

# Civil Rights Movement



# The Civil Rights Movement prior to 1954

## ➤ Pre-1900

- Opposition to slavery in colonial days
- Abolition movement and Civil War
- Legalized racism after Reconstruction
- 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* allowed the segregation of African Americans and whites.

# The Civil Rights Movement prior to 1954

## ➤ To 1930

- Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois
- Founding of the NAACP in 1909
- African Americans suffered worse than others during the Great Depression.

# The Civil Rights Movement prior to 1954

## ➤ To 1940

- A. Philip Randolph forced a federal ban against discrimination in defense work.
- 1940s founding of CORE
- President Truman desegregated the armed forces.
- Brooklyn Dodgers put an African American—Jackie Robinson—on its roster.

# Seeking Change in the Courts

- The NAACP attacked racism through the courts.
  - In the 1930s Charles Hamilton Houston and **Thurgood Marshall** began a campaign to attack the concept of “separate but equal.”
  - The NAACP began to chip away at the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in ***Plessy v. Ferguson*** —the legal basis for segregation

# Key Issues in the Supreme Court's ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*

- Thurgood Marshall began to focus on desegregating the nation's elementary and high schools in the 1950s.
  - He found a case in Linda Brown of Topeka, Kansas.
  - The Supreme Court combined several school segregation cases from around the country into a single case: *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.
  - The Supreme Court was aware of this case's great significance.

# *Brown v. Board of Education*

- ⑩ The Supreme Court heard arguments over a two-year period.
  - ⑩ The Court considered research about segregation's effects on African American children.
  - ⑩ In 1954 Chief Justice Earl Warren issued the Supreme Court's decision.
  - ⑩ All nine justices agreed that separate schools for African Americans and whites violated the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection of the law.

# The Little Rock Crisis

## Integration

- The Supreme Court's ruling did not offer guidance about how or when desegregation should occur.
- Some states integrated quickly. Other states faced strong opposition.
- Virginia passed laws that closed schools who planned to integrate.
- In Little Rock, Arkansas, the governor violated a federal court order to integrate Little Rock's Central High School.

## The Little Rock Nine

- On September 4, 1957, angry whites harassed nine black students as they arrived at Little Rock's Central High School.
- The Arkansas National Guard turned the **Little Rock Nine** away and prevented them from entering the school for three weeks.
- Finally, Eisenhower sent U.S. soldiers to escort the Little Rock Nine into the school.
- The events in Little Rock revealed how strong racism was in some parts of the country.



# Montgomery, Alabama

## ➤ **The Montgomery Bus Boycott**

- In 1955 a local NAACP member named **Rosa Parks** refused to give her seat to white riders.
- The resulting **Montgomery bus boycott** led to a Supreme Court ruling that segregation on buses was unconstitutional

# Montgomery, Alabama

## ➤ The Southern Christian Leadership Conference

- African Americans formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or **SCLC**, to protest activities taking place all across the South.
- **Martin Luther King Jr.** was the elected leader of this group—which was committed to mass, nonviolent action.

# The Montgomery Bus Boycott

- When Rosa Parks was arrested, the NAACP called for a one-day boycott of the city bus system.
  - African Americans continued to boycott the bus system for a year
  - Supreme Court ruled segregation on buses was unconstitutional

# Non-Violent Protests during the Civil Rights Movement

- Civil rights workers used several direct, nonviolent methods to confront discrimination and racism in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
  - Boycotts
  - Sit-ins
  - Freedom Rides
- American civil rights leaders such as **James Farmer** of CORE, Martin Luther King Jr. of SCLC, and others shared Gandhi's views.

# Results of Sit-ins and Freedom Rides

## ➤ Sit-ins

- Succeeded at getting businesses to change their policies
- Marked a shift in the civil rights movement—showed young African Americans' growing impatience with the slow pace of change
- Leaders formed the **SNCC**.

