

Florida Studies Weekly

State History



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An Introduction to Civil Rights

Civil rights are the rights of people to be treated fairly no matter who they are. The civil rights movement took place in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. The movement was full of people who wanted to change unfair laws. A lot of states had laws that segregated people. To segregate means to separate because of race. Laws said that businesses could choose which people they wanted to serve. Other laws told African Americans where they could and could not go, what jobs they could work and even where they could sit on the bus.

By the 1950s, a lot of people were ready for things to change. Leaders like Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and C.K. Steele looked for ways to show how unfair these laws were. They began forming groups

to start using civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is when people peacefully refuse to follow laws they believe are unfair. They did this by organizing boycotts and sit-ins.

A boycott is when a group of people decides not to use a company or service until something changes. Two major boycotts were in Montgomery, Alabama, and Tallahassee, Florida. Bus companies in those cities had rules that seats at the front of their buses were only for white passengers, even though ticket prices were the same. African Americans stopped using city buses until those rules changed. They hoped the companies would lose so much money that they would decide to change their rules. The Montgomery boycott lasted over a year, and the Tallahassee boycott lasted about seven months. They were both successful. Rules in both cities changed, and people were allowed to sit anywhere they liked.

Sit-ins are another form of civil disobedience. A lot of restaurants had seats and bars where people could order food for lunch or dinner. Many of these places would not serve food to African American people. African Americans went to these diners anyway and sat down. They planned to stay until the people working there agreed to

serve them food. That also meant nobody else could sit down. Most of the people who took part in sit-ins were college students. They knew that the only way it would work is if they were quiet and patient. Other customers often became very angry. They would throw food, drinks and trash at sitting students. The students knew they could be attacked or even arrested. It was very hard, but many sit-ins were successful. It took a long time, but many restaurant owners began to change their minds about who to serve.

Boycotts and sit-ins were just two ways that the civil rights movement tried to convince people that rules in our country were not fair. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and C.K. Steele also gave speeches and held big meetings to show our leaders that those laws needed to change.

C.K. Steele

courtesy
Floridamemory.com

ROSA PARKS

Photographed by
Fred Blackwell

DR. Martin
Luther King Jr.

Connections

The Little Rock Nine

In 1954, the Supreme Court made its decision in a case called *Brown v. Board of Education*. The case was about whether states should be allowed to segregate schools, or not. The Supreme Court said segregation was against the Constitution. One of the first places where people tried to end segregation was Little Rock Central High School

in Arkansas.

Nine African American students were chosen to go to the school in 1957. A lot of people in Little Rock did not like the idea and tried to stop them from getting to their classes. The governor even sent the Arkansas National Guard to keep

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Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: SS.4.A.1.1: Analyze primary and secondary resources to identify significant individuals and events throughout Florida history. SS.4.A.1.2: Synthesize information related to Florida history through print and electronic media. SS.4.A.6.3: Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida. SS.4.A.8.1: Identify Florida's role in the Civil Rights Movement. SS.4.A.9.1: Utilize timelines to sequence key events in Florida history. SS.4.C.1.1: Describe how Florida's constitution protects the rights of citizens and provides for the structure, function, and purposes of state government. SS.4.C.2.2: Identify ways citizens work together to influence government and help solve community and state problems. SS.4.C.2.3: Explain the importance of public service, voting, and volunteerism. SS.4.FL.1.4: People can earn interest income from letting other people borrow their money. Explain why banks and financial institutions pay people interest when they deposit their money at those institutions. SS.4.FL.4.1: Discuss that interest is the price the borrower pays for using someone else's money. SS.4.G.1.2: Locate and label cultural features on a Florida map. SS.4.G.1.4: Interpret political and physical maps using map elements (title, compass rose, cardinal directions, intermediate directions, symbols, legend, scale, longitude, latitude).



The Civil Rights Movement in Florida

The civil rights movement took place during the 1950s and 1960s in many different places in our country. Let's take a look at some of the people who brought the movement to Florida and some of the things that happened in our state.

Virgil Darnell Hawkins

Virgil Darnell Hawkins was one of the first people in Florida to fight for equal treatment. In 1949, he wanted to go to the University of

Florida to become a lawyer. Even though his grades were good enough, the university would not let him become a student because he was African American. Hawkins did not think this was fair, so he decided to go to court.

For the next

nine years, he tried to get courts to make the university take him as a student. The case was even heard by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court agreed with Hawkins, but people still found ways to stop him from going to college. Hawkins kept trying, and he finally became a lawyer in 1976. He began to work by helping people who were too poor to afford a lawyer. Hawkins died in 1988. He is remembered for being one of the first leaders in Florida's civil rights movement.

