe in question, such as the Seminole Tribe's approving the use of their name for the teams of Florida State University. Among professional teams, only the NBA's Golden State Warriors discontinued use of Native American-themed logos in 1971. Controversy has remained regarding teams such as the NFL's Washington Redskins, whose name is considered to be a racial slur, and MLB's Cleveland Indians, whose usage of a caricature called Chief Wahoo has also faced protest.

Federal laws granted tribes to operate casinos on reservation lands even in states where gambling is illegal in an effort to provide reservations with a steady source of financial support. Although many Native American tribes have casinos, the impact of Native American gaming is widely debated. Some tribes, such as the Winnemem Wintu of California feel that casinos and their proceeds destroy culture from the inside out. These tribes refuse to participate in the gambling industry.

Sadly, even today Native Americans struggle to overcome the limitations of poverty on reservations and in larger society. Crime, alcoholism, drug use,

 **Russell Means:** American Indian Movement activist and one of the leaders of the Wounded Knee occupation. He went on to a career in Hollywood but continued to advocate for Native American rights.

 **Leonard Peltier:** Native American activist and AIM member who was convicted in 1977 of the murder of two FBI agents. He has become a symbol of the conflict between Native Americans and the federal government.

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lack of educational opportunities, and lack of access to financial resources all perpetuate the poverty the plagues modern reservations. For example, according to the Department of Justice, 1 in 3 Native women have suffered rape or attempted rape, more than twice the national rate, and in recent years, an alarming increase in teenage suicide has plagued many reservations.

### DISABILITY RIGHTS

The idea of federal legislation enhancing and extending civil rights legislation to millions of Americans with disabilities gained bipartisan support in the late 1980s. In early 1989, both Congress and newly inaugurated President H. W. Bush worked separately, then jointly, to write legislation capable of expanding civil rights. Key activists played an important role in lobbying members of congress to develop and pass the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Patrisha Wright is known as “the General” for her work in coordinating the campaign to enact the ADA.

Although it may at first seem simple to legislate protections for people with disabilities, in fact, the law has proven to be controversial because it requires public accommodations to be made accessible. Included under the law are churches, private schools, motels, and restaurants. For many of these institutions, the cost of adding wheelchair ramps, lifts in swimming pools, or elevators was enormous. As a result, many church groups and business organizations lobbied against passage for the ADA. Pro-business conservative commentators in the media joined in opposition, writing that the Americans with Disabilities Act was “an expensive headache to millions” that would not necessarily improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Shortly before the act was passed, disability rights activists with physical disabilities coalesced in front of the Capitol Building, shed their crutches, wheelchairs, powerchairs and other assistive devices, and crawled and pulled their bodies up all 100 of the Capitol’s front steps. As the activists did so, many of them chanted “ADA Now”, and “Vote Now”. Some activists who remained at the bottom of the steps held signs and yelled words of encouragement. Jennifer Keelan, a second grader with cerebral palsy, was videotaped as she pulled herself up the steps, using mostly her hands and arms, saying, “I’ll take all night if I have to.” This direct action is reported to have convinced several senators to support the measure. While there are those who do not attribute much overall importance to this action, the **Capitol Crawl** of 1990 is seen by some present-day disability activists as a critical last push that made passage of the law a reality.

Certainly, there were supporters in Congress as well as champions of the law outside the Capitol. Senator Tom Harkin authored what became the final bill and was its chief sponsor in the Senate. Harkin delivered part of his introduction speech in sign language, saying it was so his deaf brother could understand.



**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** 1990 law that guaranteed protections to people with disabilities, including signage in Braille, wheelchair ramps, access lifts, handicapped parking spaces, etc.



