

# The American Civil Rights Movement: 1945-1968

Sarah Mirams, Jonathon Dallimore





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# The American Civil Rights Movement: 1945-1968

Sarah Mirams, Jonathon Dallimore



The American Civil Rights Movement 1945-1968

1st Edition

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Cover design: Kevin Finn, TheSumOf

Cover image: Shutterstock.com/XiXinXing

Typeset by: Q2A Media

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#### National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia.

#### Cengage Learning Australia

Level 7, 80 Dorcas Street  
South Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3205

#### Cengage Learning New Zealand

Unit 4B Rosedale Office Park  
331 Rosedale Road, Albany, North Shore 0632, NZ

For learning solutions, visit [cengage.com.au](http://cengage.com.au)

Printed in China by China Translation & Printing Services.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 22 21 20 19 18



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# ABOUT THE BOOK

# The American Civil Rights Movement

*The American Civil Rights Movement 1945–1968* has been developed especially for senior secondary students of Modern History in New South Wales. The book is based on the understanding that History is an interpretative study of the past by which you also come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.

Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends on the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and the historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past.



## THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1945–1968

Civil rights are the personal rights held by citizens of a country under the law. In the United States of America, these include the right to vote, the equality under the law and a fair trial, and to freedom of religion and of the press and the right to peaceful assembly. A citizen, regardless of their race, is also entitled to enjoy equal access to education, places of recreation, transportation and housing. These rights were guaranteed under the United States Constitution in the aftermath of the American Civil War in 1868. By 1950, these rights and freedoms had been taken away from African Americans across most of the South, where most of them lived. African Americans also faced discrimination in the North. This book explains the fight for civil rights for and by African Americans in the United States. It examines the means by which African people could inequality and injustice through acts of individual and collective courage. The role Martin Luther King Jr and other civil rights movement played in this movement is also examined. This book is used in classes during the 12th year when the civil rights movement adopted the tactics of non-violent direct action and confronted white racism in the streets of the United States. This social movement was to change the course of US history and have a global impact on ideas about race and human rights.

## BOOK INTRODUCTION

provides a context to the issues that are addressed.

## KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

### STOKELY CARMICHAEL (1918–91)



Stokely Carmichael was a Freedom Riders, organizer of voter registration drives in Mississippi and leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which popularised the term 'Black Power'.

### ROSA PARKS (1915–2005)



Rosa Parks was a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) member who refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Rosa Parks' arrest for breaking social segregation laws inspired the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

### THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE



The Black Panther Party was formed in California in 1966. It was a black socialist revolutionary party that called for the creation of a separate black colony for African Americans.

### THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE)



The interracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was established in 1942. Its members were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and sought to challenge segregation using the techniques of non-violent resistance. CORE adopted Black Power as its organisational principle in 1968.

### THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN (KKK)



This white extremist terrorist organisation was founded in Pulaski, Texas, in 1865. The Klan was revived in 1915 in both the North and South of the United States. Its membership grew again during the 1950s in response to the growth of the civil rights movement. The KKK committed arson, murder and acts of terror against civil rights supporters.

## KEY TERMS

### African American

The term used to describe the Americans who are descended from slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. The term 'African American' or 'Afro American' is a reference to a shared cultural and geographical history, rather than to a racial background. It was adopted in the late 1980s. The term 'birger' was used in the 1970s century. 'birger' was used in the early 20th century 'birger' with a capital letter was the preferred term usage among African Americans from the early 20th century. From the 1970s, 'black' became a popular term among the African American community. 'Black American' is sometimes used interchangeably with African American.

### Black Power

A slogan used to convey clear about black pride, black political

### Civil rights

The personal rights of a citizen, upheld by law. Civil rights include economic, political and social rights that promote equality, such as the right to vote.

### Disenfranchisement

The deprivation of laws that supports the vote in schools, work, public accommodations and neighbourhoods.

### Jim Crow laws

State-based laws segregating white American and African American citizens. The laws extended to transport, housing, work, sexual relations, accommodations and education.

### The Reconstruction Era

The period following the American Civil War (1861–1865) when the defeated rebel southern states were controlled by the federal government and policies were introduced to reconstruct the former slave states. The Reconstruction Era began in 1863 and ended in 1877.

### The South

The southern states of 11 states: Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Historically the term 'South' was used to describe the 12 slave-holding states that seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. The South is seen as having a distinct culture.

## KEY DOCUMENTS

### Amendments to the United States Constitution

The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution, 8 December 1865: an amendment to the Constitution that outlawed slavery in all states and territories. 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction'. The 14th amendment to the United States Constitution, 9 July 1868: this granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalised in the United States, and forbade states from denying citizens equality under the law. The 15th amendment to the

### Boynton v. Virginia (1960)

A legal ruling ending segregation in interstate travel. **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)** A crucial Supreme Court decision overruling separate but equal public schools. **Civil Rights Act 1964** Legislation that prohibited discrimination in accommodations, as long as it was not a federal government agency or to uphold funding from any programme permitting discrimination. **Civil Rights Act 1968** Legislation that prohibited discrimination in the sale, financing or rental of housing and provided criminal penalties for interfering with an individual's civil rights, and for intimidating or participating in a riot.

### Philly v. Ferguson (1896)

The Supreme Court ruling that permitted local segregation. **Southern Manifesto** A statement in opposition to the Brown decision arguing for almost all southern congressmen. 'I Have a Dream' speech Martin Luther King Jr's speech at the March on Washington, 28 August 1963. **Voting Rights Act 1965** This federal law banned literacy tests and intimidation on the polls and was federal officials to guarantee where voting registers did below 50 per cent of those eligible to vote.

## KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, AND KEY DOCUMENTS

feature biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.

## SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

are listed at the start of the chapter. These provide a focus for you as you read each chapter.

01

### The origins of the civil rights movement (1865–1945)

In this chapter, students will examine the background and origins of the civil rights movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the American Civil War, segregation and discrimination
- reactions against early attempts to improve civil rights
- the role of the Second World War in the development of the rights of black Americans.

Civil rights activist WEB Dubois in the 1920s at the NAACP, Washington, DC.



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# AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Researching and writing this textbook gave me the opportunity to explore the latest academic research into the history of the American civil rights movement, and in particular the role of Martin Luther King Jr. I owe an enormous debt to the scholars whose articles and books provided new interpretations of this pivotal period in world history. My thanks also to Michael Spurr, Senior Publishing Editor at Cengage at the time of writing for his support. Thank you yet again Peter, Isabel, Miranda and Millie.

**Sarah Mirams**  
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Many thanks to Michael Spurr and Sarah Mirams for the opportunity to contribute to this book. Also to Mandy Herbet and the team at Cengage who are always easy to work with, understanding and supportive. Finally, thanks to the students I've had the privilege of working with at schools and universities over the years. You have taught me so much about teaching, learning and the issues covered in this book.

**Jonathon Dallimore**  
.....



Getty Images/Robert W. Kelley

## THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1945–1968

Civil rights are the personal rights held by citizens of a country under the law. In the United States of America, these include the right to vote, to equality under the law and to a fair trial; and to freedom of religion and of the press and the right to peaceful assembly. A citizen, regardless of their race, is also entitled to enjoy equal access to education, places of recreation, transportation and housing. These rights were guaranteed under the United States Constitution in the aftermath of the American Civil War in 1866. By 1900, these rights and freedoms had been taken away from African Americans across much of the South, where most of them lived. African Americans also faced discrimination in the North. This book explores the fight for civil rights for and by African Americans in the United States. It considers the means by which citizens fought racial inequality and injustice through acts of individual and collective courage. The role Martin Luther King Jr and other civil rights activists played in the movement is also examined. This battle reached its climax during the 1960s when the civil rights movement adopted the tactics of non-violent direct action and confronted white racism in the streets of the United States. This social movement was to change the course of US history and have a global impact on ideas about race and human rights.

# KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

**STOKELY CARMICHAEL (1941–98)**



Stokely Carmichael was a Freedom Rider, organiser of voter registration projects in Mississippi and leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which popularised the term 'Black Power'.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR (1929–68)**



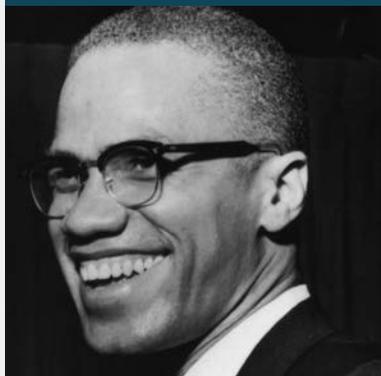
The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr became leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) during the Montgomery Bus Boycott and he went on to co-found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). King became the most prominent civil rights leader committed to non-violent protest.

**ROSA PARKS (1913–2005)**



Rosa Parks was a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) member who refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a municipal bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Rosa Parks' arrest for breaching racial segregation laws sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

**MALCOLM X (1925–65)**



Born Malcolm Little, Malcolm adopted X as a surname when he joined the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X's ideas about black pride, Pan-Africanism and black self-defence influenced the Black Power movements of the late 1960s.

**THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENSE**

The Black Panther Party was formed in California in 1966. It was a black socialist revolutionary party that called for the creation of a separate black colony for African Americans.

**THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE)**

The interracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was established in 1942. Its members were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and sought to challenge segregation using his techniques of non-violent resistance. CORE adopted Black Power as its organisational principle in 1966.

**THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN (KKK)**



This white extremist terrorist organisation was founded in Pulaski, Texas, in 1866. The Klan was in decline by 1877, but was revived during the 1920s in both the North and South of the United States. Its membership grew again during the 1950s in response to the growth of the civil rights movement. The KKK committed arson, murder and acts of terror against civil rights supporters.

Clockwise from top left: Getty Images/Bettmann ; Getty Images/Consolidated News Pictures ; Alamy Stock Photo/Photo12 ; Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd. ; Getty Images/Dave G. Houser

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)**

The NAACP was established in 1909 by white liberals and African American activists and was the first significant civil rights organisation of the 20th century. The NAACP used the legal system to try to secure federal anti-lynching legislation and challenge state laws enforcing racial segregation.

**THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO LEADERSHIP (RCNL)**



TRM Howard, a wealthy black surgeon and businessman, established the RCNL in 1951. Its aim was to promote black self-help, civil rights and voting rights.

**THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (SCLC)**

Established in 1957 in the aftermath of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, this organisation harnessed the influence of the black churches to encourage African Americans to join the civil rights struggle under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr.

**THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC)**

Established in 1961 in the aftermath of the sit-in movement, this interracial civil rights organisation was made up of students committed to using non-violence to bring about desegregation in the South.

**THE WHITE CITIZENS' COUNCILS**

White supremacist groups formed after the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) decision, which fought to maintain segregation.

### African Americans

The term used to describe Americans who are descended from slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. The term 'African American' or 'afro American' is a reference to a shared cultural and geographical history, rather than to racial background. It was adopted in the late 1980s. The term 'negro' was used in the 19th century; 'coloured' was used in the early 20th century. 'Negro' with a capital letter was the preferred word usage among African Americans from the early 20th century. From the 1970s, 'black' became a popular term among the African American community. 'Black American' is sometimes used interchangeably with African American.

### Black Power

A slogan used to convey ideas about black pride, black political independence and African heritage. Black Power rejected the civil rights goals of non-violence and integration in favour of self-determination and self-defence.

### Civil rights

The personal rights of a citizen, upheld by law. Civil rights include economic, political and social rights that promote equality, such as the right to vote.

### Desegregation

The elimination of laws that separate the races in schools, work, public accommodation and neighbourhoods.

### Disenfranchisement

The various means used to prevent people from voting.

### Jim Crow laws

State-based laws segregating white American and African American citizens. The laws extended to transport, housing, work, sexual relations, accommodation and education.

### Non-violent direct action

A method of protest in which you confront, challenge or disrupt something you regard as morally wrong without using violence.

### The Reconstruction Era

The period following the American Civil War (1861–1865) when the defeated rebel southern states were controlled by the federal government and policies were introduced to restructure the former slave states. The Reconstruction Era began in 1866 and ended in 1877.

### The South

Today, the South consists of 16 states: Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. Historically, the term 'the South' was used to describe the 11 slave-holding states that seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. The South is seen as having a distinct culture.

### White supremacy

The belief or theory that white people are superior to other races and have the right to dominate other races. Supporters of this belief are called white supremacists.

### **Amendments to the United States Constitution**

*The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution*, 6 December 1865: an amendment to the Constitution that outlawed slavery in all states and territories.

‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.’

*The 14th amendment to the United States Constitution*, 9 July 1868: this granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalised in the United States, and forbade states from denying citizens equality under the law.

*The 15th amendment to the United States Constitution*, 3 February 1870: this guaranteed the right of all citizens to vote.

### **Boynton v. Virginia (1960)**

A legal ruling ending segregation in interstate travel.

### **Brown v. Board of Education (1954)**

A crucial Supreme Court decision invalidating ‘separate but equal’ public schools.

### **Civil Rights Act 1964**

Legislation that prohibited discrimination in accommodation, in hiring and in firing. It allowed government agencies to withhold funding from any programs permitting discrimination.

### **Civil Rights Act 1968**

Legislation that prohibited discrimination in the sale, financing or rental of housing and provided criminal penalties for intervening with an individual’s civil rights, and inciting or participating in a riot.

### **Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)**

The Supreme Court ruling that permitted racial segregation.

### **Southern Manifesto**

A statement in opposition to the Brown decision signed by almost all southern congressmen.

### **‘I Have a Dream’ speech**

Martin Luther King Jr’s speech at the March on Washington, 28 August 1963.

### **Voting Rights Act 1965**

This federal law banned literacy tests and intimidation at the polls and sent federal officials to locations where voting registers fell below 50 per cent of those eligible to vote.

## 01

# The origins of the civil rights movement (1865–1945)

In this chapter, students will examine the background and origins of the civil rights movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the American civil war, segregation and discrimination
- reactions against early attempts to improve civil rights
- the role of the Second World War in the development of the rights of black Americans.

Civil rights activist WEB DuBois in the office of the NAACP's magazine, *Crisis*



# Introduction

Most African Americans are descended from Africans brought to the Americas as slaves. Slaves were the human property of their owners and could be bought, sold and used as unpaid labour. Slaves had no civil rights under the law. Even after slavery was abolished in 1865 and the Constitution guaranteed their civil rights, African Americans continued to endure racial discrimination. Terror was used as a means of implementing white racism. In the South, laws were passed that prevented African Americans from participating in the political and legal processes, and from living as equals with whites. In the North, racial discrimination was less overt, but it still existed in the form of regulations and customs. During the Second World War individuals and organisations challenged racial discrimination and **segregation**. This shaped the evolution of the civil rights movement in post-war America. The war had a profound influence on attitudes towards race globally, and challenged the legitimacy of white supremacist values.

This chapter describes the changing legal, economic and social position of African Americans from the 19th century to the mid-20th century. It explores how racial discrimination was entrenched in US society. It also examines the individuals and organisations that worked to improve and protect the rights of African Americans to restore their civil rights in the lead-up to and during the Second World War.

The terms ‘the South’ and ‘the North’ are used in this book to refer to areas of the United States. The United States Census Bureau defines the South as consisting of 16 states: Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas (see Source 1.1). Historians also use the term ‘the South’ to describe the 11 states that seceded from the Union (‘the North’) during the Civil War, all of which were slave states (see Source 1.6). The South has a distinct culture.

When referring to the North this book refers to the states in the north-east of the United States, which fought against the South in the American Civil War.

**segregation**  
To segregate means to set things apart. Segregation in the South referred to the enforced separation of blacks and whites in public places, employment, government institutions and transport.



SOURCE 1.1 A map of the United States of America today

# The origins of civil rights in the United States

The origins of the African American struggle for civil rights lie at the start of the history of the United States of America. In 1775, 13 British colonies in North America rebelled and established a new nation. The process of declaring their independence from Britain involved a declaration of their independence and a war. The second sentence of the declaration stated:

“ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that their Creator with certain unalienable Rights endows them, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. ”

As the colonies established their independence, two interrelated documents were developed. The first, the Constitution of the United States of America, defined the system and structures by which the new nation would be governed. This was adopted in 1787 and came into effect in 1789. Shortly after the Constitution came into effect, 10 amendments – updates – were made to it. These additions are known as the Bill of Rights. They added to the Constitution a number of ‘rights’ – moral and legal – that all citizens are entitled to. They included the rights to bear arms, to freedom of speech, to free assembly and to a free press, and access to the law and privacy.



Constitution of the United States

## The United States Bill of Rights, 1789

### Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### Amendment II

A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

### Amendment III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

### Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

### Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.





### Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

### Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

### Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

### Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.



### Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

## ACTIVITIES

- 1 In small groups or as a class, read the 10 amendments that make up the Bill of Rights and define words that are confusing or unfamiliar. Make sure that you understand the main idea of each amendment.
- 2 Summarise the main point of each of the 10 amendments using modern English.
- 3 Using evidence from the amendments outlined here, explain the intention of the Bill of Rights.

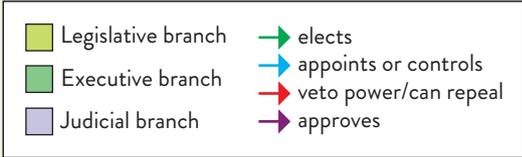
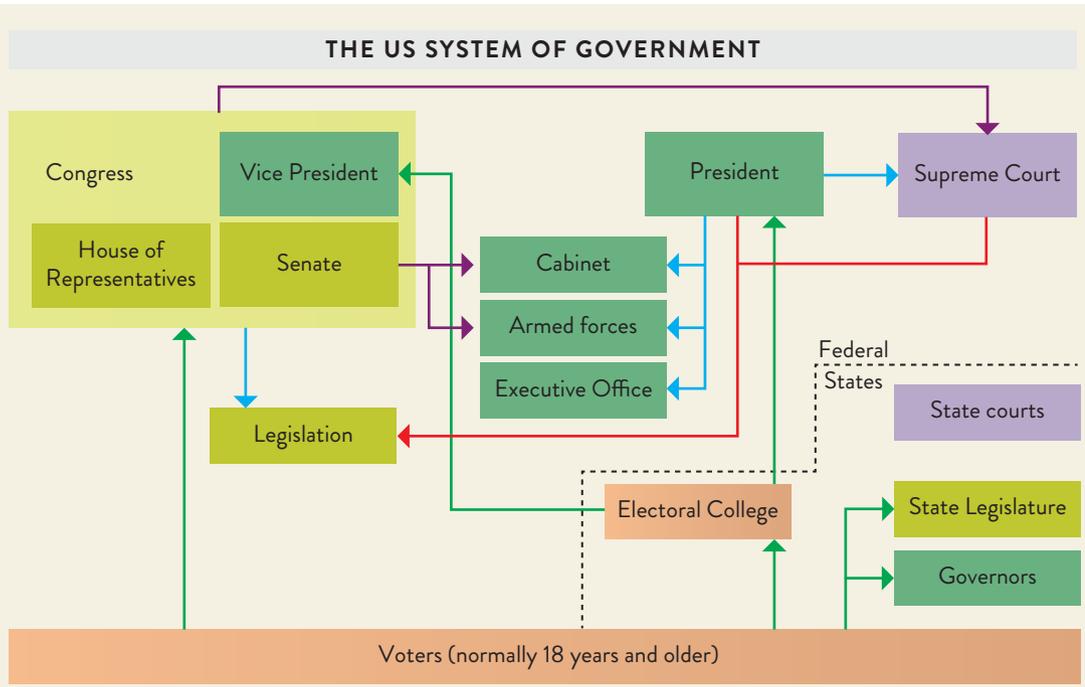
In these key documents of US history lie the origins of the African American campaign for civil rights. Many individuals and organisations have fought for more than 200 years against racism and brutality to ensure that all citizens have equal access to the rights and entitlements embodied in the laws of the United States. Many of the struggles discussed in this book took place in the 20th century, particularly the period from the 1950s to the early 1970s. But to understand the nature and reasons for the more recent struggles, it is important to understand earlier developments, such as slavery and emancipation, the Jim Crow laws, segregation, and the impact of the Second World War on black lives.

## The US system of government

The US Constitution provides the powers and structures for the US system of government. It also describes the functions of each of the three branches of government and determines the separation of the power between them. Each branch has its own powers and responsibilities, including working with each other. There are checks and balances built into the system.

The fight for civil rights was in part about making and changing laws and regulations that governed the lives of African Americans, so it is important to know how laws are made – and unmade – in the United States.





### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

There are three levels of federal government in the United States of America:

#### The Executive

The Executive is made up of the President, Vice President (both elected for four-year terms) and the Cabinet (appointed). Congress must approve these cabinet appointments.

- The Executive is responsible for implementing and enforcing laws made by Congress.
- The President is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.
- The President can appoint judges and ambassadors and other political positions.
- The Executive can negotiate treaties and trade deals with other countries.
- The President can sign legislation into law or veto laws made by Congress.



Getty Images/davidvision

**SOURCE 1.2** The White House, the residence of the President of the United States of America





### The Legislature

The Legislature, known as the Congress, is made up of two houses.

- The House of Representatives – each elected representative represents a district.
- The Senate – two senators are elected from each state.
- The House holds elections every two years.
- Senators are elected for six-year terms.
- The Legislature makes laws, declares war, regulates interstate commerce, and controls taxes and spending policies.
- The Congress confirms the presidency and can remove the president in exceptional circumstances.

### The Judiciary

The US Supreme Court is the final judge in all cases involving laws, the Congress and the Constitution.

- The President nominates judges to the Supreme Court and the Senate must approve those nominations.
- The boundaries of all lawmaking in America are determined by the Constitution, which is interpreted by the Supreme Court.



Shutterstock.com/Orthan Cam

SOURCE 1.3 The Congress building of the United States of America is the site of the Legislature



Shutterstock.com/Sean Pavone

SOURCE 1.4 The Supreme Court of the United States of America

## STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The structure of US state governments is similar to the US federal government and has the same three branches of government.

- Each state has its own constitution.
- Each state elects its own executive – known as the Governor.
- Each state, except Nebraska, has its own legislature with two houses.
- Each state has a judiciary; the state supreme courts rule on judgements made in lower courts and hold no trials.

Under the 10th amendment to the Constitution all powers not granted to the federal government are given to the states and the people. States have responsibility for health, education, law enforcement, crime and punishment, trade within the state, ratifying amendments, marriage and family law, public health and safety.

Rulings made by the state supreme courts are usually binding, however if they are seen to be inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States of America appeals may be made directly to the United States Supreme Court.

### Local government

There are also five levels of local government:

- County
- Town and township
- Municipal
- School district
- Special district

- 1 Briefly outline the main features of the following:
  - a The United States Constitution
  - b The Bill of Rights
- 2 What responsibilities do the following elements of the US federal government have?
  - a The Executive
  - b The Legislature
  - c The Judiciary
- 3 Explain why the creators of the US Constitution wanted to separate these powers in their new republic.
- 4 What rights do states have in the American system of government?

## Slavery

Slavery has existed for thousands of years in many societies across the globe. Europeans began purchasing slaves from West African slave traders in the 15th century to put to work in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. Slave labour was also used in tobacco, cotton and spice plantations in the British colonies of the United States from the 1700s. These American colonies fought to achieve their independence from Britain in the War of American Independence (1775–83). After the War of Independence the Constitution was adopted; this defined the system and structures by which the new nation would be governed. The importation of slaves into the United States was declared illegal in 1808 under the Constitution.

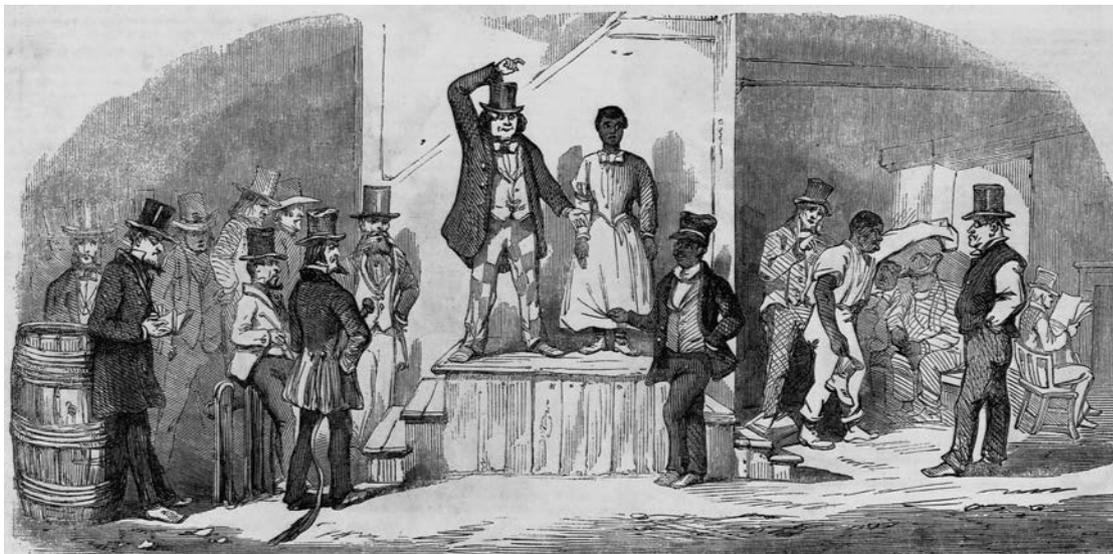
### Black history 1775–1909

- 1775 ● Thirteen colonies proclaimed their independence from Britain to form the United States of America
- 1775–83 ● The War of American Independence
- 1808 ● Importation of slaves into the United States was forbidden under the Constitution
- 1854 ● The Republican Party was established
- 1860 ● Republican Abraham Lincoln, an opponent of slavery, won the Presidency
- 1861 ● South Carolina seceded from the United States and, along with 10 other southern states, formed the Confederacy
- 1861–65 ● The American Civil War
- 1865 ● The Ku Klux Klan was established
- 1865 ● Black Codes were introduced
- 1866 ● Radical Reconstruction began
- 1877 ● Radical Reconstruction ended. Troops were withdrawn from the South
- 1892 ● Ida B Wells published her pamphlet 'Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases'
- 1896 ● The *Plessy v. Ferguson* case legitimised segregation
- 1909 ● The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established

Slavery was in decline and unprofitable in the United States by 1808. However, it revived with the invention of the cotton gin. This machine separated the cottonseed from the fibre and made cotton a more profitable crop. The cotton industry grew in the South and slavery provided the large labour force needed to tend the crops. Soon cotton became a major export crop for the United States. Slaves also worked on tobacco, hemp and rice farms; in agriculture and trades; and in domestic service.

Between 1777 and 1808 northern states abandoned slavery and introduced legislation to gradually emancipate their slave population. There were both moral and practical reasons why this occurred in the North: some northerners were opposed to slavery on moral or religious grounds, there was also little incentive to continue a system that was considered unprofitable – the northern economy was becoming more industrialised and did not need slave labour, and slaves in the North were freed or sent to the South to be sold.

After 1808, slave owners in the South had to rely on the natural increase in the slave population. By this time, the southern economy was dependent on slave labour and slaves became increasingly valuable commodities. By 1865 the population of the United States included 34 million whites and 5 million blacks. Nine-tenths of the black population lived in the South. One-quarter of a million blacks in the South were free.



Getty Images/Library of Congress

**SOURCE 1.5** An engraving published on 27 September, 1856 in the *Illustrated London News* depicts a slave auction held in Richmond, Virginia. At auctions potential buyers could feel the slaves, check their teeth and their strength, and strip them to find any sign of disease or scarring. The stronger, younger and more skilled the slaves, the more they would cost. US historian Steven Deyle notes a child slave during the 1850s could cost \$100 to \$150; a healthy young woman, \$500; and healthy young men could cost up to \$1500. Slaves were sold as lots or as individuals, and families were often split up.

## Human property

Slaves were human property. They could be bought and sold. They had no political or civil rights and were not considered citizens. Because of this they were not entitled to the rights the US ‘founding fathers’ saw as the ‘unalienable Rights’ of ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness’. The children of slaves became the property of their owners when they were born. Slaves were banned from learning to read or write in some states and were forbidden to leave plantations without their masters’ permission. Owners could punish slaves as they wanted and could not be charged with their murder. Slave marriages were not legally recognised. Families could be separated and slaves could be bought and sold at will and could only be freed by their masters.

During the early 19th century, **abolitionism** grew. Abolitionists believed slavery was a moral sin and that all slaves should be freed. Anti-slavery groups lobbied politicians, held demonstrations and

**abolitionism**  
The movement to abolish slavery

helped escaped slaves from the South reach the freedom of British Canada on the Underground Railroad.

The memoirs of former slaves such as Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery, presented a vivid picture of the cruelties endured by slaves on plantations and challenged the view that southern plantation owners were benevolent masters who treated their slaves kindly.

- 1 What is a slave and how have they been used throughout history?
- 2 Why was slavery 'revived' in the United States in the early 19th century?
- 3 What were the main differences in the way many northern and southern states approached slavery during this period?
- 4 Describe the common experiences of slaves in the United States.

## A house divided

During the 1850s there were increasing tensions between the South and the North. Their economies had developed differently. The North was increasingly industrialised and dependent upon a free labour market. Workers in the factories of the North, many of whom were immigrants, were paid a wage and could sell their labour. The South was an agricultural society dependent on slaves as a labour force. However, there was growing opposition to slavery in the northern states.

While there was an equal number of slave and free states, a balance of power existed in the Senate. When new territories in the West applied to join the Union, this balance was lost. The federal government tried to restrict the expansion of slavery into the new states. The South was looking to expand its economy and establish plantations in these new states and saw these restrictions as a threat to its way of life.

### Democrats and Republicans

The two major political parties in the United States before the American Civil War were the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

- The Democratic Party was established in 1792 and is one of the oldest political parties in the world.
- The Democratic Party was at first conservative and opposed the abolishment of slavery.
- The Democrats believed in small government; that is, that the federal government and the Judiciary should not have too much power and that most of the power should belong to the states.
- In 1854 the Republican Party was formed after the Democratic Party split into two over the issue of slavery.
- The Southern Democrats wanted to keep slavery and extend it into new territories.
- The Democratic Party identified itself as the 'white man's party'.
- In 1836 the donkey was adopted as the Democrats' symbol.
- The Republican Party was established in 1854. Abraham Lincoln was its first president.
- The name 'republic' signified the party's support for national rights over the rights of the states and sectional interests.
- The Republican Party founders were opposed to slavery.
- Abolitionists supported the Republican Party.
- The Republicans were divided into two factions: the Radical Republicans, who wanted to end slavery immediately; and the Republicans, who wanted to stop the spread of slavery into the new territories.
- In 1874 the Republican Party adopted the elephant as its symbol.

The slave states saw the election of Abraham Lincoln as president in 1860 as a threat to the system of slavery upon which their economy was based. Before Lincoln was inaugurated, in January 1861, seven states seceded from the United States. These were South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama and Texas. The Confederate States of America was formed in 1861, led by Democrat Jefferson Davis. The Confederacy wanted to maintain a slave society and ensure that new territories could also use slaves as a means of labour.

The American Civil War began on 12 April 1861 when the Confederate Army fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The US Government had raised an army, called the Union Army, to prevent the southern states from seceding and to restore the Union. Four other slave states – Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina – joined the Confederacy and the American Civil War commenced.

## PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809–65)

Born in 1809 to humble parents in rural Kentucky, Abraham Lincoln began his career splitting rails, working on a farm and running a store, before joining the army. With only one year of formal education, he was largely self-educated. He studied law and became a lawyer before being elected to the Illinois state legislature.

The Illinois Republican Party nominated Lincoln for Senator in Springfield on 17 June 1858 and he

accepted. He made a speech to the convention entitled, 'A house divided cannot stand'. He went on to say, 'I believe this government cannot stand half slave and half free'. Lincoln was elected President of the United States of America on 6 November 1860, receiving 40 per cent of the vote.



## A nation divided



SOURCE 1.6 The United States of America and the Confederate States of America

## Emancipation proclamation

At the beginning of the war, the Republican Party had no intention of passing legislation to free slaves in the Confederate states. President Lincoln believed slaves should be freed gradually. This attitude changed as the war dragged on. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863, freeing the slaves in captured territories. The proclamation changed the character of the war, making it a fight for freedom. The federal army then accepted black soldiers in its ranks. By the end of the war, more than 200 000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

The American Civil War ended in April 1865 with the surrender of the Confederate Army. It is generally accepted that around 620 000 military personnel died in the war. Some historians argue that the number of casualties was substantially higher, with recent estimates of 750 000 being proposed. Nonetheless, the casualty rate far exceeds losses in any other conflict engaged in by the United States. President Lincoln was assassinated on 14 April 1865, four days after the surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

The following extract is from Booker T Washington's autobiography, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*. As the son of a slave woman, he describes his experience of hearing of the Emancipation Proclamation as a child and being freed by the Union Army. Washington became a prominent spokesperson for the black community between 1890 and 1915. His autobiography, published in 1901, was a bestseller.

“ After the reading we were told that we were all free, and could go when and where we pleased. My mother, who was standing by my side, leaned over and kissed her children, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks. She explained to us what it all meant, that this was the day for which she had been so long praying, but fearing that she would never live to see.

BT Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*, 1901



Getty Images/Francis G. Meyer

**SOURCE 1.7** *A Ride for Liberty – The Fugitive Slaves* (c. 1862), by Eastman Johnson (1824–1906). This painting is based on a real event that the artist Eastman Johnson witnessed on the battlefield at Manassas, Virginia, during a three-day battle between the Union and Confederate armies. A fugitive African American slave family makes a dash for the Union Army lines in the early dawn. The painting was unusual for that time because it depicted only black people. The subject of this painting was controversial and it was never displayed publicly during the artist's lifetime.

# Slavery abolished

Following the surrender of the Confederate Army in April 1865 the remaining slaves in the United States were freed. Georgia was the last state to ratify the 13th amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America – abolishing slavery – in December 1865. Slaves became freedmen.

## From slavery to citizenship

A constitution is a document that lays down the system of laws and principles by which a nation is governed. The Constitution of the United States of America was adopted in 1789. The Supreme Court of the United States interprets the Constitution and determines whether laws passed by state or federal legislatures are constitutional. Changes to the Constitution are called amendments; they can only be ratified if approved by all states and at least three-quarters of Congress.

The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution outlawed slavery. It was ratified on 6 December 1865. It reads:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Two other amendments were made to the Constitution to formalise black citizenship.

The 14th amendment, ratified on 9 July 1868, granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalised in the United States, and forbade states from denying citizens equality under the law.

The 15th amendment, ratified on 3 February 1870, guaranteed voting rights to all citizens. Citizens could not be denied the right to vote because of race, colour or 'any former condition of servitude'.

The right to vote extended only to men. It wasn't until 1920, with the ratification of the 19th amendment, that women could vote in federal elections in the United States.



Constitutional amendments

- 1 Explain why tensions between the northern and southern states of America grew in the 19th century.
- 2 Draw up a table with two columns. In the left, record the key features of the Democrat Party and in the right, record the key features of the Republican Party. Include their origins, values, and other information that helps describe them.
- 3 Who was Abraham Lincoln and why did his election to the Presidency in 1860 cause so much concern among southern states?
- 4 For the Confederacy:
  - a List all of the states who joined this movement in the 1860s
  - b Explain what they wanted and why they felt the need to go to war with the Union.
- 5 How did Lincoln's attitude to slavery change during the Civil War (1861–65)?
- 6 Use the extract from Booker T Washington's autobiography and the other information provided to explain what the Emancipation Proclamation was and how it affected slaves in the United States.
- 7 How did each of the following improve the legal standing of African Americans:
  - a 13th Amendment
  - b 14th Amendment
  - c 15th Amendment

# Reconstruction

When the American Civil War ended, the North was triumphant and the South lay in ruins. Former Confederate states immediately passed laws, called the Black Codes, placing freedmen under white control. They designated where blacks could live, work and meet, and forbade them to vote or testify in court against whites. As a result of the Black Codes, violent race riots and attacks on former Union soldiers, the Republicans passed the *Reconstruction Act 1867* in federal government, placing the former Confederacy under military control.

The Republican program of reconstruction in the South was called Radical Reconstruction. The Black Codes were struck down and new voting lists were made that **enfranchised** blacks. Blacks could now vote and serve as judges, congressmen, senators and sheriffs. The Freedman's Bureau was set up to help slaves adjust to freedom by providing medical care and education, and by negotiating labour contracts for them as free workers. Black schools and churches were established. Reconstruction brought education and opportunities for the new US citizens; however, most slaves were illiterate, had

no capital to invest in land and were eventually forced to become sharecroppers. They leased land from white landowners – paying high rents – and raised crops such as cotton, half of which was paid as rent to the landowner for food and shelter. In 1870 the federal government withdrew financial support for schools.

## The South fights back

The South continued to be bitterly opposed to laws that gave African Americans freedom and former slaves equal voting rights. A movement within the Republican Party began in Texas during reconstruction to drive African Americans from positions of power within the party. This was known as the Lily-White Movement.

Angry white southerners also set up secret terrorist organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Knights of the White Camellia. Their purpose was to intimidate African Americans into not voting and to punish Republican leaders who supported black enfranchisement. Northern troops tried to quell these organisations but they went underground or became 'social groups'.

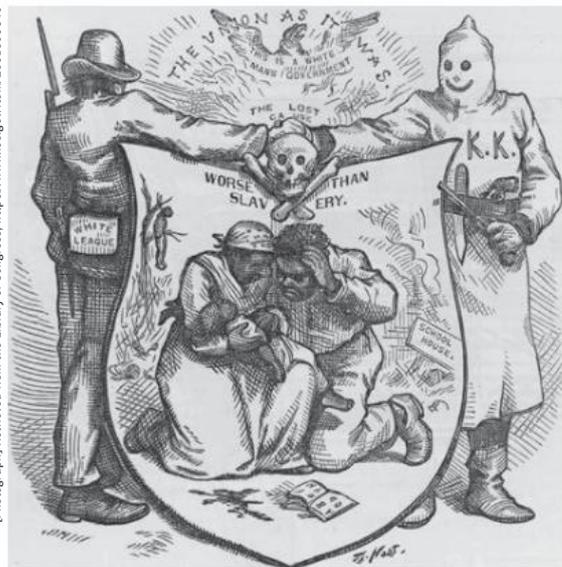
Historian Adam Fairclough described Radical Reconstruction as 'a bold experiment in democracy'. Ultimately, it failed to achieve racial equality in the South. A combination of southern white resistance, lack of investment in black schools and education and the economic disadvantages under which the freed slaves suffered all contributed to its failure. Sympathy and support for the South waned in the Republican Party and northern voters lost interest in the South. Confident they could hold power without southern votes, the Republicans withdrew from the South. Reconstruction officially ended in 1877. **White supremacists** gained the upper hand in the South and African American rights were eroded.



Reconstruction

### enfranchise

To give rights of citizenship, especially the right to vote



Nast, T. (1874) The Union as it was: The lost cause, worse than slavery / Th. Nast, 1874 [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001696840>

**SOURCE 1.8** This cartoon titled 'The Union as it was: The lost cause, worse than slavery' by Thomas Nast was published in 1874. It shows how white supremacist organisations used terror to ensure former slaves remained politically and economically weak during reconstruction.

### white supremacist

A person who believes white people are superior to other ethnicities, especially the black races, and should have control over other races



Nast cartoons

racial equality in the South. A combination of southern white resistance, lack of investment in black schools and education and the economic disadvantages under which the freed slaves suffered all contributed to its failure. Sympathy and support for the South waned in the Republican Party and northern voters lost interest in the South. Confident they could hold power without southern votes, the Republicans withdrew from the South. Reconstruction officially ended in 1877. **White supremacists** gained the upper hand in the South and African American rights were eroded.

- 1 Describe the aims and process of 'reconstruction' following the Civil War.
- 2 Evaluate Source 1.8 as evidence of discriminatory attitudes in the United States after the Civil War.
- 3 Use information you have gathered so far and Source 1.8 to construct a paragraph explaining why Radical Reconstruction failed to achieve racial equality in the southern states in this period.

# Jim Crow

'Jumping Jim Crow' was a minstrel song sung by white comedians dressed up as blacks. 'Jim Crow' became a derogatory term for a black man. African Americans were regarded by many white Americans as being racially inferior, unintelligent, savage and childlike. Black men were routinely called 'boy' or 'George', regardless of their age or name in the southern states. Whites generally did not use courtesy titles, such as Miss, Mrs or Mr, when talking to African Americans.

'Jim Crow' is the name given to the laws existing between 1896 and 1965 restricting the freedom of African Americans, denying them the benefits of citizenship and segregating Americans on the basis of race. Across the southern states there were separate schools, universities, railway cars, hotels, libraries and water fountains for black and white Americans. Whites and blacks could not sit together on buses, eat together at lunch counters or shop in the same shops. There were laws making sexual relationships and marriage between blacks and whites illegal. This 'crime' was called miscegenation.