# Results of Sit-ins and Freedom Rides

## ➤ Freedom Rides

- After the savage beatings in Birmingham, bus companies refused to sell the Freedom Riders tickets and CORE disbanded the Freedom Ride.

# Results of Sit-ins and Freedom Rides

## ➤ Federal Intervention

- SNCC continued the Freedom Rides.
- Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent federal marshals to Montgomery to protect the riders.
- The Interstate Commerce Commission finally forced the integration of bus and train stations.

# Integration of Higher Education in the South

- By 1960 the NAACP began to attack segregation in colleges and universities.
- In 1961 a court order required the University of Georgia to admit two African American students.
  - Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes suffered but both graduated in 1963.
- In 1962 **James Meredith** tried to enroll at the University of Mississippi.



# The Albany Movement

## The Movement

- SNCC began a sit-in in Albany's bus station.
- Over 500 demonstrators were arrested.
- The federal government was informed but took no action.
- Local leaders asked Martin Luther King Jr. to lead more demonstrations and to gain more coverage for the protests.
- He agreed and was also arrested.

## The Results

- The police chief had studied King's tactics and made arrangements to counter-act the nonviolent protest.
- When the press arrived, King was released.
- City officials would only deal with local leaders until King left.
- Once King left, officials would not negotiate at all.
- The nine-month movement failed.

# The Birmingham Campaign

## The Campaign

- Martin Luther King raised money to fight Birmingham's segregation laws.
- Volunteers began with sit-ins and marches and were quickly arrested.
- King hoped this would motivate more people to join the protests.
- King wrote his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."
- Fewer African Americans were willing to join and risk their jobs.

## The Results

- A SCLC leader convinced King to use children for his protests.
- More than 900 children between ages six and eighteen were arrested.
- Police Chief Eugene "Bull" Connor used police and fire fighters to break up a group of about 2,500 student protesters.
- The violence of Connor's methods was all over the television news.
- Federal negotiators got the city officials to agree to many of King's demands.

# Civil Rights Act of 1964

## ➤ **President Kennedy**

- The events in Alabama convinced President Kennedy to act on civil rights issues.
- Kennedy announced that he would ask for legislation to finally end segregation in public accommodations.

## ➤ **March on Washington**

- On August 28, 1963, the largest civil rights demonstration ever held in the United States took place in Washington.
- More than 200,000 people marched and listened to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

# Passing the Civil Rights Act

- Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law on July 2, 1964.
- The law banned discrimination in employment and in public accommodations

# Gaining Voting Rights

## Registering Voters

- SNCC, CORE, and other groups founded the **Voter Education Project (VEP)** to register southern African Americans to vote.
- Opposition to African American suffrage was great.
- Mississippi was particularly hard—VEP workers lived in daily fear for their safety.
- VEP was a success—by 1964 they had registered more than a half million more African American voters.

# Gaining Voting Rights

## **Twenty-fourth Amendment**

- Congress passed the Twenty-fourth Amendment in August 1962.
- The amendment banned states from taxing citizens to vote—for example, poll taxes.
- It applied only to elections for president or Congress.

# Gaining Voting Rights

## Freedom Summer

- Hundreds of college students volunteered to spend the summer registering African Americans to vote.
- The project was called **Freedom Summer**.
- Most of the trainers were from poor, southern African American families.
- Most of the volunteers were white, northern, and upper middle class.
- Volunteers registered voters or taught at summer schools.

# Gaining Voting Rights

## Crisis in Mississippi

- Andrew Goodman, a Freedom Summer volunteer, went missing on June 21, 1964.
- Goodman and two CORE workers had gone to inspect a church that had recently been bombed.
- President Johnson ordered a massive hunt for the three men. Their bodies were discovered near Philadelphia, Mississippi.
- 21 suspects were tried in federal court for violating civil rights laws.