**Capitol Crawl:** Protest in 1990 in which disabled Americans crawled up the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC without their wheelchairs, canes, etc. to push for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



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Since passage, the law has remained controversial. Disabled rights activists have brought a long string of cases to court over such concerns as the failure to include enough accessible bathrooms in new buildings or poor website design that makes services unavailable to blind users. Although it seems unlikely that the ADA would be repealed, it remains a relatively new law in American life and the concerns of disabled Americans continue to be a subject the nation at large has not yet fully come to understand.



Primary Source: Photograph

Members of the press and supporters gathered around Jennifer Keelan during the Capitol Crawl in 1990.

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### GAY RIGHTS

For most of America's history, homosexuality was socially unacceptable and in most states, illegal. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a gay community was active in many urban centers and after the end of World War II, a movement grew to eliminate the laws and customs which stigmatized and criminalized the lives of these Americans. A strong gay community grew in San Francisco especially, since it was the site of military bases where gay servicemen were dishonorably discharged.

During the Red Scare of the early 1950s, gay and lesbian government employees were also targeted. There was a concern that because they might not want others to know about their sexual orientation, they would be more susceptible to blackmail by Soviet agents. Whereas only a few people ever lost their jobs because due to suspicion of actually being communist, many lost their jobs because they were homosexual. In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which set security standards for federal employment and barred homosexuals from working in the federal government. Not only did the victims lose their jobs, but also they were forced out of the closet and thrust into the public eye as lesbian or gay. In 2004, historian David Johnson wrote about the era and coined the term the **Lavender Scare** to describe the persecution of homosexual federal employees that coincided with the more famous Red Scare. The term is derived from the euphemism "lavender lads" which Senator Everett Dirksen used for homosexuals at the time.

The catalyst for the modern gay rights movement took place not in San Francisco, however, but in New York City. Early in the morning of June 28, 1969, police raided a Greenwich Village gay bar called the **Stonewall Inn**. Although such raids were common, the response of the Stonewall patrons was not. As the police prepared to arrest many of the customers, especially transsexuals and cross-dressers, who were particular targets for police harassment, a crowd began to gather. Angered by the brutal treatment of the prisoners, the crowd attacked. Beer bottles and bricks were thrown. The police barricaded themselves inside the bar and waited for reinforcements. The riot continued for several hours and resumed the following night. Inspired by the brutality of the Stonewall Inn incident, various gay rights activist groups united to protest discrimination, homophobia, and violence against gay people, promoting gay liberation and gay pride.

With a call for homosexual men and women to come out, gay and lesbian communities moved from the urban underground into the political sphere. Gay rights activists protested strongly against the official position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which categorized homosexuality as a mental illness. This official classification often resulted in individuals being fired from their jobs or losing custody of their children. By 1974, the APA had ceased to classify homosexuality as a form of mental illness.



**Lavender Scare:** Persecution of homosexual federal employees during the early 1950s that coincided with the hunt for communists.




**Stonewall Inn Riots:** Violent confrontation between New York City police and gay men at a bar in 1969. The event sparked the modern gay rights movement.


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Public acceptance of homosexuality was advanced in 1974 when Kathy Kozachenko became the first openly lesbian woman elected to public office in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1977, **Harvey Milk** became California's first openly gay elected man, although his service on San Francisco's board of supervisors, along with that of San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was cut short by the bullet of a disgruntled former city supervisor.

While the Stonewall Inn incident may have catalyzed the homosexual community to mobilize for equal treatment, it was a health crisis in the 1980s that truly united them. In the early 1980s, doctors noticed a disturbing trend. Young gay men in large cities, especially San Francisco and New York, were being diagnosed with and dying from a rare cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma. Because the disease was seen almost exclusively in male homosexuals, it was dubbed gay cancer. Doctors realized, however, that it often coincided with other symptoms, including a rare form of pneumonia, and they renamed it Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID), although people other than gay men, primarily intravenous drug users, were dying from the disease as well. The connection between gay men and the illness, later renamed **Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)** led heterosexuals largely to ignore the growing health crisis in the gay community, wrongly assuming they were safe from its effects. The federal government also overlooked the disease, and calls for more money to research and find the cure were ignored.