In South Dakota the law stated that anyone who knowingly married in violation of the law would be convicted and fined not less than \$100 and not more than \$1000, and be imprisoned in a state prison for a period of time not less than one year and not longer than 10 years. In Louisiana circuses had to have separate white and black entrances, and in Atlanta whites and coloured people could not visit the zoo at the same time. In South Carolina cotton factories, blacks and whites could not work in the same room or use the same stairs, buckets or glasses. This separation of races was made clear by the use of signs designating which facilities were for 'whites' and which were for 'coloreds'. State and local governments invested far less public money in black schools, hospitals and other public services. There was one hospital bed for every 139 white Americans compared to one bed for every 1941 black Americans during the 1920s. The facilities available for blacks were inferior to those for whites, emphasising the lowly position of blacks in society.

## Plessy v. Ferguson

In 1896 the *Louisiana State Separate Car Act 1890*, a law that required black and white passengers to sit in separate railway carriages, was challenged in the Supreme Court of the United States. Homer Plessy, a 30-year-old **Creole**, sat in a white carriage and, after identifying himself as African American, was arrested. He faced a \$25 fine or 20 days in gaol. His lawyers challenged the charges against him in the Supreme Court, arguing that the Separate Car Act violated the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.



SOURCE 1.9 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter



**Creole**  
Mixed-race African American of French heritage



Plessy v. Ferguson

The Supreme Court ruled that ‘enforced separation’ did not discriminate against African Americans. The judgement argued that the 14th Amendment did not require the two races to intermingle and that ‘if one race is socially inferior’ it was not the place of the Constitution to make them equal. The historian Adam Fairclough wrote that the decision ‘reeked of racism’ and reflected accepted ideas about race and science that came to prominence in the late 19th century. This ruling made it legal under the Constitution to separate blacks and whites by providing separate facilities. It legitimised Jim Crow laws.

## Scientific racism

During the 19th century white scientists and anthropologists drew upon Darwinian theories and argued that intelligence was determined by race. They argued that the most superior races physically and mentally were the Nordic races, and that there was a progression downwards from there, with Western Europeans, Eastern Europeans, Asians, Jews and finally ‘Negroes’ (or blacks) at the bottom of the intelligence scale. These views were widely accepted as scientific fact in the United States, Europe and Australia, and were used to justify colonising Africa and Asia, restricting non-white immigration and – in the South – segregation. The intermingling of the races was seen as dangerous because the black race could pollute and weaken the white race.

## The vote

By 1910 laws had been passed across the South disenfranchising African American voters. The laws didn’t state that African Americans couldn’t vote – that would have breached the 15th amendment. Instead, state legislators introduced qualifications for voting. Examples of these qualifications included having to own a certain amount of property, passing a literacy test, paying a tax or passing a test to see how well they understood the Constitution. Whites did not have to fulfil the same requirements to vote. Blacks who persisted in trying to vote were often confronted by intimidation and violence from white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.

The number of African Americans who could vote in the South therefore fell dramatically. In Mississippi only 9000 of the eligible 147000 African Americans were registered to vote after 1890. The number of African Americans registered to vote in Louisiana had plunged from 130000 to 1342 by 1904. African Americans lost political power and segregation became rigid, entrenched and more extensive. Despite this atmosphere of fear and repression, voices were raised to protest against the treatment of African Americans.

## IDA B WELLS (1862–1931)

Ida B Wells was born a slave during the American Civil War. After emancipation, Wells was educated and became a teacher. Her parents and young brother died suddenly of yellow fever and Wells, then aged 16 years, took on responsibility for her five younger siblings. She was strong willed, with a passionate sense of justice and was twice physically removed from a first-class rail carriage for whites only.

Wells became a journalist and part-owner of the *Memphis Free Speech* in 1889. She was a harsh critic of both white racism and many black leaders, arguing they were weak and disorganised. She was also an advocate for women's suffrage.

### Lynching in Memphis

Lynching is when a person is executed, usually by hanging, for an alleged offence without a trial. Following the failure of reconstruction, the number of black men (and some women) killed by white mobs increased significantly in the South. Lynchings were often approved of by the white community and sometimes took place in broad daylight with the tacit approval of law-enforcement authorities. The people who carried out lynching did so in the knowledge that they could torture and kill African Americans with little fear of punishment.

White southerners frequently defended lynching by claiming they were protecting the reputation or 'purity' of white women by punishing black men for their assault or rape. Women, it was argued, could not be expected to stand up in court and testify to their shame of being touched by a black man.

Ida Wells published an outraged editorial in her newspaper in 1892 denouncing the lynching

of three black businessmen who owned a successful grocery store. She argued the men were killed not because they assaulted white women, but because they threatened white economic power and dared to better themselves. This, she argued, was a common pattern in the South. These views were published in her 1892 pamphlet, 'Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases'.

Wells was forced to leave the South and her newspaper was closed down. She moved to the North where she used her skills as an investigative journalist to research cases of lynching and concluded the true reason for this act was to eliminate black men who acquired wealth and property and threatened white supremacy. Wells helped set up the Black Women's Club Movement in 1896. These were middle-class, educated black women who came together to set up orphanages, hospitals, hostels, kindergartens and playgrounds in black communities.

Wells gave lectures in northern cities before taking her anti-lynching campaign to Britain. She became the first African American woman to be paid to write for white newspapers. Her exposés spurred organisations such as the Anti-Lynching Committee to lobby the US Government to pass legislation outlawing lynching. Her activities profoundly embarrassed the US Government.

In 1913 she turned her energies to winning the vote for women and African Americans, marching publicly with the white National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Ida Wells is regarded as one of the most significant figures in the post-reconstruction South.



- 1 Identify some of the general attitudes towards African Americans that were still prevalent in parts of the United States after the Civil War.
- 2 Using specific examples, explain how the 'Jim Crow' laws affected the lives of African Americans.
- 3 What is 'scientific racism' and how did this seem to influence the decision of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896?
- 4 How were blacks prevented and discouraged from voting in the South at this time?
- 5 Ida Wells could be considered an early activist for African American civil rights. Provide a brief outline of her life and assess her attempt to bring about change in the United States in regards to the treatment of African Americans.

# The rise of the NAACP

In Springfield, Illinois, in 1908, two black men were lynched and six were shot dead during a race riot. In the rampage, a white mob burnt the homes and businesses of the black community across Springfield, injuring thousands and causing hundreds of families to flee. William English Walling, who was descended from Kentucky slave owners, visited Springfield soon after and, shocked by the lack of remorse shown by whites, decided to act. He feared American democracy was at stake.

A year after the Springfield riots, Walling helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in New York City. An organisation made up of black and white members, it promoted racial equality and the elimination of racial hatred and was to become one of the most significant reform organisations in US history.

Ida Wells was a founding member. So was African American academic and teacher William Du Bois. He was the organisation's publicist and editor of the magazine *The Crisis*. Du Bois is regarded as one of the pivotal figures of black history. He was born in the North and his family had been free for 100 years. He was the first African American to be awarded a PhD at Harvard University and had studied in Berlin. The NAACP and Du Bois argued that African Americans should demand full citizenship rights and fight against injustice.

In the first half of the 20th century, the NAACP fought discrimination in the courts, winning minor victories. *The Crisis* published the names of the victims of lynching and publicised incidents of racial discrimination.



## The Crisis

William Du Bois edited *The Crisis*, the magazine of the NAACP. In his first editorial, he described the aims of the publication.

### EDITORIAL

THE object of this publication is to set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested to-day toward colored people. It takes its name from the fact that the editors believe that this is a critical time in the history of the advancement of men.

Catholicity and tolerance, reason and forbearance can to-day make the world-old dream of human brotherhood approach realization; while bigotry and prejudice, emphasized race consciousness and force can repeat the awful history of the contact of nations and groups in the past. We strive for this higher and broader vision of Peace and Good Will.

W Du Bois (ed.), *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, vol. 1, no. 1, 1910–11, p. 10.

One feature of *The Crisis* was the publication of articles and letters from newspapers relating to race and racial attitudes. The following extract, reprinted from the *Baltimore Sun*, entitled 'White supremacy and white manhood', shows an example of this.

On behalf of our glorious sons and sires, on behalf of our virtuous wives and daughters, on behalf of that dominant and peerless race nurtured and reared upon the sacred soil of 'Maryland, my Maryland,' I protest, in the name of white supremacy and white manhood, against the false and dishonoring sentiment 'that it is no humiliation nor disgrace to live next door to a Negro!'

*The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, vol. 1, no. 1, 1910–11, p. 7.





## QUESTIONS

- 1 Closely examine the editorial from *The Crisis* and answer the following questions:
  - a What do the authors claim as the magazine's main purpose?
  - b Why did the editors decide on *The Crisis* as the magazine's name?
  - c In the context of the first extract, what might the term 'catholicity' mean?
- 2 Closely examine the extract from the *Baltimore Sun* quoted in *The Crisis* and answer the following questions:
  - a What do the original authors of the *Baltimore Sun* article seem to be saying?
  - b Why would the editors of *The Crisis* want to include this in their own publication?
  - c Discuss the perspective of this extract.



The Crisis

- 1 Describe the various ways in which individuals and groups were beginning to promote the civil rights of African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Use specific examples in your description.
- 2 As a class, discuss the significance of the following in establishing campaigns for African American civil rights following the American Civil War:
  - a Ida Wells
  - b William English Walling
  - c William Du Bois

## Migration north

In the 1890s, African Americans began leaving the rural South and moved to the industrial North to escape the economic poverty of sharecropping and the discrimination of Jim Crow laws. They generally found work in factories. However, they still faced discrimination and inequality, with some northern cities such as Indianapolis and Philadelphia introducing segregated schools and residential districts, and blacks being barred from some professions and trades. There were also a number of race riots targeting black workers, who were seen to threaten white jobs in factories.

### Lynching in Marion, Indiana, 7 August 1930

The two boys hanging from the tree in the photo are Tom Shipp and Abe Smith. They were two of three teenagers accused of and gaoled for raping a white girl, Mary Ball, and shooting a white man called Claude Deeter. When news of Claude Deeter's death was released, local men used sledgehammers to knock down the prison walls. The three teenagers were dragged out and beaten. Tom Shipp and Abe Smith were lynched in the town square, but at the last moment, the youngest of the three, James Cameron, was spared. The event was witnessed by a crowd estimated at between 10 000 and 15 000 men, women and children. Many had travelled by train to witness the lynching.

Local studio photographer Lawrence Beitler took the photograph. It was made into a postcard, of which thousands were sold. Two men were charged with the lynching (following pressure from the NAACP), but the



Alamy Stock Photo/Photos12

**SOURCE 1.10** The lynching of Tom Shipp and Abe Smith





all-white jury acquitted them. The rape accusation was later withdrawn. The photograph was said to have inspired musician Bob Dylan's lyric 'They're selling photos of a hanging' in the song 'Desolation row', and the poem 'Strange fruit' by Abel Meeropol, which became an anti-lynching anthem sung by jazz vocalist Billie Holiday.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 Closely examine the photograph by Lawrence Beitler.
  - a What is happening in the background of the photo?
  - b What is happening in the foreground? How do the crowd appear to be reacting?
- 2 How was this photograph used in its original context? What might this say about common values of the time?
- 3 Create a 50–100-word caption for the photograph if it were used by the following:
  - a White supremacists
  - b The NAACP
- 4 Research the poem 'Strange Fruit' by Abel Meeropol. How does it communicate a disgust for the lynching of Shipp and Smith?

## The Klan returns

The KKK began to revive in 1915. Membership in the North grew, spurred on by fears of African American migration north and Catholic and Jewish migration from Europe. The popular film *Birth of a Nation*, released in 1915, glamorised the KKK and attracted new members. In the film, the Klan members wore white costumes, and a burning cross was used as a symbol of fear. Both of these symbols were adopted by the organisation. The film had a strong white supremacist message and depicted interracial relationships as abhorrent. The NAACP held protests against the film outside theatres in northern cities and wrote articles arguing that it falsified history.

Alamy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo



**SOURCE 1.11** The KKK had 3 million members in the early 1920s. This photo shows 40 000 members marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC, the federal capital, in 1926.

## PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT (1882–1945)

Franklin D Roosevelt was born in New York into a privileged political family whose heritage extended back to the American Revolution. He was elected President of the United States of America in 1933 and served through the Great Depression and the Second World War. He died while in office. Roosevelt was a Democrat and he had a gentlemen's agreement with the southern Democrats that he would not intervene in race relations.

Roosevelt was dependent on white Democrat votes to maintain his presidency and did not speak out against the Jim Crow laws or support anti-lynching legislation, but under his administration there were some opportunities for black advancement. His wife and political partner Eleanor was a vocal supporter of civil rights. The Roosevelts placed race relations on the national stage and, argues historian Harold Sitkoff, helped create a new mood in which African Americans

and their supporters could 'begin to struggle with some expectation of success'.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Roosevelt introduced the New Deal, a program of relief for the unemployed. Under the New Deal, the number of black federal employees increased threefold. Federal workplaces, such as secretarial offices and cafeterias, were **desegregated**. Hundreds of African American artists and writers had their works published and performed. New Deal education programs taught literacy skills to one million African Americans who could not read or write. However, some aspects of the New Deal were not so progressive. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) built segregated public housing in the North, replicating the Jim Crow system in the South.



Alamy Stock Photo/Retna

### desegregation

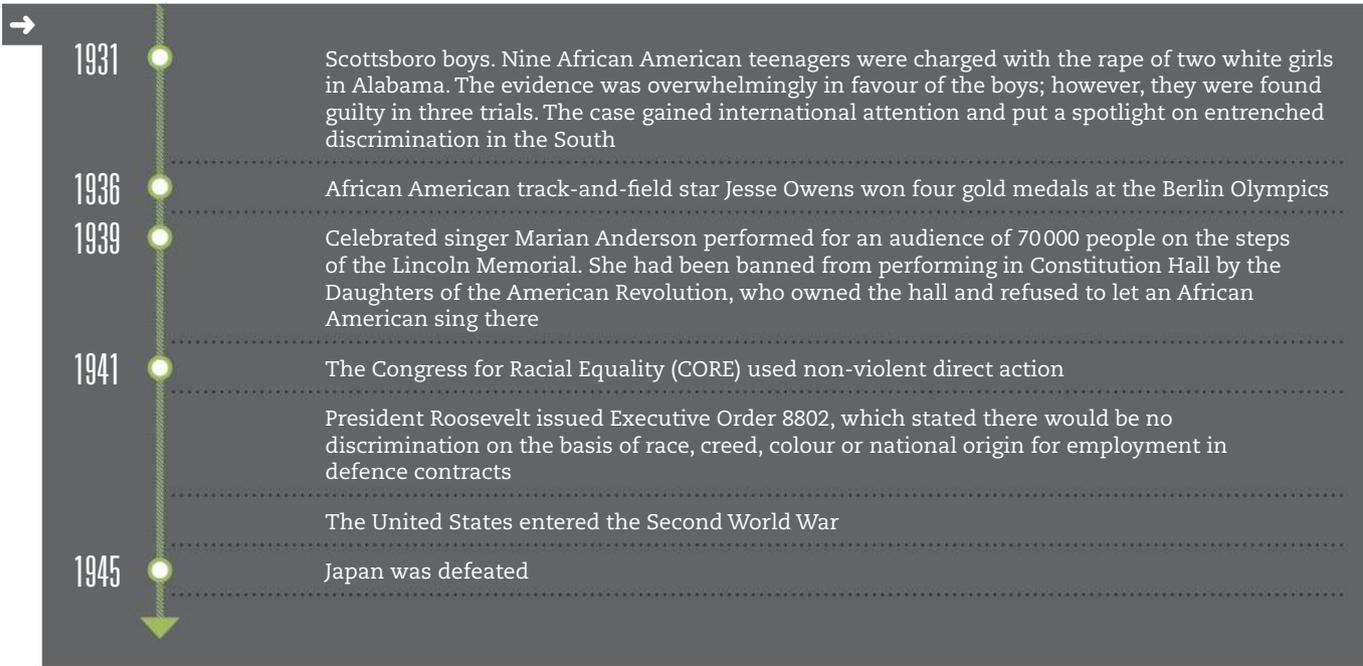
The abolishment or elimination of segregation

### Black history 1909–45

Until the 1970s, African Americans were largely absent, except as slaves, from US history books. This timeline outlines some of the significant events in black history that played a part in the growth of the civil rights movement in the 20th century.

- 1914** ● **August** Marcus Garvey formed the United Negro Improvement Association, promoting pride in African independence
- 370 000 African Americans enlisted in the segregated United States Army during the First World War. More than half of them served in France
- 1918** ● Support for the NAACP grew, with 117 branches opening across the country
- 1919** ● **May and October** Red Summer: 26 race riots across the United States, in both northern and southern cities. The riots left hundreds dead and thousands injured. There was a clampdown of black protest movements across the United States
- The Harlem Renaissance began: African American literature, music, dance, poetry, painting and other cultural expressions flourished in Harlem, New York, and reached a black and white audience
- 1925** ● The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was established. Car porters served passengers on trains. This was the first black union accepted into the American Federation of Labor. Its leader, A Phillip Randolph, became a pivotal civil rights leader
- 1929** ● **January** Martin Luther King Jr was born in Atlanta, Georgia
- **October** Wall Street Crash. The Great Depression began





- 1 Outline the main factors underpinning the growth in popularity of the KKK after 1915.
- 2 How did the Presidency of Franklin D Roosevelt affect the position of blacks within the United States?
- 3 Use the timeline (1909–45) to complete a table like the following:

INDIVIDUALS HELPING TO ADVANCE CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA	GROUPS HELPING TO ADVANCE CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA	EVIDENCE OF ONGOING DISCRIMINATION IN THE USA

## America fights for freedom

Europe went to war in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. At first the conflict was to remain a largely European war, and while the US Government provided support to Britain, there was opposition to becoming involved in another European conflict. However, after Japan launched a surprise attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States declared war on Japan, Germany and the Axis powers.

In the words of US historian Adam Fairclough, ‘the war changed everything’. The Depression was over. The US economy boomed and there was a demand for labour as factories were turned over to war production. Millions of American men and women left their homes and farms to work in factories and join the armed forces. Fourteen million American men were sent to war, more than one million of them African Americans. The United States became a vast industrial machine, producing guns, ships, food, tanks and planes for the war effort.

Wartime **propaganda** described the fight against Germany and Japan as the fight for democracy against **tyranny**. In countries and territories captured by the Nazi and Japanese forces, people lived under a regime of terror, with no political rights or freedom. Across Europe the Nazi regime was implementing Adolf Hitler's racial policies, which included the genocide of Jews and gypsies. The NAACP was quick to point out that many US citizens were also denied their democratic rights on the basis of race. This spurred on new campaigns for civil rights.

**propaganda**  
Information, often biased, used to promote a political viewpoint

**tyranny**  
A cruel and oppressive government

“... sorry for brutality, blood, and death among the peoples of Europe, just as we were sorry for China and Ethiopia. But the hysterical cries of the preachers of democracy for Europe leave us cold. We want democracy in Alabama, Arkansas, in Mississippi and Michigan, in the District of Columbia, in the Senate of the United States.

*The Crisis* no. 47, July 1940, p. 209.

## The March on Washington Movement

Defence-industry employment policies in both the South and the North discriminated against African American workers. One New York factory, for example, employed 142 African Americans out of a total of 29 215 people. The March on Washington (MOW), led by unionist A Philip Randolph, was a response to the 'racial prejudice, hatred and discrimination' exposed in the national defence industries, which did not hire African Americans to do skilled work. It was the US Government that gave out defence contracts to industry and therefore, Randolph argued, the federal government should legislate for desegregation in the defence industries.

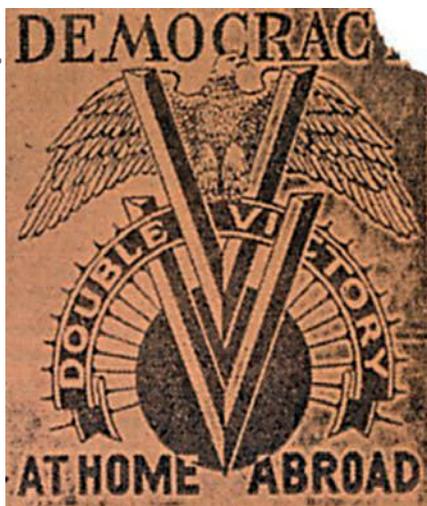
The MOW movement threatened to march into Washington to protest. The threat of 10 000 African Americans marching into the country's capital galvanised President Roosevelt into action. He tried to persuade Randolph to stop the march, but failed. On 25 June 1941 Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which stated there would be no discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour or national origin for employment in defence contracts. Two million blacks gained employment in defence plants and 200 000 in the federal public service during the Second World War.



Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

**SOURCE 1.12** The Four Freedoms posters were drawn by magazine artist Norman Rockwell in 1943 and were based on a speech President Roosevelt gave to Congress in 1941. The posters were used to promote the war effort and copies were distributed and displayed across the United States during the Second World War.

WS  
Poster worksheet



**SOURCE 1.13** The 'Double V' logo, designed by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, called for two victories for African Americans

#### wildcat strike

A spontaneous strike taken without permission from trade union officials

## 'Double V' for victory

Two months after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the war in December 1941, the 'Double V' campaign was launched in the country's most popular black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. The 'Double V' (for victory) campaign conveyed the message that African Americans were fighting for victory abroad and at home. Civil rights groups such as the NAACP, CORE and the Urban League, which all operated in the North, hoped the war would be an opportunity to win the battle for equal citizenship.

## The Detroit race riots

Although Executive Order 8802 had promised much, it was ignored in the South, where there was violent opposition to desegregation of the workplace. There was also opposition to African Americans working with white workers in the North. Detroit – in the state of Michigan – one of the United States' major industrial cities, had attracted thousands of black and white migrants from the South by 1942. There was tension between the two groups, spurred

on by the KKK, which had a strong presence in Detroit. Unskilled African American workers called **wildcat strikes** in protest at not being given the chance to do skilled work on aircraft assembly lines. These jobs were reserved for whites. White workers went on strike when they were 'forced' to work on the same assembly lines as African American workers who received the same pay. There were demonstrations when black and white families were to be housed in the same public-housing projects.

A race riot lasting three days broke out in Detroit in June 1943. It was sparked when black and white youths traded insults, escalating into beatings and looting. It only stopped when federal troops were called in. Thirty-five people were killed in the riots.

### Racial equality within the auto workers' union

Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



**SOURCE 1.14** This cartoon was produced by the United Automobile Workers (UAW), the union that represented workers in the automobile industry. By 1943 the automobile factories in Detroit were fulfilling defence contracts. The UAW supported racial equality. When white workers held wildcat strikes in protest at African American workers being assigned to a 'white' assembly line, the strikers did not have the official support of the UAW.



## QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the UAW and what was its attitude to racial equality?
- 2 The tall figure at the centre of this image is a caricature of the Nazi German leader Adolf Hitler. Why might he be depicted in this cartoon pinning a German medal onto the chest of 'Jim Crow'? (You may need to complete some research to answer this question.)
- 3 What appears to have happened to the African Americans lying on the ground behind Jim Crow and Hitler?
- 4 Why has the artist included the buildings in the right-background of this cartoon?
- 5 How would you summarise the main message of this cartoon?
- 6 Explain the purpose of this cartoon.
- 7 How might this cartoon help a historian investigating racial inequality in the United States in this period?

## A segregated military

At the start of the war African Americans faced discrimination in the US military as well as on the home front. The United States Army was segregated. All-black units were led by white officers and limited to labour, transport and quartermaster duties. African Americans could not serve in active combat roles. In the US Navy, African Americans could only serve as mess boys, cooks or servants. The US Air Force and the US Marine Corps would not accept African American recruits. The military blood banks used by the Red Cross were segregated throughout the war. African Americans made up less than two per cent of the US military in 1939.

In 1940 President Roosevelt introduced a policy of non-discrimination in the military. Under this policy, the percentage of black recruits was to reflect the 10 per cent of African Americans in the overall population. The US Marine Corps established all-black units in 1942. They served in the Pacific in a defence role in captured territories. The US Air Force held out against desegregation and instead trained African American pilots and mechanics for segregated squadrons. By 1944, 145 000 black men served in the US Air Force. A black officer-training school was established 40 kilometres from the white institution. The majority of African Americans in the US Army served in support roles. Those in combat roles generally fought in segregated units such as the 761st Tank Battalion or the 92nd Infantry Division. In the final months of the war in Europe several thousand African Americans were accepted into integrated infantry units.

African American women also served in the military, with 6500 volunteering in the Women's Army Corps, which was also segregated. Few were accepted in the other services and those who were



**SOURCE 1.15** African American military nurses stationed in Australia: Joan L Hamilton, Geneva H Culpepper, Marjorie S Mayers, Prudence L Burnes and Izez E Holmes



Invisible warriors



The Tuskegee Airmen



The extent of discrimination in the United States to 1945

often found their role was defined by their race. For example, the 512 black nurses in the Army Nurse Corps were only allowed to nurse African American personnel or German prisoners of war.

Most US military bases were in the South, where black soldiers were subject to Jim Crow laws, which caused resentment. Black soldiers guarding German prisoners of war, for example, could not eat at the same restaurants as their white prisoners. They could not sit on the same seats on buses as white soldiers. Segregation and discrimination sometimes resulted in riots and brawls on military bases.

During the war, membership of the NAACP rose dramatically from 50 000 in 1940 to 500 000 by 1946. The number of African Americans registered to vote increased. Life in the military opened their eyes to new experiences and gave them new skills. While serving in Britain, Europe and the Pacific, they found the civilian populations treated them with a respect they did not receive at home from white Americans. After the war, they could obtain an education under the **GI Bill**. Male and female veterans were to play an important role in the civil rights movement.

### GI Bill

The name given to the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act* 1944. This gave returning veterans benefits such as generous loans, no-deposit mortgages, free university tuition, and a vocational and college education.

## DORIE MILLER (1919–43)



Dorie Miller was a Cook Third Class on the USS *West Virginia* when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. His ship came under heavy aerial attack. Dorie carried wounded sailors down below to safety before rescuing the wounded captain. He then manned a machine gun and, despite having no training, kept firing at the Japanese planes until he ran out of bullets. Dorie Miller was awarded the Naval Medal for bravery on 27 May

1942. He was the first African American to win a high US Navy honour. He was recruited to sell war bonds and toured the United States. David Stone Martin drew a recruiting poster featuring Miller, the first to include an African American, in 1943.

Dorie Miller died on 24 November 1943 when the USS *Liscome Bay* was hit by a Japanese submarine torpedo in the Pacific.

- 1 How did Executive Order 8802 improve the employment opportunities of African Americans?
- 2 How do the events in Detroit show that civil rights were difficult to enforce from the level of the national government?
- 3 What was the 'Double V' campaign and how did it capture the aspirations of many African Americans during the Second World War?
- 4 Describe the position of blacks within the US military at the start of the war.
- 5 Using specific examples, outline the contribution of African Americans to the US war effort.
- 6 Outline the major changes to the position of blacks in the military that took place during the war.

# Conclusion

By the 1890s, laws restricting the civil rights of African Americans were in place across the former southern slave states. Jim Crow laws created a divided society in which black and white Americans never shared public spaces. Both the legal system and terror tactics were used to ensure that African Americans did not challenge the status quo. Ida Wells and the NAACP worked together to fight discriminatory laws and the violence perpetuated against African Americans. Membership of the NAACP grew dramatically during the late 1930s, but racism remained deeply institutionalised in US society. The Second World War offered opportunities for African Americans in the workforce and the military, despite segregation.

## Chapter summary

- There was opposition to black equality in the former Confederate states in the 1890s and laws segregating white and black Americans were passed.
- The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896 upheld the constitutionality of state laws mandating segregation.
- Terror and customs were used to control the black community in the South.
- Racial discrimination also existed in the North and intensified after blacks began migrating to northern cities.
- Individuals such as Ida Wells and William Du Bois, and organisations such as the NAACP, worked to fight the injustices faced by African Americans.
- The Second World War offered opportunities for African Americans in the workforce and the military, despite segregation.
- In the aftermath of war, increasing numbers of African Americans were committed to fighting for their democratic rights.

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### Further resources

- Lee, H, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Warner Books Inc., New York, 1960.
- Sitkoff, H, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008.



Further resources

## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Create a detailed mind map that outlines the position of African Americans in the United States at the end of the Second World War. Include themes such as slavery, discrimination, contribution to the US, evidence of progress/change and others you consider important.
- 2 Define the terms 'segregation' and 'discrimination' and outline how they were evident in the United States up to the end of the Second World War.
- 3 Describe some of the differences that were evident between the following:
  - a The southern states
  - b The northern states
- 4 Select ONE of the following and conduct further research to assess their role in the lives of African Americans in the US up to 1945:
  - a The Ku Klux Klan
  - b President Franklin D Roosevelt
  - c The NAACP
- 5 As a class, discuss the following issues and then write a response to each:
  - a To what extent was discrimination against African Americans primarily caused by economic motives?
  - b How much evidence of real change in the treatment of African Americans was there by the end of the Second World War?
- 6 What were the major obstacles to change in the treatment of African Americans in this period?
- 7 In small groups, imagine that you plan to campaign for better treatment of African Americans in the United States at the end of the Second World War. Create a 'manifesto' identifying five main changes you would like to see brought about and briefly outline how you would try to make these a reality. Compare your ideas with the other groups in your class.



Terms and  
concepts

# ‘We shall overcome’: Creating the modern civil rights movement (1945–57)



In this chapter, students will examine the emergence of the modern civil rights movement in the 1940s and 1950s.

Aspects to be covered include:

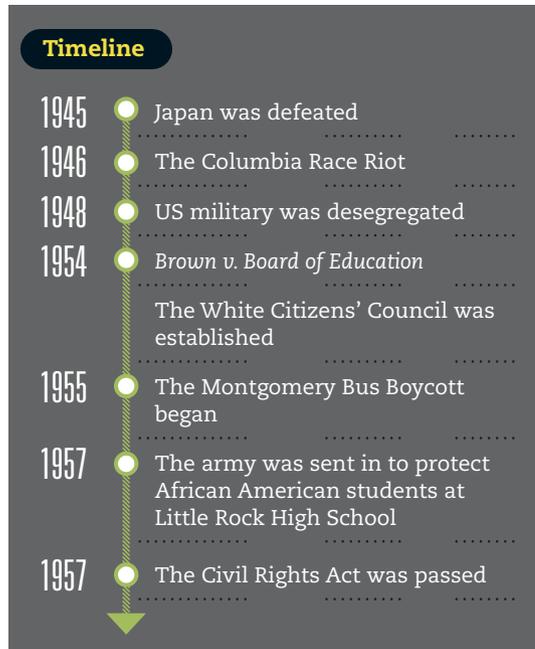
- the role of groups campaigning for and against civil rights (including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Ku Klux Klan)
- early attempts at desegregation such as Little Rock High School, legislation including the *Civil Rights Act 1957*
- the role of president Dwight Eisenhower.

Watched by white students, African American students Maurice Soles (in patterned shirt) and William Latham (in plaid) walk through the door at recently desegregated Clinton High School, Clinton, Tennessee, in early September 1956. Soles and Latham were among the so-called Clinton 12, the first group of African American students to attend the first desegregated high school in the southern states.

# Introduction



This chapter explores the legal gains made by the civil rights movement during the 1950s. When the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ‘separate but equal’ decision was overturned by the Federal Supreme Court in 1954, there was no longer a legal justification for Jim Crow. Schools such as Little Rock High School became the battlegrounds for desegregation in the South. Pro-segregationists and white supremacists created new organisations to oppose challenges to the racist status quo in the South.



SOURCE 2.1 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter

## When did the civil rights movement begin?

Historian Adam Fairclough wrote, ‘As time distances historians from the events they study, periods that once appeared sharply defined become fuzzy at the edges ...’.

This has been the case with the civil rights movement. The classical interpretation of the movement is that it began in 1954 when the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was made, overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson*’s ‘separate but equal’ decision, and that it ended in 1968 after the *Civil Rights Act 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act 1965* were passed. These pieces of legislation ended legal segregation in the United States. Between these dates the civil rights movement staged non-violent protests against Jim Crow laws in the South, many led by Martin Luther King Jr. Studies of the classical civil rights movement tend to concentrate on the battles in the South to end legal segregation.

Some historians argue that the civil rights movement had a much longer history, referred to as the ‘long civil rights movement’. Raphael Cassimore, a historian and activist for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), argues the movement had its beginnings with the formation of the NAACP. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall argues the civil rights movement began not in the South, but the North, in the cities where African Americans came to work and encountered discrimination and segregation. There they joined labour unions and other leftist organisations to form protest movements. Harold Sitkoff believes the Second World War encouraged blacks to demand equality. Historians of the long civil rights movement today explore what was happening in the North as well as the South during this period.

# The Cold War

Through the 1950s the **Cold War** raged and anti-communism pervaded life in the United States. Influential African Americans, including singers Paul Robeson and Josephine Baker and William Du Bois, founder of *The Crisis*, were accused of being communist threats. Unions fighting to democratise the South and improve wages and conditions for African Americans were accused of being disloyal.

The Cold War also helped the cause of civil rights. The Soviet Union questioned the United States' vision of itself as the bastion of freedom and democracy and its propaganda targeted US racism. In Africa and Asia former colonies were becoming independent of their white colonial rulers and some newly independent nations were choosing the Soviet Union over the United States as their political ally. In 1952, restaurants, transport, theatres and hotels in Washington – the nation's capital – were desegregated. Republican President Dwight D Eisenhower, who was elected in 1952, argued that segregation gave a misleading impression of US democracy to foreign diplomats.

## Cold War

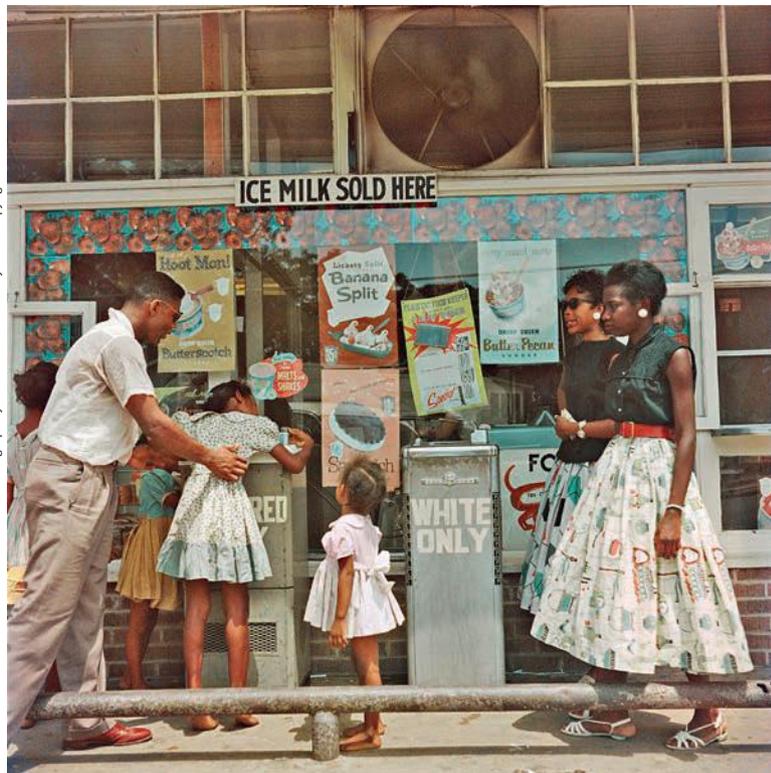
The name given to the political and military rivalry that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1991

## The Regional Council of Negro Leadership

During the 1950s, new groups formed to fight for civil rights. TRM Howard, a wealthy black surgeon and businessman, established the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL) in 1951. Its aim was to promote black self-help, civil rights and voting rights. Its committee members came from the black professional class and included businessmen, teachers, churchmen, doctors and lawyers. The RCNL was formed in Mississippi, the most segregated state of the union.

The RCNL did not challenge Jim Crow laws; it concentrated on the 'equal' in 'separate but equal'. It wanted the facilities and services for blacks to be as good as those provided to whites. For example, it worked to improve the quality of black schools and schooling in the South. It organised a boycott of service stations that failed to provide toilets for blacks. Twenty thousand bumper stickers with the slogan 'Don't buy gas where you can't use the washroom' were distributed across the South.

Photograph by Gordon Parks. Courtesy of and copyright The Gordon Parks Foundation.



**SOURCE 2.2** This photograph of segregated drinking fountains in Mobile, Alabama, was taken by Gordon Parks in 1956. Parks was an African American photojournalist who worked for *Life* magazine and was one of the most influential US photographers of the 20th century. He was born in segregated Kansas in 1912 and taught himself photography. Committed to civil rights and justice, he documented race relations, poverty and urban life in his art. In 1956 he took a series of photographs called 'The Restraints: Open and Hidden', which depicted segregation and Jim Crow laws in the South.



Segregation



One of the most significant contributions the RCNL made to the civil rights movement was training black leaders. At its annual conferences it ran workshops where participants learnt about voting rights, business skills and self-help. Civil rights activists Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers and Fannie Lou Hamer all benefited from the work of the RCNL.

- 1 Summarise how each of the following explain the origin of the US civil rights movement:
  - a The 'classical interpretation'
  - b The 'long history' of the civil rights movement as argued by:
    - i Raphael Cassimere
    - ii Jacquelyn Dowd Hall
    - iii Harold Sitkoff
- 2 Explain how the Cold War helped to bring attention to civil rights issues in the United States.
- 3 What did the RCNL attempt to draw attention to and how did it contribute to the growing civil rights movement in the USA?

## Challenging *Plessy v. Ferguson*

The NAACP made three successful challenges to racial segregation through the courts in the 1950s. Its aim was to have the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* 'separate but equal' decision overturned. In one decision it was ruled that segregated railway dining cars were unconstitutional; in a second decision the segregated University of Texas in Austin was forced to admit Heman Marion Sweatt, a black law student. In a third decision, the Supreme Court determined it was unconstitutional to make a black student sit separately from white students. These wins chipped away at Jim Crow laws, but it was desegregating public schools that the NAACP saw as representing the biggest challenge to Jim Crow.

Education was seen as the key to empowering African Americans. Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal had published his sociological study on race relations, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, in 1944. His study concentrated largely on the situation in the South under the Jim Crow system. Segregated schooling, he argued, was detrimental to black children. He believed it was important for black children to become **assimilated** into US society and that equal access to education was a means of achieving this.

### assimilate

To become indistinguishable from the dominant culture

## *Brown v. Board of Education*

Thurgood Marshall was the NAACP lawyer who represented Oliver Brown, an African American man who tried to enrol his daughter Linda in a local white school in segregated Topeka, Kansas. *Brown v. Board of Education* was one of six cases being heard on school segregation at the time. They were consolidated under the one case name. Marshall and the other lawyers argued that segregated schools were 'inherently' unequal, and that even if the facilities for both black and white schools were equal, segregation breached the 14th amendment. They argued that by separating black children from white, black children were made to feel inferior and, consequently, that segregation damaged the psychological development of children.

The case started in December 1952 and the final ruling was delivered on 17 May 1954. Chief Justice Earl Warren, who was appointed by President Eisenhower, worked hard to ensure that the nine judges reached a unanimous decision. He recognised that anything so socially sensitive could only succeed if the full bench of the court concurred. His ruling read:



Brown v. Board



Brown v. Board of Education

“ We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal ... we hold that the plaintiffs ... are ... deprived of the equal protection ... [of] the Fourteenth Amendment.

From the ruling for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, 1954.



### Black Belt

A region of the South that is an agricultural area where the cotton slave plantation economy once flourished. Today the Black Belt is one of the poorest regions of the United States.

This destroyed the basis of Jim Crow. It was a great triumph for the NAACP, and while it accepted the **Black Belt** states would resist desegregation, it believed other southern states would comply over time, local district by local district. It was mistaken. The Supreme Court gave the South a year’s grace before starting desegregation, and then did not set a deadline for compliance. Within two years, an angry and vicious campaign against desegregation was launched in the South.

## The Clark Doll Experiment

The NAACP legal team for *Brown* used the expert opinions of psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. The Clarks conducted an experiment – known as the Clark Doll Experiment – during the 1940s in Harlem, a predominantly African American part of New York. Four dolls, identical except for the fact that two were white and two were black, were given to black children. They were then asked a series of questions, including: Which is the nice doll? Which is the bad doll? Which doll would you like to play with? Which doll looks like you? Some children would burst into tears and refuse to answer the last question. The majority of children would attribute positive characteristics to the white dolls and would draw pictures of themselves white, or with lighter skin. The Clarks concluded that segregation and discrimination caused black children to develop a sense of inferiority and self-hatred.



Photograph by Gordon Parks. Courtesy of and copyright The Gordon Parks Foundation.

**SOURCE 2.3** Photograph by Gordon Parks of a boy taking part in the Clark Doll Experiment in Harlem in 1947.



- 1 What problems with segregation did the work of the following experts reveal:
  - a Gunnar Myrdal
  - b Mamie and Kenneth Clark
- 2 What did Thurgood Marshall and other lawyers in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case try to prove?
- 3 What was the final decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case?
- 4 Using the extract from the ruling, assess the significance of this case for the civil rights of African American people.