The Tallahassee Bus Boycott

On May 26, 1956, two African American college students named Wilhelmina Jakes and Carrie Patterson got onto a bus in Tallahassee. They sat down on seats that were normally only for white passengers. The bus driver told them to move, but they refused. The driver called the police, and the two women were arrested. The next day, students from their college agreed that they would stop using buses in Tallahassee.

For the next seven months, African Americans all over Tallahassee worked together to carpool to get wherever they needed to be. It was a hard time, as they faced insults and attacks. Police arrested carpool drivers for illegally transporting people. Some of these drivers were forced to pay fines. Things got better after the Supreme Court said that laws that segregated buses were unconstitutional.

The boycott made it hard for bus companies to make money. They realized that they had to change their rules to stay in business. By the summer of 1957, African Americans were free to sit anywhere they wanted on Tallahassee's buses. The boycott was also important because it proved that peaceful protests could work.

C.K. Steele and the ICC

People in Tallahassee realized they needed to organize the boycott. A group of leaders formed the Inter-Civic Council, or ICC. The ICC had members who were workers, pastors, businesspeople and



Holmes, Jefferson and Washington Counties

Florida Counties

Holmes County: Yee-haw! For bull-ridin', bronco-bustin' action, head to the Northwest Florida Championship Rodeo, an annual event that's been held in Holmes County for decades! If you'd rather be in H₂O, hit Vortex Spring, one of the largest diving spots in Florida. Beware of the cavern. It's for expert divers only! Love music? Check out the Gospel Sing, an all-night, sing-along concert in Bonifay, the county seat. Or go to the Bonifay Down Home Street Festival for some cornbread and black-eyed peas. Yum!

Jefferson County: Grab your guitar or recorder and head to Southern Music Rising, a musical gathering of Southern singers and songwriters. Or visit the Monticello Opera House in the county seat of Monticello. If you enjoy the outdoors, you'll love going to a camp or activity day at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center. Or visit the Wacissa Springs County Park for natural, primitive Florida beauty. Don't forget your canoe! By the way, look at the map. What do you notice about the geography of Jefferson County, the "Keystone County"?

Washington County: How do you think this county got its name? You don't even need a hint, do you? The folks in this

county liked George Washington so much that they also named a town Vernon after his home, Mount Vernon. Vernon is right in the middle of the county, which is right in the middle of the panhandle. The county seat is Chipley. If you visit Washington County, don't miss Falling Waters State Park and Florida's tallest waterfall. This county may be named after our first president, but this is pure Florida.



TIMELINE

The Supreme Court hears the Brown v. Board of Ed. case, 1952



Martin Luther King Jr. gives his "I Have a Dream" speech, 1963



U.S. troops begin fighting in Vietnam, 1965



The Voting Rights Act becomes law, 1965



Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated, 1968



Voting Rights

The civil rights movement won many freedoms for African Americans in Florida and the rest of the United States. Laws were passed that said businesses were not allowed to tell people they could not come inside just because of their race. Even though the civil rights movement was a success, African Americans still faced a lot of challenges from people who did not want them to be treated fairly.

One of these challenges was voting in elections. Voting is one of the most important things we can do in our country. Some leaders decided to make it hard for African Americans to sign up to vote. They did this by making a rule that everyone had to pass a test in order to vote. The test was usually very confusing and difficult to pass. Even if they did pass the test, voting officials might tell African American voters the wrong day, time or place to go. In some places, it became so hard to vote that in 1965, President Johnson asked Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act. The new law made the tests illegal and allowed the government to send officials to make sure everyone was treated fairly.

Civil Rights Today

Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and C.K. Steele helped make sure that everyone in our state was treated fairly. Even though the civil rights movement is over, there is still work to do. Have you seen ways that people are still treated differently? What do you think we should do?

Voting Rights Act Of 1965

Have you ever been treated unfairly?

This Week's Question

Even after slavery ended, many people in the United States were still not treated fairly. People had to sit in different seats, use different bathrooms and buy from different stores just because of race. It took a long time and a lot of work before many of these rules were changed.

Have you ever been treated unfairly? How did that make you feel? Was there anything you could have done to show them how you felt? Have you ever seen someone else being treated unfairly? Write down some thoughts about how these events made you feel. Share your thoughts with a classmate and come up with a plan to help people who are being treated differently.



Earning Interest

Financial Literacy

If you keep your money in a savings account, the bank will pay you interest. Interest is earned when the bank pays you a small fee for allowing them to use your money while they have it. Banks use their customers' money to give loans to other people. This helps other customers buy things they want or need. Banks make money by charging interest on the loans they give. When that interest comes in, they share it, and your savings account grows.

Interest is the price that banks pay for using someone else's money. It can also be a price we pay for using the bank's money. It is usually a very small amount, but over time that can really add up. Every little bit helps!