 **Harvey Milk:** First openly gay man elected to a public office in the United States. He served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors until he was murdered.

 **AIDS:** Illness caused by HIV that was first detected in the 1980s and mistakenly believed to infect only gay men. It devastated the gay community and because the federal government was slow to respond to the growing crisis, sparked organization and activism in the gay community.

Primary Source: Photograph

An ACT UP rally during the 1980s featuring signs with the pink triangle and Silence=Death slogan.

Tragically, the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was not well understood and the AIDS epidemic wreaked havoc in the gay community, the nation in general, and eventually in many parts of the world before governments found the political willpower to step in. Even after it became apparent that heterosexuals could contract the disease through blood transfusions and heterosexual intercourse, HIV/AIDS continued to be associated primarily with the gay community, especially by political and

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religious conservatives. Indeed, the Religious Right regarded it as a form of divine retribution meant to punish gay men.

With little help coming from the government, the gay community organized its own response. In 1982, New York City men organized a volunteer information hotline, provided counseling and legal assistance, and raised money for people with HIV/AIDS. Larry Kramer, one of the original members, left in 1983 and formed his own organization, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). ACT UP took a more militant approach, holding demonstrations on Wall Street, outside the headquarters of the Food and Drug Administration, and inside the New York Stock Exchange to call attention to the crisis and shame the government into action. One of the images adopted by the group, a pink triangle paired with the phrase Silence=Death, captured media attention and became the symbol of the AIDS crisis.



### Primary Source: Photograph

The AIDS Memorial Quilt laid out on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The Quilt has become an important symbol for the gay rights movement and the movement to find a cure for HIV/AIDS.

One of the most powerful images associated with both the gay rights movement and the fight against AIDS has been the **AIDS Memorial Quilt**. The idea for the quilt was conceived in 1985 by activist Cleve Jones during the candlelight march in remembrance of Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone. For the march, Jones had people write the names of loved ones that were lost to AIDS-related causes on signs, and then they taped the signs to the old San Francisco Federal Building. All the signs taped to the building looked like an enormous patchwork quilt to Jones, and he was inspired to expand the project. At that time, many people who died of AIDS did not



**AIDS Memorial Quilt:** Collection of sewn memorials to Americans who died from AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses. It was first displayed in full in Washington, DC on the National Mall.



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receive funerals, due to both the social stigma felt by surviving family members and the outright refusal by many funeral homes and cemeteries to handle the remains of those who had died from the disease. Lacking a memorial service or grave site, The Quilt became an opportunity for survivors to remember and celebrate their loved ones' lives. The first showing of The Quilt was in 1987 on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The Quilt has since been displayed in sections around the world.

By the 1990s, the gay rights movement was beginning to find support in government. In January 1993, newly elected President Bill Clinton wanted to allow homosexuals to serve openly in the military, but to appease conservatives, adopted a policy of **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**. Under this policy, those on active duty would not be asked their sexual orientation and, if they were gay, they were not to discuss their sexuality openly or they would be dismissed from military service. This compromise satisfied neither conservatives seeking the exclusion of gays nor the gay community, which argued that homosexuals, like heterosexuals, should be able to live without fear of retribution because of their sexuality. Don't Ask, Don't Tell continued until 2011 when the military leadership, President Barack Obama and Congress all voted to end the policy and allow gay and lesbian military personnel to serve openly.

President Bill Clinton also proved himself willing to appease political conservatives when he signed into law the **Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)**, after both houses of Congress had passed it with such wide margins that a presidential veto could easily be overridden. DOMA defined marriage as a heterosexual union and denied federal benefits to same-sex couples. It also allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages granted by other states. When Clinton signed the bill, he was personally opposed to same-sex marriage. Nevertheless, he disliked DOMA and later called for its repeal. Like many democratic politicians, he also later changed his position on same-sex marriage. On other social issues, however, Clinton was more liberal. He appointed openly gay and lesbian men and women to important positions in government and denounced discrimination against people with AIDS.