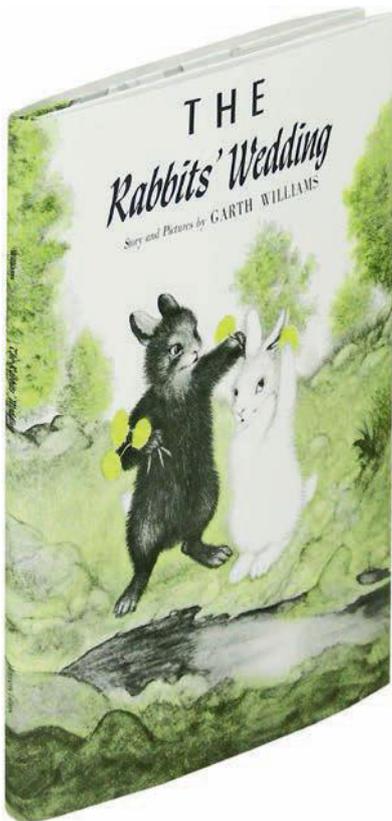
The Image Works! © 1976 Matt Herrom/Take Stock



The Southern Manifesto

**SOURCE 2.4** Altering the wording on a White Citizens' Council sign (as here, where 'Racial Integrity' has been changed to 'Racial Integration') is just one example of civil rights activists at work.

Garth Williams: "The Rabbits' Wedding", 1958



**SOURCE 2.5** State Senator EO Eddins from Alabama demanded that the 1958 children's book, *The Rabbits' Wedding*, be destroyed as it promoted integration and miscegenation. The book is about a black rabbit and a white rabbit who become friends and then fall in love and marry. It was removed from general circulation.

## Massive resistance

Within a month of the Brown decision, the white supremacists and pro-segregationists had rallied in opposition to the decision. Judge Thomas P Brady, a circuit judge from Mississippi, wrote 'Black Monday', a pamphlet denouncing desegregation, calling for the banning of the NAACP, the closing of public schools and the creation of a 49th state for 'Negroes'. Nineteen senators and 77 members of the House of Representatives signed the Southern Manifesto in 1956. This document condemned the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. The Manifesto claimed the decision was an abuse of judicial power and infringed states' rights. In a newspaper interview, Senator Harry F Byrd of Virginia was reported as calling for massive resistance to school desegregation in the South.

## The White Citizens' Council

Plantation manager Robert B Patterson set up the first White Citizens' Council in Greenwood, Mississippi in 1954. This organisation became the blueprint for similar groups across the South. Membership of these citizens' councils peaked at 250 000 in 1957. The White Citizens' Councils believed the best way to manage a bi-racial society was through segregation, and argued African Americans were not intelligent enough to live as equals in a white society. African Americans were caricatured as sexual predators, savages and cannibals in its publication, *The Citizens' Council*. Articles gave statistics about low levels of education and high illegitimacy rates in the black population and described how successful South Africa under apartheid was in comparison to African countries governed by black Africans. Racial integrity and the southern way of life were promoted as ensuring a stable, safe and prosperous South. Desegregation was considered 'unnatural'.

The citizens' councils attracted an educated, articulate, professional membership of middle-class, religious southerners, which included doctors, pastors, politicians, lawyers and teachers. It claimed to be a respectable organisation, with no links to the more violent KKK, which was regarded as being lower class. However, its propaganda shared the racism of the more secret Klan. It was known as the 'uptown KKK'. The KKK was also revived after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, with new chapters being formed across the South.

The White Citizens' Councils derided southerners who supported civil rights as being disloyal. It aimed to stop the implementation of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme

Court decision, and each September, at the start of the school year, it held demonstrations outside schools that attempted to accept black students.

The NAACP was targeted by the White Citizens' Councils, accused of controlling the Supreme Court, whipping up white race hatred, and forcing the unnatural mingling of the black and white races. In cartoons, the NAACP was depicted as a masked thief armed with a revolver. The councils had some success in shutting down the NAACP in the South. People named on NAACP membership lists were sacked from jobs or found themselves in physical danger. The NAACP was banned in Alabama in 1955 and the number of branches in the South dropped from 65 to seven between 1955 and 1956.

### Recruiting for the White Citizens' Councils

The text below is from a pamphlet published by the White Citizens' Councils to help recruit more members.

#### Why does your community need a citizens' council?

Maybe your community has had no racial problems! This may be true; however, you may not have a fire yet you maintain a fire department. You can depend on one thing: The NAACP (National Association for the Agitation of Colored People), aided by alien influences, bloc vote seeking politicians and left-wing do-gooders, will see that you have a problem in the near future.

The Citizens' Council is the South's answer to the mongrelizers. We will not be integrated! We are proud of our white blood and our white heritage of sixty centuries.

People with racial pride are attacked by the NAACP and its affiliates as being bigoted, prejudiced, immoral, un-American, etc. These hysterical smear words are used in lieu of any logical reason why a person can no longer be loyal to his white blood, his church, his state, and his nation above all else.

In other words, the right to esprit de corps which has won every war we have fought is no longer in style. The idea now is seemingly to pride ourselves in the fact that everybody in the world should be made equal by law, regardless of aptitude or heritage. The 'have nots' must share equally with the 'have got's' in this new world order.

PB Levy (ed.), *Documentary History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1992, pp. 214–5.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Who might this pamphlet be primarily addressed to?
- 2 Who are the 'mongrelizers'? Why do you think the authors have chosen this word?
- 3 According to this pamphlet, what are the White Citizens' Councils trying to preserve?
- 4 What is the purpose of the pamphlet?
- 5 Account for the perspective of this pamphlet.
- 6 What reliable evidence does this document contain regarding the values and attitudes of the White Citizens' Councils?
- 7 In pairs, conduct some of your own research to find other primary sources that add to your understanding of this movement. Share your research with your class and provide an evaluation that assesses the evidence provided by your source(s).

## EMMETT TILL (1941–55)

Emmett Till was a 14-year-old African American boy who lived with his family in the northern city of Chicago in Illinois, where he attended an integrated school. In 1955 he visited his grandfather in the town of Money, Mississippi. Emmett and his cousins went into the local store to buy lollies and he allegedly whistled at Carolyn Bryant, the white woman serving him. Three days later, Bryant's husband Roy and Roy's half-brother dragged Emmett Till from his bed in the middle of the night to a barn, where they beat him and gouged out one of his eyes before shooting him at point-blank range. He was then thrown into the Tallahatchie River, weighed down by a large fan from a cotton gin attached to his body with barbed wire. When his body was retrieved, Emmett's mother insisted it be sent back to Chicago where it was put in an open casket so people could see the state of the body. Thousands of people viewed the casket in Chicago. Photographs were published in newspapers across the world, bringing Mississippi's racial violence to a global audience.

The Till case made headlines across the United States and internationally and saw the NAACP and the RCNL work to bring the culprits to justice. TRM Howard, who had established the

RCNL, provided bodyguards for the black witnesses who were brave enough to come forward and testify. Twice, an all-white jury acquitted the two white men charged with Till's murder, even though black witnesses identified them. Two months later, protected from prosecution by the double jeopardy clause (meaning you can't be tried more than once for the same offence), the men sold their confession to a journalist for \$3000. Howard was forced to leave the South as he and his family were on the KKK death list.

Till's murder has been interpreted as a pivotal incident in the civil rights movement. It revealed to the world the extent of racism in Mississippi, where even a child wasn't safe from death for challenging the racial code. The case also demonstrated how there was no justice for African Americans in Mississippi and that white supremacist attitudes had hardened after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Civil rights activists such as Medgar Evers and Rosa Parks were deeply affected and inspired by the Emmett Till case.



Gaety Images/Getty Images

AP Image/AP



SOURCE 2.6 Clinton High School students protesting in 1955

### Deep South

Deep South states are the old slave cotton states. Definitions of which states constitute the Deep South differ; however, they have always included Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida and Tennessee.

## The Clinton 12

In some border states between the North and the South, desegregation occurred peacefully. There was, however, violent opposition in the states of the **Deep South**, located in the Black Belt. After a court case, Clinton High School in Tennessee was forced to desegregate in 1955. On the first day of term, the 12 African American students (who became known as the 'Clinton 12') were met by a demonstration led by John Kasper, a Citizens' Council leader from Washington, who held anti-desegregation rallies outside the school.

Governor Frank Clement sent 600 **National Guards**, tanks, and 100 highway patrolmen to control the rioters and ensure the black teenagers could enter the school. Clement did not support desegregation, but believed the law of the land should prevail.

Protests continued. Burning crosses – a symbol of the KKK – were left on the lawns of white civil rights supporters, dynamite was used and shots were fired at the homes of black students. One of three white leaders who walked to school with the black students was severely beaten. After this the school was closed for four days. Clinton High School was bombed in 1958, but was rebuilt quickly through donations. Clinton's other schools were not desegregated for another 10 years.

There were scenes such as this all over the South in schools and universities. Black students were spat at, harassed and abused, and their lives threatened. Not surprisingly, many parents chose to remove their children from integrated schools. Bobby Cain, one of the Clinton 12, was the first African American to graduate from an integrated high school. During the graduation ceremony, the football team guarded him because the principal feared he would be killed.

**National Guards**  
State-based military reserves



The Clinton 12

## The Little Rock Nine

Little Rock High School in Arkansas complied with a Federal Court order to desegregate. The school began by enrolling nine black students (the Little Rock Nine) in 1957. There had been no great opposition to desegregation in Little Rock. However, on the night before school was to reopen, Governor Faubus, who was up for re-election, announced that he would not allow the African American students to start school because of security concerns. The next morning, 2 September 1957, the National Guard stopped the students from entering, telling them, 'Governor Faubus has placed the school off-limits to Negroes'.

The Federal Supreme Court ordered Faubus to withdraw the National Guard, but he refused. President Eisenhower had never agreed with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, but was forced to act, as Faubus was defying a Federal Supreme Court order. Eisenhower met with Faubus and persuaded him to let the black students into the school. Faubus withdrew the National Guard and left the state. However, his supporters encouraged white demonstrators to flock to the school to stop the black students from entering. More than 1000 demonstrators congregated on the school grounds screaming, 'Out Nigger, out Nigger', 'Go back to the jungle' and 'We won't integrate'. They hung effigies of the black students from trees, mirroring a lynching, and followed the students, shouting abuse. A white man kicked Alex Wilson, a black journalist, in the face. All of this was beamed into US lounge rooms by television or publicised in newspapers.

President Eisenhower spoke on television to denounce the demonstrations, but the next day they continued. Eisenhower sent 1000 troops of the US Army 101 Airborne Division – a highly decorated paratrooper unit known as the 'Screaming Eagles' – to restore order. Using fixed bayonets, they forced the mob back and escorted the Little Rock Nine to their classes. Armed troops stayed on the school campus for the rest of year protecting the students, who endured abuse, taunts and harassment.



Getty Images/Bettmann

**SOURCE 2.7** Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Ekford walking to Little Rock High School on the first day of term, 4 September 1957. The girl behind her is 15-year-old student Hazel Bryan. According to a reporter from the *New York Times*, Bryan was hysterical and called out 'Go home Nigger, go home to Africa'. The picture was taken by photographer Will Counts from the *Arkansas Democrat* and was featured in overseas papers including the *Daily Express* in London and *Paris Match* in France.



Little Rock



Little Rock Nine

## DAISY BATES (1914–99)

Daisy Lee Gatson was brought up by foster parents in a poor mill town in Louisiana, where she attended segregated schools but received little formal education. She married LC Bates, who established the *Arkansas State Press*, a popular weekly newspaper devoted to civil rights. Daisy Bates became President of the Arkansas State NAACP branches and fought for school desegregation in her home of Little Rock. When questioned by the attorney for the Little Rock School Board, Bates refused to allow him to call her by her first name, therefore challenging the white supremacist traditions of treating African Americans like children. She became a leading figure in the Little Rock desegregation campaign, acting as a mentor to the students and their families. Intimidation and the withdrawal

of advertising from white businesses forced her and her husband to close down their newspaper in 1959. Her account of the Little Rock crisis was banned from libraries in the South in the 1960s.

Although many women were involved in the civil rights movement, men usually took on the leadership roles and were the public face of the movement. Daisy Bates worked on anti-poverty campaigns in later life. At a 1990 event honouring her life, President Bill Clinton described her as the most influential Arkansas citizen.

In the letter below, Daisy Bates describes the progress of the Little Rock Nine to Roy Wilkins, director of the NAACP in New York.



Gerty Images/Thomas D. McPherson

December 17, 1957

Mr. Roy Wilkins [Chair of NAACP]

20 West 40th Street

New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Wilkins:

Conditions are yet pretty rough in the school for the children. Last week, Minnie Jean's mother, Mrs. W. B. Brown, asked me to go over to the school with her for a conference with the principal, and the two assistant principals. Subject of conference: "Firmer disciplinary measures, and the withdrawal of Minnie Jean from the glee club's Christmas program." The principal had informed Minnie Jean in withdrawing her from the program that "When it is definitely decided that Negroes will go to school here with the whites, and the troops are removed, then you will be able to participate in all activities." We strongly challenged this statement, which he denied making in that fashion.

We also pointed out that the treatment of the children had been getting steadily worse for the last two weeks in the form of kicking, spitting, and general abuse. As a result of our visit, stronger measures are being taken against the white students who are guilty of committing these offenses. For instance, a boy who had been suspended for two weeks, flunked both six-weeks tests, and on his return to school, the first day he knocked Gloria Ray into her locker. As a result of our visit, he was given an indefinite suspension.

The superintendent of schools also requested a conference the same afternoon. Clarence and I went down and spent about two hours. Here, again we pointed out that a three-day suspension given Hugh Williams for a sneak attack perpetrated on one of the Negro boys which knocked him out, and required a doctor's attention, was not sufficient punishment. We also informed him that our investigation revealed that there were many pupils willing to help if given the opportunity, and that President Eisenhower was very much concerned about the Little Rock crisis.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the general context in which this letter was written. What was taking place in the United States in regards to African Americans and schooling at the time? What had happened at Little Rock?
- 2 According to this letter:
  - a Why was Daisy Bates asked to attend Little Rock High School?
  - b Why had the school principal prevented Minnie Jean from participating in the Christmas program?
  - c How were the black students being treated at Little Rock?
  - d What had begun to change as a result of this meeting? Provide examples.
- 3 Critically discuss the perspective of this source.

## The Civil Rights Act 1957

Civil rights was a political issue that could no longer be ignored by the federal government after troops were sent in to Little Rock. The *Civil Rights Act 1957* gave federal prosecutors the ability to obtain court injunctions to stop interference with the right to vote and set up a Civil Rights Commission to investigate civil rights abuses. Southern Democrats, who feared losing the support of white voters in the South, opposed the bill.

This was the first federal civil rights legislation to pass in 82 years and it signalled that the federal government recognised its role in protecting civil rights. It was, however, a weak bill. It stated that people accused of hindering African Americans from registering to vote would be tried in the state where the breach occurred. This meant the accused would face an all-white jury that would most likely be sympathetic to segregation and opposed to black civil rights.

## Jim Crow lives on

Little Rock closed its schools from 1958 to 1959 to avoid desegregation. This was a pattern across the Deep South, with some school districts shutting schools for up to four years. States also set up private 'white-only' schools and established strict student-placement rules, which allowed black students to apply for enrolment in all-white public schools, but ensured they would not be accepted because they failed to meet the set criteria. In 1962, only 1.2 per cent of black students attended schools with whites.

Two years after the Brown decision, the NAACP began to find it increasingly difficult to operate in the South with White Citizens' Councils controlling most state legislators. Both black and white public schools across the state were closed. African American individuals were paying a high financial and emotional burden in court battles to see the Brown decision implemented. Across the South, 'white only' and 'black only' signs remained at lunch counters, shops, hospitals, washrooms, buses and drinking fountains. Jim Crow still remained firmly in place.

Nevertheless, the Brown decision was an important turning point in the civil rights battle. One aspect of Jim Crow – segregation in schools – had been legally overturned in the Supreme Court. The heroism of the students at Little Rock inspired other African Americans to take up the fight. The federal government had sent troops to the South to protect black citizens from white extremism for the first time since reconstruction. The way forward lay with direct action by African American citizens such as Rosa Parks, who, in 1955, took on segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama. You will learn about this in Chapter 3.

- 1 Using evidence from the extract of Daisy Bates' letter on page 42 and your own knowledge, outline the ways in which white supremacists tried to challenge and subvert desegregation in the United States. Include specific examples where appropriate.
- 2 Consider the cases of Emmet Till and Little Rock. Assess the contribution of the media to the growing civil rights movement in the United States.
- 3 Explain how the following demonstrated that the US federal government was becoming increasingly active in extending and protecting the civil rights of black Americans.
  - a The desegregation of Little Rock High School.
  - b The Civil Rights Act of 1957.
- 4 How did school districts in the Deep South try to prevent desegregation in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

# Conclusion

The experience of the Second World War gave many African Americans the skills and confidence to challenge the Jim Crow laws. Presidents Roosevelt, and Eisenhower were forced to respond to civil rights issues during their presidencies. While the NAACP's success on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case overturned the legal basis of the 'separate but equal' doctrine, implementing the ruling proved difficult and dangerous. Individuals and organisations continued to pay with their lives, livelihoods and personal safety, as white supremacists in the South fought against desegregation.

## Chapter summary

- The NAACP successfully challenged *Plessy v. Ferguson* in the Supreme Court, paving the way for the desegregation of public schools.
- There was a strong backlash to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the South, with the revival of the KKK and the establishment of the powerful pro-segregationist White Citizens' Councils.
- The murder of Emmett Till and the violence accompanying the attempted desegregation of Little Rock High School drew national and international attention to the issue of civil rights.

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### Further resources

- *Eyes on the Prize*, Episode 1: 'Awakenings' (1954–56); Episode 2: 'Fighting Back' (1957–62), PBS, 1987. This is the award-winning historical documentary of the civil rights movement.
- Fairclough, A, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001.
- Sitkoff, H, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008.



Further resources

# CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Create a table like the following to record the evidence for progress and the evidence for continued discrimination in the United States education system regarding African Americans:

EVIDENCE FOR PROGRESS	EVIDENCE FOR CONTINUED DISCRIMINATION

- 2 Use the internet to collect 4–5 images of segregation in the United States in the 1950s. Record the following details of your images and share them as a class:
  - a Origin (who created the image and when?)
  - b Distribution (when and where was the image used?)
  - c Perspective of the source
  - d Evidence of segregation
- 3 Make a list of groups discussed so far who were promoting civil rights and one listing those who were opposed to civil rights. What values and ideas were important to these groups and what action were they taking to support their views?
- 4 Select one individual or group from those mentioned and conduct your own research to extend your understanding of their contribution to the civil rights movement. In a brief presentation to your class, assess their significance to the growth of the civil rights movement in the United States.
- 5 As a class, discuss the following: to what extent were conditions for black students in southern schools improving after the *Brown v. Board of Education* case? What evidence is there of change? What evidence is there of continued discrimination and difficulty?
- 6 After the discussion, write an extended response to this question, making use of specific evidence and examples to support your view.

## 03

# ‘You won’t see me at the back of the bus’ (1955–60)

In this chapter, students will examine the growth of the civil rights movement in the late 1950s.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the role of key individuals and groups such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Nation of Islam
- events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Greensboro sit-in.



Rosa Parks seated toward the front of the bus, Montgomery, Alabama, 1956.

# Introduction

This chapter examines new strategies – including boycotts, sit-ins, non-violent protests and direct actions – developed by the US civil rights movement to confront entrenched segregation. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, initiated by NAACP member Rosa Parks, is the best known of these actions. Also discussed in this chapter is the establishment of two southern organisations: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Martin Luther King Jr, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

The chapter also looks to the northern states, where African Americans were fighting against deep-rooted de facto segregation in the areas of housing, education and work, and considers the alternative position to racial integration taken by the Nation of Islam (NOI) and its popular spokesperson, Malcolm X.

**From Bus Boycott to sit-ins**

- 1955 **December** The Montgomery Bus Boycott began
- 1957 **January** The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed, with Martin Luther King Jr as its chairman
- July** The Little Rock protests
- July** Black parents withdrew their children from Harlem schools
- 1960 **February** The Greensboro sit-ins began
- March** The Nashville sit-ins began
- April** The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed



SOURCE 3.1 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter

## ‘I felt it was something I just had to do’

Montgomery is the capital city of the state of Alabama and it sits in the Black Belt. It is known as the ‘Cradle of the Confederacy’. It is one of the cities of the South where Jim Crow laws divided black citizens from white citizens in most public spaces after the American Civil War. Buses were divided into black and white sections, and when the white sections were full black passengers were expected to give up their seats for white passengers. Black passengers paid at the front of the bus, but had to

enter at the back no matter what the weather. White bus drivers could, without explanation, eject black passengers from buses. This was the situation across the South. In Richmond, Virginia, in December 1955, for example, seven African Americans were arrested for refusing to give up their seats to whites.

Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old married seamstress, caught a bus home from work on 1 December 1955. She refused to give up her seat to a standing white man in the overcrowded bus and was arrested at the next stop for disobeying the municipal rule making bus segregation compulsory. Rosa Parks had served as secretary of the Montgomery National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and had attended workshops on school desegregation. Recalling the murder of Emmett Till, she described her act of defiance: 'I felt it was something I just had to do'.

## The boycott begins

News of Rosa Parks' arrest spread through the African American community and Alabama's NAACP President, ED Nixon, posted bail. He saw in Rosa's arrest the opportunity to challenge bus segregation.

The Women's Political Council, led by Professor Jo Ann Robinson from the all-black Alabama State College, began to organise a one-day bus boycott to coincide with Rosa Parks' trial. In the meantime, Montgomery's black middle class – doctors, lawyers, academics and ministers – flocked to the Dexter Baptist Church. Ministers agreed to deliver sermons to their congregations urging them to support the boycott. Robinson printed and distributed thousands of leaflets. The boycott was not

Alamy Stock Photo/World History Archive



SOURCE 3.2 Rosa Parks' arrest photograph

planned to end bus segregation, but to stop black passengers having to give up their seats to white passengers. On Monday 5 December 1955, 90 per cent of African Americans who usually took the bus carpooled, walked, drove or even rode mules to work instead. Rosa Parks was found guilty of violating the segregation law of the Montgomery City code and fined \$14.

Although bolstered by the success of the one-day boycott, Nixon was worried the protest would fizzle out without strong leadership. A new organisation – the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) – was formed and it was recommended that Dr Martin Luther King Jr, a 27-year-old Baptist preacher who had only recently moved to the city, be approached to lead the organisation. King accepted the leadership of the MIA and at an evening meeting urged participants to support the boycott, preaching that after years of brutal oppression 'we have no choice but to protest'.



Rosa Parks  
interview

## White backlash

Three days later, King tried to negotiate with the bus company, but it refused to budge. The city council threatened legal action against black taxi drivers who undercharged black passengers. A system of volunteer carpooling was developed around the city and the boycott continued. Soon Montgomery retailers were suffering, with profits falling because black customers no longer travelled downtown to shop. Fear and intimidation tactics were used against supporters of the boycott. Police fined white women who drove their maids to and from home, and carpool drivers were harassed. On 26 January 1956 King was arrested for speeding. Four days later homemade dynamite bombs exploded at King's and ED Nixon's homes. King's wife Coretta and their baby were home at the time, but were not injured.



Getty Images/Margaret Bourke-White

**SOURCE 3.3** The background of segregation: in 1956 photographer Margaret Bourke-White travelled to Greenville, South Carolina, to take a series of photographs entitled 'The Background of Segregation' for *Life* magazine. This photograph shows a black maid preparing supper for a white family. Domestic service was the major form of employment for black women, who worked in the houses of white families, cleaning, looking after children and cooking. In Montgomery the local council pressured white women to sack their staff if they were involved in the bus boycott.

These tactics backfired spectacularly, with the attacks on King strengthening the resolve of African Americans. When 1000 African Americans, some armed, congregated around King's verandah after the attacks, he urged them to 'love their white brothers' and told them that the boycotters were doing God's work. This display of love and Christian forgiveness, according to King's biographer, made him a key symbolic figure of the civil rights movement.

The city council tried to end the boycott by arresting 100 participants and charging them with violating a 1921 law against hindering a business. Again this did not stop the protesters. Black leaders, many of them ministers, including King, rushed into police stations surrendering willingly. A photograph of King in gaol was beamed around the world as the bus boycott had become international news, with hundreds of correspondents flocking to Montgomery. The arrest of the black minister hardened the resolve of the people and on 25 February 1956, 2000 African Americans voted to continue the boycott. Even the Ku Klux Klan's (KKK's) fear and intimidation tactics failed to end

the boycott. When a procession of white-robed KKK members slowly drove their cars through the black areas of town in the dead of night, they were followed by a jeering crowd.

“ ... the blacks learned a basic lesson that they applied over and over again during the next ten years: white repression could be turned to their advantage. In responding to harassment, arrests, bombings, and indictments, the MIA demonstrated a sure-footed ability to retain both the tactical initiative and the moral advantage.”

A Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001, pp. 232–3.

## The boycott ends

The boycott at Montgomery had repercussions beyond the city. The MIA agreed to allow the NAACP to challenge the legality of Rosa Parks' arrest, as well as that of Claudia Colbert and two other women, in the courts. The *Browder v. Gayle* case challenged the Jim Crow laws relating to segregated buses, just as *Brown v. Board of Education* had challenged segregated schools. The case was heard in June 1956 in the Federal Court and the ruling came through that bus segregation was unconstitutional.

However, it wasn't until the Supreme Court confirmed the ruling in December 1956 that the boycott ended and the MIA began celebrating. The boycott had lasted 381 days. On 21 December 1956 Martin Luther King Jr entered a bus by the front door and rode in it. The court's decision was not accepted with equanimity in Montgomery, however. Snipers fired at buses, a 5 p.m. curfew on buses was imposed so workers were unable to travel home by bus, and black leaders' houses continued to be bombed. As with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, many states chose to ignore the ordinance and there were still shots fired at members of the MIA in Montgomery.

## Significance of the boycott

The Montgomery Bus Boycott is recognised as a significant moment in the history of the civil rights movement. It was a well-organised and efficient home-grown southern protest that withstood many attacks from white opposition. The protest drew international attention and catapulted Martin Luther King Jr into the spotlight as a civil rights leader. The boycott drew sympathy from the North and put the spotlight on racism in the South. It also highlighted non-violent resistance and **civil disobedience** as methods of fighting for civil rights reform.

### civil disobedience

The refusal to obey certain laws using non-violent techniques such as boycotting and protesting

## Civil disobedience and non-violent resistance

Civil disobedience is when people publicly, actively and deliberately break a law to which they are morally opposed in order to bring about a change in public policy or the law. Civil disobedience has a long history. American poet Henry David Thoreau coined the phrase in 1848 when he refused to pay a poll tax to the government in protest against slavery. Mahatma Gandhi – leader of India's independence movement – protested against the tax on salt imposed by British rulers by leading a march of thousands across India and making salt from seawater, which was illegal. Civil disobedience became a cornerstone of the social movements from the 1980s.

The aim of non-violent resistance is to persuade an opponent of the merits of a particular point of view without using physical force. Non-violent confrontation does not aim to make an opponent suffer; rather, it shows the participant's preparedness to suffer for a cause. Examples of non-violent resistance include boycotts, sit-ins, hunger strikes, civil disobedience, strikes, street theatre and peaceful demonstrations.

Mahatma Gandhi used non-violent resistance in his battle against the British imperial rulers. Gandhi called his approach *satyagraha*, meaning 'truth force': win over the heart and mind of your opponent. Do not react to your opponent by swearing, resisting arrest, lashing out or retaliating. At all times show love and goodwill.



## QUESTIONS

- 1 Briefly define the following terms:
  - a Civil disobedience
  - b Non-violence
  - c *Satyagraha*
  - d Boycott
- 2 How has civil disobedience been used to challenge governments and rulers throughout history?
- 3 As a class, discuss the benefits and limitations of non-violent forms of protest.



## Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

The Montgomery Bus Boycott is a famous example of non-violent resistance, but this was not the first time the technique had been used in the fight for civil rights in the United States of America. In 1942 African Americans James Farmer and Joe Guin established an interracial council, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), along with four other white supporters. CORE was inspired by Gandhi and sought to challenge segregation using non-violent resistance. CORE was based in the North and most members were white, middle-class college students. It successfully ran campaigns to desegregate public facilities in the North.

In 1947 eight white and eight black CORE members travelled to the South on a two-week ride of reconciliation, testing a Supreme Court ruling banning segregation on interstate buses. Four of the men were arrested. African Americans Bayard Rustin and Andrew Johnson were sentenced to 30 days on the chain gang, while two white men, Randal Worth and Igor Roodenko, were sentenced to 90 days on the chain gang for 'bringing your niggers with you to upset the customs of the South'. CORE also played a significant role in the civil rights movement during the 1960s.



- 1 Describe the position of black Americans in the city of Montgomery following the Civil War.
- 2 Create a flow chart outlining the key events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, including its effect on Montgomery and the wider civil rights movement.
- 3 Who was Martin Luther King Jr? Assess his contribution to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- 4 Outline the various ways in which white supremacists tried to challenge the protesters in Montgomery.
- 5 How did the black community respond to the aggression directed at Dr King?
- 6 Explain how the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) also employed the principles of non-violence and civil disobedience.

## The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, other clergymen across the South took on leadership roles in civil rights movements in their communities. Bus boycott protests were organised in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. King capitalised on this mood two years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott by calling a meeting of black clergymen in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1957. They formed the Conference on

Transportation and Nonviolent Integration. A month later, at a conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, black ministers from the South met and formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Martin Luther King Jr was elected president.

The SCLC called on African Americans to use non-violent resistance as a means of protest. King argued that it was not a sign of weakness to refrain from fighting back against violence, but rather a way of demonstrating courage. King drew upon his Christian beliefs and told the protesters they should follow Jesus. He also studied non-violent techniques and Gandhian ideas, with help from two members of CORE, Reverend Rusty M Smiley and Bayard Rustin.

Massive non-violent protests would, King came to believe, defeat segregation and bring about social reform. The SCLC was criticised over the following years for its use of non-violence, which resulted in white supremacists becoming violent towards civil rights protesters. The SCLC believed that to achieve its goal of overturning the Jim Crow laws it had to ensure the federal government intervened and applied the 14th and 15th amendments.

## Home grown

While the NAACP and CORE evolved in the North, the SCLC was a southern organisation that grew out of the black church, which had been an influential force in the black community since emancipation. The SCLC was a hierarchical organisation whose power rested in the hands of its male leaders. In its first three years of existence it achieved little. As discussed in Chapter 2, white southern resistance to civil rights and desegregation hardened after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, with the creation of White Citizens' Councils and attempts to make it impossible for the NAACP to operate in the South. It wasn't until some young, black university students took an initiative that non-violent resistance came to the fore.



### DR MARTIN LUTHER KING JR (1929–68)

Martin Luther King Jr was born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, a Jim Crow state in the Deep South. His father was a Baptist minister who was politically active in the local African American community and was well respected. Known as 'Daddy King', Reverend Martin Luther King Senior was an NAACP leader who fought for black teachers to be paid wages equal to those of white teachers in the 1930s. Martin Luther King Jr grew up in a loving, close, middle-class family. He attended all-black schools in Atlanta before studying theology at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania with predominantly white students. He later studied at Boston University and received his Doctorate in 1953. He met and married Coretta

Scott in Boston and they had two sons and a daughter. In 1954 he became pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama where, in 1955, he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

By 1959 King was America's best known black leader. He travelled to Ghana for the independence ceremonies in 1959 and was invited to India as a guest of the Indian Government in the same year. Between 1957 and 1968, he travelled more than 9 million kilometres to speak at tens of thousands of protests and civil rights demonstrations.

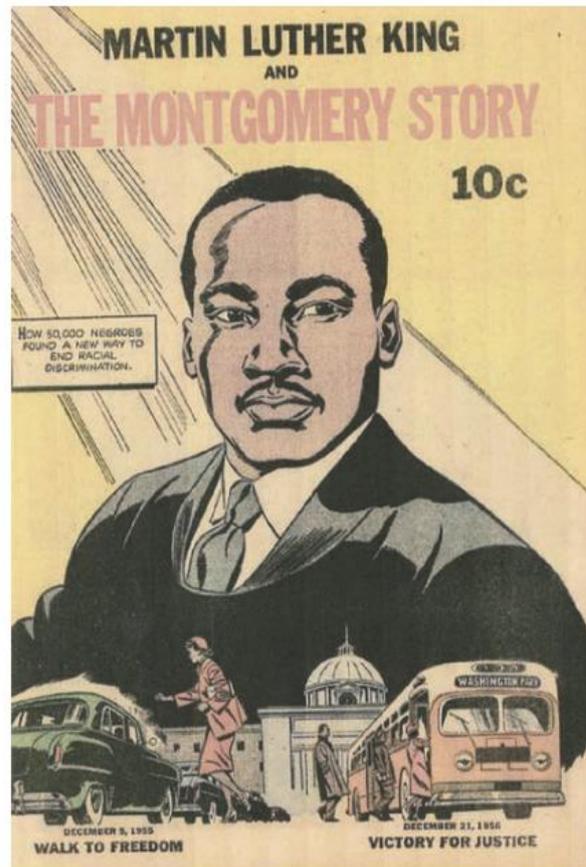


## Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story

This comic book was produced in 1957 by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an anti-war organisation that was formed in Britain during the First World War. The United States chapter of FOR started in 1915 and worked for labour rights and against racism. Bayard Rustin was a FOR activist who advised Martin Luther King Jr on Gandhian techniques of non-violence during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The 14-page comic book and the film *Walk to Freedom* were produced to publicise non-violent techniques. It is estimated that 250 000 copies of the comic book were published. In 2008 it was translated into Arabic and distributed in Egypt by the American Islamic Congress.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the aim of the comic book and the film *Walk to Freedom*? Who were the target audience?
- 2 Why do you think the Fellowship of Reconciliation chose to make a comic book to help promote the principles of non-violence?
- 3 Discuss the perspective of the comic's front cover.
- 4 What evidence is there to suggest that this comic book was a popular publication?
- 5 This comic book has been recently reprinted. If possible, find a copy and analyse its content as a class. Evaluate its portrayal of the events in Montgomery discussed in this chapter.



**SOURCE 3.4** The cover of the 14-page comic book *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*



- 1 Create a mind map to summarise the key features of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Include information regarding the group's origins, message, structure, influence and any other issues you see as important.
- 2 How did the SCLC mark a new chapter in the civil rights movement when compared with groups like the NAACP and CORE?
- 3 For Dr Martin Luther King Jr:
  - a Provide a brief outline of his upbringing.
  - b What was Dr King's educational background? How might this have influenced his message as a civil rights leader?
  - c Outline some of the activities Dr King undertook to help organise and promote civil rights.
- 4 In pairs, conduct some more research into the life and work of Dr King. Create a small portfolio of 5–6 photographs and/or extracts from speeches he made that demonstrate his beliefs and his activity in this period. Compare your collection with others in the class and evaluate your selections.

## In the North

Between 1940 and 1960, five million African Americans moved from the rural South to the urban North and western cities in search of factory jobs and better opportunities. While they escaped Jim Crow laws, they found the North had its own forms of racial discrimination with the **de facto segregation** of schools, housing and employment.

### de facto segregation

Segregation that occurs in practice, rather than by law

Historian Thomas J Sugrue describes how racial inequality was different in the North and South. There were no signs marking black and white facilities in the North, only some schools were segregated by law and black voters weren't disenfranchised. Despite this, blacks lived separate lives as second-class citizens. A de facto segregation system excluded them from restaurants, swimming pools, hotels and theatres. Sectors of the labour market were off limits to blacks. Sugrue writes, 'as a result of the combined efforts of segregation, discrimination and substandard education they remained over represented in the ranks of the unemployed and poor'. The segregation and racial discrimination experienced by African Americans in the 'free' North has become a significant subject for research, as have the movements within the North to fight for civil rights and equality. Education was a battleground for civil rights in both the North and the South.

## The Harlem Nine

Harlem in New York city was home to an African American community that had developed a vibrant artistic and music scene. It was also a very poor area with overcrowded schools and slum housing. In the 1950s, half of the housing in Harlem was deemed 'unsound'. Laws did not segregate schools



Getty Images/George Karger

**SOURCE 3.5** Harlem was a predominantly African American area by the 1920s, with black businesses, theatres and churches. It was also the home of the civil rights movement in the North. Harlem was known for its vibrant music and theatre scene and the sharp way its residents dressed. This photograph shows boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson, who owned a number of shops along 7th Avenue, posing in front of his pink Cadillac and two of his stores. Sugar Ray was one of the first black sporting celebrities and businessmen.

into black and white the way they did in the South. Despite this, 95 per cent of public schools in New York were attended only by children of one race. Students were sent to neighbourhood schools and white administrators from the school boards drew the borders and allocated students. The budgets for schools were linked to property taxes so in areas where houses were expensive and residents paid more rates, schools received more money. In New York, \$20 per year was allocated to educate an African American or migrant student, while \$65 per year was allocated for each white student. This is an example of de facto segregation, where the races were separated not by law but by circumstances such as poverty.

The Parents Committee for Better Education in Harlem was formed in July 1957. The parents of nine children refused to send their children to the local allocated junior high school because of the poor quality of education and facilities. They argued they should be able to attend the white schools they could walk to. The black press dubbed these families the 'Harlem Nine'. The parents were taken to court for illegally taking their children out of school. The protest extended to a 162-day boycott of New York public schools by an estimated 10 000 parents. The parents eventually persuaded the school boards to let their children attend white schools.



Harlem History

- 1 In your own words, summarise the arguments of the historian Thomas Sugrue regarding the similarities and differences in racial equality between the northern and southern states.
- 2 Describe the district of Harlem in New York in the 1950s and 60s.
- 3 Explain how the case of the Harlem Nine demonstrated the growing influence of non-violence in the civil rights movement.

## The Nation of Islam (NOI)

Civil rights groups such as CORE, SCLC and NAACP fought to integrate, or become a part of, mainstream American society. They wanted African Americans to enjoy the same democratic freedoms as other Americans and used the courts and peaceful protests to fight for these rights.

Another group prominent during the 1960s was the Nation of Islam (NOI), founded in 1930. Its leader in 1959 was Elijah Muhammad, who was seen by his followers as a prophet or messenger of God. Muhammad mixed traditional Islamic beliefs with his own and preached that the 'original man' was black and that white men were weak and degenerate; that they would only rule for 6000 years; and that their time was almost up. Muhammad described the white man as a 'devil'. The NOI followers were also known as Black Muslims. They followed traditional Islamic practices. They didn't gamble, take drugs, drink or smoke and they were very devout.

Rather than integrate into white America, the NOI wanted to separate from white American society and create a black community. The NOI was a **black nationalist** organisation. It built mosques in northern cities; set up its own schools, businesses, restaurants and farms; and tried to create a separate black economy. It preached self-discipline, personal pride and self-reliance. It called for the creation of an all-black state in the United States and rejected integration and non-violence. New members abandoned their 'slave names' (slaves were named by their owners) and took on new names. For example, Malcolm Little (on page 56) became Malcolm X.



Nation of Islam

### black nationalism

Black nationalism was popularised in the 1920s through Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Society. Black nationalists promoted a separate black identity and economic, social and political structures. They didn't believe African Americans should assimilate into white mainstream society.

## MALCOLM X (1925–65)

Malcolm Little was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. His father was a Baptist preacher and active supporter and organiser for Marcus Garvey's Negro Improvement Association, a black nationalist group. His father was killed in what Malcolm believed was a white hate attack in 1931. His mother was institutionalised in an insane asylum in 1937 and he was made a ward of the state and lived with foster families and government institutions during his teen years. Malcolm excelled at the white schools he attended in Michigan and had little interaction with local black communities as he grew up. He drifted into gambling, crime and drug use as a teenager. He was arrested in Boston for stealing jewellery from wealthy white families and served a seven-year sentence at the Charlestown State Prison.

Malcolm's brothers joined the Nation of Islam and encouraged him to do so too. In 1948, while in prison, he became a member of the NOI and wrote regularly to Elijah Muhammad, the movement's leader. He broke with his past in 1950 and abandoned his 'slave name', becoming Malcolm X. The NOI preached black nationalism, black separatism and that Islam was the black man's religion.

In 1955, Malcolm X met Betty Sanders, who joined the NOI in 1956 and became Betty X. They married in 1958 and had six daughters. By the late 1950s, Malcolm X was the NOI's most successful minister. He drew thousands of new converts. He had a charismatic presence: he was tall, handsome and always impeccably dressed.

Malcolm X has been described as one of the most influential and controversial African American activists of the 20th century.



Alamy Stock Photo/Mike P.

## The Hate that Hate Produced

In the early 1950s the NOI's membership numbered in the hundreds, and by 1959 it had reached the tens of thousands. Its membership was predominantly from northern urban areas. This increase is largely attributed to the work of Malcolm X, who was an enthusiastic convert. He became leader of Temple No. 7 and the very public face of the NOI movement.

The American public learnt about Malcolm X and the NOI via television in 1959 after a young, black journalist called Louis Lomax told media personality Mike Wallace about the NOI. The American broadcaster at CBS produced a five-part documentary called *The Hate that Hate Produced*. The documentary sensationalised the NOI's anti-white message and presented Elijah Muhammad's followers as vengeful and violent. However, it also helped publicise the NOI and attracted more believers.

### “ What are they saying? ”

Tonight we begin a five part series which we call 'The Hate that Hate Produced'; a story of the rise of Black Racism, of a call for black supremacy among a growing segment of American Negroes. While city officials, state agencies, white liberals and sober-minded Negroes stand idly by, a group of Negro dissenters are taking to street corner step ladders, church pulpits, sports arenas and ballroom platforms across the nation to preach the gospel of hate that would set off a federal investigation if it were to be preached by southern whites. What are they saying?