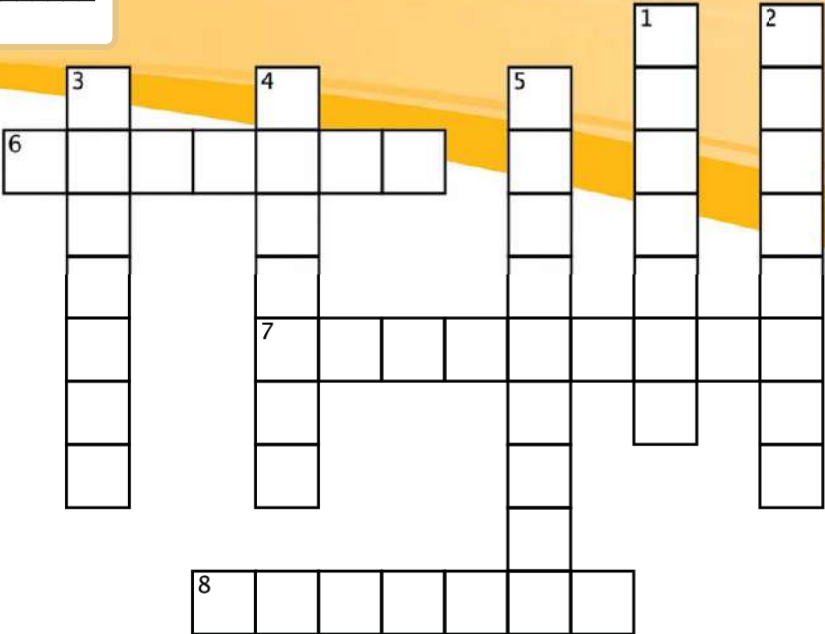
Name _____

ACROSS

- 6. to refuse to use a business or service
- 7. to separate people based on race
- 8. one of the first people to fight for civil rights in Florida

DOWN

- 1. The Little Rock Nine wanted to attend Little Rock _____ High School.
- 2. the price banks pay for using someone’s money
- 3. C.K. Steele was the leader of the Inter-Civic _____
- 4. President _____ worked on passing the Voting Rights Act.
- 5. Florida county where you can visit the Monticello Opera house



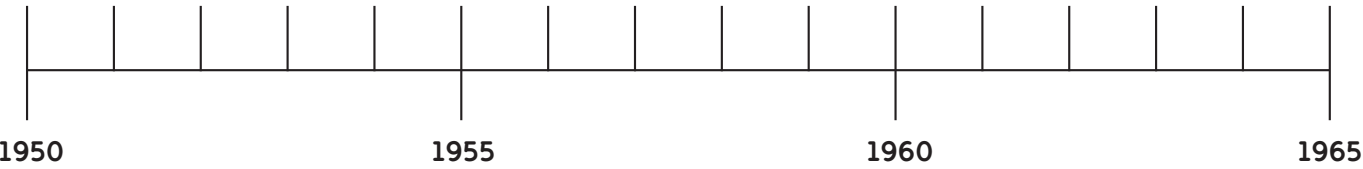
The Civil Rights Movement: Keeping Track of Time



The civil rights movement was a busy time for people in Florida and the rest of the United States. Think about the different events that are listed in the box below and when they happened. Place each of

these events on the timeline below in the order that they happened. Then, choose one of those events and answer the questions below.

Tallahassee boycott begins	Voting Rights Act becomes law
Little Rock Nine go to Central High	Brown v. Board of Education
Tallahassee boycott ends	C.K. Steele moves to Tallahassee



- 1. Which event did you choose? _____
- 2. Describe the event in your own words. _____
- 3. Why was your event so important? _____

The Little Rock Nine

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
them from going inside the school. The group of students became known as the Little Rock Nine.
It wasn’t until President Eisenhower got involved that the students were able to go to class. Even then, the students were bullied and threatened every day. It was hard, but all nine students knew how important it was for them to keep going and to do their best work. At the end of the year, Ernest Green became the first African American to graduate from Little Rock Central High School.
It still took people a long time to change their minds about segregation, but the Little Rock Nine are remembered for being brave people. They were willing to work hard for what they thought was right.

Let's Write

Imagine you were on the bus with Wilhelmina Jakes and Carrie Patterson in 1956. How do you think you would have reacted when the bus driver told them to move and called the police? If a reporter asked you about what happened, what would you say? Remember to think about grammar, spelling and punctuation as you write your response.

Think&Review

- 1. What does the term civil disobedience mean? Give an example.
- 2. How did the Tallahassee bus boycott begin? How did it end?
- 3. What were some of the challenges African Americans faced when trying to vote?
- 4. What happens during a sit-in?
- 5. What happened in Little Rock Central High School in 1957? Why was it so important?