# The Voting Rights Act

## ➤ Selma Campaign

- King organized marches in Selma, Alabama, to gain voting rights for African Americans.
- King and many other marchers were jailed.
- Police attacked a march in Marion.
- King announced a four-day march from Selma to Montgomery.

# The Voting Rights Act

## ➤ Selma March

- 600 African Americans began the 54-mile march.
- City and state police blocked their way out of Selma.
- TV cameras captured the police using clubs, chains, and electric cattle prods on the marchers.

# The Voting Rights Act

## ➤ Voting Rights Act

- President Johnson asked for and received a tough voting rights law.
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed in Congress with large majorities.
- Proved to be one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation ever passed.

# The Civil Rights Movement Expands to the North

- The civil rights movement had done much to bring an end to **de jure segregation**—or segregation by law.
- In most of America there was still **de facto segregation**—segregation that exists through custom and practice rather than by law.

# Fractures in the Movement

## ➤ **Black Power**

- **Stokely Carmichael** became the head of SNCC.
- SNCC abandoned the philosophy of nonviolence.
- Black Power became the new rallying cry.
- Wanted African Americans to depend on themselves to solve problems.

# Fractures in the Movement

## ➤ Black Panthers

- The Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, California, in 1966.
- Called for violent revolution as a means of African American liberation.
- Members carried guns and monitored African American neighborhoods to guard against police brutality.

# Fractures in the Movement

## ➤ Black Muslims

- Nation of Islam was a large and influential group who believed in Black Power.
- Message of black nationalism, self-discipline, and self-reliance.
- **Malcolm X** offered message of hope, defiance, and black pride.

# The Death of Martin Luther King Jr.

- ⑩ King became aware that economic issues must be part of the civil rights movement.
  - King went to Memphis, Tennessee to help striking sanitation workers. He led a march to city hall.
  - James Earl Ray shot and killed King as he stood on the balcony of his motel.
  - Within hours, rioting erupted in more than 120 cities. Within three weeks, 46 people were dead, some 2,600 were injured, and more than 21,000 were arrested.



# The Civil Rights Movement after Martin Luther King Jr.

- ⑩ King realized that most African Americans were prevented from achieving equality because they were poor.
- Ralph Abernathy, the new leader of the SCLC, led thousands of protesters to the nation's capital as part of the **Poor People's Campaign**.
- The campaign turned out to be a disaster. Bad weather and terrible media relations marred the campaign.
- The campaign also failed to express clearly the protesters' needs and demands.

# The Decline of Black Power

## The Black Panthers

- Hoover was particularly concerned about the Black Panthers.
- Police raided Black Panther headquarters in many cities.
- Armed conflict resulted, even when Black Panther members were unarmed.
- By the early 1970s, armed violence had led to the killing or arrest of many Black Panther members.

## SNCC

- SNCC collapsed with the help of the FBI.
- H. Rap Brown, the leader who replaced Stokely Carmichael as the head of SNCC, was encouraged to take radical and shocking positions.
- Brown was encouraged to take these positions by his staff—many of whom worked for the FBI.
- Membership declined rapidly.

# Civil Rights Changes in the 1970s

- Civil Rights Act of 1968—banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing (also called the Fair Housing Act)
- Busing and political change—to speed the integration of city schools, courts began ordering that some students be bused from their neighborhood schools to schools in other areas
- **Affirmative action**—programs that gave preference to minorities and women in hiring and admissions to make up for past discrimination against these groups

# The New Black Power

- Black Power took on a new form and meaning in the 1970s.
- African Americans became the majority in many counties in the South.
- African Americans were elected to public office.
- African Americans who played roles in the civil rights movement provided other services to the nation
  - Thurgood Marshal became Supreme Court's first African American justice.
  - **John Lewis** represented the people of Alabama in Congress.
  - **Andrew Young** became Georgia's first African American member of Congress since Reconstruction, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, and mayor of Atlanta.
  - **Jesse Jackson** founded a civil rights organization called Operation PUSH and campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1980s.