Listen—

'I charge the white man with being the greatest liar on earth. I charge the white man with being the greatest drunkard on earth. I charge the white man with being the greatest ... on earth ... I charge the white man ... with being the greatest murderer on earth ...'

Malcolm X FBI file, Memo, New York Office, 16 July 1959.



- 1 What were the core ideas of black nationalism?
- 2 Explain how these ideas differ to the views of groups like the NAACP, CORE and the SCLC?
- 3 Outline the main beliefs of the Nation of Islam and its founder, Elijah Muhammad.
- 4 Who was Malcolm X and what were his views regarding African-Americans?

## More than a hamburger

Young, middle-class African Americans in the South were impatient for change. They were children when the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling was made, but four years on, schools and universities remained segregated and the white and coloured signs were still displayed across the South. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, black and white students attended non-violent action workshops run by CORE and took the skills they learnt back to their own communities.

In Marion, South Carolina, an ice-cream stall was desegregated. Youth marchers brought thousands of students into the streets of Washington DC to protest school segregation. In Miami, Florida, there were protests to desegregate the beaches, and in Oklahoma City students occupied white-only lunch counters in five stores until the owners desegregated them. These protests were scattered. It wasn't until the 1960s in Greensboro, North Carolina, that a nationwide movement was born.

### Bar and Grill

African American artist Jacob Lawrence painted *Bar and Grill* soon after arriving in New Orleans, where restaurants and bars were segregated. Lawrence grew up in Harlem, New York, the son of southerners who had migrated to the North. His first major exhibition opened the day the Second World War was declared and he was drafted into the coastguard as a steward. During his service in the United States and Europe, Lawrence continued to paint, inspired by the colours of Harlem.



**SOURCE 3.6** *Bar and Grill* (1941) by Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000). Gouache on paper, 42.5 cm × 57.8 cm, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY





## QUESTIONS

Closely examine Jacob Lawrence's painting *Bar and Grill* and answer the following questions:

- 1 Who was Jacob Lawrence?
- 2 Where was Lawrence when he produced this painting?
- 3 The left side of this painting obviously depicts the 'white' side of a bar. Make a list of everything Lawrence has included in this part of the image.
- 4 The right side of the painting obviously depicts the 'black' side of the bar. Make a list of everything Lawrence has included in this part of the image.
- 5 What do you think Lawrence's purpose in creating this painting might have been?
- 6 Research other paintings by Lawrence that include themes relating to racial inequality in the United States. What do they add to his portrayal of the lives of African-Americans? To what extent do you think his work fairly portrays these issues?

## The Greensboro sit-ins

African Americans could shop and buy take-away food at the FW Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, but they were not permitted to sit at the lunch counter to eat. The lunch counter was reserved for white customers. When Ezell Blair Jr, Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain and David Richmond – four first-year students from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College – sat down at the counter on Monday 1 February 1960, they were told, 'Sorry, we don't serve coloured here'. They produced receipts for goods they had bought in the store and said if their money was good elsewhere, it should also be good at the lunch counter. The store manager advised the staff to ignore them and the first day of the sit-in ended quietly.

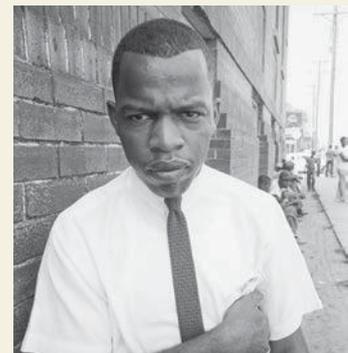
Greensboro was a vibrant city with five universities – two black and three white – and therefore had a large, progressive student population that was aware of political ideas and civil rights. Ralph Johns, a white clothing store merchant and NAACP member, was friends with the four students and had encouraged them to protest. Word of the sit-in soon spread around the campuses and the African American community. On the second day of the sit-in, 16 students joined in. On the Thursday, another 64 students occupied most of the 65 seats. The protesters included four white female students from the Women's College. By Friday 300 students, working in shifts, occupied the lunch counter. By then the sit-in had also extended to other stores in Greensboro.

### Do not

John Lewis was the son of poor sharecroppers from Alabama. As a student at Fisk University, Nashville, he attended non-violence workshops run by the Reverend James Lawson, a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). One month after the Greensboro Woolworth sit-in, Lewis and other Fisk students began a sit-in at the Nashville Woolworth lunch counters. Lewis wrote this list of instructions for participants of the sit-in.

#### DO NOT

- 1 Strike back nor curse if abused.
- 2 Laugh out.
- 3 Hold conversations with floor walker.
- 4 Leave your seat until your leader has given you permission to do so.
- 5 Block entrances to stores outside nor the aisles inside.



Getty Images/Steve Schapiro

SOURCE 3.7 John Lewis (1940– )

## DO

- 1 Show yourself friendly and courteous at all times.
- 2 Sit straight; always face the counter.
- 3 Report all serious incidents to your leader.
- 4 Refer information seekers to your leader in a polite manner.
- 5 Remember the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Love and non-violence is the way.

From J Lewis with M D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, Harcourt & Company, New York, 1998, p. 98.

By the second week at Greensboro, the sit-in participants were being heckled, spat on, and in one case a black protester had his coat set alight. Through all this the protesters maintained their non-violent strategies: not responding to abuse, refusing to move and not hitting back. The students read and studied quietly. The Greensboro sit-ins were receiving national and international attention by this stage. In the North, CORE members picketed Woolworth stores in solidarity with the Greensboro protesters and went to white suburbs, where they tested racial discrimination in restaurants and bowling alleys.

The demonstration stopped briefly for negotiation, but the white management refused to change the status quo. Forty-five students were arrested for trespassing, which resulted in a boycott of variety stores across the city. Retail profits were down by one-third and the six-month protest cost Woolworth \$200 000. Reluctantly, Greensboro's white leaders gave in and on 25 July 1960 three African American Woolworth staff sat down and had a cup of coffee at the lunch counter.

## Wade-ins, play-ins, pray-ins

Greensboro inspired similar protests by students across the South. By April 1960 more than 65 communities were protesting against Jim Crow laws and 2000 students had been arrested. It was



AP Image/AP/Adison Daily News

**SOURCE 3.8** The sit-ins continued beyond 1960. One of the most violent sit-ins took place at the Woolworth lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi on 28 May 1963. This photograph shows Tougaloo College professor John Salter with students Joan Trumpauer and Anne Moody, surrounded by a jeering and abusive crowd of segregationists. The sit-in lasted more than three hours and the protesters were subjected to beatings.

estimated that by August 1961, 70 000 blacks and whites had participated in sit-ins and 3000 had been arrested. These sit-ins were often spontaneous and were led by students, frequently without the approval of their parents. Soon, however, parents and others joined the sit-ins. Black, and some white, students demonstrated against segregated libraries, parks, churches, movie theatres, beaches, schools, swimming pools and shops.

Some non-violent protests were met with violence, especially in the Deep South. Demonstrators were knifed, flogged, and in one instance the initials KKK were carved into a demonstrator's skin. Acid was thrown in the face of an Atlanta civil rights leader. In Jackson, Mississippi, fire hoses and dogs were used against demonstrators, many of them children. In Orangeburg, South Carolina, in April 1960, students initiated sit-ins to protest against segregated lunch counters at the Kress store. A silent march of 1000 demonstrators into the city centre was stopped when police, firefighters and state troopers fired high-pressure hoses and tear gas into the march. The goal was not big enough to house the 400 students, so they were herded into stockades at gunpoint. Lunch counters remained segregated in Orangeburg.



### Diane Nash (1938–)

Diane Nash grew up in a middle-class Catholic family from Chicago and was the daughter of a Second World War veteran. She became involved in the civil rights movement in Nashville, Tennessee, when she was a 20-year-old student at Fisk University. Nash trained in non-violent techniques with Reverend James Lawson. Her first non-violent protest was participating in the sit-ins at the Nashville Woolworth store, which were organised by the Nashville Civil Leadership Council. She became a leader in the civil rights movement and worked closely with Martin Luther King Jr.

#### Interview in *The New Negro*

“In September, 1959, I came to Nashville as a student at Fisk University. This was the first time that I had been as far south as Tennessee; therefore, it was the first time that I had encountered the blatant segregation that exists in the South. I came then to see the community in sin. Seeing signs designating “white” or “colored”, being told, “We don’t serve niggers in here” ... “Go around to the back door where you belong” had tremendous psychological impact on me. To begin with, I didn’t agree with the premise that I was inferior, and I had a difficult time complying with it. I felt stifled and boxed in since so many areas of living were restricted. The Negro in the South is told constantly, “You can’t sit here. You can’t work there.” ... Segregation encompasses city parks, swimming pools and recreational facilities. Oppression extends to every area of life.

Failure to comply with these oppressions results in beatings, in house-burnings, ... and economic reprisals ...”

Diane Nash, quoted in MH Ahmann (ed.), *The New Negro*, Notre Dame: Fides, 1961.



Getty Images/Atro Newspaper/Carlo

Diane Nash went on to participate in sit-ins, where protesters were routinely beaten and abused. She was, along with 149 other student protesters, arrested and gaoled. The students were found guilty of disorderly conduct and fined \$50, which they refused to pay. Instead they served 30 days in the county gaol.



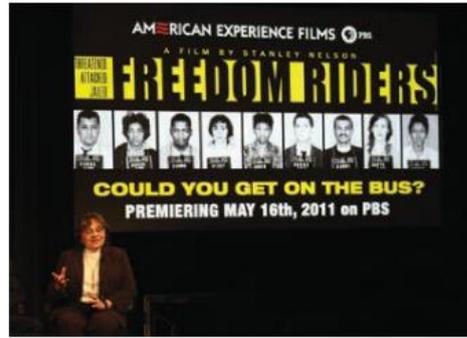
“... over the next few months I would really experience segregation; that I would see raw hatred; that I would see my friends beaten: that I would be a convict several times ... I was also unaware that I would begin to feel part of a group of people suddenly proud to be called “black”... At one time to have been called “nigger” was a gross insult and hurt keenly. Within the movement, however, we came to a realization of our own worth. We began to see our role and our responsibility to our country and to our fellow men.

Through the unity and purposefulness of the experience of the Nashville Negro, there was born a new awareness of himself as an individual.

There was also born, on the part of whites, a new understanding and awareness of the Negro as a person to be considered and respected.”

Diane Nash, quoted in MH Ahmann (ed.), *The New Negro*, Notre Dame: Fides, 1961.

The Nashville sit-ins took place from February to May 1960. On 19 April 1960, the home of Alexander Looby, one of the lawyers defending the students, was fire bombed. Later that same day 4000 demonstrators marched to Mayor West’s office, where Diane Nash asked him whether it was fair that black students could buy goods at stores but couldn’t eat there. Mayor West agreed that it was not fair. Consequently, six Nashville lunch counters were desegregated in May 1960.



Getty Images/Frederick M. Brown

**SOURCE 3.9** Diane Nash, speaking about the 2011 documentary that told the story of the civil rights movement and the Freedom Riders

## QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe Diane Nash’s background and her path to involvement with the civil rights movement.
- 2 Identify examples of the following discriminatory behaviour Diane Nash claims to have witnessed in the South:
  - a Verbal abuse
  - b Physical abuse
  - c Legal discrimination
- 3 According to Diane Nash, how did discrimination and aggression begin to strengthen the black community?
- 4 As a class:
  - a Watch relevant sections of the 2011 documentary *Freedom Riders* (PBS). How does this add to your knowledge of the events discussed by Nash?
  - b Discuss the case of Diane Nash. Why do you think a young woman from a middle-class family might be inspired to act in the way she did? How important were individuals like Nash to the growing civil rights movement?

- 1 Provide a brief summary of the main events of the Greensboro sit-in.
- 2 Examine the ‘instructions’ issued to the Greensboro sit-in participants, written by John Lewis:
  - a What do they reveal about the strategies used by the participants?
  - b Why might instructions like these have been important to the success of the protest?
- 3 What evidence is there to suggest that the Greensboro sit-in inspired others in the South?

# The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

The university students revitalised the civil rights movement, inspiring and sometimes shaming their parents' generation into becoming involved. Ella Baker, a 57-year-old veteran of the US civil rights movement, recognised the potential of these committed young people and urged them to create their own organisation to coordinate the sit-ins. She persuaded the SCLC to appropriate \$800 for a conference of youth leaders. Baker thought the NAACP and the SCLC were too cautious in their approach to civil rights.

At the conference in April 1960, she urged the 200 delegates to set up an organisation where the group as a whole (a consensus model), rather than one leader, would make the decisions. It was important that the members were united in their purpose as the work they planned to do was dangerous. The Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was established and a statement of purpose was adopted with non-violence and Christian love as its guiding principles. An office was established in Atlanta, and Marion Barry, a native Mississippian and future mayor of Washington DC, was elected as the organisation's first chairperson.

“Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt ... By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.”

SNCC Statement of Purpose, April 1960.

‘Temporary’ was dropped from the title of the organisation in October 1960 and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was created. Diane Nash and Reverend James Lawson

were two of the founding members of the SNCC. They left their university studies and committed themselves full time to the cause. The SNCC was uncompromising. It demanded full racial equality and was determined to win in the streets through non-violent protest. It was given a budget to send fieldworkers into the South. Three-quarters of these fieldworkers were under 20 years of age.

Getty Images/The Frent Collection



**SOURCE 3.10** The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was an interracial organisation when it was founded. These two badges, produced by the Committee, visually convey the organisation's aim of racial equality.



- 1 What was the main aim of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)?
- 2 Outline the range of activities the SNCC began to coordinate to promote racial equality.
- 3 Examine Source 3.10. Explain how the SNCC's badges conveyed the organisation's message.

# Conclusion

The success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott led to non-violence being adopted as a strategy by the civil rights movement in its fight against the Jim Crow laws. During this campaign, Martin Luther King Jr emerged as a leader. The SNCC and university students who began staging sit-ins across the South to desegregate lunch counters and other public spaces became a new force in the civil rights movement in 1960.

In the North, Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam preached a different view of race relations. He argued that rather than integrate, African Americans should set up their own society and a black nation.

## Chapter summary

- In the aftermath of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, initiated by the defiance of Rosa Parks, non-violence became the method of protest used by the civil rights movement in America.
- Martin Luther King Jr emerged as an inspirational leader during this campaign.
- New civil rights organisations committed to non-violence, including the SCLC and the SNCC, arose in the South during the late 1950s.
- Sit-ins and economic boycotts organised by university students in the South helped desegregate lunch counters and businesses in some cities and towns.
- There was still strong white resistance to desegregation in the Deep South.
- In the northern cities, African Americans experienced discrimination and de-facto segregation.
- The Nation of Islam preached black nationalism and a form of anti-white politics which was in contrast to the desegregation message promoted by the mainstream civil rights movement.

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### Further resources

- *Eyes on the Prize*, Episode 1: 'Awakenings' (1954–56); Episode 2: 'Fighting back' (1957–62); Episode 3: 'Ain't scared of your jails' (1960–61), PBS, 1987.
- *February One: The Story of the 1960 Greensboro Sit-in*, PBS, 2010.
- Fairclough, A, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001.
- Sitkoff, H, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008.

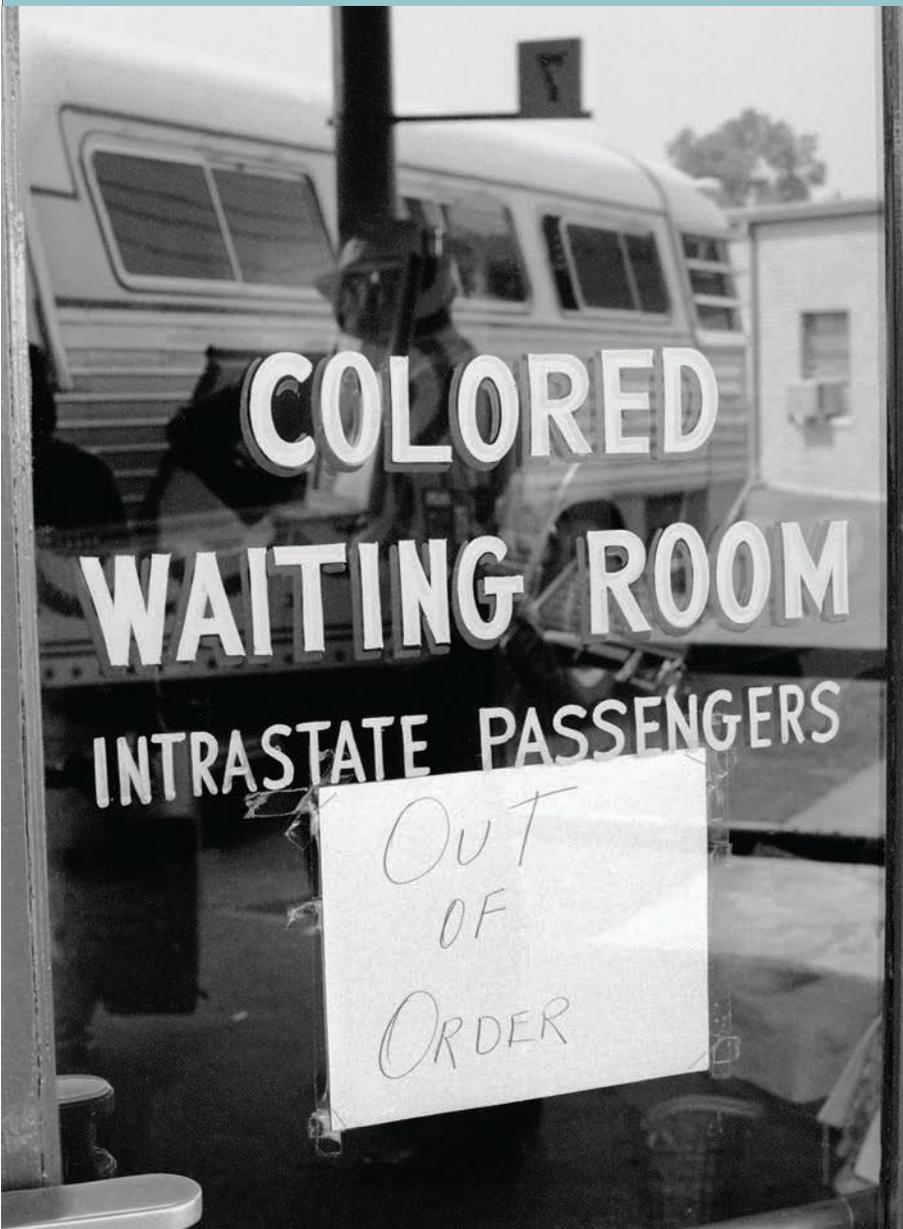


Further resources

## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Prepare a detailed comparison of Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X. You may wish to set your ideas out in a table, diagram or written piece. It should include information on the background, education, beliefs and values, activity, influence and any other issues you regard as important.
- 2 Compile a list of the main methods used by individuals and groups within the civil rights movement:
  - a Provide a brief summary of how each of the methods was used.
  - b Evaluate the methods. Which seem to be most successful?
- 3 Assess the significance of the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the civil rights movement.
- 4 Select one individual or group from the following list and use a site such as Piktochart to create an infographic outlining their beliefs and action within the civil rights movement up to 1960:
  - NAACP
  - RCNL
  - CORE
  - SCLC
  - SNCC
  - Another group of your choosing
- 5 Construct an extended response to one or more of the following questions:
  - a Assess the impact of legal changes to racial equality in the United States up to the early 1960s.
  - b Evaluate the influence of the principles of non-violence on the development of the civil rights movement up to the early 1960s.
  - c How successful was opposition to the civil rights movement in limiting the progress of racial equality in the United States up to the early 1960s?
  - d To what extent could the lives of African Americans be considered to have improved by the early 1960s?

# ‘A change is gonna come’: The Freedom Rides (1961–63)



In this chapter, students will examine the key features of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s.

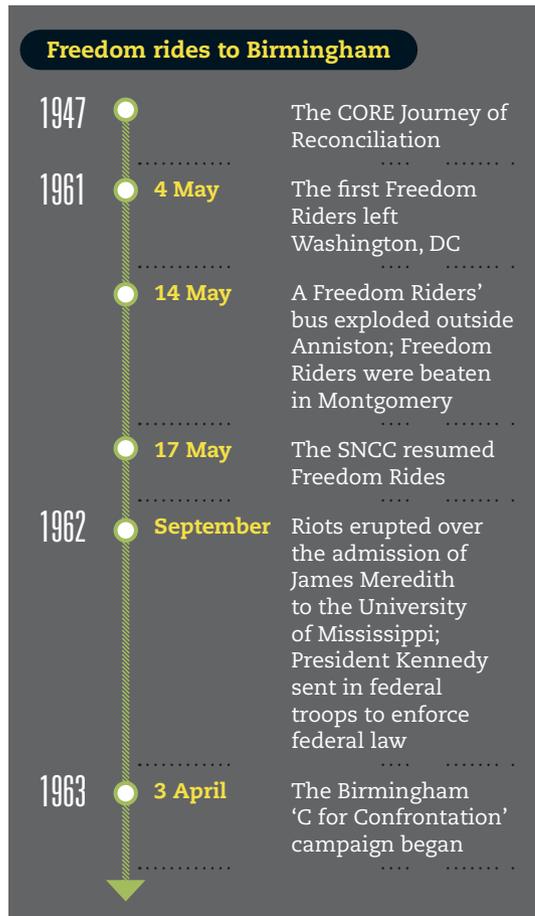
Aspects to be covered include:

- various strategies used to campaign for civil rights
- the similarities and differences between significant leaders including Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X
- ongoing opposition to the civil rights movement
- the Freedom Rides
- the confrontation at Birmingham
- the role of President John F. Kennedy.

1961: ‘Out of Order’ sign pasted to window for segregated waiting room marked ‘Colored Waiting Room Intrastate Passengers’ in Mississippi or Alabama.

# Introduction

The sit-in movement helped to revitalise the civil rights movement. The Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) initiated a non-violent protest to desegregate interstate bus travel in what became known as the Freedom Rides. This, and other forms of non-violent protest, was met by strong resistance in the Deep South from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other white supremacists. President JF Kennedy and the federal government were reluctant to act against southern states, and violence continued. The most violent confrontation was in Birmingham, Alabama, in the 'C for Confrontation' march of 1963, led by Martin Luther King Jr. This chapter examines the years from 1961 to 1963.



SOURCE 4.1 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter

## Riding the bus to freedom

If you travelled through the United States of America in the 1950s and early 1960s, you most likely travelled by Greyhound or Trailways interstate buses. Travelling into the South, passengers were confronted by Jim Crow laws. Black passengers sat in different parts of the bus from white passengers and weren't allowed to share seats with whites or to face whites. At the terminals there were signs for whites and signs for coloureds. The restrooms, waiting rooms and restaurants were segregated, with the black facilities being of a much poorer standard.

The segregation of interstate travel had been deemed unconstitutional in the Supreme Court's *Morgan v. Virginia* decision in 1946. Despite this, interstate travel remained segregated in the Deep South, with signs still prominently displayed.

## CORE

The Committee for Racial Equality (CORE) had challenged interstate travel segregation in the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947. Eight blacks and eight whites travelled through the states of Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky for 15 days on interstate buses to publicise the Morgan decision. It received little publicity at the time.

James Farmer had been appointed as CORE's new national director in 1961 and was looking for a strategy to revive the organisation. Inspired by the sit-in movement, he called for a new attack on Jim Crow laws in the South and decided to revisit the Journey of Reconciliation idea. He felt the sit-ins had not gone far enough. Most protesters were arrested and then had bail posted or went to trial, were found guilty and paid a fine. Farmer believed protesters should serve their gaol time, thereby filling the gaols to bursting point. Violent confrontation and full gaols, he believed, would force the Justice Department in Washington to act and enforce the federal laws overturning Jim Crow.

## Freedom Riders

The first Freedom Ride was planned for May 1961 and CORE carefully selected the 18 participants. Only experienced civil rights protesters were considered for this dangerous assignment, as the planned route was to take the riders into the most racist states in the United States. The 18 members of the CORE Freedom Ride – 12 black and six white – came from a wide variety of backgrounds and were of different ages. They included a 28-year-old white stockbroker, Genevieve Hughes, who had given up her Wall Street career to fight for civil rights; a 61-year-old white retired professor who had worked in the United Nations in post-war Europe; Jimmy McDonald, a 29-year-old black folk singer from New York City; a Korean war veteran; a 19-year-old black university student who had picked cotton as a child in Georgia; and two white ordained ministers.

The Freedom Riders met at the beginning of May 1961 for three days of intense training in non-violence. They role-played 'socio-dramas'. They role-played how they would challenge segregation at white or black only facilities. They screamed abuse at each other, threw each other to the floor, called each other racist names, threw drinks and food at each other and spat at each other. They practised what they would say when they were arrested. They were testing each other. Could they hold their tempers? Could they respond to violence without violence?

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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107-12-62

SOURCE 4.2 Interstate bus travel was in competition with the car by the 1960s. Advertising posters such as this one promoted the glamour, comfort and stress-free experience of bus travel.

# The Freedom Rides, May 1961

## 4 MAY: LEAVE WASHINGTON DC

Twelve Freedom Riders – two women and 10 men – were divided into two groups, travelling on different buses. Three journalists accompanied the riders.

## 8–9 MAY: CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Joseph Persons was arrested for asking for a shoe-shine at a whites-only stand. He spent two days in gaol.

## 10 MAY: ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA

White men attacked John Lewis, Al Bigelow and Genevieve Hughes when they tried to use a white waiting room at the terminal.

## 13–14 MAY: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Freedom Riders arrived and were given a welcome reception attended by Martin Luther King Jr, who advised them not to head into the Deep South and confront the KKK.

## 14 MAY: ANNISTON, ALABAMA

A screaming mob of 50 white supremacists attacked the bus with crowbars, slashing tyres and denting the bus when it arrived at the Greyhound terminal. The police made no arrests and gestured for the bus to leave.

The bus travelled slowly along the highway, followed by a convoy of trucks and cars filled with angry white men. The bus pulled over a few kilometres out of town and the Freedom Riders found themselves again surrounded by a screaming mob. The bus was firebombed. The riders escaped through the windows and lay choking on the grass. One of two highway patrolmen fired his gun to let the Klan know it was all over. Some riders were hospitalised. A fleet of cars picked them up and took them to Birmingham, Alabama.

Two hours later, a Trailways bus with the second group of Freedom Riders arrived at Anniston. The Klan boarded the bus and started beating up the riders, who refused to move to the blacks-only part of the bus.



SOURCE 4.3 The route taken on the CORE Freedom Ride





**14 MAY: BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

The Trailways bus arrived at Birmingham and the injured riders walked into the whites-only restaurant. They were beaten with iron bars, fists and baseball bats. Reporters and journalists were also attacked and their cameras and radio equipment smashed.

'Kill the Nigger' was heard through the terminal. No bus was prepared to take the riders any further. President Kennedy's advisor then intervened.

**15 MAY: NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

The Freedom Riders arrived in New Orleans on a flight chartered by the Justice Department.

**17 MAY: NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

Diane Nash from SNCC contacted James Farmer and told him the SNCC was prepared to resume the Freedom Ride immediately. A Freedom Ride Coordinating Committee was formed between CORE, SCLC and SNCC. They ignored a call from Robert Kennedy, the attorney-general and brother of President Kennedy, for a cooling-off period. James Farmer retorted, 'We've been cooling off for a hundred years. If we got any cooler, we'd be in the deep freeze'.



AAP Image/AP/Montgomery Advertiser

**SOURCE 4.4** Freedom Riders were instructed to dress formally and neatly, looking as respectable as they could. The men wore suits, ties and polished shoes. The women wore dresses, high heels and groomed hair.



AAP Image/AP

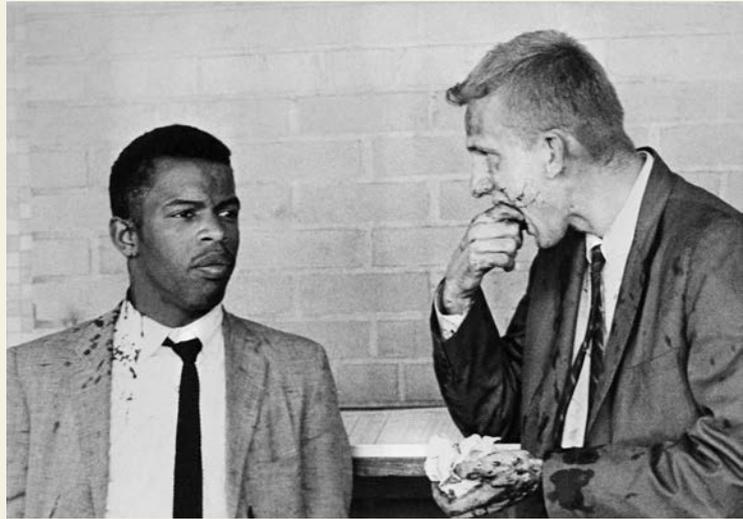
**SOURCE 4.5** The Anniston firebombing of a Freedom Ride bus





### 20 MAY: MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

Twenty-two new Freedom Riders arrived in Montgomery. They were all university students aged between 18 and 22. There were eight women and 14 men, and four of the riders were white. Police escorted them to the Montgomery city limits. Robert Kennedy had extracted a promise from Governor Pattinson that the riders would be protected from mob violence. However, they were attacked with baseball bats and lead pipes. A crowd of more than 1000 had congregated.



Getty Images/Bettmann

**SOURCE 4.6** John Lewis (left) and Jim Zwerg, splattered with blood after being beaten with baseball bats at Montgomery bus terminal. Zwerg was a theology student from an all-white town in Wisconsin. He first became interested in civil rights when he saw how his black roommate at Beloit University in the South was treated. At the Montgomery bus station, two men held his head while others took turns to punch him. He was diagnosed with a broken back five days later.

### 21 MAY: MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

A mass meeting was held at the Montgomery First Baptist Church with Martin Luther King Jr speaking about the Freedom Rides. A white mob surrounded the church and began throwing stones, bottles, stench bombs and firebombs into the church. Armed federal marshals flown into Alabama by the Justice Department lobbed tear gas into the crowd to disperse them. The people in the church were forced to spend the night there before they were safely escorted out.



Getty Images/Paul Schutzer

**SOURCE 4.7** National guards protect Freedom Riders from attacks by white supremacists. The Freedom Riders were arrested and charged as soon as they got off the bus and tried to use segregated facilities.

### 24 MAY: JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

The violence embarrassed President Kennedy, who was preparing for a meeting with Soviet Premier Khrushchev in June. He came to an agreement with the Mississippi government not to intervene in the arrest of the Freedom Riders, as long as they were protected from mob violence. Freedom Riders were guarded by national guards and then arrested when they arrived in Jackson. Charged with trespass, they refused to pay a fine and instead were put in the county gaol.





Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History

**SOURCE 4.8** In 1958, the state of Mississippi set up the State Sovereignty Commission. A former FBI agent assigned a group of informants to spy on civil rights activists and report back to the commission. When the Freedom Riders were arrested, their details and photos were taken for the commission. These are mug shots of Freedom Riders Stokely Carmichael, Margaret Leonard, Kredelle Petway and Paul Green.



Freedom riders



Freedom rides

## PRESIDENT JOHN F KENNEDY (1917–63)

Democratic nominee John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected as the 35th President of the United States of America in 1961. The first Catholic to be elected President, Kennedy was born into a wealthy Boston family that had little experience of African American life. He was 43 when elected. President Kennedy made a major effort to increase black voter registration before his election campaign and helped secure the release of Martin Luther King Jr from gaol in Atlanta. He appointed African Americans to government posts and his brother Robert chaired the Equal Opportunity Commission to oversee the government agency hiring of African Americans. This suggested he would support civil rights reform. Kennedy, however, believed

winning the Cold War was the most important aim of the United States. He was primarily interested in foreign policy and scientific advancement such as the space race. Civil rights issues were recognised as a US problem, but not one he was committed to acting decisively on at the beginning of his presidency. Civil rights legislation had the potential of dividing the Democratic Party into two groups: those who supported such legislation, and those who were opposed to it. This would cause him electoral damage.



Gaity Images/Getty Images

## Parchman

Despite the violence, mob attacks, arrests and possibility of injury, Freedom Riders continued to come to the South to challenge segregation. They were automatically arrested in Jackson, Mississippi, at the end of their journey. Once the county gaols began to fill, they were sent to the maximum security wing of the notorious Mississippi State Penitentiary prison farm, known as Parchman.

Freedom Rider William Mahoney described the conditions in Parchman during an interview on his release:

“ ... we slept on large bags of cotton and were locked in small, dirty, blood-splattered, roach-infested cells. Days were passed in the hot, overcrowded dining room playing cards, reading and singing ... ”

One month into the arrests, the guards were sick of the choruses of freedom songs and took away the inmates' mattresses and flyscreens, forcing them to sleep on the concrete floors. Another time, six men were thrown into solitary confinement in the six-by-six hot boxes for singing freedom songs too loudly. Cattle prods were used to make new prisoners strip. Wrist breakers were used and beatings were routine for those black prisoners who refused to call the guards 'sir'.

The conditions in Parchman failed to break the spirits of the Freedom Riders. The prison became a training ground for activists, and many young people who participated in the ride went on to become pivotal figures in the civil rights movement.

## Freedom songs

Singing was a form of non-violent protest. Freedom songs included black spirituals, folk songs and newly created songs. Some had their roots in songs sung by slaves on plantations and in black churches. They were songs of hope, of freedom and of struggle. They acted to unify during non-violent protest, such as marches, pickets, freedom rides, boycotts and sit-ins. The lyrics of freedom songs were customised to reflect incidents, individuals, places and names that formed part of the protests. The black spiritual 'woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus' became 'woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom'.

The titles of the songs give an idea of their message. Some of the well-known songs included:

- 'Eyes on the prize'
- 'We shall overcome'
- 'If you miss me at the back of the bus'
- 'Get your rights, Jack'
- 'Oh freedom'
- 'Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round'
- 'People get ready'.

Freedom songs communicated a political message and were a means of spreading an awareness of the cause. The SNCC Freedom Singers and the CORE Freedom Singers performed at university campuses across the United States, not only singing, but telling stories about the movement and raising funds. White folk artists of the 1960s, such as Bob Dylan, Peter Seeger, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez and Janis Ian, wrote freedom songs that demonstrated a unity with the civil rights cause. These folk songs helped create popular support for civil rights.

One of the best known protest songs written by an African American artist was 'A change is gonna come' by R&B singer Sam Cooke. He usually wrote light-hearted pop songs, but his experience of being arrested in Louisiana for registering in a whites-only hotel was said to have inspired the song. Recorded in 1963 and released in 1964, it became popular within the black community. In 2005 it was rated as number 5 on the 'Most influential songs of all time' list by *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Letters, diaries and memoirs of the men and women who were part of the civil rights movement often describe the empowering experience of singing. Bernice Reagon was arrested and gaoled during the desegregation protests in Albany, Georgia, in 1961. In an interview in 1979 she said:

In jail the songs kept us together . . . I was in jail with about sixty women, and there were teachers there, and educated people, a few people who had been drunk in Harlem and just ran . . .

So there was a real class difference between the Black women in jail, and music had a lot to do with breaking down those things because there were several women in there who could lead songs, of different ages, and everybody would back everybody up. It was the first time I led songs and felt totally backed up by a group of Blacks . . .

There was a sense of power, in a place where you didn't feel you had any power . . .



Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives

SOURCE 4.9 Musician Sam Cooke (1931–64)

## QUESTIONS

- 1 In pairs or small groups:
  - a Find the lyrics to one of the 'freedom songs' mentioned.
  - b Analyse the lyrics and explain how the writer represents the lives of African Americans, discrimination, the civil rights movement and the future for black people.
  - c Share your findings with the class and listen to some of the original recordings.
- 2 Using the ideas provided by Bernice Reagon and other information you have gathered, explain how these songs were used by the black community to help develop a sense of purpose and solidarity.



Change  
Gonna Come



Civil rights  
and music

## Victory

The Freedom Riders created a crisis and forced the US Government to act immediately rather than take the gradualist approach to civil rights. The Justice Department petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) – the regulatory body for interstate transport – to end racial discrimination. On 22 September 1961 the ICC announced its findings, ruling that racial discrimination was prohibited. The Freedom Riders continued their journey, testing the new ruling, over the winter of 1961 to 1962. Not surprisingly, Mississippi was the most reluctant state to comply and it challenged the ruling – unsuccessfully – in the Supreme Court.

The Freedom Rides built upon the successful non-violent sit-in movement. The movement attracted supporters from across the United States and enlisted whites and non-southerners to the civil rights cause. New leaders emerged from this movement and CORE and SNCC became more significant organisations, at times causing rivalry within the more traditional NAACP and SCLC.

- 1 What was the main aim of the Freedom Rides?
- 2 How did the first Freedom Riders prepare for their journey?
- 3 Describe the events that took place during the Freedom Rides in 1961.
- 4 Why did President John F Kennedy refuse to intervene too much in the events surrounding the Freedom Rides?
- 5 How were the Freedom Riders treated when they were arrested and how did this affect many individuals arrested?
- 6 Evaluate the contribution of the Freedom Rides to civil rights in the United States.

## James Meredith at Ole Miss

James Meredith was born seventh of 13 children in rural Mississippi. He enlisted in the air force in 1951 and served nine years, including a stint in Japan, before enrolling at the all-black Jackson University. Meredith applied to the all-white University of Mississippi (known as Ole Miss) in 1961, but was rejected. Ole Miss is located on the outskirts of the town of Oxford. It was the most prestigious university in Mississippi and had never enrolled a black person. After a lengthy legal battle run by the NAACP, the



Getty Images/Hulton Archive

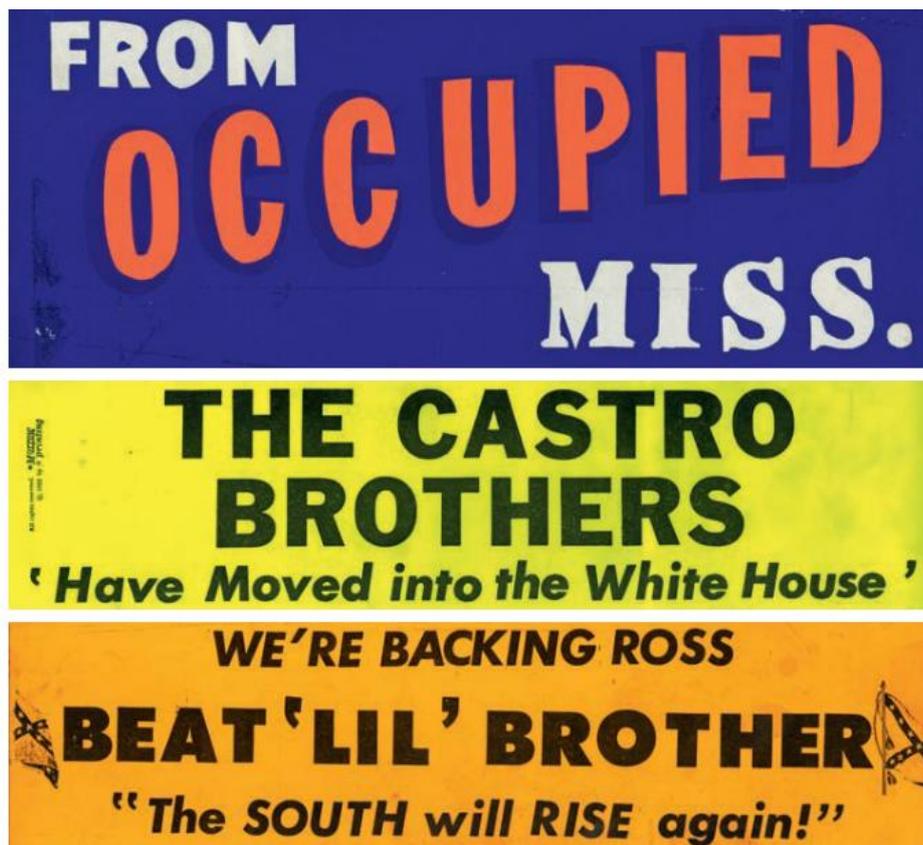
**SOURCE 4.10** James Meredith being escorted into Ole Miss

university's segregation policy was overturned and Ole Miss was forced to accept Meredith as a student. Robert Kennedy tried to negotiate with Governor Ross Barnett to obey the federal ruling and protect Meredith from violence. Barnett, however, had promised the voters of Mississippi that no school in his state would ever be integrated.

Federal officials escorted Meredith into Ole Miss on 30 September 1962, where he enrolled. Southern radio stations broadcast messages to their audiences warning of a federal 'invasion'.

Carloads of demonstrators arrived in Oxford and began belting federal marshals with bottles, bricks and rocks. Tear gas was fired into the crowd. Two people were killed and 300 injured; the campus looked like a battlefield. Kennedy ordered 5000 troops into Oxford to restore order. Meredith was guarded by federal troops throughout his time at Ole Miss.

