



USA CIVIL RIGHTS
CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE USA
CIVIL 1945
RIGHTS 1968
IN THE USA

SAMANTHA
FRAPPELL

SMALL CAPS

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RIGHTS 1968
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Small Caps Publishing acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the lands on which this book was written and will be used. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.

SMALL CAPS

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***Civil rights in the USA 1945-1968* traces the development of the movement that aimed to ensure that African Americans could access the 'American Dream.' This pursuit was undertaken at great personal cost for many participants in a struggle for equality that is not yet fully realised.**

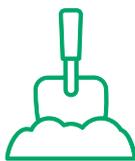
The book's approach to this topics combines the practice of historians with the needs of senior secondary students. Like the historian, students engage with secondary literature before investigating and interpreting the sources. By taking this approach, students apply the historical concepts of causation, continuity and change, perspectives, significance, and contestability. This approach prepares students to become more than simple observers of the past. They are empowered to understand it and its implications.



Chapters and activities apply historical concepts and skills, including the analysis and use of sources, historical interpretation, historical investigation and research, and explanation and communication.



Historically accurate images, including photographs and artworks, along with diagrams and tables, enhance engagement and present information and interpretations in a variety of ways.



Source studies, which include artwork, photographs, extracts from speeches, laws, personal accounts, and historians' interpretations, feature regularly throughout the textbook. Each source study includes exam-style questions.



Review activities consolidate student understanding, encourage the synthesis of content, include opportunities for research, and support the application of historical concepts.



Each **chapter ends with activities** that focus on larger historical questions arising from the topic and suggestions for further resources.

Publisher acknowledgements

This is Small Caps Publishing's third textbook. I wish to thank Sam Frappell who was open to feedback, wrote diligently and delivered on time. A publisher can not ask for any more of an author. Thank you for entrusting your book to Small Caps.

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Alamy

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Author acknowledgements

Researching and writing this book has been a fascinating project. It concerns a period of history that is still very much with us today. The source material is confronting and heartbreaking, but also contains the seeds of hope that we can, in the words of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 'Build a New World Together'. For those of you who are reading this book for your senior studies, I hope it proves helpful. Know that there is much more to this story than can be contained in one small textbook. Many thanks to my beloved family for their patience and kindness; to my dear friends for their enthusiasm and also to my wonderful colleagues at Joeys for their support and encouragement. I am also indebted to my students, past and present, whose insightful questions have helped formulate many of the ideas in this book. Finally, much gratitude to Michael Spurr and the team at Small Caps, who have been a pleasure to work with.

– Sam Frappell

Glossary

American Civil War

the war fought 1861–65 in the United States between the Northern states (Union) and the Southern states (Confederacy)

American Dream

a belief that US citizens enjoy freedom, equality and democratic rights and that all have the opportunity to increase their wealth through hard work

Black nationalism

the belief that African Americans are members of a distinct Black nation and should strive for economic, political and social empowerment and Black pride

Black Power

a political philosophy that advocated self-determination for African Americans, including economic and political empowerment and the right to self-defence

Black self-sufficiency

the idea that African Americans should aim to become economically independent and should only support African American businesses

Black separatism

the belief that African Americans should not integrate, but should live separately from white Americans, on the basis that white Americans were 'devils' and Black people were racially superior

blackface

the practice of wearing makeup to impersonate a dark-skinned person

Boynton v Virginia (1960)

Supreme Court ruling that determined that segregation on interstate transport and at bus and railway terminals was illegal

Browder v Gayle (1956)

Supreme Court ruling that declared the segregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama, was unconstitutional

Brown v Board of Education (1954)

Supreme Court ruling that overturned the *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896) ruling and declared that segregation in schools was unconstitutional

Brown II (1955)

a Supreme Court amendment to *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) which determined that all schools should be desegregated 'with all deliberate speed' – a vague direction that did not specify a particular date

Civil Rights Act (1857)

legislation passed in 1857 giving African Americans equal access to public transport and public facilities