As the 2000s began, state governments began to challenge DOMA. Vermont became the first state to recognize **civil unions**, a legal agreement between two people that gave them the same rights as married couples. In this way, homosexual couples could own property together, adopt children, have next-of-kin access in cases of medical care, as well as seek financial support in the case of separation. For many, this was seen as a step forward and other states followed Vermont's lead. Yet for many couples, a civil union would never mean the same as being married.

The first two decades of the new century saw same-sex marriage receive support from prominent figures in the African-American civil rights movement, including Coretta Scott King, John Lewis, Julian Bond, and Mildred Loving. In May 2011, national public support for same-sex marriage



**Don't Ask, Don't Tell:** Policy adopted by the Clinton Administration in the 1990s that allowed homosexual

Americans to serve in the military so long as they didn't reveal their sexual orientation. In turn, the military would not actively try to find out their orientation. It ended the days of an open ban on service.



**Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA):**

Law passed in 1996 that defined marriage as between one man and one woman. It prohibited the federal government from recognizing gay marriages and allowed states to ignore gay marriages issued in other states. It was overturned in 2015.



**Civil Union:** A legal agreement between homosexual partners that served as a substitute for marriage in

some states. It granted the same legal rights as marriage without the title.



**Obergefell v. Hodges:** 2015 Supreme

Court case that declared gay marriage constitutional in all 50 states.

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rose above 50% for the first time. In June 2013, the Supreme Court struck down DOMA in their *United States v. Windsor* decision, and finally in June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of **Obergefell v. Hodges** that the fundamental right of same-sex couples to marry on the same terms and conditions as opposite-sex couples is guaranteed by the Constitution.



Primary Source: Photograph

The = symbol and the slogan “Love Wins” became powerful images, especially in social media, during the campaign for marriage equality.

As with acceptance of gay marriage, the American public has grown increasingly accepting of homosexuality over the past two decades. Gay and lesbian actors have been cast in positive roles on television and movies. Professional athletes have come out and been accepted by teammates and fans. There are now Senators and Representatives in the Congress who are open about their sexual orientation. The corporate world has become equally accepting. In fact, in some ways the business community has pushed reluctant politicians toward acceptance because they do not want to lose potential customers.

### CONCLUSION

The movements that were inspired by and followed the African American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s varied in their makeup and success.

For the Mexican American farm workers of California, they found success through similar means. They marched and boycotted. They also were guided by charismatic leaders. However, they focused their efforts on working conditions rather than larger issues such as voting rights or police and housing discrimination.

The American Indian Movement took a decidedly more militant turn. Armed activists forcibly took possession of land and buildings and provoked confrontations with the government. Sometimes these standoffs were resolved peacefully, but tragically, not always. Similar to the African

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American community, the Native Americans found a sense of pride in their work, but only mixed results in courts and the halls of power.

Disabled Americans had a tremendous success with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but have had to go to court dozens of times to seek enforcement of the law's provisions.

Most recently, homosexual Americans underwent a long struggle to advance their argument for a place at America's table. Through protests, advocacy, and the courts, and in the face of health crisis and enormous prejudice, they have emerged in just the past few years with important victories at the national level.

What factors led to these successes, and what factors held these movements back? What combination of leadership, timing, method, and public support was responsible?

What do you think? What makes a movement successful?

## 4 WHAT MAKES A MOVEMENT SUCCESSFUL?

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### SUMMARY

Hispanic Americans had won important victories in the court system in the 1940s and 1950s similar to victories won by African Americans. However, the biggest victories were because of the work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers in California. They led a strike and boycott against grape growers and eventually won using nonviolence.

The Chicano Movement was a broader nationwide effort to promote Hispanic rights, identity and pride. It included organizing political groups, fighting for rights in the courts, and new music and art.