James Meredith's enrolment at Ole Miss is regarded as a significant moment in the battle for civil rights. President Kennedy was forced to intervene in the confrontation and take a more hands-on approach to civil rights. The confrontation also saw more moderate segregationist groups in Mississippi reject violence. The desegregation of Ole Miss was a pivotal moment in Mississippi history.



**SOURCE 4.11** These car bumper stickers were a form of political protest, used by those opposed to integration and federal intervention in the affairs of Mississippi. 'The Castro brothers' is a reference to John and Robert Kennedy. Castro was the leader of communist Cuba. 'Lil' is a reference to Robert Kennedy, President Kennedy's younger brother and the attorney-general.



Desegregation  
of Ole Miss

- 1 Use the weblink provided to conduct some extra research into the desegregation of Ole Miss.
- 2 Referring to primary sources gathered in your investigation, write a paragraph that explains the significance of the desegregation of Ole Miss.
- 3 Examine Source 4.11. Evaluate these sources as evidence of the strategies used to oppose the civil rights movement.

# ‘Bombingham’

Birmingham in Alabama was the most segregated and violent city in the South. Many of its most influential citizens were rabid in their hatred of desegregation. The city closed public parks rather than integrating them. It became known as ‘Bombingham’, for the many black churches that were bombed. The church of Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, who kept civil rights alive in Birmingham after the NAACP was banned in Alabama, was bombed twice.

Burning crosses – a KKK warning sign – were common features of the landscape. The Ku Klux Klan operated with impunity in Birmingham. Segregation across the city was enforced by Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor, the commissioner for public safety, who had control of the police and fire departments. Connor had joined the KKK as a teenager and was a committed white supremacist. He ran for mayor and lost in April 1963, but refused to leave his position as commissioner even though the position had been abolished after pressure from white moderates.

Reverend Shuttlesworth invited the SCLC into Birmingham. The organisation believed that if Jim Crow laws could be defeated in the most racist of southern cities, they could be defeated across the South. A top-secret plan to desegregate Birmingham – called ‘Project C’ (for ‘Confrontation’) – was developed several months before Martin Luther King Jr arrived in the city.

“ The power of nonviolence lay in its ability to *symbolize* the violence of segregation. ‘We wanted the world to know what was going on in the South,’ Andrew Young [SCLC member and close friend of King] explained. ‘We had to craft a concise and dramatic message that could be explained in just sixty seconds. That was our media strategy.’ The demonstrations were, to use a popular phrase of the 1960s, ‘street theater.’ The SCLC sought vivid images that would attract the news media – especially the cameras – and evoke sympathy for the protesters. Blatant provocation, if it led to bloodshed, would have destroyed that sympathy.

A Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001, p. 278.



Bombingham

## Martin Luther King’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’

On 3 April 1963, the secretly planned demonstrations began. The first stage was sit-ins at local segregated lunch counters. Three days later Reverend Shuttlesworth led a march of 50 African Americans to city hall and everybody was arrested. The marches continued and demonstrators continued to be arrested. White businesses were boycotted. On 10 April the city passed a ruling banning racial demonstrations.

King announced he would not abide by this immoral injunction and on 12 April he marched with 50 others to city hall along a route lined with 1000 cheering supporters. Connor, surrounded by snarling police dogs, arrested him. In gaol, King wrote a famous letter (‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’), in which he justified the strategies used in the black freedom struggles. He dismissed calls for African Americans to be patient and described the pain and hurt segregation caused them. He argued that there was a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. He considered the struggle for civil rights a part of America’s dream of democracy and Christian values. The letter, written on toilet paper and newspaper, was smuggled out of the gaol and published in newspapers across the country.



Letter from Birmingham Jail

## The children’s march

Outside gaol the protests continued and became violent. William Moore, a white CORE member, was shot in the head and killed outside Gadsten, Alabama, while on a freedom walk, carrying a sign saying ‘Equal Rights’. Other such walks were met with arrest and violence.

The most controversial part of the Project C campaign was launched after King was released from gaol. James Bevel from SNCC had recruited and trained children for non-violent protest, arguing they were more likely than adults to demonstrate as they didn't fear losing their jobs. On 2 May 1963, 1000 black children, the youngest of whom was six years old, marched out of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church to defy the city ordinance against racial demonstrations. They were arrested in front of television cameras while dancing, clapping and singing freedom songs. The next day, 1000 other students met at the church and Connor, enraged, set police dogs onto the children as they ran to escape. High-pressure fire hoses were trained on children and adults while police attacked with batons. Over two days, 1300 children were arrested.



**SOURCE 4.12** A 17-year-old civil rights demonstrator is attacked by police dogs in Birmingham, Alabama, on 3 May 1963. A sculpture by James Kirk called 'Police and Dog Attack' memorialised this event in Kelly Ingram Park, Birmingham.

## Kennedy intervenes

Television footage of the violence electrified the nation and generated support for King, forcing President Kennedy to act. Loath to send in federal troops, he sent the Justice Department in to negotiate a deal between the SCLC and the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, which represented white, segregated businesses. Meanwhile, the riots, demonstrations and violence continued unabated, with Connor using water cannons against unarmed demonstrators, corralling 3000 of them into a park. The negotiations went on. The Justice Department argued that if it were forced to send in troops, local businesses would suffer, but the Chamber of Commerce refused to compromise. The demonstrations continued. Non-violence became increasingly difficult to maintain, as horses, batons and water cannons were used against demonstrators.

It wasn't until 10 May 1963 that the SCLC called off the protests after an agreement was signed by business leaders to desegregate stores, hire African American sales clerks and conduct further negotiations to improve employment opportunities for blacks. The concessions were in part a response to the economic downturn the demonstrations brought to Birmingham. This angered the Ku Klux Klan, which tried to wreck the agreement by letting off a number of bombs across the city. Kennedy mobilised federal troops in readiness to go into Birmingham if the agreement didn't hold.

## Legacy

In the months following the Birmingham marches, more and more southern cities held protests against the Jim Crow system. The protests were still met with violence and repression, but after Birmingham, people knew that Jim Crow laws could be challenged and defeated. Birmingham radicalised the civil rights movement and encouraged more African Americans in the South to rise and demonstrate. More than 20 000 people were arrested and there were 1412 civil rights demonstrations across the country in 1963. In the North, some demonstrators rejected non-violence and fights erupted between the police and protesters during protest marches. Police harassment and

brutality was a major cause of tension in northern cities, with some peaceful protests in Chicago and Philadelphia turning into rock and stone throwing riots. These riots continued throughout 1963.

There was a growing divide between those in the civil rights movement – such as the NAACP and the SCLC, who supported non-violence – and the more radical protest groups, which were impatient for change and found support in the northern **ghettos**.

The 1963 demonstrations across the country saw the Kennedy administration forced to confront the issue of civil rights. Birmingham, with its police dogs and water cannons, exposed the ugly violence of the Jim Crow system on television screens and in newspapers across the world. This image of the nation embarrassed the United States at a time of Cold War tension. The United States promoted itself as the bastion of democracy and denounced the Soviet Union and its allies as places characterised by repression and brutality. There was also a concern that African Americans, impatient for change, would move from non-violence to violence, as advocated by more radical leaders such as Malcolm X.



Strategies

### ghetto

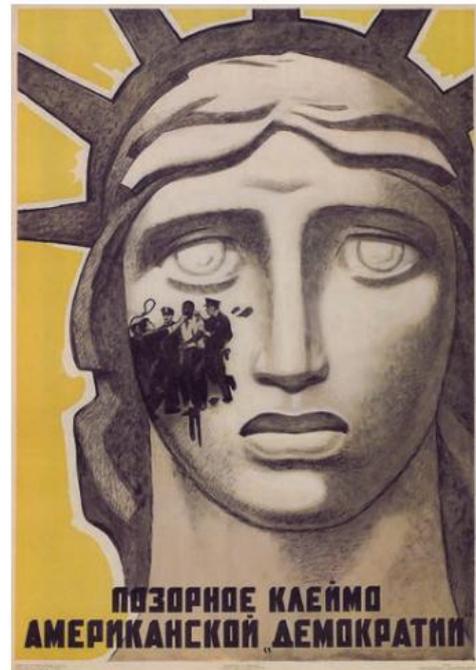
A poor or slum area of a city occupied by one racial or cultural group

### 'A Shameful Brand of American Democracy'

During 1963, Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States continued. Both superpowers developed more powerful nuclear weapons, competing in science and space, and on the sporting field. They covertly supported conflicts and resistance in countries that shared their political ideology. They also worked to discredit each other's political systems.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Conduct some brief research into the Statue of Liberty in New York:
  - a What is it meant to symbolise?
  - b What is the statue's facial expression? What might this be meant to symbolise?
- 2 Closely examine the poster:
  - a How does the facial expression depicted in the poster compare with the original Statue of Liberty?
  - b What scene is depicted on the cheek of the face in the poster?
  - c What do you think is the main message of the poster?
  - d Why would the Soviet Union want to create a poster like this?



Alamy Stock Photo/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Fine Art Images

**SOURCE 4.13** Poster published in the Soviet Union in 1963. It reads, 'A Shameful Brand of American Democracy'.

- 1 Why was Birmingham chosen as a place to confront issues of racial inequality?
- 2 Find a copy of Martin Luther King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' and read the first five paragraphs. How does King defend his actions?
- 3 Create a flow-chart diagram that provides a detailed outline of the events in Birmingham in 1963.

# Conclusion

Between 1961 and 1963, civil rights activists put themselves in personal danger to draw media attention to their cause and expose racism in the South. The Freedom Riders and the Birmingham demonstrators endured arrest, imprisonment, beatings and death threats. Despite this, they were resolved to continue the fight, and were empowered and unified through the group struggle. Resistance in the Deep South hardened among the more extreme white supremacists, and the federal government was pressured to confront civil rights abuses in the South in response to brutality. The scale of desegregation demonstrations after Birmingham showed that southern blacks would no longer put up with segregation.

## Chapter summary

- The Freedom Riders confronted desegregation on interstate buses through non-violent protest and civil disobedience.
- The Freedom Riders faced physical dangers and abuse, and endured prison sentences.
- President Kennedy made an agreement with southern governments that he would not intervene in the arrests of Freedom Riders as long as they were protected from the mobs.
- President Kennedy was reluctant to pass federal civil rights legislation that would alienate his southern Democrat supporters.
- Opposition to desegregation hardened among the more extreme white supremacists.
- President Kennedy sent federal troops to the University of Mississippi to quell riots and violence directed against the legal enrolment of black student James Meredith.
- The SCLC initiated a campaign in Birmingham to draw attention to segregation; the demonstrations were met with extreme violence, which was captured by the media.

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### Further resources

- *Eyes on the Prize*, Episode 3: 'Ain't scared of your jails' (1960–61); Episode 4: 'No easy walk' (1961–63), PBS, 1987.
- *Freedom Riders*, PBS, 2011.
- Fairclough, A, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001.
- Sitkoff, H, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008.
- Arsenault, R, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, Oxford University Press, 2007.



Further resources

## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Outline the various strategies used to oppose the civil rights movement.
- 2 Research photographs taken in Birmingham in 1963:
  - a Select 5–6 images that record some of the events.
  - b Use these photographs and the information you have gathered from this chapter to create a report summarising the events and explaining their significance to the civil rights movement.
- 3 Discuss the importance of President John F Kennedy to the civil rights movement.
- 4 Find another example of Soviet artwork similar to Source 4.13 that criticises the United States. What message does it include? How does it convey this message? Compare and contrast examples found by other members of your class.
- 5 During the early 1960s, the civil rights movement began to break into groups who supported non-violence and those who wanted to take more aggressive action against white supremacy. In pairs, develop a set of reasons that might have been used to justify *both* points of view. Debate these two approaches as a class.
- 6 Create an extended response to one of the following questions:
  - a Assess the impact of the Freedom Rides on the civil rights movement.
  - b How effective was non-violence in advancing the cause of racial equality in the United States up to 1963?
  - c Evaluate the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr in shaping the civil rights movement up to the end of 1963.
  - d Assess the role of opposition groups in shaping the civil rights movement up to the early 1960s.

## 05

# ‘Mississippi goddam’: The Mississippi Freedom Summer (1963–65)

In this chapter, students will examine some of the most violent and iconic events of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the March on Washington led by Martin Luther King Jr.
- the passing of the *Civil Rights Act 1964* under President Lyndon B. Johnson
- the Freedom Summer campaign
- the March on Selma
- the changes taking place in American society.



Civil Rights demonstrators during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Washington DC, 28 August 1963

# Introduction

President John F Kennedy’s announcement in May 1963 that he was going to ask Congress to pass a civil rights bill was welcomed as a major triumph for the civil rights movement. There was, however, strong resistance to desegregation and voter registration in the Deep South, and civil rights campaigning continued amid increasing levels of violence. Some members of the civil rights movement began to question whether non-violence was an effective weapon against the entrenched racism in US society, and some alliances between civil rights groups became strained.

This chapter explores the tumultuous period between May 1964 and August 1965 and focuses on the March on Washington, the Mississippi Summer Project, the March on Selma and the passing of the *Civil Rights Act 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act 1965*.



SOURCE 5.1 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter

## 11 June 1963

President Kennedy announced on television on 11 June 1963 that the United States was facing a ‘moral crisis’ and he was going to ask Congress to pass a sweeping civil rights bill. The Kennedy administration came to the realisation that segregation in the South was destabilising the country and embarrassing the United States in the eyes of the world. Concerned that non-violence could be abandoned for violence and an African American revolt, it was believed that only legislation to remove racial discrimination would calm the situation and restore stability. President Kennedy’s speech – penned by speechwriter Ted Sorenson, with contributions by Robert Kennedy and the president himself – was written only hours before it was delivered. It was incomplete when President Kennedy sat down to record it.

President Kennedy began his address by describing how the Alabama National Guard had been deployed to the University of Alabama to ensure that two African American students could enrol. Kennedy asked Americans to examine their consciences on this and other matters. He argued that the nation was founded on the principle that all men were created equal, and that African Americans should be able to eat in the same restaurants, attend the same schools and travel on the same buses as other citizens. He then explained why he was introducing civil rights legislation.

## President Kennedy's address to the nation

We are confronted primarily with a moral issue ... One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes ...

The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.

The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, parades, and protests which create tensions and threaten violence and threaten lives.

We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is time to act in the Congress, in your State and local legislative body and, above all, in all of our daily lives ...

We have a right to expect that the Negro community will be responsible, will uphold the law, but they have a right to expect that the law will be fair, that the Constitution will be color blind, as Justice Harlan said at the turn of the century.

This is what we are talking about and this is a matter which concerns this country and what it stands for, and in meeting it I ask the support of all our citizens.

Thank you very much.



Kennedy's speech

### QUESTIONS

- 1 When was this speech delivered?
- 2 What do you know about the context in which it was created? What events were taking place around this time?
- 3 How might this context have influenced Kennedy's decision to make this speech?
- 4 What arguments does Kennedy use to try to persuade his audience that improving race relations in the United States should be a priority?
- 5 How might the following have responded to this speech?
  - a White supremacists
  - b Non-violent pro-civil rights groups like the NAACP and the SCLC
- 6 Select one phrase or sentence that you think summarises the main point of the speech. Compare your selection to others in the class.
- 7 How might this source be used by a historian studying the American civil rights movement?

# Assassination in Jackson

After the Birmingham protests and the announcement of the new civil rights legislation, white supremacists across the South, and their northern supporters, prepared for a last-ditch stand against integration. Hours after Kennedy's announcement of the Civil Rights Bill, Medgar Evers, a well-known Mississippi NAACP activist, was shot in his driveway in Jackson, Mississippi, by white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith.

## MEDGAR EVERS (1925–63)

Medgar Evers was born to a poor family on a Mississippi farm in 1925. He joined the US Army, served in Europe from 1943 to 1945 and fought in the Battle of Normandy. On his return to Mississippi, he was forced at gunpoint not to vote in local elections. Evers studied administration and became a businessman. He tried, unsuccessfully, to enrol in the segregated University of Mississippi Law School.

Evers first became involved in civil rights issues during the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL) campaign. He became an NAACP field officer in Mississippi and was involved in a boycott of white businesses. He was influential in the desegregation campaign for the University of Mississippi and the enrolment of James Meredith at Ole Miss.

In the week before his death, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at his house and he was almost run down by a car. Evers was shot in the driveway of his home a few hours after Kennedy's civil rights speech was broadcast. He was carrying T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan, 'Jim Crow Must Go'.

Evers was laid to rest with full military honours at Arlington National Cemetery. He was mourned nationally and President Kennedy condemned his assassination. Bob Dylan wrote the ballad, 'Only a pawn in his game', about Evers' assassination. The song was performed at the March on Washington.

Byron De La Beckwith, a White Citizens' Council and Ku Klux Klan (KKK) member, was arrested for the murder. However, two all-white juries failed to convict him. It wasn't until 1994 that De La Beckwith was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.



Getty Images/CBS Photo Archive



Getty Images/John Loengard

**SOURCE 5.2** The influential US magazine *Life* was first published in 1936. It is regarded as having changed journalism through its use of photo journalism. This front cover shows Medgar's wife, Myrlie Evers-Williams, a noted civil rights campaigner, comforting their son Darrell at Medgar's funeral.



### 'Mississippi goddam'

Nina Simone, a renowned singer and pianist, performed 'Mississippi goddam' at Carnegie Hall in 1964. The lyrics were written in response to the murder of Medgar Evers. They included the lines, 'Alabama's got me so upset', 'Tennessee's made me lose my rest' and 'Everybody knows about Mississippi goddam'. The song was banned in several southern states and became a civil rights anthem.

**SOURCE 5.3** Nina Simone (born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in 1933) came from a poor family in North Carolina. She became a civil rights activist, performing and speaking at civil rights meetings such as those for the Selma-to-Montgomery marches. Simone explored civil rights through her music.

- 1 How did white supremacists react to the announcement of Kennedy's new civil rights bill?
- 2 Examine the case of Medgar Evers:
  - a What was his involvement with the civil rights movement?
  - b How had he become a target of violent white supremacists before his murder?
  - c What happened to Evers' murderer?
  - d Analyse the perspective of Source 5.2.
- 3 Research the song 'Mississippi goddam' by Nina Simone. Evaluate the lyrics as a source of information regarding the civil rights movement.

## The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

Civil rights activists knew it was important to encourage Congress to pass civil rights legislation and they acted quickly to try to influence its decision. King and civil rights leaders revived the idea of the March on Washington first planned by A Phillip Randolph during the Second World War (see page 27). It aimed to focus attention on black employment issues. The date chosen for the march, 28 August, commemorated the death of 14-year-old Emmett Till.

President Kennedy was initially opposed to the march, fearing the possibility of violence, which could threaten the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. The march was only approved after meticulous planning. Recruiting pamphlets were sent out to churches, unions, social welfare groups and civil rights groups across the country. Portable toilets, water fountains, ambulances and rest stations were organised, and instruction pamphlets were written telling marchers where to meet, what to wear and which songs to sing.





I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its Governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and before the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the mount with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the genuine discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, pray together; to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom forever, knowing that we will be free one day.

And I say to you today my friends, let freedom ring. From the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, let freedom ring. From the mighty mountains of New York, let freedom ring. From the mighty Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snow capped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

But not only there; let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain in Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill in Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we're free at last!'

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I Have a Dream

## QUESTIONS

- 1 How would you summarise the 'dream' Martin Luther King Jr refers to in this speech?
- 2 King tries to link his speech with important national references:
  - a Find these references and make a record of each.
  - b What might his motive have been in doing this?
- 3 King also gives this speech the feel of Christian sermon (he was a Baptist Minister). How does he use the following to do this?
  - a Poetic language
  - b Imagery and symbolism
  - c Biblical references
- 4 What important words and phrases are repeated throughout this speech? What effect does this have?
- 5 How does this speech compare-and-contrast with the speech delivered by Kennedy in May of the same year? How would you explain the differences between them?
- 6 This speech by Martin Luther King Jr is often considered to be one of the most important speeches delivered in the 20th century. Conduct some research into the significance of this speech and create a list of 3–4 reasons why it might be considered so important. Consider the content of the speech but also its context.
- 7 The 'I Have a Dream' speech is protected by copyright law. The Estate of Martin Luther King Jr has sued a number of media companies that have used the speech, most notably CBS in 1999. What is copyright and why might the Estate seek to 'protect' the words of this speech? What implications might copyright law have for historians?

## Too little, too late

The march was declared to be a great triumph for the civil rights movement. It was televised live across the world and reported in newspapers internationally. It didn't change any votes in Congress though. In the South, President Kennedy and the Democrats were losing voter support as Southern Democrats increasingly pledged allegiance to Barry Goldwater, the Republican senator from Arizona, who opposed the Civil Rights Bill.

Behind the scenes before the march, tensions developed between members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the march's organising committee. The speech John Lewis had prepared was critical of the Kennedy administration, saying that the Civil Rights Bill was 'too little, too late'. It didn't protect African Americans trying to vote in Mississippi and did nothing to stop police brutality and economic injustice in the North. Lewis' speech called for a revolution of 'black masses' across the United States. Lewis was persuaded to tone down his speech for the march. His original speech expressed the frustrations felt by many at the slow pace of change and signalled something of the differences that were emerging within the civil rights movement.

Separatist groups such as the Nation of Islam (NOI) chose not to attend the march. Malcolm X was still critical of non-violence and renamed the March on Washington, 'The Farce on Washington'.

## Death in the South

One month after the March on Washington, on 16 September 1963, a bomb planted at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham killed Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley, four girls aged between 11 and 14 attending Sunday School. Twenty others were seriously wounded. The girls' deaths shocked the nation and saw a surge of support for the Civil Rights Bill.

Two months later, on 22 November, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. The Civil Rights Bill was at the time bogged down in Congress and was in danger of being watered down. Vice President Lyndon Johnson of Texas assumed the presidency and made passing the Civil Rights Bill a top priority. He saw it as a tribute to President Kennedy's memory.

### *The Civil Rights Act 1964*

The Civil Rights Act:

- banned discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion and national origin in:
  - employment
  - federally assisted programs
  - public facilities
  - accommodation
- gave the government power to initiate lawsuits to desegregate schools
- set up the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- created the Community Relations Service to investigate racism in US society.



Civil Rights Act 1964



Civil Rights Act 1964

## LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON (1908–73)

Lyndon Baines Johnson was born to a poor family in rural Texas on 27 August 1908. He worked to put himself through teachers' college and taught poor Mexican students. Johnson was elected to the House of Representatives as a New Deal Democrat. He served in the navy during the Second World War in the Pacific. After the war he returned to politics. In 1961, Johnson was appointed Vice President of the United States of America, and he became the 36th President after the assassination of President Kennedy on 27 November 1963. Johnson oversaw the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* in 1964.

### The Great Society

At his State of the Union Address in January 1965, Johnson identified poverty as the greatest barrier

to freedom and success in the United States. He pledged to create a Great Society – to end poverty, racial discrimination and inequality. In 1964, 55 per cent of black Americans and 18 per cent of white Americans lived below the poverty line. His speeches were careful to emphasise that his war on poverty was colour blind; it aimed to help all Americans, regardless of colour. However, historian Thomas J Sugrue argues it was aimed primarily at addressing the poverty and disadvantage experienced by black, urban Americans. During President Johnson's two terms of office, the United States fought in the Vietnam War, a commitment made by presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy.



- 1 What was the main purpose of the March on Washington?
- 2 On what date did the march take place and what anniversary did this mark?
- 3 Describe the preparations for the march.
- 4 Outline the key features of the march.
- 5 To what extent was the March on Washington a success? Support your answer with specific evidence.
- 6 Consider the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964:
  - a Explain why the implementation of this Act was complicated for Kennedy and Johnson.
  - b What role did President Johnson play in pushing the *Civil Rights Act* through?
  - c How did the Act improve the position of African Americans?

## The Mississippi Summer Project

Bob Moses, a leader of the civil rights movement, had been working in the South as an organiser for the SNCC on the Voter Education Project since 1960. This project, funded by the federal government, aimed to enrol blacks to vote. Mississippi remained the most segregated state in the United States, with a black voter participation rate of just five per cent. SNCC field workers, most of them young and black, did the slow work of registering voters. The SNCC activists were beaten, shocked with cattle prods, their homes ransacked, their houses shot at and they were routinely arrested on trumped-up charges by the local police, who were often Klan members. Houses and churches were firebombed and threatening phone calls interrupted their nights. African Americans who attempted to register to vote lost their jobs and were evicted from farms or rented land, beaten and refused welfare payments. Banks refused to extend credit to black customers who tried to register to vote. Herbert Lee, a Mississippi farmer, was murdered in 1961 for being involved in a voter registration drive.

## Voter registration

Every state in the United States apart from North Dakota requires US citizens to register before they can vote. Once registered, their name is added to the electoral roll and they receive a voting card. Unlike in Australia, it is not compulsory to vote in the United States. Until recently, US citizens were required to register to vote at state offices. In the South, prior to the passing of the *Voting Rights Act 1965*, various strategies were used to make it difficult, if not impossible, for blacks to enrol to vote.

### STATE OF ALABAMA LITERACY TEST

The State of Alabama introduced literacy tests that required applicants for enrollment to fill out a 20-page questionnaire. They asked for information on education, employment, membership of organisations and personal character references. Applicants were then required to read aloud passages from the Constitution, answer questions and then undertake a dictation test on the Constitution. More than 100 different literacy tests were used, making it difficult for people to study for them. Examples of these literacy tests were used in voter education classes during the 1960s.

## Freedom elections

In October 1963, Moses conducted freedom elections to prove that blacks wanted to vote. Eighty thousand disenfranchised African Americans took part in a mock election and ‘voted’ Aaron Henry, the NAACP state head, as Governor of Mississippi. The civil rights groups in Mississippi had united under a coalition in the same year – the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) – with Moses as convener. In 1964, it launched the Mississippi Summer Project – also known as the Mississippi Freedom Summer – a major campaign that challenged the white power structure in Mississippi.

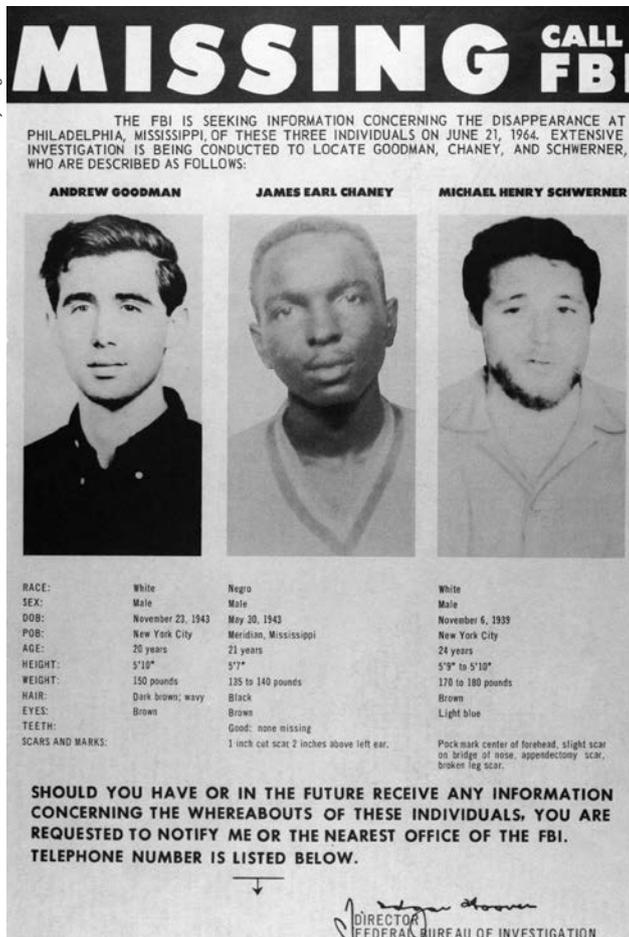
The SNCC debated whether large numbers of whites should be invited to join the project. There was some opposition, with some members concerned that white volunteers would push aside African Americans and stifle black self-confidence. Moses rejected this view as he continued to support the SNCC’s policy of integration. He also knew that having white students working with the SNCC would guarantee the media covered the Freedom Summer and might help protect the black community from violence. Flyers were posted in northern universities, inviting university students to come South to teach in freedom schools and work in community centres set up by the COFO to support black voter education. The participants would live with black families in these communities.



**SOURCE 5.7** Freedom Summer volunteers singing ‘We shall overcome’, the anthem of the civil rights movement, at their training session before leaving for Mississippi in June 1964

## The South prepares

Even before the summer began, Mississippi was preparing itself for what was called an invasion. Police numbers were increased and makeshift prisons built. New regulations were passed prohibiting civil rights meetings. Half a dozen black churches were burnt down and the headquarters of the CORE and the SNCC were bombed. By 1964 the Mississippi KKK membership had surged to 10 000. On 24 April the KKK burnt 61 crosses in Mississippi simultaneously.



**SOURCE 5.8** An FBI 'Missing' persons poster showing Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney

## 'Missing: call FBI'

In June 1964, the first 300 Freedom Summer volunteers were trained in non-violent resistance in Ohio. Moses was speaking to the group when he was interrupted by a call from Mississippi. Three of the advance guards for the Freedom Summer had gone missing. The three men had travelled to the burnt-out Mount Zion church in Lonsdale. They had been there the week before when the congregation had voted to hold a freedom school in the church. Three nights later, 30 white, armed men had blocked the church entrance and beaten up the black men to try to find out 'where the white boys were'.

The 'white boys' were Mickey Schwerner, a 24-year-old white leader of the Meridian Freedom Summer Project who had travelled to Meridian with his wife and fellow activist Rita, and 20-year-old white university student Andrew Goodman, who was from a political New York Jewish family. The third man was a 21-year-old African American from Meridian, James E Chaney, who was a CORE staff member, with strong

connections within the local black community. Members of the Mississippi Summer Project office in Johnson frantically called hospitals and gaols to try to locate the men, but to no avail. Civil rights officials and the missing men's families rang the Justice Department, the White House and the FBI demanding help. When the burnt-out blue station wagon driven by the men was found, it was feared they were dead.

The Justice Department, the FBI and the president had anticipated the possibility of violence in Mississippi, but no provisions had been made to protect civil rights workers. J Edgar Hoover, the powerful head of the FBI, saw the civil rights movement as a nest of communists and had been waging a long campaign to discredit Martin Luther King Jr.

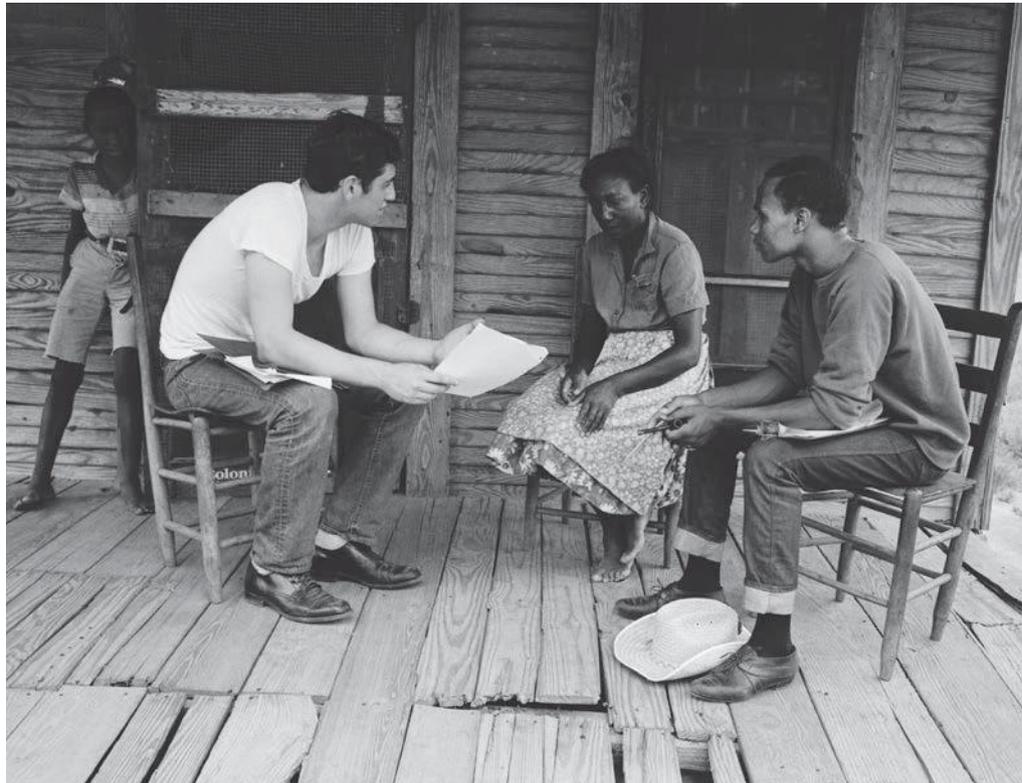
Under increasing pressure from the press and victims' families, President Johnson committed the FBI to finding the men's bodies. The Mississippi state government was opposed to federal intervention and claimed the men had staged their disappearance as a stunt. While dragging lakes to find the men's bodies, three other dead civil rights workers were found, one a headless body. The disappearance of these black activists, unlike that of the white civil rights workers, had not been noted outside their own communities.

It wasn't until 4 August 1964 that the FBI located the bodies of Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney buried under tonnes of earth at a dam site. They had all been shot and Chaney had been beaten. The FBI had bribed a clan member \$30 000 to reveal the location. Nineteen men, including the deputy sheriff, were charged with civil rights violations in December 1964. Only four were successfully prosecuted, but all served sentences of less than 10 years.

“ Before the summer project last year we watched five Negroes murdered in two counties in Mississippi with no reaction from the country. We couldn’t get the news out. Then we saw that when three civil rights workers were killed, and two of them were white, the whole country reacted, went into motion. There’s a deep problem behind that, and I think if you can begin to understand what that problem is – why you don’t move when a Negro is killed the same way you move when a white person is killed – then maybe you can begin to understand this country in relation to Vietnam and the third world, the Congo and Santo Domingo.

Copyright © Bob Moses, 1965.

## Registering voters in Mississippi



Ted Polunbaum/Newsweek Collection

**SOURCE 5.9** Two Freedom Summer volunteers talk to a local resident about registering to vote

## QUESTIONS

- 1 What does this photograph suggest about the living conditions of some African Americans in Mississippi in the early 1960s?
- 2 Describe each of the individuals in this photograph.
- 3 Explain what appears to be taking place.
- 4 Outline the kinds of ideas the man seated on the left might be trying to communicate.
- 5 Use your responses to Questions 3 and 4 to create a caption of 50–100 words for this photograph.
- 6 Using the information gathered so far and Source 5.9, describe the position of African Americans in Mississippi in the early 1960s.



The Image Works© 1976 Matt Herron/Take Stock

**SOURCE 5.10** A freedom-school volunteer teacher, Edie Black, and her students at Mileston in the Mississippi Delta, 1964

## Teaching freedom

The volunteers of the Freedom Summer project knew they were facing possible physical danger and would receive no protection from the law in Mississippi or the Justice Department in Washington. Despite the danger, more than 700 white and black middle-class university students travelled to Mississippi. Within two weeks of the first arrivals, the CORE and SNCC offices had been firebombed and there were three shootings and several serious beatings.

The white volunteers were welcomed into black communities and adopted into families. Letters sent home by volunteers describe the generosity of black families. One white teacher in Guildford wrote home that, 'time and time

we'd go into a restaurant or bar, we'd start to pay, only to be told that the bill has been taken care of. People bring over a dozen eggs or invite us to dinner'.

Altogether, 41 freedom schools and community centres were set up in rural and urban areas across Mississippi, in buildings donated by local civil rights groups. The schools' aim was to educate and empower a generation of black voters. The curriculum included units of work where students would learn about the power structures in US society, civil rights history and democracy. They would role-play voter registration and white police beating them in the courthouse. The schools aimed to develop political consciousness.



Freedom Summer

## Gains and losses

Over the Freedom Summer, only 1600 more African Americans were added to the voter registration lists. This was a complicated process that included filling out an application form, writing a statement, visiting the courthouse and having voters' names published in the local newspaper. When new voters came to register, they were often turned away and sometimes arrested on trumped-up charges.

Over the Freedom Summer, 1000 people were arrested, six people murdered and 35 churches destroyed by arsonists. African Americans lost their jobs and their homes and they lived under the constant threat of violence. Despite this, the program continued. Freedom schools taught 3000 black children. The Freedom Summer also brought the situation in Mississippi to a national audience and garnered support for fair voting legislation.

## Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP)

Once every four years, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party hold their national conventions, where they elect their candidates for president and vice president. Lyndon Baines Johnson became president in 1963 not through the ballot box, but as the result of an assassin's bullet. In 1964, he had hoped to be elected presidential candidate by the Democratic Party and win the next election, as he would then have a mandate for implementing his Great Society program.

The civil rights movement, in particular the CORE and the SNCC, saw the Democratic National Convention (DNC) as an opportunity to publicise voter registration discrimination and to expose the racist and undemocratic character of the Democratic Party. In the South, the Democratic Party was a lily-white party, with no black members.

A 'freedom election' was held and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was set up. Eighty thousand black citizens voted. Its delegates were elected and travelled to Atlanta, where the DNC was being held. The aim of the MFDP was to be seated as part of the official Mississippi

delegation. To succeed, it had to convince the credentials committee that it should represent Mississippi. President Johnson was angered by this tactic and saw it as a threat to Democratic Party unity and his chance to be elected president. He knew the southern Democrats would not share power with African Americans and he needed southern votes. Johnson began working behind the scenes to whittle away support for the MFDP.

One of the highlights of the convention was the evidence given by Fannie Lou Hamer, vice president of the delegation. A 49-year-old southern black woman, she was the youngest of 20 children and had begun picking cotton in Mississippi when she was six years old. When she tried to register to vote in 1962, she and her family were given one night to leave the property where they had worked as sharecroppers for 18 years. Hamer described how she and four other women were arrested by a Mississippi state highway patrolman and taken to the gaol, where black prisoners were ordered to beat them with nightsticks. Their 'crime' had been to try to register to vote. She finished her evidence at the convention with a plea to the committee: 'Is this America? The land of the free and the home of the brave? Where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hook, because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings?'

President Johnson got his way. The MFDP was not to be part of the official Democratic delegation. Instead, a compromise was negotiated between the Democratic Party and civil rights leaders. There was a promise that future state delegations would not be segregated. Some civil rights leaders believed they had no choice but to accept the compromise, as they were dependent on the federal government to pass civil rights legislation. It was a political decision; if Johnson lost the election the civil rights reforms bill may not become law. The MFDP and SNCC were particularly embittered by the compromise and disillusioned with mainstream politics, with Bob Moses declaring he would no longer have anything to do with the political system.

President Johnson won a resounding victory over his Republican rival, Barry Goldwater – who was opposed to civil rights reform – in the 1964 presidential election. Ninety-four per cent of black voters voted for Johnson. He carried all states except Arizona and five Deep South states, including Mississippi. Against the recommendation of his advisers, Johnson announced in Congress he would introduce new voting rights legislation.



**SOURCE 5.11** Fannie Lou Hamer and Medgar Evers were featured in a series of stamps commemorating the civil rights movement

U.S. Postal Service



1964 Freedom Summer Project

- 1 What issues did the Voter Education Project attempt to address?
- 2 Consider the Freedom Summer Project:
  - a Who was behind its organisation?
  - b What did it aim to achieve?
  - c Outline the preparations that took place in Mississippi before the volunteers arrived.
  - d What happened to Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney and what did this reveal about the problems in Mississippi and the wider nation?
  - e Assess the achievements of the Freedom Summer Project.
- 3 Outline the main problem with the Democratic Party raised by CORE and the SNCC in the lead-up to the 1964 presidential election.
- 4 Explain the compromise reached between the Democratic Party and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the reaction that some civil rights campaigners had to it.

# Malcolm X

Like Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X was a powerful and charismatic speaker but his aims and tactics differed significantly to those of King's. He supported black nationalism and black independence and rejected non-violence and integration. Malcolm argued for the right of African Americans to defend themselves from white violence, and he condemned non-violence as ineffective.

Malcolm X had become increasingly disillusioned with the Nation of Islam (NOI) by 1962 because it did not get involved in political processes. Malcolm's unease increased when NOI's spiritual leader, Elijah Muhammad, entered into negotiations with the KKK in support of a project to set up an all-black state. Muhammad's personal behaviour, which included fathering children with his secretaries, also seemed to contradict the NOI's strict commitment to moral behaviour.

Elijah Muhammad became increasingly concerned with Malcolm's growing popularity. He suspended Malcolm from the NOI after Malcolm made comments about 'the chickens coming home to roost' following Kennedy's assassination (a reference to Kennedy's commitment to US troops in Vietnam).

## Independence

Malcolm X left the NOI in March 1964 and began to forge his own political program, encouraging black militants to become involved in voter registration drives and civil rights action. He visited the SNCC offices and, now free of the NOI, began to articulate his black nationalist philosophy in writings and speeches. He set up his own organisation, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), and began recruiting members.