Cold War

the period from the end of World War II to 1991, characterised by political tensions, militarism and economic rivalry between the United States and its allies (known as the 'West') and the Soviet Union and its allies (known as the 'Eastern bloc')

communism

a political system where the state owns all property and means of production

Democrat

a member of the Democratic Party, a political party in the United States; during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the Democratic Party's supporter base was in the South of the United States

Executive Order

the president can block any law passed by Congress, present a bill to the Congress and issue an Executive Order to pass a law independently

Fifteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1870 allowing all African American men the right to vote and prohibited racial discrimination in voter registration

Fourteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1868 that ensured African American people were included in the definition of citizenship; prevented state and local government bodies from depriving a person of life, freedom or property rights without a fair trial; and gave all citizens equal protection under the law

Kerner Commission

National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (or Kerner Commission); a federal investigation launched by President Johnson on 28 July 1967 into the causes of the Long Hot Summer of 1967

Korean War

Cold War conflict fought between North Korea (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and South Korea (supported by UN forces led by the United States) from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953

lynching

an illegal public execution undertaken by a mob

Monday Demonstrations (Die Montagsdemonstrationen)

a series of peaceful protests undertaken every Monday during the East German Peaceful Revolution

Nineteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution that came into force in 1920 giving all US women the right to vote

Pan-Africanism

the belief that all peoples of African descent have common interests and should work together for these interests

President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (PCEO)

a program run by the Kennedy administration that sought to ensure that government contractors provided equal employment opportunities to African Americans

Reconstruction Era

the period following the American Civil War (1865–77), during which new laws and amendments to the US Constitution were passed to further civil rights in the United States

Selective Training and Service Act

US conscription act requiring all men aged 21–45 to register for the draft; a lottery of those registered was then drawn and those selected had to serve at least one year in the armed forces

Social Gospel

a 19th century Protestant movement that advocated that Christians should work for social justice to build 'the Kingdom of Heaven' on Earth

Thirteenth Amendment

the amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1865 banning slavery

US Supreme Court

the highest court in the United States; able to invalidate a law that violates the US Constitution or stop a president's Executive Orders if they are unconstitutional

Vietnam War

a Cold War conflict fought between North Vietnam (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and South Vietnam (supported by the United States and its allies) from 1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975

War on Poverty

a series of laws passed by the Johnson administration, including the *Economic Opportunity Act* (1964), to provide funding to target poverty

Key organisations

Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR)

an African American civil rights organisation based in Alabama that aimed to end segregation; established in 1956 after the NAACP was outlawed from Alabama

Capital Citizens' Council (CCC)

an organisation formed in 1956 in Arkansas to resist the desegregation of schools

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

an interracial group established in Chicago in 1942; James Farmer would lead the organisation 1961–66; CORE's approach was nonviolent direct action, inspired by Gandhi

Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO)

a Chicago-based civil rights organisation

Dallas County Voters League (DCVL)

an African American civil rights organisation in Dallas County, Alabama, which worked to register African Americans for the vote

Deacons for Defense and Justice

an armed African American organisation formed by war veterans in 1964 to protect civil rights workers from KKK violence

Democratic Party

major political party in the United States; during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the Democratic Party's supporter base was in the south of the United States

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

US federal intelligence and security service led by J Edgar Hoover 1924–72

Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FAAA)

an organisation formed in 1958 to fight for legislative changes in Australia to advance Aboriginal civil rights

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

a special committee of the US House of Representatives appointed to investigate the 'subversive' activities of individuals and left-wing organisations to see if they were promoting communism or were part of a communist spy network

Ku Klux Klan

an organisation first established in 1865 as a fraternal society; by 1867 the group had become a white supremacist

terrorist organisation

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP)

formed in 1965, this pro-civil rights political party challenged the Mississippi branch of the Democratic Party

Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

grassroots organisation formed by Christian ministers, WPC members, NAACP members and other African American community leaders to oversee the extension of the original one-day bus boycott led by the WPC; the MIA also aimed to improve race relations in Montgomery

Mothers' League of Central High School

an organisation formed in August 1957 to resist the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