Native American activists formed AIM in 1968 to campaign for their rights. AIM occupied Alcatraz Island, led a march to Washington, DC where they occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and also led a standoff at Wounded Knee. In each of these cases, their movement was more violent than the African American and Hispanic efforts. However, laws were passed that gave Native American tribes more control over their land and finances, and the movement led to an increased sense of pride.

Disability rights activists worked to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They succeeded in 1990 and now business and organizations have to ensure that their buildings and services are accessible to people with disabilities. There is still some opposition to the law from groups who believe the requirements (such as installing elevators) are too expensive.

The gay rights movement started in 1968 when police raided a gay bar in New York City and the customers fought back. The movement gained momentum due to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s when the disease first spread among gay men.

During the Red Scare of the 1950s, a law was passed to prohibit homosexuals from working for the government. In the 1990s, President Clinton implemented “don’t ask, don’t tell” which allowed homosexual Americans to serve in the military so long as they did not reveal their sexual orientation. This policy did not end until 2011. Today homosexual Americans can serve openly in the military and government.

Also during the 1990s, Americans started to debate gay marriage. Some states began allowing gay marriage while others banned it. A federal law allowed states to ignore gay marriages passed in other states. Eventually in 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage was a constitutional right.





## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Cesar Chavez:** Leader of the United Farm Workers and champion of the rights of Hispanic farm

**Dolores Huerta:** Co-founder of the National Farm Workers Association and champion of the rights of Hispanic farm workers.

**Larry Itliong:** Leader of the Filipino farm workers in California who merged his union with the Hispanic farm workers union led by Cesar Chavez to form the United Farm Workers.

**United Farm Workers:** Union of Filipino and Hispanic farm workers in California led by Cesar Chavez.

**Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales:** Mexican American boxer, poet, and one of the first political activists of the Chicano Movement.

**La Raza Unida:** Chicano political organization that was founded in the early 1970s and became prominent throughout Texas and Southern California where its members ran for office in local elections.

**Reies López Tijerina:** Chicano political activist who helped Hispanics reclaim lands their families had lost when the United States took the Southwest from Mexico in the 1840s.

**Dennis Banks:** Native American activist and co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) along with George Mitchell.

**George Mitchell:** Native American activist and co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) along with Dennis Banks.

**American Indian Movement (AIM):** Native American political organization founded in 1968. They organized various protests including the occupation of Alcatraz Island, Trail of Broken Treaties and occupation of Wounded Knee.

**Russell Means:** American Indian Movement activist and one of the leaders of the Wounded Knee occupation. He went on to a career in Hollywood but continued to advocate for Native American rights.

**Leonard Peltier:** Native American activist and AIM member who was convicted in 1977 of the murder of two FBI agents. He has become a symbol of the conflict between Native Americans and the federal government.

**Harvey Milk:** First openly gay man elected to a public office in the United States. He served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors until he was murdered.



## EVENTS

**Delano Grape Strike and Boycott:** Major strike and boycott during the 1960s in California by the United Farm Workers to win guarantees of humane treatment of workers and better pay.

**Chicano Movement:** Movement of Hispanic Americans beginning in the 1960s that focused on civil rights. It involved the development of political institutions and was marked by an increased sense of community pride as well as a flowering of artistic expression and literature.

**Occupation of Alcatraz Island:** Political occupation of an island in San Francisco by members of AIM in 1969-1970.

**Trail of Broken Treaties:** Pilgrimage from California to Washington, DC in 1972 organized by AIM and other Native American activists. Once in DC, they occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and presented a list of demands to be read by President Nixon.

**Occupation of Wounded Knee:** Violent 71-day standoff between AIM activists and the federal government in 1973.

**Capitol Crawl:** Protest in 1990 in which disabled Americans crawled up the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC without their wheelchairs, canes, etc. to push for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**Lavender Scare:** Persecution of homosexual federal employees during the early 1950s that coincided with the hunt for communists.