## The Harlem riots

When an off-duty policeman shot a 15-year-old black boy in Harlem, New York, a series of race riots was sparked across the city. Eight thousand protesters took to the streets, protesting police brutality. For three days, rioters set fires, looted shops and overturned cars. Their anger was directed towards white shop owners and the police. The violence spread to the neighbourhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant. One person died, 100 were injured and 450 were arrested. Riots then broke out in Rochester, New York. The hostility signified growing unrest in northern cities over racial discrimination and social and economic problems. This was an example of the 'racial powder keg' that Malcolm X described in his speech, 'The Ballot or the Bullet', which he made at the King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan on 12 April 1964. In this speech, he argued that civil rights had failed and that black nationalism was the means of uniting blacks in the fight for freedom.

- 1 Identify the main problems beginning to emerge in the Nation of Islam (NOI) in the early 1960s.
- 2 Why was Malcolm X suspended from the group by Elijah Muhammad and what did he do in response?
- 3 What problems did the riots in New York signify?
- 4 Analyse extracts from Malcolm X's speech 'The Ballot or the Bullet' as a class:
  - a Summarise what he says about the civil rights movement.
  - b Identify some of the other major themes he discusses.
  - c What ideas does Malcolm X openly promote?
  - d What kind of language does he use?
  - e Compare the ideas promoted by Malcolm X in this speech with those promoted by Martin Luther King Jr in his 'I Have a Dream' speech. Discuss the similarities and differences.

# March on Selma

The city of Selma in Dallas County, Alabama, used literacy tests and other forms of discrimination to stop African Americans from registering to vote. Of the 15 000 African Americans of voting age, only 335 were registered to vote in the state. White supremacy in Selma was protected by the powerful local White Citizens' Council; Sheriff Jim Clarke and Judge James A Hare had banned public gatherings of more than three people in 1964 when the SNCC began a voting drive. The governor of Alabama, George Corley Wallace Jr, was an aggressive racist whose mantra was 'Segregation Today. Segregation Tomorrow. Segregation Forever'.

Amelia Platts Boynton and Reverend Frederick D Reese, who ran the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL), invited the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the SNCC to Selma. Martin Luther King Jr, who had just returned from Norway, where he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, came to help organise the voter registration protest. The SNCC and the SCLC wanted to capture the nation's attention and push forward the legislation reforming voter registration. It was thought a confrontation with Wallace might help to bring the issue of voter registration into the homes of Americans.

## Bloody Sunday

The demonstrations began in January 1965 and over the following weeks protesters were shoved and kicked and 3500 people were arrested, including Martin Luther King Jr and 700 school children. Clubs and cattle prods were used to control the crowds. Prisoners were transported to Camp Selma, the state prison, where they slept on concrete floors with no bedding.

Malcolm X came to Selma on 4 February 1965 and spoke to the SNCC, urging them to defend themselves against white violence and to develop a black identity and pride. On 21 February, only two weeks later, Malcolm X was assassinated in New York.

During a night march on 18 February, a young black man, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was shot by a state trooper. He died eight days later. The SNCC decided to lay the responsibility of his death at the feet of Governor Wallace and planned a 54-kilometre march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery. The SNCC felt it was time to try more dramatic and perhaps more dangerous forms of civil disobedience.

On 7 March 1965, 600 people left Selma, defying the ban on the march. When they reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Alabama, state troopers stopped them. The marchers refused to move so the troopers attacked them with clubs, whips, horses and tear gas. The attack was telecast live across the United States. It was described as an 'orgy of police brutality'.



Bloody Sunday



© 1965 / Spider Martin

**SOURCE 5.12** The marchers were given two minutes to leave the bridge and end the march



**SOURCE 5.13** During the Bloody Sunday march in 1965, state troopers demanded the marchers turn back, but they refused. The troopers moved in and started beating the marchers with batons and whips, firing tear gas and charging with horses. John Lewis (chairman of the SNCC) received a head injury. This attack was captured on film and telecast live across the United States.

## We Shall Overcome

Protest marches in support of Selma took place across the nation and the White House was picketed. The SCLC called for support from religious communities and 400 nuns, ministers and rabbis came to Selma to join the protest. On the evening of ‘Turnaround Tuesday’, the second march, led by Martin Luther King Jr, was turned back. James Reeb, a white minister from Boston who had come to Selma to join the protest, was killed when four white men beat him. This led to further protests across the country.

President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress on 15 March, proposing the enactment of a voting rights bill. In what is regarded as one of his most powerful speeches, he spoke of the events in Selma and of how the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation had not been delivered to African Americans. Six days later, 6000 protesters, protected by federal state troopers, marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, led by Martin Luther King Jr. In Montgomery, the crowd swelled to 25 000, but it was a peaceful demonstration.

White resistance continued. Viola Liuzzo, the white wife of a Detroit labour official and mother of five, had volunteered to transport marchers back to Selma. Her car was pulled over by four Klansmen and she was shot in the head and killed. President Johnson appeared on television denouncing the killing and demanding quick passage of the *Voting Rights Act*. On 6 August 1965 President Johnson signed the Act with Martin Luther King Jr and other civil rights leaders looking on.



Selma to  
Montgomery

### Historians' views of the *Voting Rights Act 1965*

The *Voting Rights Act 1965* is recognised as one of the pivotal achievements of the civil rights movement. The Act:

- prohibited any voting qualification that denied US citizens the right to vote because of race or colour – for example: literacy tests, good character tests, constitutional interpretation tests or poll taxes
- did not allow election districts to be drawn to dilute minorities' voting powers →

- • stated that voting laws cannot be changed without clearance from the attorney-general or the District of Columbia
- declared that the federal government could take over voter registration in counties with persistent discrimination.

The crowning achievement of the Civil Rights Movement, the Voting Rights Act reenfranchised black Southerners and democratized the South. It ended the era of Jim Crow.

A Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, London, 2001, p. 293.

In those four years [1964–68], the number of Southern African American voters tripled.

The movement for black equality could indeed be proud. The awesome power of nonviolent direct action to dramatize racism to the nation had again been demonstrated. More than ever before, the fear of African Americans in the South had been vanquished. The movement had changed the nation, and buoyed the dreams of equality of people of every color around the world.

H Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008, pp. 182–3.

Though rallies and protests continued for years to come, the extension of the vote gave African Americans fresh incentive to address their grievances through the ballot box. More and more southern Blacks turned their efforts at organizing campaigns to elect African American candidates to public office. In 1964, fewer than [sic] twenty-five elected Black officials governed in the South, but by 1970 the numbers climbed to over seven hundred. Within another decade, Black mayors sat in city halls in Atlanta, Birmingham and New Orleans, and Black congressmen represent [sic] districts in Tennessee, Texas and Georgia.

JT Patterson, Introduction. SF Lawson and C Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement 1945–1968*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, 2006, p. 33.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 What do the following historians argue about the importance of the *Voting Rights Act*?
  - a Adam Fairclough
  - b Harvard Sitkoff
  - c James T Patterson



- 1 Outline the position of black Americans in the town of Selma in Alabama.
- 2 What did civil rights campaigners hope to achieve by confronting Alabama's Governor Wallace in demonstrations in 1965?
- 3 Describe the confrontation that took place in Alabama beginning in January 1965.
- 4 Assess the importance of these events to the civil rights movement.
- 5 Explain how the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965 improved the position of African-Americans.

# Conclusion

The passage of the *Voting Rights Act 1965* saw the legal impediments to African Americans fully participating in elections removed. This victory was only achieved after increased pressure was put on the federal government through mass rallies of support and violent confrontations in Mississippi, where white supremacists made a last-ditch effort to halt the forces of desegregation. There was, however, still entrenched racial inequality in the United States and some supporters of the civil rights movement had begun to question the strategy of non-violence as a means of overcoming economic and political inequalities.

## Chapter summary

- President Kennedy proposed a civil rights act in 1963.
- The March on Washington on 28 August 1963 demonstrated support for civil rights legislation.
- Martin Luther King Jr gave his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech.
- The Selma-to-Montgomery March highlighted voting inequalities in the South.
- The Freedom Summer of 1964 aimed to register, educate and empower African American voters in Mississippi. Its efforts were met with murder, violence and repression.
- Riots took place in Harlem, New York, in 1964.
- Malcolm X broke from the Nation of Islam and argued that African Americans should consider violence to achieve independence.
- Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965.
- The *Voting Rights Act* was signed by President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965.

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### Further resources

- *Eyes on the Prize*, Episode 5: 'Mississippi: is this America?' (1962–64); Episode 6: 'Bridge to freedom' (1965); Episode 7: 'The time has come' (1964–65), PBS, 1986.
- *Malcolm X* (1999), directed by Spike Lee.
- *Selma* (2015), directed by Ava DuVernay.
- Fairclough, A, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890–2000*, Penguin, New York, 2001.
- Risen, C, *The Bill of the Century: The Epic Battle for the Civil Rights Act*, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2014.
- Sitkoff, H, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008.



Further resources

## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Create a mind map outlining the various ways in which those opposed to racial equality were continuing to challenge the civil rights movement.
- 2 Contrast the photo of the Marion lynchings on page 23 with the opening photo for this chapter taken during the March on Washington. What do these events suggest about continuity and change in attitudes to racial discrimination in the United States between the 1930s and 1960s?
- 3 Create a photo essay of 10 images with captions that provides an overview of the variety of strategies used by civil rights campaigners up to the mid-1960s.
- 4 In small groups, select ONE of the following and develop an evaluation of its significance to the civil rights movement. Share your ideas with the class:
  - a March on Washington
  - b The Civil Rights Bill 1964
  - c Freedom Summer
  - d March on Selma
  - e The *Voting Rights Act 1965*
- 5 Evaluate the contribution of President Lyndon B Johnson to the civil rights movement.
- 6 Construct an extended response to one or more of the following questions:
  - a Evaluate the importance of legislative change to the civil rights movement.
  - b How effective were the methods used by civil rights movements in achieving racial equality in the United States up to 1965?

# I'm black and I'm proud: Black Power (1966–71)

In this chapter, students will examine the rise of the Black Power movement in the late 1960s.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the assassination of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.
- the formation of the Black Panther Party
- the influence of the Black Power movement.

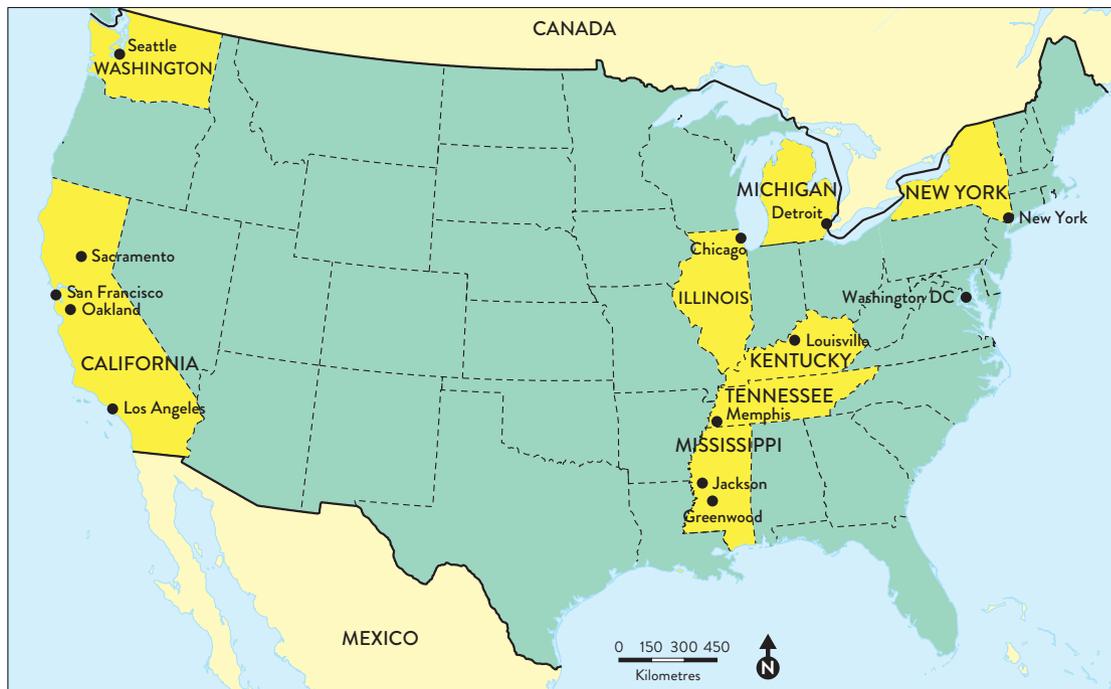


Stokely Carmichael speaking in London 1967

# Introduction

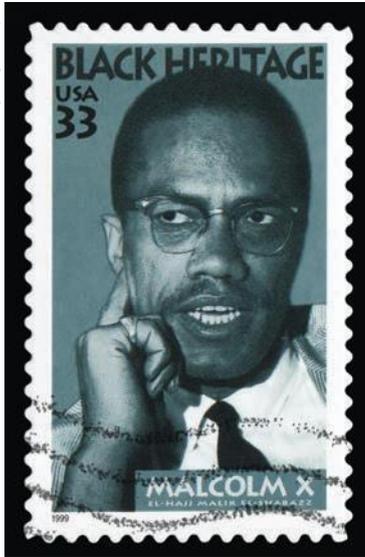
The civil rights movement had triumphed in overturning segregationist laws with the passing of the *Civil Rights Act 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act 1965*. Despite these achievements, racial inequality and disadvantage remained entrenched in US society. From 1965, the focus of civil rights was to turn to the northern cities, where *de facto*, rather than *de jure* segregation persisted in housing, education and employment. Some civil rights supporters looked to African American engagement with the mainstream political system as the way forward; others considered a more radical and revolutionary approach to black empowerment. Impatience with the slow pace of change in northern cities resulted in periodic rioting. Black Power movements, some inspired by the legacy of Malcolm X, engaged in both militant protest and community empowerment. Black pride was also expressed through cultural forms such as art, music and fashion.

**de jure**  
according to the law



SOURCE 6.1 Map of locations mentioned in this chapter

<p>1966</p> <p>1967</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>October</b> The Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, California</li> <li>● <b>April</b> Stokely Carmichael used the phrase 'Black Power' on the Meredith March</li> <li>● <b>June</b> The <i>Loving v. Virginia</i> decision ruled the anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional</li> <li>● <b>July</b> The Detroit Race Riots spread to other cities</li> <li>● <b>August</b> Thurgood Marshall was appointed as the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court</li> </ul>	<p>1968</p> <p>1969</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>4 April</b> Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated</li> <li>● <b>11 April</b> President Johnson signed the <i>Civil Rights Act</i>, banning discrimination in the sale, renting and financing of houses</li> <li>● <b>October</b> The Mexico Olympics protest</li> <li>● <b>November</b> The first interracial kiss on television (in <i>Star Trek</i>)</li> <li>● Black students protested at universities</li> </ul>
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**SOURCE 6.2** The US Postal Office released this stamp honouring Malcolm X in 1999 as part of the Black Heritage series

## The assassination of Malcolm X

After leaving the Nation of Islam (NOI), Malcolm X established the Organization of Afro-American Unity to promote greater black awareness and identification with Africa, and to encourage African Americans to take control of their own communities. Malcolm converted to Sunni Islam and travelled to Mecca before visiting Africa, where he met many black political leaders. He adopted the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz after his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Malcolm's anti-white views modified after experiencing the racially diverse Muslim Hajj. On his return to the United States, he was sought out by universities and colleges as a speaker. His views on violence also changed; he supported self-defence rather than the violent revolution he had advocated in the documentary 'The Hate That Hate Produced' (See page 56). He gave a speech in Selma on the invitation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) before flying to London.

Free from the NOI, Malcolm was beginning to develop his own political message. His independence from the NOI came at the cost of his personal safety. NOI had the reputation of punishing those who left the organisation, and some within the organisation were openly jealous of Malcolm's popularity. He began keeping a shotgun in his home and was always accompanied in public by bodyguards. On 14 February 1965, Molotov cocktails were thrown through his front windows. He escaped the burning house with his pregnant wife Betty Shabazz and his four daughters.

In a television interview the next day, he angrily called the NOI a 'criminal organisation'. Seven days later he walked onto the stage at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City to make a speech. Three men associated with the NOI gunned him down. Frantic efforts to revive him failed and Malcolm X died. Three NOI members were charged and found guilty of the shooting, although two maintained their innocence. Exactly who was responsible for ordering the assassination has never been established.



**SOURCE 6.3** Malcolm X's body was laid out in a glass-covered copper coffin at the Unity Funeral Home in Harlem. More than 10 000 mourners came to view the body in freezing temperatures.



## The Legacy of Malcolm X

One year after his death, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, co-written by author Alex Haley, was published. It became a bestseller, selling 400 000 copies in 1967. The book helped promote Malcolm X's legacy and ideas beyond his death and became a standard text in American universities for decades, selling six million copies by 1977. Spike Lee's 1992 feature film *Malcolm X* introduced his story to an international audience. In the 1990s, hip hop culture began drawing upon the words and image of Malcolm X, and he became a cultural icon for young African Americans.

Historian Adam Fairclough identified four of Malcolm's central beliefs, which were to influence African American culture and society after his death. These were:

- racial pride/black pride
- the importance of the African aspect of African American identity and global black nationalism
- the belief in violence and self-defence and a belief that non-violence is cowardly
- pride in black manhood.

Historian Thomas J Sugrue suggests that after his death Malcolm X became 'a blank screen on which activists of all varieties projected their visions of a new society'. Some believed he would have led a socialist revolution had he lived; others thought he could have become the architect of an interracial movement for the poor. For others, he was the patron saint of black self-help. Sugrue suggests that his real role after death was as the inspiration to black youth of a man who stood up to white oppression.

Manning Marable's 2011 biography *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* used recently released historical material to re-examine Malcolm X's life. He argues that *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which was published posthumously, omitted some chapters written by Malcolm X that described his commitment to black nationalism and Islam. Marable also argues that the mature Malcolm believed African Americans could use the electoral system and voting rights to achieve change.

To most black Americans he [Malcolm X] became an icon of black encouragement, who fearlessly challenged racism wherever he found it and inspired black youth to take pride in their history and culture. These aspects of Malcolm's public personality were indelibly stamped on to the Black Power movement: they were present in the cry 'It's our turn!' by black proponents of Harold Washington in the Democrat's successful 1983 mayoral race in Chicago. It was partially expressed in the unprecedented voter turnouts in black neighborhoods in Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign of 1984 and 1988 and the successful bid of Barack Obama in 2008. Malcolm truly anticipated the black electorate could potentially be the balance of power in a divided white republic.

M Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Viking NY, 2011, p. 484

## When did the civil rights movement end?

Just as there is debate about when the civil rights movement began, so too there is debate about when it ended. In the classical interpretation of the civil rights movement, it ended with the passing of the *Voting Rights Act 1965*. Critics of this view, such as historian Peniel E Joseph, call this the 'heroic' version of the civil rights movement, which encompasses the sit-ins, Freedom Rides and other forms of non-violent protest, and blames the Black Power movements, black militancy and white backlash for the collapse of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s. Jeanne Theoharis argues that this dominant civil rights story focuses on the South and incorrectly separates the civil rights battles in the North and the South. Thomas J Sugrue argues that black militancy had a history that predated Black Power and that there was no sharp dichotomy between Black Power and civil rights. In his study *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, Sugrue describes how the civil rights movement continued well into the 1970s and took on new forms.

### QUESTIONS



- 1 When does the classical interpretation suggest that the civil rights movement came to an end?
- 2 According to the historian Peniel E Joseph, how does the classical interpretation explain the 'collapse' of the civil rights movement?
- 3 What ideas do Jeanne Theoharis and Thomas J Sugrue put forward to challenge the classical interpretation of the civil rights movement?

- 1 How did the views and activism of Malcolm X develop after he left the Nation of Islam?
- 2 Explain how these new ideas caused problems for Malcolm X in the last years of his life.
- 3 Outline the details surrounding Malcolm X's death.
- 4 Identify the different ways in which the life of Malcolm X has been used in popular culture.
- 5 Summarise how the following historians explain Malcolm X's significance:
  - a Adam Fairclough
  - b Thomas Sugrue
  - c Manning Marable
- 6 Using some of the ideas provided by these historians and your own evidence, assess the importance of Malcolm X to the developments within the civil rights movement in the United States.

## Black Power

James Meredith had braved riots and violence to attend the University of Mississippi in 1962. He graduated on 16 August 1963 with a degree in political science and then studied in Nigeria before returning to the United States in 1965 to begin a law degree at Columbia University.

Meredith was committed to fighting for civil rights and in June 1966 began his solo 354-kilometre March Against Fear from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of the march was to encourage African American citizens in the Deep South to exercise their constitutional right to register to vote a year after the passage of the *Voting Rights Act*. Wearing a pith hat, sunglasses and carrying a walking cane, he walked in the summer heat, followed by a small band of reporters.

On the second day, just outside the town of Hernando, an unemployed clerk by the name of Aubrey James Norvell ambushed Meredith and began firing shots into his legs and back. Meredith fell to the ground and crawled off the highway. An ambulance was called and he was taken to the local hospital. Meredith was not seriously injured.

## Meredith Mississippi March for Freedom

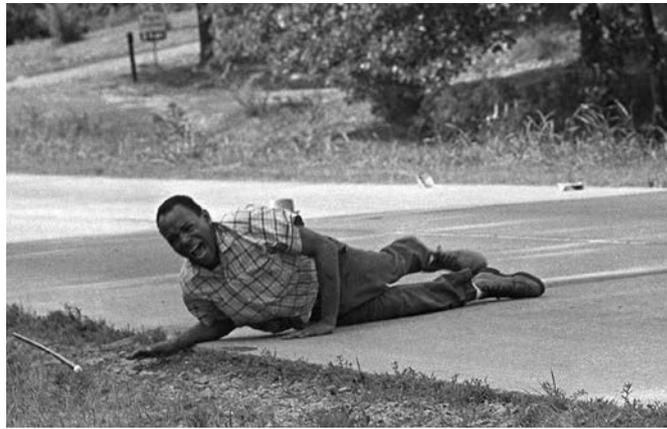
The attack on Meredith united the different civil rights organisations. All agreed the march should continue through Mississippi.

Members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the SNCC all walked together on the long trek.

The SNCC believed local law enforcement agencies would not protect the civil rights marchers and recruited the Deacons for Defense and Justice for this role. The Deacons were an armed African American self-defence group that had formed in Louisiana in 1964 to protect the community and civil rights workers from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The NAACP, committed to non-violence, withdrew from the march, in part because of the Deacons for Defense's involvement.

The march is well known in civil rights history, not only for the shooting of Meredith, but also for the differences and tensions that emerged between the participants over the 20 days of the march. The SNCC had chosen **militant** Stokely Carmichael to replace pacifist John Lewis as chairperson in May 1966. Both had worked on the front line of civil rights in the Deep South, where SNCC members had faced arrest, violence and abuse, since 1963. Both men had seen fellow members murdered. Carmichael was among those black SNCC members who had become disillusioned with mainstream politics and the tactics of non-violence. Some SNCC members carried guns to defend themselves. Both the CORE and the SCLC remained committed to non-violence.

Although Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King Jr and Floyd McKissick from the CORE walked together at the head of the march, their unity was to be short lived. In the town of Greenwood, local officials would not let the marchers camp at the local elementary school as had been agreed to earlier. The marchers refused to leave and state troopers fired tear-gas canisters into the crowd. Carmichael and two others were arrested for trespass and gaoled. Carmichael emerged from gaol the next day and made an impassioned speech to the crowd, where he announced he had been arrested 27 times and that he wasn't going to gaol again. In this speech, he declared, 'the only way we gonna stop those white men from whuppin' us is to take over. What we gonna start sayin' now is Black Power!' He went on to call Mississippians a bunch of racists and suggested that every courthouse in Mississippi should be burnt down.



AP Image/AP/Jack Thornell

**SOURCE 6.4** This photograph of James Meredith crawling off the highway wounded made front-page news. It was taken by 26-year-old reporter Jack Thornell, who worked for Associated Press in New Orleans. Thornell was sitting in a parked car waiting for another reporter to bring back drinks when Meredith appeared and shots rang out. Thornell leapt out of the car, shot two rolls of film and then drove to Memphis to file the story. Thornell won a **Pulitzer Prize** for this image.

### Pulitzer Prize

US award for excellence in journalism, photography, literature and musical competition; administered by Columbia University

### militant

Active and aggressive, combative

## STOKELY CARMICHAEL (1941–98)



Stokely Carmichael was born in Trinidad in 1941 and came to New York with his family when he was 11. He attended the all-black Howard University and participated in sit-ins in Washington DC. Carmichael was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and joined the Freedom Rides in 1964. After graduating from university he worked full-time for the SNCC in both the

Freedom Summer and the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). He became SNCC chairperson in 1966. Under his leadership, the SNCC rejected non-violence and integration and instead supported black militancy. Carmichael joined the Black Panther Party in 1968. He left the United States in 1969 and moved to West Africa. He died in Guinea in 1998.



**SOURCE 6.5** Martin Luther King Jr and Stokely Carmichael walk together in the Meredith March Against Fear.



**SOURCE 6.6** A badge promoting the Meredith Mississippi March

The cry of 'Black Power' competed with 'Freedom Now' along the march. The press interviewed Carmichael, and 'Black Power' rapidly became the media focus, rather than registering black voters. A crowd of 12 000 to 15 000 assembled at the end of the march in front of the Mississippi State Capitol building, where the Confederate flag was ceremonially burnt and there was music and speeches. While King spoke of his belief that one day freedom would even come to the people of Mississippi, Carmichael took a more militant stand, predicting that one day the movement would become so powerful that blacks 'would bring them [whites] to their knees every time they mess with us'.

### What is Black Power?

The term 'Black Power' had been around since the 1950s, but it didn't become widely used until Stokely Carmichael referred to it during the Meredith Mississippi March for Freedom. Black Power is a difficult term to define as it held different meanings to different people. It has been defined broadly as a slogan used to express racial pride, black separatism and community, black political independence and African heritage. Black Power signified unity and brotherhood with the Black Nationalist movements in Africa. Colonies once ruled by European powers were achieving independence and becoming black nations. Black Power was expressed through fashion, music, language, political protests, art and revolutionary violence. The Black Power movement was never an organised movement with a designated leader or formal groups; rather, it was a series of movements or events.



## 'BLACK POWER'

The slogan 'Black Power' was criticised by both the white press and President Johnson as being racist. Some civil rights leaders were quick to condemn the SCLC for its support of Black Power. Opponents of Black Power from within the black community argued that racial integration and non-violence were the vehicles for social change. Violence and separatism, they believed, would not secure black rights. In a country where blacks made up 10 per cent of the population, they believed white support was necessary to achieve change. CORE was moving away from its pacifist ideals and supported Black Power. Some civil rights supporters, such as black congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr, saw Black Power as simply meaning black leaders and organisations representing black interests in government.

New revolutionary groups inspired by Black Power ideas sprang up in northern cities. These included the Republic of New Africa, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Congress of African People, the US (United Slaves) Organisation, the Young Lords Party and the Black Panthers for Self-Defense and Justice. The ideas of Black Power resonated in the black ghettos.

### Defining Black Power

The phrase 'Black Power' was to divide members of the civil rights movement. The following interviews, the first with Floyd Bixler McKissick, the director of CORE, and the second with Roy Wilkins, Chair of the NAACP, show how different groups understood Black Power.

#### STEPHEN D LERNER TALKS ABOUT FLOYD BIXLER MCKISSICK'S DEFINITION OF BLACK POWER

... Black Power, McKissick continued, has come to mean many things to different people. CORE, however, defines Black Power as having six major characteristics: political power, economic power, an improved Negro self-image, development of militant leaders, enforcement of federal laws, and creation of a black consumer block ...

One of the most important problems facing Negroes today is that of forming a self-image in a white society, he said. McKissick told the story 'of the beautiful black girl with a figure like a Coca-Cola bottle . . . who asks the mirror on the wall, "mirror mirror on the wall who's the most beautiful of them all," and the mirror answered "Snow White and don't you forget it."

The same problem exists in the New York School System where predominantly Negro schools have a white principal. 'Negro school children need someone they can identify with so that they can aspire to being a principal one day,' McKissick said.

Every image is white in this society, he continued. 'Even when you go into the church and pray to Christ, you look up and sure enough he's white too, and you wonder "will he hurt me", McKissick said.

SD Lerner, 7 October 1966, 'CORE Director Gives Definition of Black Power', © 2014 *The Harvard Crimson*. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

#### ROY WILKINS, CHAIR OF THE NAACP, SPEAKS ABOUT BLACK POWER

No matter how endlessly they try to explain it, the term 'Black Power' means anti-white power ... It is a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan ... We of the NAACP will have none of this ... It is the ranging of race against race on the irrelevant basis of skin color. It is the father of hatred and the mother of violence. It is the wicked fanaticism which has swelled our tears, broken our bodies, squeezed our hearts, and taken the blood of our black and white loved ones. It shall not now poison our forward march.

From 'Steady as She Goes', in AC Littleton and MW Burger (eds), *Black Viewpoints*, NY Mentor, 1977.





## QUESTIONS

- 1 Provide a one-sentence definition of the term 'Black Power'.
- 2 Make a list of groups who began to openly support the ideals of Black Power.
- 3 Closely examine the views put forward by Floyd Bixler McKissick and Roy Wilkins. Create a table like the following to compare and contrast their perspectives on Black Power.

	MCKISSICK	WILKINS
Definition of Black Power		
Overall interpretation (was Black Power a positive or negative force in the campaign for racial equality?)		

## Martin Luther King Jr and Black Power

Black Power divided the civil rights movement. However, the movement's most well-known spokesperson, Martin Luther King Jr, did not join the NAACP and the SCLC in condemning Black Power. Historian Adam Fairclough argues that King understood that Black Power 'struck a responsive chord' among blacks because it 'expressed a call to manhood'. He understood this was a response to the anger, hopelessness and frustration felt by many young black men. King focused on its constructive elements: the call for black pride and group solidarity. He also saw no benefit in attacking other black organisations and hoped the SNCC could be persuaded to reject violence and separatism and that civil rights unity could be restored.

“ King believed he could better combat doctrines of violence and separatism by debating with black nationalists than by anathematizing them. He had too much respect for SNCC to simply turn his back on it. It went against his instincts to publicly attack other black organizations. Dialogue and debate were in his blood, and he rebelled against lumping together all advocates of black power and treating them as untouchable.

A Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King*, University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1987, p. 321. ”

- 1 What was James Meredith hoping to achieve by conducting his March Against Fear and what was the outcome of his attempt?
- 2 Outline some of the key ideas promoted by Stokely Carmichael. In your answer, use specific quotes from Carmichael where possible.
- 3 Create a mind map or infographic that outlines the key features of Black Power. Your mind map should include influences, variety of expression, responses to Black Power and any other themes you consider important.
- 4 Explain the main divisions that were beginning to open between activist groups during the March for Freedom.

# Black is beautiful

African American art, fashion and music – much of it with African overtones – had been promoted in Harlem since the 1930s, but it wasn't until the mid-1960s that this distinct African American culture went mainstream. Black Power challenged African Americans to appreciate and celebrate their own culture. The terms 'Black is Beautiful' and 'Black Pride' became popular. Increasingly, 'black' replaced 'Negro' or 'coloured' as the preferred description of Americans of African heritage. The growing sense of black identity challenged these ideas and Black Pride was expressed not only in words, but also in appearance. Young, politically aware African American women abandoned the chemicals and combs used to straighten their naturally 'kinky' hair. 'The Natural' was a short cropped haircut adopted by some young women.



Getty Images/Archive Holdings Inc

SOURCE 6.7 Black is beautiful

## 'Going natural', from *Ebony*

*Ebony* magazine was founded in 1945 and catered to the African American market. It featured fashion and African American celebrities and personalities, and it presented African American interests in an affirming manner. *Ebony* was one of the few magazines that featured African Americans in advertising.

### THE NATURAL LOOK

#### Many Negro women reject white standards of beauty

by Phyl Garland

... 'We, as black women, must realize that there is beauty in what we are, without having to make ourselves into something we aren't,' contends Suzi Hill, 23-year-old staff field worker with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. A veteran of the Dixie civil rights fight currently involved in Dr Martin Luther King's crusade against Chicago slums ...

One such center for this revolution in fashion is The African Look, a shop nestled in Chicago's Hyde Park ... There, co-owners Lee McDaniel and Joyce Gere design and make clothing derived from African styles ... 'I'm protesting against the black Anglo-Saxon and the white man, because I'm unhappy here in this land with these cats!' and 'I'm tired of going through all these changes trying to look like Doris Day and Elizabeth Taylor. I'm not going to measure myself by their yardstick any longer!'

... 'Many claim whites more readily accept natural hair, while Negroes are most apt to become uneasy ... Negro women often act hostile. It's as though they think we've pulled the covers off of them and told on them in some way.'

... 'Black people have been taught to be ashamed of themselves and their blackness for so long that it has been difficult for them to accept each other,' comments a New York clothing designer. 'Lips are only right if they're thin, and so are noses ... They must be taught to be proud of themselves as belonging to a beautiful people, a proud people.'

*Ebony* magazine, 6 June 1966, pp. 143–8.





## QUESTIONS

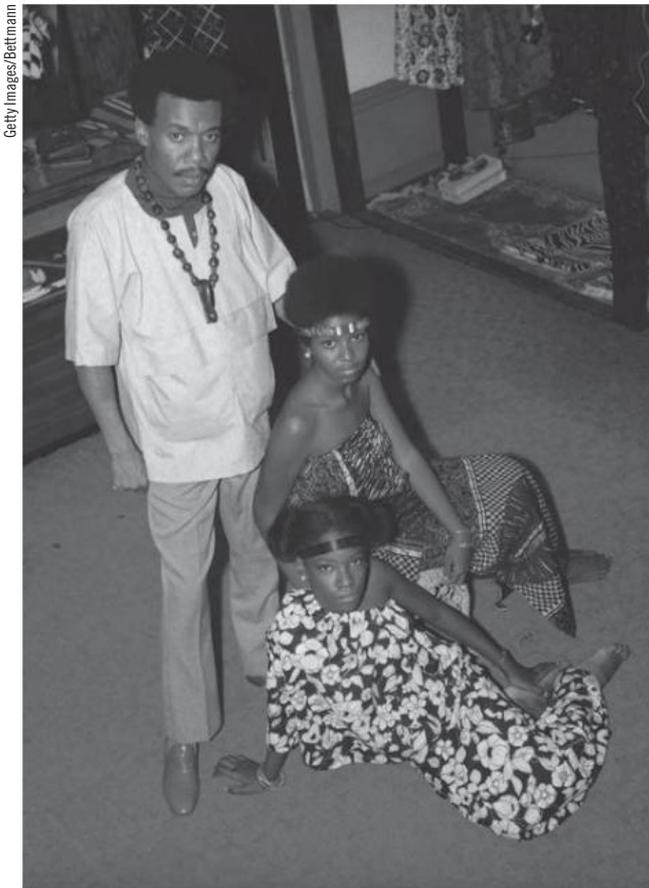
- 1 Why do you think 'The Natural' was adopted by politically active black women during the 1960s?
- 2 The article reports that some African American women were disdainful of the 'natural' look. Why do you think this might be?
- 3 What do you think 'black Anglo-Saxon' means?
- 4 How is 'The Natural' related to the rise of the idea of Black Power?

## Kenete cloth

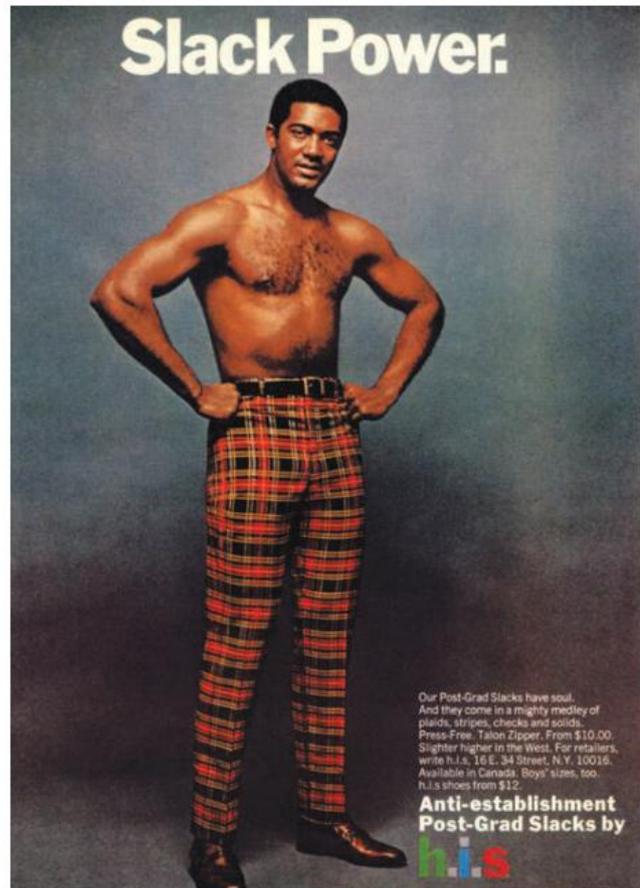


Clothes and fashion were also a way of signifying people's solidarity with black liberation movements across the globe. Kenete cloth, woven in Ghana and popularised in the United States by Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah in 1958, became a symbol of African solidarity. The dashiki – a West African, colourful, heavily embroidered, loose top – and the buba – a Nigerian blouse, often worn with a wrap called an obu – were also popular.

By the 1970s, these African inspired fashions had become mainstream and commercial businesses found a new black market for their products. Cosmetics companies such as Avon started to produce make-up for their black customers, and black models appeared in fashion magazines. Black Power was absorbed into the capitalist mainstream, much to the disgust of the Black Power movement's more radical elements.



**SOURCE 6.8** Kaftans, dashiki, beaded headbands, Kenete cloth and other African-inspired ethnic fashion were mainstream by the 1970s



**SOURCE 6.9** As the African American middle class grew in the 1960s, so did a new market for advertisers, who used Black Power images to attract new consumers

# Soul

There were distinct black and white musical cultures in the United States up until the 1960s. White musicians and black musicians had their own radio stations, record companies, charts and distinct genres. Rock'n'roll was seen as white music (even though it evolved from African American rhythm and blues), while soul was black music. Although there was a small cross-over audience, most white and black audiences listened to different music on different radio stations. The White Citizens' Councils had urged white Americans not to buy or listen to 'Negro music', which was described as 'savage' and seen as corrupting white youth. African American popular music became increasingly politicised during the civil rights years.

The word 'soul' had been used within African American communities for generations. It described black nationalism, black culture and black pride. 'Soul brother' signs signified an African American business. 'Soul food' was cuisine popular in African American communities. It evolved from the slave food on southern plantations. Historian Portia K Maultsby described soul music as being influenced by gospel music and evolving from rhythm and blues. Soul came out of the urban areas and expressed the black experience in these communities. Soul music was characterised by passionate singing, powerful rhythms and strong lyrics. Words and phrases were repeated and instruments were made to mirror the vocals. Maultsby wrote that soul acted as the 'soundtrack' for the ascension of black pride during this era and that the music cannot be separated from the prevailing mood at the time, and vice versa. 'Soul' became synonymous with 'black'. This trend was accentuated as the soul sound morphed towards funk.

James Brown's 1968 hit 'Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud' is a soul song closely associated with Black Power. In the recording, Brown used a chorus of children to call back the line 'I'm black and I'm proud', in response to his call, 'Say it loud'. Although the song was described as a Black Power anthem, in his 1986 autobiography Brown described how he initially saw it as a song to inspire pride in black children. Brown started wearing his hair natural after he recorded this song. Other African American musicians soon followed suit.

Soul music delivered a message of hope. As well as articulating the problems in black communities, it also gave people a voice against injustice and inspiration to work towards a better future together. Other artists whose soul music incorporated the Black Power ideas of racial pride included Curtis Mayfield, Aretha Franklin and the Staple Singers. Soul music communicated the Black Power message to the masses. It was the first genre of black music defined by black musicians that was recognised by the white music industry. Maultsby saw this as a triumph for the Black Power movement.



Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives

**SOURCE 6.10** James Brown, who had been a popular soul singer since the early 1960s, by the late 1960s was often described as Soul Brother No 1. In 1968, he wrote and recorded the song, 'Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud'. Other Brown songs, such as 'World', 'I don't want nobody to give me nothing' and 'Get up, get into it', also expressed black pride and the need for self-reliance and independence rather than dependency.

## Soul, funk and Black Power

By the late 1960s, the soul sound was beginning to change. Until the mid-1960s, soul had a pop style, such as that of Motown artists Diana Ross and the Supremes, which had some cross-over appeal to white audiences and a more black-focused sound, with many artists being from the South. Interestingly, while the soul singers were African American, the bands were often racially mixed. This 'desegregated' music scene was unusual. By the late 1960s, the soul sound had begun to change. While continuing to feature horn sections, the rhythm became heavier and the message often increasingly political. Black Power anthems would also later influence rap and hip-hop, with many prominent artists, such as Run-DMC, Public Enemy and N.W.A., sampling tracks by James Brown and his peers. Some examples of the most popular Black Power anthems are:

- 'Keep on pushing' (1968) by Curtis Mayfield
- 'People get ready' (1968) by Curtis Mayfield
- 'Soul man' (1969) by Sam and Dave
- 'I don't want nobody to give me nothing (Open up the door, I'll get it myself)' (1969) by James Brown
- 'Get up, get into it, get involved' (1971) by James Brown
- 'You can depend on me' (1969) by Luther Ingham
- 'Respect' (1967) by Aretha Franklin
- 'Don't call me Nigger, Whitey' (1969) by Sly and the Family Stone.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 What changes to soul music emerged throughout the 1960s?
- 2 Find examples of Motown-style soul music. What is the feel of the music? What themes and ideas do the lyrics include?
- 3 Select one of the songs from the list provided above and listen to a recording of it. Present an analysis of your chosen song, comparing the style of the music and the lyrics with the Motown examples examined. You may choose to present this in prose, a detailed diagram or as a brief presentation to the class.

