



The Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1970

The Beginning of the Movement

The events in the early 20th century set the stage for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. More than 1,000,000 African Americans served during World War II, usually in segregated units. The experiences of discrimination in the service and combat led many of the African American veterans to want greater equality and opportunity when the war ended.

Between 1940 and 1970 in another African American migration from the South, more than four million African American Southerners moved north hoping for better opportunity. They joined more than one million African Americans who had migrated north from 1910 to 1930. Northern cities developed huge ghettos where African Americans found they were still segregated and subjected to second-class citizenship, although there was greater personal freedom, fewer humiliations, and more opportunities for better jobs and lives than in the South.

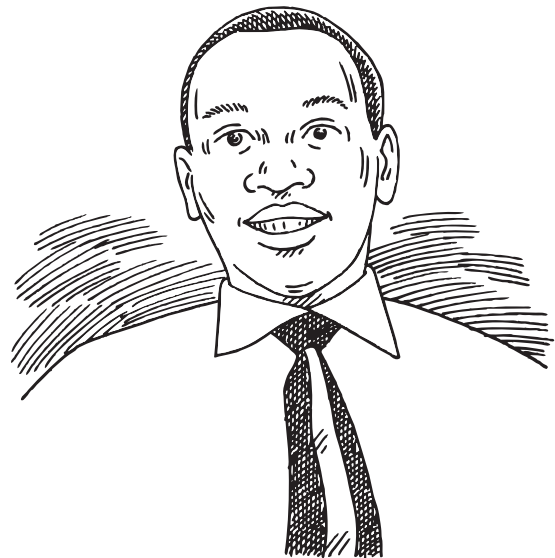
Brown v. Board of Education

The first victory in the civil rights movement came with the unanimous ruling by the Supreme Court against segregation in public schools in 1954. Several challenges to segregated schools were combined in this case, and the court's ruling that separate is not equal undermined the legal basis of segregation in public education. Unfortunately, it did not set a deadline for correcting the injustice.

This ruling created a huge white backlash against African Americans in much of the South. A hate group called the White Citizens' Council (WCC) had chapters in many Southern cities with the intent of punishing African Americans economically if they tried to advocate desegregation in any manner.

Emmett Till's Murder

In August 1955, Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African American boy visiting relatives in Mississippi, was viciously murdered for allegedly whistling at a white woman in a store. The boy's open-casket funeral drew 50,000 mourners and became a symbol of the mistreatment of African Americans. His killers were set free by an all-white jury.





The Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1970 *(cont.)*

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

In December of 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery public bus to a white man. Her refusal sparked a boycott led by the Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For a year, African Americans refused to ride the buses in the city. Instead, they walked to work, rode with friends and employers in some cases, and became the true spark for the civil rights movement. The protesters practiced Dr. King's policy of meeting violence with non-violence. In December of 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on city buses was unconstitutional. The Montgomery bus system almost went bankrupt because of the loss of riders. The leaders of the movement founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to carry on the work of national desegregation.

Sit-ins

In September 1957, nine brave African American teenagers faced mobs, armed police, and National Guard troops in order to attend all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. In February 1960, four African American college students held a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Their actions led to sit-ins at lunch counters and other public places, such as libraries, museums, and parks in other states. Gradually, these activities succeeded in ending segregation at these establishments.

Freedom Riders and Other Protests

Freedom riders, both African American and white, rode through the South on buses to enforce a legal decision that segregation on interstate transportation was illegal. The riders were attacked by white mobs in Alabama, jailed, and beaten. In September 1961, the U.S. Attorney General outlawed segregation on interstate buses.

Dr. King was arrested in Birmingham, along with hundreds of demonstrators protesting segregation in Birmingham department stores. As many as 1,000 demonstrations were held throughout the South in 1963, and over 20,000 civil rights workers were jailed.





Reading
Passages

The Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1970 *(cont.)*

The March on Washington

To help Americans appreciate the importance of civil rights for all, a march on Washington was held on August 28, 1963. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, which resonated with many Americans the need for equal rights for African Americans. Violence continued against African Americans in September of 1963, when four young girls were killed in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama.



Civil Rights Act of 1964

In July 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which insured fair employment and the right to use public facilities and protected the voting rights of African Americans. However, many Southern states refused to obey the law, and Dr. King and other leaders protested the actions of these unwilling states. Freedom Summer, a voter registration campaign, led to violence by gangs of whites and police

against demonstrators. The walk from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, led by Dr. King, began as a memorial march for one of the victims of the violence.

Selma Violence

People throughout the nation watched on television in horror and outrage when 600 peaceful protesters were attacked on a bridge in Selma by troopers and mounted police using nightsticks, tear gas, whips, and other weapons. National outrage over these brutal tactics, as well as the use of dogs and fire hoses against protesters, led to the passage of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, which provided tough federal protection of voting rights for African Americans.