Muslim Mosque, Inc.

established by Malcolm X after his departure from the Nation of Islam; the organisation remained small and disbanded after Malcolm X's death

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

the first major national organisation working for civil and political rights for African Americans, founded 1909

National Negro Congress (NNC):

an organisation of African American workers, which campaigned for desegregation and workers' rights

Nation of Islam

a Black nationalist organisation established in 1930

Negro American Labor Council (NALC)

African American workers' organisation formed in 1960 to provide trade unionist support for the civil rights movement

Organization of Afro-American Unity

established by Malcolm X in 1964, the movement advocated for rights for African Americans and encouraged cooperation with Black Africans

Redfern Black Power Caucus

an Aboriginal civil rights organisation formed in Redfern in 1967; based on the ideology of Black Power

Republican Party

US political party, formed by Abraham Lincoln in 1854; its support base was mainly in the North of the United States

during the 1940s, 50s and 60s

Rules Committee

a committee in the US House of Representatives that determines the rules under which a bill will be presented to the Senate

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

formed in Atlanta, Georgia in January 1957, Martin Luther King Jr was its first leader; the group's approach was nonviolent direct action, inspired by Jesus and Gandhi

Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA)

a civil rights organisation formed at the University of Sydney in 1964 to undertake the Freedom Ride in outback NSW

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

student organisation formed in 1960; initially employed nonviolent direct action to force authorities to address and implement civil rights

Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU)

a large British trade union comprising transport workers, dock workers, ships clerks and engineering workers

West Indian Development Council (WIDC)

an action group founded in Bristol, UK, to fight the racist employment policies of the TGWU

White Citizens' Council (WCC)

also known as the Citizens' Councils of America, formed in Mississippi in October 1954; members included professionals and business people, giving a veneer of respectability; established branches throughout the South, very close links to local and state government

Women's Political Council (WPC)

a grassroots organisation of middle-class African American women in Montgomery, Alabama, formed in 1946; It encouraged voter registration, protested against the abuse of African Americans on city buses, opposed segregated parks, educated high school students about democracy and ran adult literacy classes to raise eligibility for voter registration

Significant individuals

Ralph Abernathy

war veteran; founder of MIA; executive leader of SCLC 1957-68; president of SCLC 1968-77

Ella Baker

NAACP, SCLC and SNCC civil rights activist 1938-66; founder of SNCC, 1961

Ross Barnett

Democrat Governor of Mississippi, 1960-64

Daisy Bates

president of the Arkansas branch of the NAACP, 1952-60

James Bevel

Freedom Rider, 1961; director of SCLC's Direct Action and Nonviolent Education, 1963-65

Harry F Byrd

US Senator (Virginia, Democrat), 1933-65

Stokely Carmichael

Freedom Rider, 1961; leader of SNCC, 1966-67

Eugene 'Bull' Connor

Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, 1936-54, 1957-63

Elizabeth Eckford

member of the Little Rock Nine

Dwight D Eisenhower

President of the United States, 1953-61

Medgar Evers

African American war veteran; field secretary of the Mississippi branch of NAACP, 1954-63; murdered by the WCC 12 June 1963

James Farmer

leader of CORE, 1961-66

Orval Faubus

Governor of Arkansas, 1955-67

William A Gayle

mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, 1951-59

Fannie Lou Hamer

field secretary of the Mississippi branch of SNCC, 1963; co-founder of the MFDP; representative of the MFDP, 1964

Aaron Henry

war veteran; head of the Mississippi branch of NAACP; co-founder of the MFDP

Lyndon B Johnson

President of the United States, 1963-68

John F Kennedy

President of the United States, 1961-63

Robert Kennedy:

Attorney General of the United States, 1961-64

Martin Luther King, Jr

pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama; leader of MIA and SCLC

John Lewis

leader of SNCC, 1963-1966; later a member of US Congress

Thurgood Marshall

NAACP lawyer who successfully prosecuted the civil rights cases *Smith v Allwright* (1944) and *Brown v Board of Education* (1954); US Solicitor General, 1965-67; Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1967-91