**Stonewall Inn Riots:** Violent confrontation between New York City police and gay men at a bar in 1969. The event sparked the modern gay rights movement.

**AIDS Memorial Quilt:** Collection of sewn memorials to Americans who died from AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses. It was first displayed in full in Washington, DC on the National Mall.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Aztlán:** Mythical name for the lands of Northern Mexico that were annexed by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War. The idea of Aztlán has been used to develop as sense of communal identity by Chicano activists.

**Civil Union:** A legal agreement between homosexual partners that served as a substitute for marriage in some states. It granted the same legal rights as marriage without the title.



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**AIDS:** Illness caused by HIV that was first detected in the 1980s and mistakenly believed to infect only gay men. It devastated the gay community and because the federal government was slow to respond to the growing crisis, sparked organization and activism in the gay community.



## LAWS & POLICIES

**Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975:** Law passed in 1975 that gave federal money to Native American tribes in the form of grants that the tribes could spend as they wished. It was an important step in allowing Native Americans great self-government.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** 1990 law that guaranteed protections to people with disabilities, including signage in Braille, wheelchair ramps, access lifts, handicapped parking spaces, etc.

**Don't Ask, Don't Tell:** Policy adopted by the Clinton Administration in the 1990s that allowed homosexual Americans to serve in the military so long as they didn't reveal their sexual orientation. In turn, the military would not actively try to find out their orientation. It ended the days of an open ban on service.

**Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA):** Law passed in 1996 that defined marriage as between one man and one woman. It prohibited the federal government from recognizing gay marriages and allowed states to ignore gay marriages issued in other states. It was overturned in 2015.



## COURT CASES

**Mendez v. Westminster:** 1947 court case that ended segregated schools for Hispanic students.

**Hernandez v. Texas:** 1954 Supreme Court case in which the court concluded that Fourteenth Amendment protections should be extended to all ethnic groups. Specifically in this case, Hernandez argued that he should not be tried by an all-White jury.

**Madrigal v. Quilligan:** Court case in which Spanish-speaking women had been sterilized after signing documents they could not read. The case resulted in forms being published in multiple languages.

**Obergefell v. Hodges:** 2015 Supreme Court case that declared gay marriage constitutional in all 50 states.



## Q U E S T I O N   S I X T E E N

W e r e   t h e

**CIVIL RIGHTS**

**M O V E M E N T S**

o f   t h e   p o s t - w a r   d e c a d e s

**S U C C E S S F U L ?**

The ultimate triumph of the human spirit over powerful forces of oppression after a long struggle is truly inspiring. We cannot help but celebrate the passage of the Civil Rights Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act. Sometimes the actions of those who advocated for civil rights are harder to celebrate. Was the standoff at Wounded Knee a noble statement of purpose or the act of gun-wielding agitators? What should we make of the Black Panthers or the rioters in Los Angeles in 1992?

Sometimes the events of history are simply so close it is hard to see them from the long view that history usually provides. Certainly, the Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision falls into this category. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* is now universally celebrated, it was not in its own time. The marriage equality decision of 2015 will probably fall into this same category.

We can look back at the African American Civil Rights Movement and the movements that it inspired and celebrate their successes, but we must also be mindful of their failings. Despite their inspiring victories, the nonviolent champions of justice in the 1960s did not end racism. As the rhetoric of President Trump continues to show, Hispanics do not enjoy universal respect. Disabled Americans are still fighting for application of the ADA in court, and the victories gay and lesbians have won in courts and legislatures are still so recent that they hardly feel permanent.

What then do we as historians make of these movements? Can we call them successes because of how far they moved the nation toward an ultimate goal of racial justice and harmony? Alternatively, do we label them failures since they did not achieve what their leaders set out to accomplish? Perhaps a more honest tally can be found somewhere in between?

What do you think? Were the civil rights movements of the post-war decades successful?



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