## Black studies

Black Power would also change the school and university curriculum in the United States. In November 1968, African American, Asian American, Chicano and Native American students at the San Francisco State College (SFSC) and the University of California, Berkeley, participated in what was known as the Third World Strike.

Striking students demanded an end to racism on campuses and the introduction of a black studies and ethnic studies program. Students held pickets, sit-ins, mass rallies and teach-ins. Police riot squads, tear gas and mass arrests were used to try to end the protests, and in one sweep 450 students were arrested. The National Guard was called in to maintain martial law in the last weeks of the five-month strike. Today, courses such as Black Studies and Ethnic Studies are offered at many US universities.

## Black Power at the Mexico Olympic Games, 1968

At the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games, American Tommy Smith won the gold medal for the 200-metre sprint and Jon Carlos, also representing the USA, won the bronze medal. Australian Peter Norman won the silver medal. While the United States national anthem, 'Star-Spangled Banner', was playing, Smith and Carlos raised their black-gloved fists in a Black Power salute. Both men wore no shoes, to signify black poverty.

All three athletes wore Olympic Project for Human Rights badges. This organisation was set up to protest against racism in sport and racial segregation. Following the medal ceremony, Smith and Carlos were sent back to the United States and were banned from future events by the US Olympic Committee. Peter Norman was also shunned by the Australian athletics establishment and was never again selected for the Olympic Games, despite ranking fifth in the world in his event. Norman died in 2006, aged 64. Both Tommy Smith and John Carlos gave eulogies and were pallbearers at his funeral.



AP Images/AP Photo

**SOURCE 6.11** The most famous image of Black Power, and one of the most iconic sporting images ever taken, comes from the medal ceremony of the 200-metre sprint at the 1968 Mexico Summer Olympic Games.

- 1 What was 'black pride' trying to promote?
- 2 How did 'black pride' represent a new development in the civil rights movement when compared with earlier campaigns studied so far?
- 3 Explain how fashion was used to promote a sense of African identity in the United States.
- 4 Conduct some research and find examples of the fashion discussed. Ensure that you have examples of both men's and women's clothing, hairstyles and other accessories.
- 5 In addition to fashion, soul music became an important vehicle for expressing black culture in the United States. Using some specific examples, explain how this kind of music supported the idea of black pride.
- 6 Consider the Third World Strike in 1968:
  - a What were the activists hoping to achieve?
  - b What evidence is there that they were successful in achieving some of these aims over the long term?
- 7 Source 6.11 is considered to be one of the most famous and controversial sporting images ever captured.
  - a Describe what is taking place in the image.
  - b Even though the Australian silver medallist on the left is holding a different stance, he showed solidarity with Smith and Carlos. Explain how he did this.
  - c Outline the fate of the three athletes when they returned to their respective countries. What does this suggest about the ongoing challenges faced by those supporting racial equality?

# In the ghetto

More than four million African Americans from the South had migrated North between 1940 and 1960. In northern and western cities there were no Jim Crow signs, but discrimination and segregation were alive and well. Public spaces were shared, but schools, health care, housing, safe policing and sanitation services were segregated in practice, if not in law. Unskilled and poorly educated, many new arrivals could only find basic factory work. When technology made these jobs redundant, unemployment grew, with black unemployment double that of white at 10 per cent in 1960. Despite anti-discrimination legislation, unions blocked the apprenticeship of black workers into skilled unions. Although some African Americans moved up the class scale (African American white-collar employment increased by eight per cent between 1940 and 1960), many were trapped in a cycle of poverty and unemployment. Many unemployed young men joined gangs and became involved in crime and drug culture.

Housing was the area where racial discrimination was most pronounced, and residential segregation continued in most cities despite a 1948 Supreme Court ruling forbidding restrictive covenants. Public housing was built for white and black residents by city authorities in different areas. Real estate agents operated a dual housing market, only showing black buyers houses in black areas, and vice versa. Attempts of African Americans to move into white neighbourhoods were met with bombs in Chicago. Within many black areas, houses were substandard, transport inadequate and schools run-down.

There were protests against segregation across the North just as there were in the South. Civil rights groups such as the NAACP and the CORE had worked to fight discrimination in the North for decades, as had other organisations based in the cities, such as the Urban League. In Detroit, Michigan, thousands walked against police brutality in 1963, and in New York almost half a million students boycotted public schools in 1964, demanding a plan to desegregate schools. From the mid-1960s the fight for civil rights focused on de facto segregation and racial disadvantage in northern and western cities.

## Burn, baby, burn

Periodically, urban uprisings erupted in northern cities throughout the 1960s, usually triggered by clashes between young black men and the overwhelmingly white police force. The six-day Watts Riot in Los Angeles in August 1965 (one month before the March on Washington) left 34 people dead, 4000 arrested and an estimated \$200 million worth of property destroyed through fire and looting. The riot was sparked by a confrontation between police and local black residents over the arrest of a drunk driver. The riot was dismissed by the McCone Commission, set up by the governor of California to investigate the causes of the riots, as criminal vandalism rather than political protest.

By the end of 1968 there had been more than 300 race riots and disturbances across the United States, and an estimated half a million African Americans had taken part. Two hundred and fifty African Americans had died in race riots, 50 000 had been arrested and more than 8000 wounded. There were riots in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Newark. Television screens were filled with images of burning buildings and cars in US cities.

Historian Thomas J Sugrue argued that there were two main targets in the urban uprisings: the police and white shopkeepers. All uprisings, aside from those triggered by Martin Luther King Jr's assassination, were triggered by incidents or rumours of police brutality. Looters targeted white-owned shops, restaurants and stores in black areas, while most black businesses were left alone. Sugrue argued that looters saw their actions as a means of 'retribution and redistribution', a response to the discrimination in jobs, housing and education, and the poverty they faced. There was an impatience with the pace of change promised by the civil rights movement. Some looters were opportunistic and took alcohol and things they could never afford. Commentators differed on what the uprisings

meant. Were they political revolutions? Were they senseless expressions of rage that destroyed black communities? Were they criminally led attacks on private property? Sugrue defined them as uprisings: 'a spontaneous upsurge of protest or violent expression of discontent'. They were political, but not revolutionary, acts.



## Martin Luther King Jr in Chicago

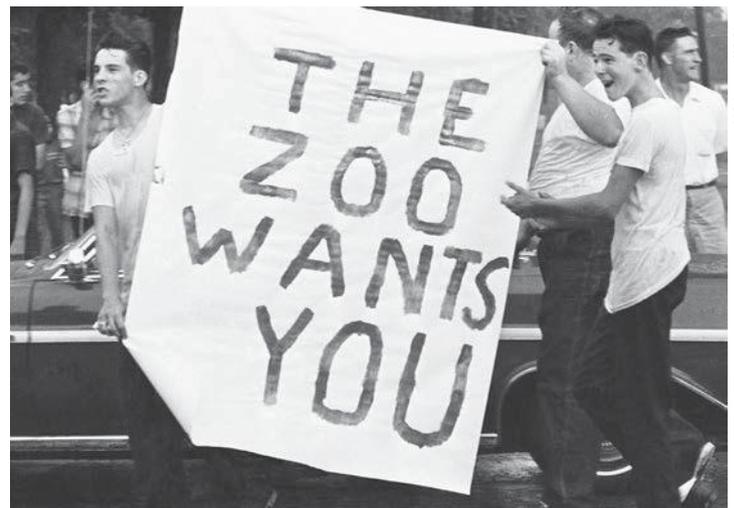
White communities resisted black incursions into their world. Four teenagers beat Jerome Huey, a student at Wilson Junior College, to death with baseball bats when he inquired about a job in the all-white enclave of Cicero, a Chicago suburb. Whites feared that blacks moving into their neighbourhoods would decrease property values and increase levels of crime. Politicians accepted white requests to keep their neighbourhoods white, and supported de facto segregation.

In 1966, Martin Luther King Jr and the SCLC decided to move their non-violence campaign north to support the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO) campaign against segregated housing markets. The SCLC set up campaign headquarters in a three-bedroom flat on the west side ghetto, where the rat population outnumbered the human population, the black schools had to run two shifts because they were so overcrowded, 31 per cent of residents lived on welfare and the police had a reputation for abusing their powers and arbitrarily arresting black residents. There was 50 per cent youth unemployment and 40 per cent male unemployment in the poorest slums. The SCLC and CCCO launched the Chicago Freedom Movement, demanding Mayor Richard Daley end housing and education discrimination. Reverend Jesse Jackson also launched Operation Breadbasket, a campaign to end racist hiring practices in African American areas.

A protest rally in Soldiers Field on 10 July 1966 had a turnout of 60 000. This was disappointing for the organisers. King led a delegation to meet Mayor Daley, who argued he was doing what he could to remove the slums. The next day, a heatwave spread over the city. Police tried to close down a fire hydrant opened by teens to give local kids a place to escape the searing heat. In the fight, police clubbed the five teenagers and the next day the neighbourhood of East Garfield erupted. For three days the rioters and police battled it out over 600 blocks. The riot only ended when the National Guard was called in to restore order. Martin Luther King Jr tried to negotiate with the riot leaders with little effect. They were sceptical of non-violence and were drawn more to the ideas of Malcolm X.

## Gage Park

A march on 5 August 1966 into the white Gage Park area was met by white counter-protesters, who hurled bricks, rocks and firecrackers, in particular targeting the nuns and priests in the march. Martin Luther King Jr led another march of 800 demonstrators into Gage Park on 22 August 1966. White protesters threw rocks and bricks at the marchers. One rock hit King in the head, bringing him to his knees. King continued marching and was met by 4000 angry demonstrators at the march's conclusion. Fights broke out and only the actions of 1500 police on duty stopped further violence. The level of hatred displayed by a broad section of the white demonstrators shocked the most experienced civil rights campaigners who had worked in the South.



AP Images/AP Photo

**SOURCE 6.12** A racist sign is displayed as Martin Luther King Jr marches into an all-white neighbourhood in Chicago on 22 August 1966.

The demonstration at Gage Park and the threats of further marches forced Mayor Daley to the negotiating table. Daley, representatives of the Chicago Freedom Movement and King met at a summit in which Daley agreed to end segregation and improve housing. However, he did not specify how that would happen. Mayor Daley quietly shelved the summit promises once the Chicago campaign ended.

Chicago was the only attempt by the SCLC to run a non-violent campaign in the North and it was seen as a failure in the short term. They did not have the experience or resources to mobilise a population numbering in the millions, and found it difficult to convince young people in the slums of the worth of non-violence. The level of apathy, disillusionment and bitterness in the African American ghettos was also daunting.

- 1 What is a ghetto?
- 2 Why was this term frequently used to describe black suburbs in northern states during the 1960s?
- 3 Identify the range of ways in which segregation and discrimination were still evident in the northern states in the 1960s.
- 4 What motivations did black Americans have for their decision to turn to rioting as a form of protest in the 1960s?
- 5 Create a diagram, table or written summary that outlines the key features of the following riots:
  - a Watts Riot (Los Angeles) 1965
  - b Chicago 1966
  - c Gage Park 1966

## The Vietnam War

The United States first sent military advisers to South Vietnam in the 1950s. Vietnam was to become a Cold War battleground and the United States was committed to defeating the communist North. The last troops were withdrawn from Saigon in 1975, by which time 2.8 million Americans had served

in Vietnam, 57 000 had been killed and at least two million Vietnamese had died. African Americans made up 12.5 per cent of soldiers in Vietnam (they were 10 per cent of the population) and were more likely to be volunteers in infantry units. They had a much higher casualty rate than white soldiers in the early years of the war, making up 20 per cent of combat deaths in 1965. A high percentage of black soldiers volunteered for infantry duty and blacks re-enlisted at a higher rate than whites.

The Vietnam War affected the civil rights movement in several ways. Drastic cuts to the domestic budget were made to pay for the war. President Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty programs, which aimed to alleviate poverty and rebuild the inner-city slums, were put on hold as he committed more US troops to the conflict from 1965. The funds spent on the war against poverty amounted to less than two per cent of the funds spent on the military.



**SOURCE 6.13** Black marine Jeremiah Purdie, about to be evacuated by medics, reaches out to a wounded comrade after a firefight at Hill 845 in Vietnam in 1966. Purdie had joined the marines during the Korean War because 'it was the only service that would take a black man'. This is regarded as one of the iconic images of the Vietnam War. The photographer, Larry Burrows, died in a helicopter crash on the Cambodian border in 1971.

The war also divided the civil rights organisations. Committed to pacifism, Martin Luther King Jr spoke out against the war in 1965, urging President Johnson to negotiate with the North Vietnamese. This was at a time when the war still enjoyed popular support. King accused the US Government of hypocrisy because it condemned riots and violence in US cities while bombing Vietnamese villages and sending black US soldiers, whose average age was 19, to their deaths. Civil rights organisations including the NAACP and the Urban League spoke out against King's stance and in support of America's involvement in the war.

King's public statements caused a breach between King and President Johnson. King was fully committed to the anti-war movement by 1967. Some supporters of the civil rights movement thought King's involvement took the attention, white support and donations away from the fight for racial equality. By this stage the CORE and the SNCC were also committed to the anti-war movement.

### MUHAMMAD ALI (1942–2016)

Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1942. His father was a signwriter and his mother a domestic servant. Clay took up boxing and won a gold medal at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games, then returned to the United States and turned professional. He became the heavyweight champion of the world on 25 February 1964 and two days later announced he had joined the Nation of Islam, become a Muslim and had taken the name Muhammad Ali. On 28 April 1967 he refused induction into the United States Army, citing his religious beliefs. Fourteen

months earlier he had stated that he had no quarrel with the Viet Cong. Ali was convicted and sentenced to five years in gaol, a sentence later overturned. He was stripped of his title and banned from fighting for three-and-a-half years. Muhammad Ali was admired as a sporting champion, for his opposition to the Vietnam War – which saw him sacrifice his career for his principles – and as an advocate for racial equality and Black Power.



Getty Images/Bettmann

## Black Power and The Black Panthers

The most influential of the numerous Black Power groups that sprang up in the 1960s was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, founded in late 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale. It took its name from an independent, black political party set up by Stokely Carmichael in Lowndes County, Alabama, in 1965. The Lowndes County Freedom Organisation used a black panther as its symbol and later adopted the name.

The Black Panthers' politics were a mixture of black nationalism and Marxist-Leninism. It recruited its followers from the *Lumpenproletariat*, or 'lumpens'. These were the lowest men and women on the class scale: the unemployed, the unskilled, ex-prisoners and gang leaders. Newton and Seale believed these people would be the foot soldiers for the revolution that would overthrow the white US Government. The Black Panthers' political aims were explained in its 10-Point Program (see page 118).

Black Panthers chapters opened across 38 cities, including Seattle, New York, Chicago, Portland, Detroit, Newark, Jersey City and San Francisco. At its height, the Black Panthers had 5000 members across the country; 139 000 copies of its magazine, *The Black Panther*, were sold in 1969.



Getty Images/The Front Collection

**SOURCE 6.14** The black panther was chosen by Stokely Carmichael as a symbol of black empowerment for the Lowndes County Freedom Party.



The Image Works/Shark Archives @Photo12

**SOURCE 6.15** The Black Panther magazine included graphic art by Emory Douglas, the minister for culture. Douglas learnt art while in prison as a teenager in California. His images show an oppressed people, powerful and ready for revolution.

**The Black Panther Party Program**

- 1 Freedom: the power to determine the destiny of the Black and oppressed communities.
- 2 Full employment: give every person employment or guaranteed income.
- 3 End to robbery of black communities: the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules as promised to ex-slaves during the reconstruction period following the emancipation of slavery.
- 4 Decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings: the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people can build.
- 5 Education for the people: that teaches the true history of Blacks and their role in present day society.
- 6 Free health care: health facilities which will develop preventive medical programs.
- 7 End to police brutality and murder of Black people and other people of color and oppressed people.
- 8 End to all wars of aggression: the various conflicts which exist stem directly from the United States ruling circle.
- 9 Freedom for all political prisoners: trials by juries that represent our peers.
- 10 Land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace and community control of modern industry.

The Black Panthers' 10-Point Program





Getty Images/Bettmann

**SOURCE 6.16** Students and teachers giving a Black Power salute outside the 'liberation school', run by the Black Panther Party, in San Francisco in 1969. Liberation schools taught students about African American history and culture, current events and politics, and literacy and numeracy.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 Consider the Black Panther Party's 10-Point Program:
  - a Which ideas do you think civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr would agree with? Explain your answer.
  - b Which ideas do you think these leaders might disagree with? Explain your answer.
- 2 Closely examine Source 6.16:
  - a Where was this photograph taken?
  - b What symbol are most of the individuals in the picture making?
  - c Describe what is taking place in this photograph.
  - d Evaluate this image as evidence of the Black Panther Party's activism.
- 3 Closely examine Source 6.17:
  - a Describe the clothing and accessories of these Black Panther Party members.
  - b What look do these men have on their faces?
  - c What image do you think the members are trying to project?
  - d Why might this image have resonated with members of the black community?
- 4 Find 2–3 other artworks or images of the Black Panther Party that help to demonstrate the ideas and activism of the party. Explain how each of your visual sources helps to understand this group, its main ideas and the role that it played in this period.



AAP Image/San Francisco Examiner

**SOURCE 6.17** The Black Panther Party fascinated the media. Its members were very photogenic, with their black berets (a symbol of revolution), leather jackets and dark sunglasses. They appeared street smart, glamorous and very masculine. They were often photographed carrying guns. Women only played a minor role and the female panthers were expected to be subservient to the men. This changed in 1969 when official policy declared men and women equal.

## Guns and breakfast

The Black Panthers believed in armed self-defence and carried guns openly. (This was legal in California as long as you did not point them at anyone.) They came to the attention of the world when 30 of them marched onto the steps of the state capital in Sacramento, California, bearing firearms in protest at a bill proposed to restrict the public display of guns. The Panthers followed police patrols through the ghettos. Two of their slogans were 'off the pig' and 'kill the police'. This aggressive relationship sometimes led to armed confrontations. In one battle, Newton killed policeman John Frey in a shootout in Oakland; he was charged with murder but later acquitted.

The Panthers' love of guns overshadowed their work in local African American communities, where they set up survival programs based on community needs. These included free breakfast programs for children, free ambulances, free medical clinics, tutorial programs, free bussing to prisons for family visits, police patrols and free clothing drives. The Black Panther Party used church properties to run many of its programs. In Illinois, the Panthers fed 4000 children breakfast daily. Sociologist Alondra Nelson argues that the Black Panthers' campaigns to test for lead poisoning and to screen for sickle cell anaemia, a disease that affects African Americans in large numbers, were important contributions to the field of preventative health care.

## Decline of the Black Panther Party

The Black Panthers' gun culture and public calls for the violent overthrow of the US Government saw the FBI and the police work to destroy them. They sent in undercover agents to infiltrate and disrupt the organisation, as they had with the KKK and the Communist Party. The Panthers' links with the criminal underworld also took a toll on their reputation, with 300 arrested in 1969 for murder, drug offences, armed robbery and rape. By 1971, 20 members had died in confrontations with the police. The organisation went into decline after 1971, with internal battles and violence used to punish those who challenged the leaders. Some members went on to form more extreme militant organisations such as The Black Liberation Army; some went underground; and others left and continued with social justice work within local communities. Newton became addicted to cocaine and was killed by a drug dealer in 1998. By 1980 membership of the organisation was down to 28.



Black Panther Party



The Black Panther Party

### Historians on the Black Panthers

Historians disagree on the significance of the Black Panthers and their contribution to the civil rights movement. Professor Robert J Norrell sees them as a murderous group led by petty criminals. He believes they have been romanticised by historians and the media. In contrast, historians such as Jon Rice argue that the Black Panthers filled an important need for social justice in local communities and that their influence should be studied at a local level, rather than concentrating on the drugs and drama in California. Paul Alkebulan suggests that the survival programs are the true legacy of the Black Panther Party and showed how its members were visionary activists who wanted to create a new world. Adam Fairclough argues that while the Black Panther Party received lots of media interest, its support in the African American community was limited. Most African Americans were still committed to the traditional civil rights movement's method of protest and were not interested in violent revolution.

The Black Panthers' influence went beyond the United States into other countries with oppressed racial minorities. In Australia, the Black Panther Party's Survival Program inspired Aboriginal activists to form the Black Panther Party of Australia in 1971. It helped set up a free legal service and medical clinic for Aboriginal Australians in Redfern, Sydney (see Chapter 7, page 134).

- 1 Briefly outline the basic factual detail of the Vietnam War (When was it? How was the USA involved? etc.)
- 2 Explain why the Vietnam War was particularly controversial among the black community.
- 3 Explain how King's response to the Vietnam War inspired criticism from some civil rights activists and other important individuals and groups in the United States.
- 4 What role did Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) play in the growing controversy about US involvement in the Vietnam War?
- 5 Create a detailed mind map outlining the key features of the Black Panther Party. Your mind map should include the origins, ideas, activism, influence and decline of the party along with any other themes or issues you see as important.
- 6 Summarise the views of the following on the Black Panther Party:
  - a Professor Robert J Norrell
  - b Jon Rice
  - c Paul Alkebulan
- 7 Using specific evidence from at least TWO sources provided in this chapter, assess the significance of the Black Panther Party to the civil rights era.

## Assassination

The civil rights movement was becoming fragmented, with organisations divided over tactics and directions by the close of 1967. Black Power movements challenged non-violence as a strategy for bringing about change, but they had made few political gains and could not unite black and white.

Martin Luther King Jr continued to be committed to non-violence and interracial harmony. He believed poverty was the underlying cause of racial inequality and saw the reform of the capitalist system as the means by which poverty could be alleviated. The SCLC Poor People's Campaign recruited representatives of the poor people in the United States across cultures and races. King planned to set up a shanty-town in Washington DC to draw the nation's attention to the issue of poverty.

Overcome or overthrow?



Center for the Study of Political Graphics

**SOURCE 6.18** A Black Panther newspaper cartoon from 1969 depicts the increasing militancy of the Black Power movement.





## QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the individuals on both sides of the cartoon. Consider their clothing, facial expressions, accessories and anything else you see as important.
- 2 What message is being promoted on each side of the drawing?
- 3 What evidence is there to suggest that this cartoon is critical of non-violence and the early civil rights movement?
- 4 To what extent do you think that this is an accurate portrayal of the campaigns for racial equality that took place in the 1960s?
- 5 Create a written or pictorial response to this cartoon from the perspective of someone supporting non-violence.

Before the campaign began, King was visiting Memphis, Tennessee, to support striking sanitation workers. In his last church sermon, considered by some to be his most powerful, he spoke of the threats against his life and how he didn't care what happened to him now. He had 'been to the mountain' and 'seen the Promised Land' and was 'not fearing any man'. Such was his passion that, at the end of his sermon that when the audience applauded, many of them were weeping.

While standing on a balcony of his bedroom at the Lorraine Motel at 6.01 the next evening talking to friends, Martin Luther King Jr was shot with a 0.30-caliber bullet. He was taken to hospital and was pronounced dead at 7.05. He was 39 years old. His death triggered grief and shock, and there were riots across the United States. The shooter, James Earl Ray – a Hitler admirer and white supremacist – was arrested at Heathrow Airport outside London and extradited to the United States. He was sentenced to 99 years in gaol.



## Aftermath

Many historians regard the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr as the symbolic end of the civil rights movement. He was the most well-known public campaigner, and had the ability to potentially draw the disparate civil rights groups together and unify blacks. His courage and charisma had inspired both blacks and whites to embrace non-violence and racial equality. After his death, Congress passed the *Civil Rights Act 1968*, which prohibited discrimination in the sale and rental of housing and provided criminal penalties for interfering with an individual's civil rights and for inciting riots.

“ ... the loss of Martin Luther King Jr., robbed the nation of its best last hope for fundamental change, without violence, without hatred. ”

H Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Hill and Wang, New York, 2008, p. 209.

“ Indeed, by the end of the 1960s, the civil rights movement, as it had existed for over two decades, had come to a conclusion. Martin Luther King fell to an assassin's bullet in April 1968, and though SCLC remained in operation, it never recovered from the loss of its charismatic leader. The moderates had scored three major legislative victories and won numerous battles in the courts to enforce desegregation and disenfranchisement. However, even moderation was not enough to sustain the struggle at a national level once conservatives captured the White House beginning with Richard Nixon in 1968. ”

JT Paterson, in SF Lawson and C Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement 1945–1968*, Rowan and Littlefield, Maryland, 2006, p. 39.

## After 1968

Although the big events associated with the civil rights movement – the overthrowing of the Jim Crow laws, the boycotts, the Freedom Rides and the marches – had ended by the late 1960s, civil rights organisations in both the North and the South continued to work for racial equality and civil rights and to improve the circumstances for African Americans. Although the legislative victories won negated Jim Crow, inequality and discrimination remained.

After Jim Crow, the black electorate had grown, as had the black middle class, created out of greater access to jobs, education and housing, and better standards of living. Policies of **affirmative action**, first introduced under President Kennedy in 1961 and developed under President Johnson, aimed to provide equal opportunities in education and employment for African Americans. Universities actively recruited black and Latino students. African American participation in professional and political life grew and in 1972 the first African American from the South since reconstruction was elected to the US House of Representatives. The Reverend Jesse Jackson, who had worked with Martin Luther King Jr in Chicago, stood unsuccessfully for the Democratic Party Presidential nomination in 1972.



Getty Images/Robert Abbott Sengstacke

**SOURCE 6.19** Four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr his wife Coretta King and three of their children led a march through Memphis



Getty Images/Bettmann

**SOURCE 6.20** Riots broke out across the United States in at least 110 cities when King's assassination was reported. Millions of dollars worth of damage was caused and 39 people died, 34 of them black. This photograph shows the damage to the west side business district of Chicago.

### affirmative action

Government and private programs designed to overcome the legacy of discrimination of historically excluded groups such as women and minorities, especially in education and employment



Chicago race riots



Strategies for change

- 1 Describe the nature of the civil rights movement by the late 1960s.
- 2 What ideas did Martin Luther King Jr include in his final sermon in 1968?
- 3 Outline the details surrounding King's death.
- 4 Assess the significance of King's death to the civil rights movement.
- 5 Explain how the civil rights movement changed after 1968.

# Conclusion

The once united organisations that made up the civil rights movement in 1961 were fragmented after the passage of the *Voting Rights Act 1965*. The SNCC abandoned its commitment to interracial organisation and non-violence and embraced Black Power, inspired by the work and life of the recently assassinated Malcolm X. Black Power inspired a pride in African American history, culture and music, and rejected black integration into white society. At its most radical, it preached revolution through organisations such as the militant Black Panthers. Martin Luther King Jr and the SCLC continued to believe in non-violence and took their campaign to Chicago, but failed to make inroads into entrenched de facto housing segregation. King turned his attention to campaigns against poverty before his assassination in 1968. During the 1970s, the successes of the civil rights movement improved the lives of African Americans even though inequalities were still evident.

## Chapter summary

- Although Malcolm X had been assassinated, his legacy lived on in the Black Power movement.
- The civil rights organisations pursued differed goals and strategies after the passing of the *Voting Rights Act 1965*.
- Black Power became a recognised political and cultural idea after the Meredith Mississippi March for Freedom.
- The non-violence movement moved north in 1967, but failed to make inroads in the northern cities.
- The Black Panthers were the most recognisable militant Black Power group during the 1960s.

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### Further resources

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- Lucks, D, *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War*, University of Kentucky Press, 2014.
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Further resources

## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the ideas of non-violence, supported by Martin Luther King Jr and groups like CORE, and the ideas of Black Power, supported by groups like the Black Panther Party.
- 2 Create a multimedia product (e.g. a short montage) using songs, spoken word, images and footage that outlines the key features of the Black Power movement.
- 3 Conduct some further research into the Black Panther Party focusing on the interpretations developed by a range of different historians. How do they describe the party? How significant do they consider the party to have been in the context of the US civil rights movement? What evidence do they provide to support their views?
- 4 Conduct a class debate on the following statement: 'The Black Panther Party was more successful than the non-violent groups of the earlier civil rights movement.'
  - a Each member of the class should prepare a case for both the affirmative and the negative positions in this debate.
  - b Each member of the class should then choose the position (affirmative or negative) they believe to be the strongest, forming two teams.
  - c Conduct the debate providing equal opportunity for the affirmative and the negative sides to present their views.
  - d All views should be supported by specific historical evidence.
- 5 Construct an extended response to one of the following questions:
  - a Assess the significance of Black Power to the changing nature of the civil rights movement.
  - b 'The civil rights movement fundamentally changed throughout the 1960s.' Evaluate the accuracy of this statement.
  - c Evaluate the view that legislative change had failed to fundamentally improve the position of blacks in the United States by the early 1970s.
  - d To what extent can the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr be regarded as the 'death' of the civil rights movement?

## 07

# Legacies and influences of Martin Luther King Jr and the American civil rights movement

In this chapter, students will examine the legacies of the American civil rights movement.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the development of the American civil rights movement after the 1960s
- the influence of the civil rights movement in other parts of the world including Australia, the United Kingdom and South Africa.



Mourners at Martin Luther King Jr's funeral in Atlanta, Georgia, 9 April 1968

# Introduction

The civil rights movement had an impact on other minority groups in the United States and oppressed people across the globe during Martin Luther King Jr's life, and continued to do so after his assassination. This chapter studies the legacy of the civil rights movement and considers to what extent it influenced other battles for civil rights in Australia, the United Kingdom and South Africa. This chapter also discusses King's global legacy, which has received far less attention from historians than his American activism. The election of Barack Obama was seen as a defining moment in America's racial history but despite this, the fight for social and economic justice for African Americans continues.



# Civil rights after Martin Luther King

Although the big events associated with the civil rights movement – the overthrowing of the Jim Crow laws, the boycotts, the Freedom Rides and the marches – had ended by the late 1960s, civil rights organisations in both the North and the South continued to work for racial equality, civil rights and improving the circumstances for African Americans in an increasingly conservative political environment. The anti-war Vietnam demonstrations intensified across the United States with 10 000 students descending upon the Democrat national convention in 1968. The marchers were assaulted with nightsticks, and eight radicals, including Black Panther Bobby Seale, were indicted for conspiracy to incite violence.

Veterans of the civil rights movement continued their commitment to black equality beyond the 1960s. John Lewis worked on the Voter Education Project in the South and was later elected to the US House of Representatives in 1986, representing Georgia – a state in which at one time he could not have voted. Diane Nash taught at a school in Chicago and lobbied for rental and tenant rights. Rosa Parks established an institute that educated young people about civil rights. Some Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists, including Bob Moses and Stokely Carmichael, inspired by Black Power and disillusioned with the United States, settled in Africa. Moses returned in 1982 and set up the Algebra Project, a program to teach maths to minority groups.

## Latino activism

The call for improved political, legal and civil rights of Latino Americans, particularly among those of Mexican heritage, developed in a similar pattern to the African American civil rights movement. The concurrent development of these Latino groups, however, does make it difficult to gauge the direct influence of the African American civil rights movement, although it should be noted that they shared many similarities in terms of tactics and, at times, cooperated with each other.

The similarity in aims and tactics is most obvious in the formation of major organisations. Founded in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens was similar in focus and tactics to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, although it tended to support assimilation and was opposed to immigration. The American GI Forum, established in 1948, initially focused on equity of treatment of Hispanic World War II veterans but as the 1950s progressed broadened its focus to support wider issues, such as education, voting rights and jury selection, through the legal system. In 1968, with the support of the League of United Latin American Citizens and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund was established. This organisation, like earlier groups, used legal means to challenge segregation in schooling and restrictions of voting rights.

Mexican Americans also held non-violent protests during the 1960s, led by Cesar Chavez, a union organiser and the son of migrant farm workers. He drew attention to the low wages and oppressive working conditions suffered by migrant workers in the United States and pushed to establish labour contracts with the United Farm Workers. In 1965 Filipino and Mexican workers began a strike that lasted five years against the Delano grape growers in California. Chavez, a follower of King, organised non-violent protests including marches and fasts to support the strikers.

The Latinos were also influenced by Black Power, which encouraged them to embrace and celebrate their **Chicano** culture. The Chicano Movement fought for the recognition of Mexican American rights and during the 1960s inspired mass walkouts from high schools by students protesting against their treatment. In New York City the Young Lords Organization, based on the Black Panthers, protested the high unemployment in Latino neighbourhoods and the lack of basic services, like rubbish collection.



Film study



Comparing the struggle for civil rights



Latino civil rights movement

### Chicano

A chosen identity of some Mexican Americans



The Imageworks © 1976 George Ballis/Take Stock

**SOURCE 7.1** Cesar Chavez leading protesters during the Delano Grape Strike (1965–70)

## Native American protest

In 1924 Native Americans were granted American citizenship under the *Snyder Act*. Before the Act, they had been denied civil rights and had lost ancestral land through massacre, invasion and war. Peace treaties made between the federal government and Native American tribes had benefited the white government, and many of the promises made in the treaties were ignored. By the late 19th century most surviving Native Americans were living on reservations, areas of marginal land. They were encouraged to abandon their language and beliefs; to abandon their culture. As in Australia, children of mixed race were forcibly removed from their families and taken to boarding schools. De facto segregation was a regular feature of life in parts of the United States, with signs such as ‘No Indians or dogs allowed’ commonplace. Most Native Americans lived in abject poverty.

Native Americans were denied the vote in some jurisdictions. Under the *Snyder Act* it was up to individual states to determine which Native Americans could vote. In some states, literacy testing and property qualifications were used to limit access to the vote, as was the case with African Americans in the Deep South. In the 1950s there were attempts to dismantle the reservation system and make Native Americans integrate into mainstream society. The 1960s saw a surge in protest movements by Native Americans, demanding not only economic aid but also self-determination. In 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed and argued for greater tribal self-government. The Indians of All Nations occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay from 1969–71, claiming it had been illegally seized from its original inhabitants. Other major AIM campaigns included the occupation of an abandoned military airfield in Minnesota in 1970 and the attempted citizen’s arrest of the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of



Alamy Stock Photo/Bob Weiser

**SOURCE 7.2** Members of the Indians of All Nations movement at the Alcatraz Island occupation, 1969 to 1971

Indian Affairs in 1971. In an attempt to influence the 1972 presidential election and initiate the renewal of the treaty making process, AIM organised the Trail of Broken Treaties march to Washington.

In 1973 AIM, in conjunction with members of the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization, were involved in a two-month stand-off with the FBI and US Marshals at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The protest stemmed from Native American concerns about corrupt Bureau of Indian Affairs officials and is now regarded as a key event in modern Native American history. During the stand-off there were numerous shootouts between AIM members and federal soldiers, in which two Sioux men were killed. Following the surrender of AIM and the Sioux on 8 May 1973, more than 1200 protesters were arrested and many of AIM's leaders were imprisoned. Pine Ridge also exposed the fact that AIM's leadership had been compromised by FBI informers. This, and the loss of key leaders, led AIM to disband as a national organisation in 1978, but many local branches continued the campaigns and in various forms the movement has continued to be active into the 21st century.



Getty Images/Bettmann

**SOURCE 7.3** A car carrying Harlington Wood, Assistant Attorney General, is escorted to a checkpoint leaving Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, after he met with American Indian Movement (AIM) leaders in March 1973

Martin Luther King Jr wrote of the injustice meted out to Native Americans in his 1963 book *Why We Can't Wait*, written after Birmingham. He wrote, 'Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race.' His words and actions inspired a young member of the Pawnee tribe, John Echohawk, to set up the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), which was modelled on the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund. The fund provides lawyers to fight for Native American rights over land, water and culture, to ensure promises made in treaties are fulfilled.

“ 'Dr. King was a great inspiration to me when I was in law school back in the late 1960s,' Echohawk [sic] told a campus audience Jan. 24 in the Michigan Union. 'I had watched the civil rights demonstrations on television, and when I got into law school in 1967, I really saw the implications of what was happening in the civil rights movement led by Dr. King for our Native American people.'

'Inspired by Dr. King, who was advancing the civil rights agenda of equality under the laws of this country, we thought that we could also use the laws to advance our Indianship, to live as tribes in our territories governed by our own laws under the principles of tribal sovereignty that had been with us ever since 1831. We believed that we could fight for a policy of self-determination that was consistent with U.S. law and that we could govern our own affairs, define our own ways and continue to survive in this society.'

John Echohawk, quoted in B DeGroat, 'Native American rights tied to MLK', *The University Record*, 29 January 2001.

”



Native American civil  
rights movement

- 1 In what ways did civil rights campaigners continue their work after the 1960s?
- 2 Explain how Cesar Chavez drew upon the civil rights movement to campaign for better treatment of Latinos in the United States.
- 3 Consider the place of Native Americans in the United States:
  - a Describe their treatment at the hands of the American governments prior to the mid-20th century.
  - b Outline the variety of ways in which Native Americans began to challenge this treatment.
- 4 According to John Echohawk, how had the civil rights movement inspired his own political activism?
- 5 Using evidence provided by Source 7.3 and the comments of John Echohawk, write a paragraph that explains the impact of the civil rights movement on other groups in the United States.

## The global influence of the American civil rights movement

1968, the year of Martin Luther King's assassination, was a year of worldwide protest, with many young people challenging the existing power structures. Television took events in Selma and Montgomery into homes across the world, inspiring other groups to adopt the same strategies and language. This is one of the significant legacies of the US civil rights movement. Some protest movements also drew inspiration from the Black Power movement and the Black Panthers, and saw armed struggle as the means of achieving their aims, while some more radical organisations adopted terror tactics.

London, Rome, Paris, Munich and Tokyo all experienced massive anti-war demonstrations and clashes with police in 1968. Education was halted in Italy when university students occupied campuses. A general strike in France, initiated by students but embraced by workers, paralysed the country. In Czechoslovakia, reform attempts to liberalise the country resulted in a Soviet invasion. In many parts of the world non-violent protest was met with state-sanctioned violence. In Mexico in 1968, days before the start of the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, government forces at a democracy demonstration shot and killed a number of students.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of social turmoil in the United States and across the world. New social movements emerged, fighting for competing political ideologies, rights and freedoms. These included the anti-war movement, the anti-nuclear movement, women's liberation, personal liberation, the environment movement and gay liberation.

The effectiveness and the experience of non-violent action differed widely from campaign to campaign and from country to country. Not all protest movements looked to non-violence as a means to achieve change or used the same tactics and strategies. It is difficult to quantify the broad effect Martin Luther King Jr and the American civil rights movement had on such global events, but there is little doubt King was a figure who inspired protest movements around the world.

“ However deeply American negroes are caught in the struggle to be at last at home in our homeland of the United States, we cannot ignore the larger world house in which we are also dwellers. Equality with whites will not solve the problems of either whites and Negroes if it means equality in a world society stricken by poverty and in a universe doomed to extinction by war.

ML King Jr, *Where Do We Go from Here? Chaos or Community*, Beacon Press, 2010, p. 167.



Comparing the struggle for civil rights

## Lewis V Baldwin and the global Martin Luther King Jr

The majority of historical studies of Martin Luther King Jr focus on the American experience, and the influence of King on global politics and ideas is a relatively new area of research. Historian Lewis V Baldwin argues that Martin Luther King Jr saw the civil rights struggle and the war against poverty as part of a global struggle. His opposition to the American involvement in the Vietnam War, the public comments he made criticising the apartheid regime in South Africa, his public opposition to nuclear weapons and his campaigns to end poverty took place in a global context.

Baldwin coedited a book where historians considered the impact of Martin Luther King Jr's actions and writings in civil rights struggles in Cuba, Central and South America, Asia and South Africa, called *'In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality': Martin Luther King Jr and the Globalization of an Ethical Idea*. Baldwin argues that King's influence was important through his commitment to global justice and his support to campaigns across the globe.

But King's most significant and far-reaching influence came through his involvement with the peace movement and the more global antiwar activities in his time, much of which entailed making speeches, fund-raising, participating in street demonstrations and signing declarations and appeals against conflicts in Vietnam and parts of the so-called Third World.

LV Baldwin and PR Dekar, *'In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality': Martin Luther King Jr and the Globalization of an Ethical Idea*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2013, p. 20.

Baldwin also argues that in an increasingly globalised world Martin Luther King Jr's ideas are still pertinent.

King's anti-war witness and crusade are desperately needed in a contemporary world in which war is too often glorified and in which humans are haunted by sectarian warfare in Iraq, organized torture and terrorism, ethnic cleansing, genocide, religiously based violence, political assassinations and the cycle of violence, repression and reprisal in the Middle East. No one recalls King's suggestion that 'the arms race' be replaced by 'the peace race'...