James Meredith

first African American to attend University of Michigan 1962-63; initiator of the March Against Fear, 1966

Robert 'Bob' Moses

field secretary SNCC, Mississippi, 1961-64; co-director of COFO, 1964; co-founder of the MFDP

Elijah Muhammad

leader of the NOI, 1934-75

Diane Nash

leader of the Nashville student sit-in movement, 1960; co-founder of SNCC, 1960; Freedom Rider, 1961; member of SCLC, 1961-65

ED Nixon

president of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, 1945-47; state president of the NAACP, Alabama, 1947-56; president of the Montgomery branch of the BSCP, 1938-64

Rosa Parks

secretary of NAACP, Montgomery branch, 1943-57; civil rights activist, SCLC, 1957-65; Black Power advocate, 1967-69

John M Patterson

Governor of Alabama, 1955-59, 1959-63

A Phillip Randolph

founder and leader of the BSCP, 1925; co-founder of the NNC, 1936-46, the MOWM, 1941-48; and NALC, 1960-66

William P Rogers

Attorney General of the United States, 1957-61

Fred Shuttlesworth

chair of Alabama chapter of the NAACP, 1953-56; leader of ACMHR, 1956-69, cofounder of SCLC, 1957; organiser of the Freedom Rides, 1961; member of SCLC, 1957-65

Emmett Till

African American boy who was brutally lynched in 1955; his death and the subsequent acquittal of his murderers led many people to fight for civil rights

Harry S Truman

President of the United States, 1945-53

Wyatt Tee Walker

president of NAACP Petersburg, Virginia branch, 1953-57; state director of CORE 1958; executive director of SCLC, 1960-64

George Wallace

Governor of Alabama, 1963-67, 1971-79, 1983-87

Roy Wilkins

leader of the NAACP, 1955-77

Hosea Williams

war veteran and member of SCLC

Malcolm X

leader of NOI No. 7 Temple, Harlem, 1955-63; leader of MMI, 1964-65; leader of OAAU, 1964-65