A Broader Movement

Dr. King and other civil rights leaders broadened their aims and targeted discrimination in the North as well as the South. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 led to riots in many cities in the summer of 1968. The movement for equal rights for African Americans continued and split into several factions. Today, people of all races and ethnic minorities benefit from the pioneer work of the civil rights movement, and African Americans have successfully entered mainstream politics at every level, from the grassroots of local political jobs to the United States presidency.

The Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1970 Quiz

Directions: Read pages 29–31 about the civil rights movement from 1945 to 1970. Answer these questions based on the information in the selection. Circle the correct answer to each question below. Underline the sentence in the selection where the answer is found.

- Which president signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964?
 - John F. Kennedy
 - Lyndon B. Johnson
 - Richard Nixon
 - Bill Clinton
- Why did Emmett Till get murdered?
 - He allegedly robbed a store.
 - He allegedly whistled at a white woman.
 - He allegedly was a freedom rider.
 - He allegedly attacked a police officer.
- Where were sit-ins held?
 - lunch counters
 - libraries
 - museums
 - all of the above
- In what state were freedom riders attacked, jailed, and beaten?
 - New York
 - Alabama
 - North Carolina
 - Arkansas
- Where were four young girls killed in a church bombing?
 - Selma
 - Montgomery
 - Birmingham
 - Atlanta
- How many Southern African Americans moved North between 1940 and 1970?
 - one million
 - 50,000
 - 600
 - more than four million
- Why did people throughout most of America get angry at the police behavior in Selma?
 - They read about it.
 - They heard about it from friends.
 - They saw it on television.
 - They heard about it from their employers.
- About how many civil rights workers were jailed in the demonstrations held in the South in 1963?
 - 1,000
 - 2,000
 - 20,000
 - 600
- Where was Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech delivered?
 - Birmingham
 - Montgomery
 - Selma
 - Washington, D.C.
- How did African Americans protest discrimination?
 - sit-ins
 - freedom rides
 - marches
 - all of the above

Answer Key

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. b |
| 2. c | 7. b |
| 3. b | 8. d |
| 4. d | 9. b |
| 5. a | 10. d |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. c |
| 2. c | 7. a |
| 3. b | 8. b |
| 4. a | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. c |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. d |
| 2. a | 7. b |
| 3. b | 8. d |
| 4. b | 9. a |
| 5. a | 10. c |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. d |
| 3. a | 8. d |
| 4. c | 9. d |
| 5. c | 10. a |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. d |
| 2. d | 7. d |
| 3. d | 8. b |
| 4. c | 9. a |
| 5. b | 10. d |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. d |
| 2. b | 7. c |
| 3. d | 8. c |
| 4. b | 9. d |
| 5. c | 10. d |

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- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. c |
| 2. a | 7. c |
| 3. c | 8. a |
| 4. d | 9. c |
| 5. c | 10. d |

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Discussion Starters

1. His brother is in the sixth grade, and he may get picked on or bothered by Byron and other sixth-grade boys who don't like him "showing them up."
2. The boys are very poor, have few clothes to wear, and do not have much to eat. They come from Arkansas, and their "country" speech patterns are different.
3. Kenny's mom sends extra food to share with the boys, and she helps them become friends again after Kenny hurts Rufus's feelings.
4. Answers will vary.
5. He defends Kenny against other bullies, recovers his stolen gloves, and comforts him after the bombing when they return home.
6. He's worried that his sister has been killed and later retreats into himself in reaction to what he sees in the bombed church.
7. She seems less strict and less "proper" to Mrs. Watson.
8. They took food because they couldn't stop easily at restaurants or find places that served African Americans. They also prepared for sleeping in the car and stopping for restroom needs in parks where they were allowed.

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Discussion Starters

1. Answers will vary.
2. They know that he is probably an orphan and surely homeless and want to make sure he has some food.
3. Bud and the other Hooverville residents are usually chased away or hassled by police because the nearby towns had so little money to support or feed the poor.
4. Three examples of kindness: the family who pretends Bud is their child in the breakfast line, the families who share with him at the Hooverville, and Lefty Lewis who helps him find his grandfather.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Most students will be opposed to the destruction of the Hooverville because the poor had no place to go, and they did not appear to cause any trouble. However, they were seen as an embarrassment to the town by some townspeople.
7. Answers will vary.
8. He probably doesn't want to be reminded of the long-ago conflict with Bud's mother or her death.
9. Answers will vary.
10. He quickly learns to play the recorder and the sax.
11. Herman is Bud's grandfather.
12. They argue, and Bud's mother leaves home.