LV Baldwin in ML King Jr, *'In A Single Garment of Destiny': A Global Vision of Justice*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2014, p. 5.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Explain what is meant by the claim that 'the 1960s and 1970s were a period of social turmoil'.
- 2 Make a list of the common issues that were targeted by protesters around the globe in the late 1960s.
- 3 Explain how the modern media was helping to spread the message of protest and resistance.
- 4 What role did non-violence play in these various protest movements?
- 5 How have the majority of historical studies treated the Martin Luther King Jr story?
- 6 Using the quotes provided, explain how Lewis V Baldwin's approach differs from this traditional approach.
- 7 According to Baldwin, what might the significance of Martin Luther King Jr be to the 21st century?
- 8 Discuss Baldwin's ideas as a class. To what extent do you think they have merit? Once you have discussed this, evaluate Baldwin's views on the significance of Martin Luther King Jr in 1–2 paragraphs.

# Australia

For the first 50 years after Federation, Aboriginal Australians were citizens without rights. Their situation differed from state to state, and across Australia there were different levels of control imposed. The right to vote was denied across the Commonwealth and a policy of **assimilation** was the objective of government from the 1930s to the 1970s. From the 1930s Aboriginal groups in Victoria and New South Wales founded organisations to represent their interests and called for citizenship rights and better living conditions. The Second World War was a catalyst for change, with Aboriginal people enlisting in the forces and working with whites in industry. In 1958 the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement was formed, the first national Aboriginal body. They campaigned for constitutional change, equal citizenship and the Commonwealth power to legislate for the Aboriginal people, which was achieved as a result of the Constitutional Referendum in 1967. During the 1960s the direct influence of Martin Luther King Jr and the American civil rights movement was evident in the Australian Aboriginal rights movement.

**assimilation**  
Aboriginal Australians would be absorbed into white society and abandon their traditional culture. This was the policy behind mixed-race children being removed from their families.

## Freedom Ride, New South Wales 1965

One particular campaign that was obviously influenced by the American civil rights movement was the Australian Freedom Ride. Australians were aware of the civil rights struggle in the United States, and in 1964, when Sydney University students held protests in support of the American struggle for civil rights, comments from the public suggested that they look in their own backyard. The Freedom Rides through the Deep South in 1961 inspired University of Sydney students to hire a bus and travel through parts of New South Wales in 1965 to investigate living conditions in Australian Aboriginal communities and the extent of segregation. Student Action For Aborigines (SAFA) hoped to end discrimination and encourage Aboriginal people to resist discrimination. Among their members was Charles Perkins, an Arrernte man born in Alice Springs, the first Australian Aboriginal man to be awarded a university degree, and a future leader in the struggle for Indigenous rights. In a 1998 interview, Perkins observed that the American example was a direct influence on the Australian one, stating:



**SOURCE 7.4** Charles Perkins speaks with members of the Aboriginal Community in Moree on the Australian Freedom Ride in 1965

“ Well, the Freedom Ride is a copy of really what happened in America, where people wanted to go out, get in a bus, go out there and go to towns and cities and expose discrimination and prejudice wherever it may be. And racism. And that’s what we wanted to do, all of us students. And we thought, well we’ll go into the country towns of New South Wales.

Charles Perkins, Interview 5 May 1998, *Australian Biography*, [www.australianbiography.gov.au](http://www.australianbiography.gov.au)



The protesters visited Wellington, Gulargambone, Walgett, Moree and towns along the New South Wales coast, recording discriminatory practices that barred Aboriginal Australians from clubs, bars, swimming pools, hotels and sections of the cinemas. The media covered the ride and SAFA drew attention to links between its objective and that of the civil rights movement in the United States. The Freedom Ride raised public awareness and debate about the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal Australians.

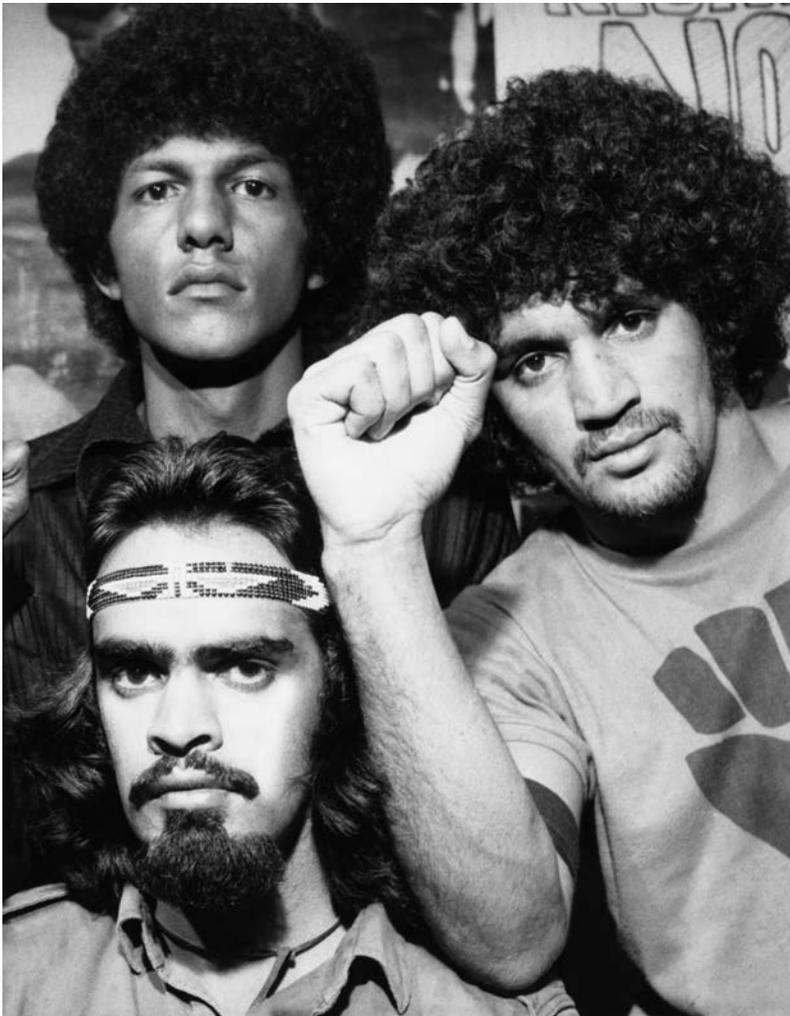
## Black Power in Australia

While the 1967 Referendum was seen as a watershed moment in the movement for legal and political rights for Australian Aboriginals, some younger Aboriginal activists were frustrated by the lack of reform and looked to the Black Power movement for inspiration. For example, after the visit of Caribbean Black Power Leader Roosevelt Brown in 1969, members of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) began to advocate for Aboriginal control and leadership of Aboriginal organisations. In New South Wales, particularly in Redfern, Sydney, a younger generation of Aboriginal activists similarly worked towards establishing Aboriginal-led services, adapting Black Power models to the Australian context. Among this group's earliest accomplishments were the

establishment of a free legal service and medical clinic for Aboriginal Australians in Redfern, and the National Black Theatre. These would become the model for establishing other services run for and by Aboriginal Australians. A number of those influenced by Black Power politics also participated in the protest campaign against the tour of the all-white South African rugby team in 1971.

Members of the AAL also attended the first black nationalist Congress of African People meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, and then met with members of the Black Panther Party in New York. This experience led to the formation of an Australian Black Panthers group in 1971 in Brisbane whose membership also included 'field marshals' in other states. The Australian Black Panthers, and those influenced by the American Black Power examples, also adopted the style of their American counterparts, including afro hair, leather jackets and the Black Power salute.

An enduring example of the influence of the Black Power movement in the Australian context was the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra. In 1972 when the Liberal McMahon government rejected Aboriginal land rights on the eve of Australia Day, young Aboriginal protesters from Redfern embarrassed the



**SOURCE 7.5** Members of the Australian Black Panther Party, including founder Denis Walker (top left), Gary Foley (bottom left), and Billy Craigie, giving the Black Power salute

government by setting up a tent embassy on the grounds of (Old) Parliament House. It began as a beach umbrella but grew to 11 tents by mid-February. The site became a focal point for the demand for land rights, with 2000 supporters joining the tent embassy in the following few months. In July 1972 the police moved in to dismantle the tents and protesters sang 'We shall not be moved', a gospel song frequently sung at American civil rights movement rallies, as the tents were pulled down. Police violence against the protesters was shown on national television. The next day the tents were put back up, and again removed. Despite this removal, the embassy was quickly re-established on the lawns in front of Old Parliament House, where the Aboriginal Embassy still stands today.



## American influences

The following two extracts were written by participants in the movements for Australian Aboriginal rights. Each was actively involved in the events and developments they discuss, and reflects broadly on the American and local factors influencing the campaigns they were involved in.

### ANN CURTHOYS ON THE FREEDOM RIDE

As a third year Bachelor of Arts student at the University of Sydney in 1965, Ann Curthoys participated in the SAFA Freedom Ride through New South Wales. After graduation she lectured in History at the Australian National University and the University of Sydney and has published widely in the areas of Women's History, Australian History and Aboriginal History. This lecture was given at the time her book *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* was published, Curthoys quotes Peter Westerway recalling discussing the US Freedom Rides with Charles Perkins following a lecture at the University of Sydney. Westerway was one of Perkins' lecturers at the University, and at the time of the meeting described was executive producer of the investigative TV show *Seven Days*.

... I remember we were sitting in the body of the lecture hall, not down at the lecture podium, and I repeated this stuff about pictures and said, 'look, television's all about short grabs, you have to be able to see interesting pictures or they won't use it. They only use things which they have pictures to illustrate. Talking heads are dead on television.' And we began to talk and I think I suggested about the Freedom rides in the United States and the way in which that had been done. And as I was talking it occurred to me that there was no reason why you couldn't do something similar in Australia. I said to him 'if you get together a group of people who will go on a bus ride around what has come to be called the Deep North of New South Wales I suppose, I'll send a camera crew with you. And we'll do a documentary and put it on 7 Days.'

Curthoys continues

The idea took off from there, and the students set about organising a Freedom Ride. The organisation was formalised, with a constitution and office bearers, and students set out to publicise their proposed Freedom Ride, which they did quite successfully with stories in *The Australian* and the Sydney afternoon tabloid, *The Sun*.

They raised money, recruited students to go, and planned an itinerary. It was agreed that as well as protest, the students would also conduct a survey to elicit more detailed information about racial discrimination, living conditions, education, and health. The towns chosen were those thought to have the worst record on racial discrimination – Walgett, Moree, and Kempsey, with other towns like Lismore with supposedly better reputations chosen for contrast. One of the key people in the organisation of the Freedom Ride was Jim Spigelman, now Chief Justice of New South Wales but then a nineteen-year-old student in Arts law. Jim was indefatigable in seeking out information about conditions in the country towns to be visited. He wrote to everyone, including to the civil rights organisations in the US like the Congress for Racial Equality and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. How had the Freedom Rides been conducted in the US, what could we learn from them?

The Freedom Rides in the US had occurred in 1961, and had been specifically focused on desegregating transportation facilities – buses and bus stations. When the idea was taken up in Australia it had a much broader meaning – black and white students travelling together by bus



→ to draw attention to all kinds of racial discrimination. Indeed our concern was not transportation, which was not segregated, but rather places of leisure in country towns – pools and picture theatres and RSL clubs – which were. We were also to draw attention to the appalling conditions under which Indigenous people lived, in shanty towns, on reserves and missions. Yet we students at the University of Sydney in 1965 had a lot to learn from the US, most of all from the ideas of Martin Luther King. SAFA was especially interested in his letter from Birmingham City Jail, which we reprinted and entitled ‘Our Struggle’, and anyone going on the Freedom Ride was encouraged to read it. ‘Our Struggle’ makes fascinating reading today. Written on scraps of paper with a pen smuggled into King’s cell in Birmingham City Gaol in Alabama in 1963, it was an impassioned response to criticism from churchmen who accused him of creating tension between blacks and whites. In this letter, King argues against gradualism and for immediate, direct, non-violent action. The purpose of direct action, he writes, is ‘to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation’.

Ann Curthoys, ‘The Freedom Ride – Its Significance Today’, public lecture, 4 September 2002.

### GARY FOLEY ON BLACK POWER IN REDFERN

Gary Foley, a Gumbaynggirr man, is an activist, writer and academic who was a key figure in Australian Black Power politics. From the late 1960s he was active in the Redfern communities’ establishment of Aboriginal-led services, protested against the Springbok rugby tour, participated in the establishment of the Aboriginal Embassy in Canberra and has served on the boards or managed a range of Aboriginal organisations. Foley has also worked as an actor, perhaps most notably in the comedic play and television program *Basically Black*. Foley is now a professor in the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit at Victoria University.

In time, like most Koori arrivals from the bush at that time, they began to congregate around the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA), a social/welfare centre established by community leaders like Charles Perkins, Ken Brindle, wharfies Chicka Dixon and Jack Hassan and boxers Roy Carrol and Teddy Rainbow. The FAA had set up premises in an old funeral parlour at 810 George Street, near Central Railway Station,... and by 1968 had become the major social congregation point for the increasing number of young arrivals from the bush and more established Koori city-dwellers. It was at the social functions held by the FAA that most of the later Black Power movement met each other and began to discuss the events of the day. Many had participated in the campaign for the 1967 referendum and had respected and supported ... Charlie Perkins and Ken Brindle in the Gurindji campaign and various actions through 1967–69. As a result by their late teens they had developed a relatively sophisticated knowledge and understanding of politics and political methodology from old hands like Brindle, Perkins, Shirley ‘Mum Shiril’ Smith, Faith Bandler, Bert Groves, Chicka Dixon, Dulcie Flowers and others.

Further, they came to sense themselves as the inheritors of a long tradition of political struggle as they met and conversed with aging legends of the indigenous struggle such as Bill Onus, Jack Patton, Bert Groves and Frank Roberts. By 1968 a small discussion group emerged that at times comprised of Paul Coe, Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, John Newfong, Alana and Samantha Doolan, Lyn Craigie and husband Peter Thompson, Bob and Kaye Belleair, Naomi Mayers, Gary Williams, Norma Williams, Pam Hunter, Isobel Coe and others. This group, at the behest of Coe and Williams, began consuming all they could of the political literature of the day. Paul Coe was a strong critic of what he perceived as, ‘...too many white liberals running black affairs. Nothing will get done until young blacks take the initiative.’ To a man and woman these young Kooris had come to the city in the previous five years, and all agreed with Coe when he observed, ‘In the country racism is blatant, In the city it is more subtle. But the result is the same’. These sentiments and the way they were vehemently expressed by Coe resonated deeply with the other young blacks. They may not have been as articulate as Coe, but they strongly related to what he was talking about. At that time, as Roberta Sykes noted, the streets were regarded as ‘our only true meeting place’.

→



It should be remembered that this was a time of exciting social and political upheaval in Australia and the rest of the world. The late 1960s saw student rebellion in Paris, riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago and the emergence of the American Black Power movement. In both America and Australia demonstrations against the War in Vietnam brought [sic] together elements of black and white political activists. In Sydney people like Paul Coe, Gary Williams and Gary Foley were starting to encounter new people and new ideas. Goodall describes these as 'diverse groupings of young people who sometimes called themselves 'New Left', but who might just as well associate themselves in Australia with the anarchist, libertarian traditions'. They were 'influenced by the anti-colonial movements in India and Africa' and writers like Franz Fanon, Jean Paul Satre [sic] and Camus.

Within that context, the young disaffected Aborigines of inner city Sydney set about to raise their level of political awareness. One thing that accelerated their international awareness had been the sudden influx in the late 60s of American servicemen on R&R (Rest and Recuperation) leave in Sydney. A significant number of these were the African-American troops who some said were America's cannon fodder in Vietnam. These troops often gravitated toward the Sydney Black community in Redfern seeking solace from the prevalent white racism of Sydney. Consequently, the young indigenous activists became exposed to the latest developments in racial politics in America, and were provided by Black GI's with some of the latest in African-American political literature and music.

The young Kooris were acutely conscious of the strong sense of alienation and injustice, and the hostility toward white authority that they had in common with many of these African-American servicemen. Another reason why the young Redfern activists came to focus on the USA was because at that time there was very little available in the form of good political literature for them to study. Very little being written at that time about the historical situation of Australia was of use to them because of the 'British' nature of that material.

Furthermore, only one bookshop in Sydney sold the type of material they were after. This was the Third World Bookshop, run by Bob Gould, an anarchic Sydney left wing identity. It was from Gould's bookshop that the Redfern activists began acquiring their reading matter, at first by the simple and expedient way of theft, and later when Gould agreed to provide the group with whatever books they wanted, gratis. The bulk of the relevant literature that Gould had related to the African-American political struggle, and so the Redfern activists began consuming the works of Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Searle, George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver and Angela Davis. But, as Goodall reminds us, it is also important to remember that in 1969 these Redfern activists 'were just as aware of the seizure of Alcatraz by Vine Deloria Jr as they were of the Panthers' ...and *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was as widely read as *Soul on Ice*.'

Gary Foley, 'Black Power in Redfern 1968–1972', *The Koori History Website Project*, [www.kooriweb.org](http://www.kooriweb.org), 5 October 2001.

## QUESTIONS

- 1 Discuss the perspective of the extract from Ann Curthoys.
- 2 Curthoys' observations in this quote are a recollection of the events she describes. What potential problems are there using an individual's memory as an historical source? To what extent is this a concern for this particular source?
- 3 According to Curthoys:
  - a How was the idea for the NSW Freedom Ride created?
  - b What role did the media play in the NSW Freedom Ride?
  - c What did the organisers hope to achieve?
  - d What were some of the differences between the NSW Freedom Ride and the US Freedom Rides of 1961?
  - e How were the Australian activists taking part in the Freedom Ride influenced by Martin Luther King Jr?





- 4 Provide some brief biographical details for Gary Foley.
- 5 According to Gary Foley:
  - a What role did the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA) play in supporting younger Aboriginal people in NSW?
  - b How did the FAA contribute to the development of the Black Power movement in Australia?
  - c What did Paul Coe criticise about previous attempts to bring about civil rights in Australia?
  - d How did global events influence Aboriginal activists in Sydney?
  - e What role did Bob Gould's bookshop play in this growing movement?
- 6 Using these sources, discuss the influence of the US civil rights movement on Australia.

- 1 Describe the position of Aboriginal people in Australia in the first half of the 20th century.
- 2 Outline the main events of the NSW Freedom Ride of 1965.
- 3 Explain how the NSW Freedom Ride was linked to events in the United States.
- 4 What did the 1967 Referendum in Australia achieve?
- 5 Create a detailed flow chart that explains the influence of the Black Power movement in Australia. Include the origins of the movement, specific events and how it contributed to civil rights in Australia.
- 6 Explain how Source 7.5 demonstrates the influence of the Black Power movement in Australia.
- 7 Conduct some further research to extend your understanding of the influence of the US civil rights movement in Australia.

## United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, from the mid-1960s, examples from England and Northern Ireland also highlight the influence of the American civil rights movement. In England, casual racism was a widespread fact of everyday life for South Asian and West Indian migrants. This racism also extended to colour bans that restricted access to accommodation and work opportunities.

### Bristol Bus Boycott

In 1963 Bristol, England, was home to 3000 people with Caribbean ancestry, most of whom had arrived after the Second World War and were British citizens, coming from the mostly British colonies of the West Indies. Bristol's West Indian community had been subjected to racism and discrimination. For example, the Bristol Omnibus Company, with the support of the local Transport and General Workers' Union, refused to employ black or Asian people as bus drivers or conductors. Gary Bailey, an 18-year-old West Indian man, was chosen by the West Indian Development Council to challenge this colour bar. When he was rejected by the Bristol Omnibus Company for employment as a bus driver on the basis of race, the West Indian community launched a campaign of demonstrations, blockades, sit-ins and pickets to draw attention to the company's policies. Students from Bristol University – many of whom were already involved in anti-nuclear and anti-racial discrimination campaigns – supported the protests, as did some Labour Party MPs.

The West Indian Development Council members were inspired by Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott and used non-violence in their campaign strategy. The British press drew parallels between Bristol and the situation in the Deep South of the USA. This embarrassed the wider union movement, the government and Bristol's civic leaders, and after four months the colour bar was lifted. The Bristol boycott and other similar protests are considered to be contributing factors in the passing of the *Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968*, which outlawed discrimination in the United Kingdom on the grounds of race, national origin, ethnicity and colour in public places and in applications for housing, employment and public services.

## Northern Ireland

In 1801 the former Kingdom of Ireland merged with the Kingdom of Great Britain to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Irish nationalist movements fought to establish an independent Ireland well into the 20th century. In 1922 the Irish Free State was created, and in 1949 the Republic of Ireland was established and severed all ties with the British monarchy. However, on the creation of the Irish Free State the area known as Northern Ireland, made up of six predominantly Protestant counties in the otherwise largely Catholic country, opted to remain in the United Kingdom (UK) with Great Britain. Supporters of the decision to remain were known as Unionists.

Northern Ireland was beset by **sectarian** divisions. In some instances Catholics in Northern Ireland called themselves the 'negroes of Northern Ireland'. In towns and cities people lived in Catholic or Protestant wards, with most Protestants occupying the more middle class and professional jobs, owning businesses and having access to better services. Schools were segregated on religious lines. Electoral boundaries were drawn to benefit the Protestant population and the owners of private companies were entitled to six votes. Discrimination in housing was a particular issue for Catholics with fewer council houses built in Catholic areas and preference in rentals given to Protestants.

Most homes in Northern Ireland had television by the early 1960s so Catholics saw the American civil rights movement in action. This inspired civil rights groups to form, and a campaign of civil disobedience and protest was staged. Protests were held outside council offices to highlight discriminatory housing allocations, and a caravan being used as housing by a family of four, without a toilet or running water, was dumped in the middle of a Londonderry intersection. This was filmed and shown on television across Britain. In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed. At a sit-down protest at the opening of a bridge in Londonderry the protesters sang 'We shall overcome', an African American gospel song frequently sung in American civil rights campaigns, as they were hauled away by the police.

Catholics marched in the thousands for civil rights, and many were attacked by Protestant Unionist supporters. Tensions between Catholics and Protestants grew. Riots in Belfast in August 1969 resulted in hundreds of houses being destroyed by fire and thousands of people (mainly Catholic) made homeless. Eight people were killed. Harold Wilson, the UK Prime Minister, ordered British troops to Northern Ireland to restore order. This military build-up intensified the sectarian violence, with both sides adopting paramilitary tactics. In this radicalised environment many Catholics drew inspiration from the Black Power and Black Panthers movements, rather than from Martin Luther King Jr.

According to some historians Bloody Sunday in January 1972 was when the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland ended. A peaceful Catholic protest march in Londonderry had been declared illegal by the authorities, but despite this the march went ahead. The Catholics were protesting against the UK government policy of internment without trial. At the end of the march, attended by at least 10 000, stones were thrown at British troops. Gunfire broke out and the British Army killed 13 civilians. Images of the march and its outcome were shown across all forms of media.

### sectarianism

Strong support of a particular religious group, not willing to accept others' beliefs



In the United States the event was likened to the March on Selma. Increasingly, Catholics looked to a military solution and enlistments in the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) soared. Direct rule from Britain was then imposed in Northern Ireland. Thirty years of violence followed, which included assassinations, car bombs, rocket attacks on British targets, and both civilians and security forces being targeted by the paramilitary groups the IRA and the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Terrorism spread to the British mainland. It wasn't until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 that a political solution was reached, ending 'The Troubles'.



Getty Images/Bentley Archive/Popperfoto

**SOURCE 7.6** Father Daly taking an injured man past British troops, Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972



Alamy Stock Photo/PHOTOBYTE

**SOURCE 7.7** The Bloody Sunday mural, by the Bogside Artists, Bogside, Derry, Northern Ireland, shows Father Daly leading an an injured man past British troops. Murals such as this one are common in Northern Ireland.

- 1 Which minorities had been the target of discrimination in Britain?
- 2 Who initiated the Bristol Bus Boycott?
- 3 What evidence is there to suggest that:
  - a this event had been influenced by the US civil rights movement?
  - b the boycott was effective?
- 4 Consider the case of Ireland:
  - a Identify the main differences between Catholic and Protestant wards in Northern Ireland by 1949.
  - b Describe the position of Catholics living in Northern Ireland.
  - c How were the ideas of the US civil rights movement brought to Ireland?
  - d Outline the ways in which Catholics in Ireland began to protest their treatment. How did this, too, reflect the US civil rights movement?
  - e Explain how Bloody Sunday in 1972 changed the civil rights movement in Ireland.
- 5 What do Sources 7.6 and 7.7 suggest about the legacy of the civil rights movement in Ireland?

# South Africa

South Africa by the 1950s was a country that had institutionalised white supremacy through a system of **apartheid**. This system of racial discrimination and racial segregation was introduced in 1948 by the governing National Party. The first laws passed were the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949)* and the *Population Registration Act (1950)*. The latter divided the population into four racial groups – Bantu (black), White, Coloured (mixed race), and Indian. People were treated differently depending on their racial group. The *Group Areas Act (1950)* legally separated the racial groups and allowed people to be forcibly removed from an area not designated for their race. All Bantu had to move into townships outside of cities, where they could not own land. Over time universities, hospitals, toilets, and schools were all segregated. The *Bantu Education Act (1953)* created government-run schools with a paternalistic curriculum that promoted white supremacy, and where black people were to be educated only as labourers and servants. The *Bantu Authorities Act (1951)* designated areas of land for tribal groups, denying black South Africans citizenship. All black men were required to carry a passbook, which contained their personal details, photograph and fingerprints. Black people could not enter a white area without a pass.

There were parallels between the Deep South and South Africa, however the penalties imposed on political protest were much harsher in South Africa. Campaigns of non-violent civil defiance began with the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Trained volunteers went to gaol for failing to carry passes, violating curfew and entering locations and facilities designated white. These tactics were to be used during the 1960s by the civil rights protesters in the Deep South. Protest in South Africa, even non-violent protest, was met with state-sanctioned violence, with police using whips and guns.

The *Public Safety Act (1953)* and the *Criminal Law Amendment Act (1953)* were passed, empowering the government to impose emergency measures and increasing penalties for protesting or supporting the repeal of a law. In March of 1960 a demonstration against the pass laws saw several thousand unarmed people surround the police station. Fifty-five Africans were killed when the police opened fire, most shot in the back. The event drew worldwide condemnation. The *Unlawful Organizations Act (1960)* was passed, making demonstration illegal and banning the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The *General Law Amendment Act (1963)* imposed the death penalty for all acts of sabotage. It became a criminal offence to publish anything written by banned white or black journalists. In 1964 Nelson Mandela, who had previously been imprisoned for five years for inciting workers to strike, was convicted of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1994, after the dismantling of apartheid, he became the first president of South Africa.

## apartheid

An Afrikaans word meaning separateness or being apart. It is the name given to the institutionalised system of racial discrimination and racial segregation in South Africa between 1948–91.

## The American civil rights movement and South Africa

There was a two-way relationship between the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and segregation in the American South. Many American civil rights activists after the 1950s saw the struggle in the US as an extension of the struggle in Africa and spoke out publicly against apartheid. Racial exploitation and oppression were seen as a universal evil; the struggle in the US and the struggle in Africa were the same. Africa expert William Minter, in the book *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century (1950–2000)*, argues that it was the non-violent demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa,



**SOURCE 7.8** Nelson Mandela, with fellow ANC member Walter Sisulu, at the Robben Island prison, 1966

Photograph by Cloete Breyfembach

as well as the success of Indian independence, that inspired civil rights leaders in America to adopt the same strategies.

Martin Luther King Jr was active in the fight against apartheid. In 1962 Dr King and Albert Lutuli – a leader of the ANC when Nelson Mandela became active – issued the Appeal for Action against Apartheid, signed by 150 world leaders. In December 1965, after Nelson Mandela had been sentenced to imprisonment for life, King called the white rulers of South Africa ‘modern-day barbarians’. He recognised that the struggle in South Africa was similar to and yet different from that in the United States. In a speech delivered in London in 1964, en route to Oslo where he was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, he spoke of how even the mildest forms of non-violent resistance in South Africa were met with years of imprisonment. Such oppression, he argued, could lead to violence and race war. King spoke of the torture and sadistic interrogation methods used to crush human beings. He urged the United States and the United Nations to impose massive economic sanctions against the apartheid regime to bring it down. At this time, at the height of the Cold War, the United States government would not act against South Africa, who it regarded as an ally against communism in Africa. King, too, was under suspicion of being a communist as he continued to speak out against American involvement in the Vietnam War and the development of nuclear weapons.

Eighteen activists from the SNCC, including John Lewis, visited African leaders in 1964. Lewis returned convinced that the economic and political destinies of black Americans and Africans were inseparable. In March 1965 the SNCC, along with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other activist groups, protested outside Chase Manhattan Bank’s headquarters in opposition to their proposed loans to the South African regime. Chase abandoned the \$40 million loan after church groups threatened to withdraw funds.

For black South Africans, the achievement of the American civil rights movement offered hope. In a radio interview in the United States in 2003, Archbishop Desmond Tutu recalled how he and many other South Africans took heart in the struggles and achievements of African Americans.

Eventually, the sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western nations led to apartheid being abandoned in South Africa.

Across the United States and the West there were networks actively campaigning against the apartheid regime. Groups like the African Liberation Support Committee and the TransAfrica Forum are credited with launching the first sit-ins to demand US action in South Africa, precipitating the successful sanctions movement of the mid-1980s where sporting and economic boycotts were imposed on the regime. Violence intensified in South African townships during the 1980s. A memorial march in memory of the Sharpeville massacre saw 21 people killed by police with automatic weapons. In June 1989 Nelson Mandela met with President FW de Klerk to discuss the future of South Africa. In 1994 the first multi-race elections were held and Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first black president of South Africa.



**SOURCE 7.9** Archbishop Desmond Tutu introduces Nelson Mandela to the crowd at the City Hall, Cape Town, after he was elected President of South Africa in 1994

“When I was in a ghetto township, I picked up a tattered copy of *Ebony* magazine. I don't know where that came from. But, it was one that was describing Jackie Robinson's breaking into major league baseball. Now, I didn't know baseball from ping pong. But what was important for me was, "Hey, man! Here is a black man who has overcome all kinds of odds, and made it! I will make it too,"" Tutu said.

Desmond Tutu quoted in M Helms, 'U.S. civil rights movement fueled anti-apartheid effort, Tutu says', Minnesota Public Radio, www.mprnews.org, 26 February, 2003.

- 1 How were people divided in South Africa from the mid-20th century?
- 2 Identify some of the laws that discriminated against certain groups in South Africa and briefly explain what they meant.
- 3 What was the name given to this system?
- 4 Outline the ways in which people began to challenge this system.
- 5 Describe the response to protest and resistance in South Africa. How did it differ to the response to protests in the United States during the civil rights era?
- 6 Explain how the case of South Africa demonstrated a 'two-way relationship' between the civil rights movement in the United States and the events taking place in South Africa.
- 7 How did the apartheid system in South Africa come to an end in the 1990s?

**The civil rights movement beyond America**

**MICHAEL FARRELL, A FOUNDING MEMBER OF WORKING COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AT QUEENS COLLEGE**

All young Catholics ... were very influenced by seeing on television the American civil rights movement ... by the beginning of the 1960s you were beginning to have the American civil rights struggle on television and I think there was a very general identification with it.

Michael Farrell quoted in B Dooley, *The Black and the Green: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland and America*, Pluto Press, London, 1998, p. 28.

**THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE, 1967**

We can understand South Africa because we have seen the inside of the jails of Mississippi and Alabama and have been herded behind barbed wire enclosures, attacked by police dogs, and set upon with electric prods – the American equivalent of the *sjambok*. There is no difference between the sting of being called a 'kaffir' in South Africa and a 'nigger' in the U.S.A. The cells of Robin [sic] Island and Birmingham jail look the same on the inside. As the vanguard of the struggle against racism in America, SNCC is not unfamiliar with the problems of southern Africa.

SNICK, 'The Indivisible Struggle Against Racism, Apartheid and Colonialism', position paper presented at International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination and Colonialism in Southern Africa, Zambia, 24 July–4 August 1967, p. 1.

**SOURCE 7.10** This handbill was produced by NICRA in America and distributed at Carnegie Hall, New York, before the St Patrick's Day demonstration in 1969. Irish Catholics had always looked to America for support.



Northern Ireland Civil Rights Handbill © National Museums NI Collection Ulster Museum (BELUM.W2013.28.5)



## NELSON MANDELA, 1990

The following day I went up to Harlem, an area that had assumed legendary proportions in my mind since the 1950s where I saw young men from Soweto emulate the sharp fashions of Harlem Dandies. Harlem, as my wife said, was the Soweto of America. I spoke to a great crowd at Yankee Stadium telling them that an unbreakable umbilical cord connected black South Africans and black Americans, for we were together children of Africa. There was a kinship between the two, I said, that had been inspired by great Americans such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King Jr. As a young man, I idolised the Brown Bomber Joe Louis, who took on not only his opponents in the ring but racists outside it. In prison, I followed the struggle of black Americans against racism, discrimination and economic inequality. To us, Harlem symbolised the strength of resistance, and the beauty of black pride.

Nelson Mandela recalling a speech he made at Yankee Stadium NY in June 1990 after his release from Robben Island.

N Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Abacus, Great Britain, 1994, p. 698.



Alamy Stock Photo/David Angel

**SOURCE 7.11** 'I Have a Dream' mural, King Street, Newtown. Painted under cover of darkness over two nights in 1991, without council permission, by Julie Pryor and Alan Aitkin. It was painted to reflect the great themes of the 20th century: environmental activism, gender equality and civil rights. In 2014 it was heritage listed by the Marrickville Council.



**SOURCE 7.12** Leaflet promoting a Martin Luther King rally in support of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, 1965

## QUESTIONS

1 Create a table like the following and complete it for all the sources included above:

NAME	ORIGIN (CREATOR, YEAR, ETC.)	TYPE	SUMMARY	EVIDENCE OF INFLUENCE OF US CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Michael Farrell quote				
SNCC comment				
Handbill by NICRA				
Nelson Mandela comments				
'I Have a Dream' mural, Sydney				
Martin Luther King rally				

2 Using evidence from a range of these sources and your own knowledge gathered so far, explain how the US civil rights movement influenced events beyond North America.

# Fifty years on

The 50th anniversary of the March on Washington led by Martin Luther King Jr, during which he made his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, was in 2013. A commemorative march was held to celebrate the anniversary and John Lewis, the youngest speaker at the original march, addressed the crowd. Other dignitaries spoke, including former presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton; politicians; celebrities, such as Oprah Winfrey and Jamie Foxx; and civil rights activists from organisations that worked to alleviate poverty, discrimination and racism in US society. The speeches celebrated what had been achieved in the fight for jobs and freedom in the 50 years since the famous civil rights march and what still needed to be done to make the United States of America a more equal society.



## Election of Barack Obama

In 1961, Attorney-General Robert Kennedy commented that race relations were moving so fast that in 30 or 40 years' time the United States of America could have an African American president. It wasn't until 2009 that this prediction came true. The election of Barack Obama, the United States' first African American president, in 2008 was a cause of joy and jubilation for Democrats across the nation. Obama received 53 per cent of the electoral vote. Sixty-three per cent of Americans who could vote did so. This was the highest voter turnout in 50 years. Democrat supporters held vigils at civil rights monuments and sites, including the Ebenezer Baptist Church where Martin Luther King Jr once preached.

John Lewis, the youngest speaker at the March on Washington, an original Freedom Rider and the man who led the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, was on the podium when Barack Obama was inaugurated as President of the United States. Obama signed a commemorative photo for Lewis with the words, 'Because of you, John. Barack Obama'. The *New York Times* headline read, 'Racial Barriers Fall'. Obama was re-elected for a second term in 2012. At his speech on 28 August 2013 at the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, President Obama acknowledged the debt the nation owed to the civil rights marchers, including civil rights legislation and new opportunities for African Americans to participate in the political process.



Getty Images/SAUL LOEB

**SOURCE 7.13** US President Barack Obama (right) hugs John Lewis (left), Democrat of Georgia, at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery civil rights marches at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama

“ ... And because they kept marching, America changed. Because they marched, the civil rights law was passed. Because they marched, the voting rights law was signed. Because they marched, doors of opportunity and education swung open so their daughters and sons could finally imagine a life for themselves beyond washing somebody else's laundry or shining somebody else's shoes. [Applause.] Because they marched, city councils changed and state legislatures changed and Congress changed and, yes, eventually the White House changed. [Cheers, applause.] ...

President Barack Obama speaking at the ceremony commemorating the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom, August 20, 2014.



## Freedom and equality

The speeches at the anniversary march also acknowledged the work that needed to be done and the inequalities that still existed within the United States. In the 50 years since the great March on Washington the percentage of African Americans living in poverty declined by 23 per cent, the number of African Americans in college tripled and African American home ownership increased by 14 per cent. African Americans are now prominent in the areas of education, entertainment, sports, business and politics. There are, though, still significant inequalities between black and white communities, as demonstrated in the Black Urban League's *State of Black America* report released in April 2013. African Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed than whites, and earn two-thirds, on average, of whites' income. The life expectancy for whites is 78.3 years; for African Americans it is 73.1 years.

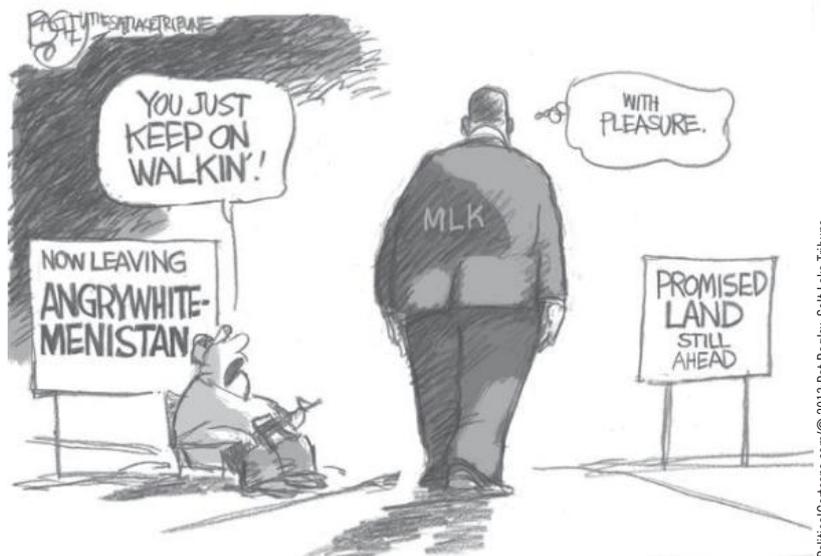
Homicide is the leading cause of death for black men aged 18 to 24. Poverty, crime and drug use are still features of inner-city slums inhabited by a black underclass. Of great concern to civil rights activists today is the prison incarceration rate. There were two million Americans in gaol in 2000, half of them African American men and women. Civil rights may have delivered freedom, but not equality, to all.



“ ... The victories of the civil rights movement failed to solve the problems experienced by many black people. The movement had gained access for a few while never challenging the structure of the system.

G Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle*, North Carolina Press, 1997, p. 331.

### Promised land still ahead



SOURCE 7.14 'Promised land still ahead'

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Who are the two figures in this cartoon and what are they doing?
- 2 What is the main message of the cartoon?
- 3 Using information you have gathered, explain how this cartoon reflects the ongoing challenges of racial equality in the United States.

# Chapter summary

- 1968 saw a wave of protests across the world.
- The civil rights movement was to inspire Chicano and Native American groups to fight for civil rights.
- The Black Power movement also continued to influence protest movements in the United States and across the globe.
- The global impact of the American civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr has received less attention from historians than the international civil rights struggle.
- Civil rights movements in Australia, Northern Ireland and Britain were influenced by the strategies and tactics used in the American civil rights movement.
- There was a two-way relationship between the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and against segregation in the American South.
- In 2008 Barack Obama was elected President of the United States, the first African American to hold this position.
- Despite greater participation of African Americans in the country's political, economic, social and cultural life since the 1960s, there is still entrenched racial inequality in American society.

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## Further resources

- Gaines, K, 'The Civil Rights Movement in World Perspective', *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2007, pp. 57–64.
- King Jr, ML & Washington, JM, (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, HarperCollins, 2003.
- Riches, W, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance*, 3rd edn, Palgrave, 2010.
- Romano, RC & Raiford, L, (eds) *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, University of Georgia Press, 2006.



## CHAPTER REVIEW

- 1 Create a mind map or infographic that traces and details the global influence of the American civil rights movement.
- 2 In small groups, prepare and share an evaluation of the influence of the American civil rights movement on one of the following:
  - a Australia
  - b Britain
  - c Ireland
  - d South Africa
  - e Another country of your choosing
- 3 As a class, discuss: what were the most important legacies of the American civil rights movement? Once you have finished your discussion, explain your views in an extended response.
- 4 Which methods used to campaign for civil rights in America were the most influential beyond the United States? Provide examples to support your view.
- 5 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr's assassination. Conduct some research and gather a range of interpretations of his legacy at this milestone.
- 6 Construct an extended response for one or more of the following questions:
  - a Evaluate the success of the civil rights movement in the United States.
  - b To what extent had the civil rights movement succeeded in overcoming segregation and discrimination against African Americans by 1968?
  - c Assess the impact of the American civil rights movement beyond the United States.
  - d 'The US civil rights movement was a local initiative with a global influence.' Evaluate this statement.



Essay planning

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