Chapter

1

The position of African Americans in 1945

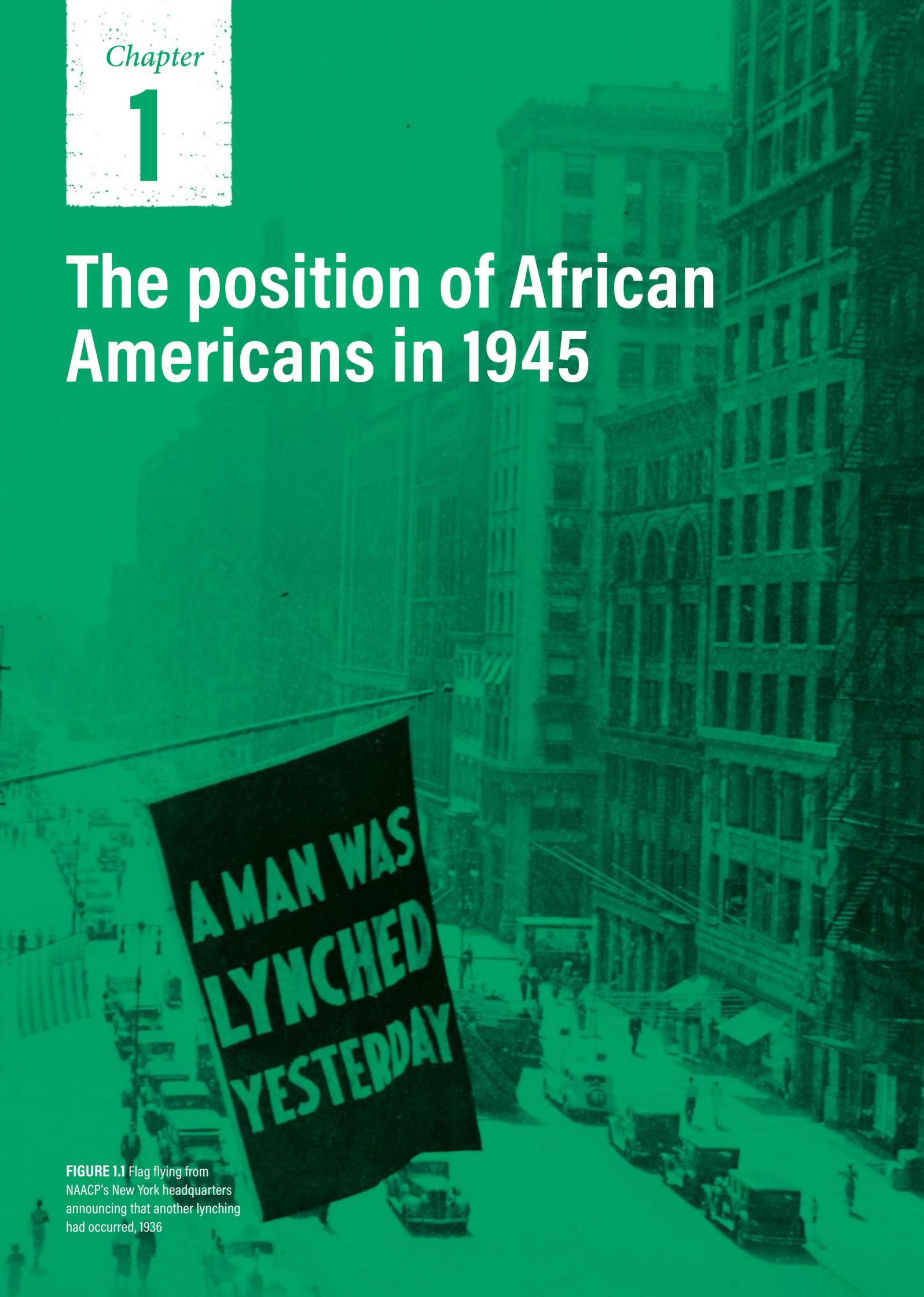


FIGURE 1.1 Flag flying from NAACP's New York headquarters announcing that another lynching had occurred, 1936

The *Declaration of Independence* (signed in 1776) had founded the United States on the basis that 'all men are created equal'. The US Bill of Rights (1789), incorporated the first 10 amendments to the US Constitution (1788), had guaranteed a range of individual freedoms for all citizens. But these rights and freedoms had rarely been applied to African American citizens.

For the most part, the position of African American people in US society at the end of World War II (1939–45) reflected the long-term conditions that had persisted since the end of the 19th century. The majority of African American people suffered considerable economic disadvantages, including poor living conditions, limited educational prospects and little opportunity for employment beyond the lowest-paid jobs. These circumstances had led to perpetual intergenerational poverty, locking African American families into ongoing disadvantage.

In addition, few African Americans enjoyed political equality with other US citizens. Most African Americans were prevented from exercising their right to vote and faced significant discrimination under the law. They were also unable to access a range of facilities on the same basis as other Americans, including public facilities such as schools and hospitals, and private businesses such as restaurants and hotels.

However, there were signs that this situation could change. World War II opened up new opportunities for African Americans, which they were keen to turn to their advantage. Moreover, the war was widely promoted as a fight for democracy and freedom. By the end of the war in 1945, African Americans had the confidence to suggest that having won the war for democracy and freedom against Nazi Germany and militarist Japan, the United States must now establish true democracy and freedom at home, so that African Americans could enjoy the civil rights promised to them by the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

This chapter will explain:

- the extent of racial segregation and discrimination
- the impact of World War II on African American citizens in the United States.

Words are important

The words used to describe people are important. They also change over time. In this book you will notice several terms and phrases used to describe Black Americans. The words reflect changing understandings of identity over time and language that was used in the past may readily be considered offensive today. For example, 'negro' was a commonly used term to describe Black people in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The use of 'Negro' (note the capital 'N') was favoured by many Black people from the early 20th century in the United States, but is now no longer in use. Similarly, while the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has retained the term 'colored' in its name, it is otherwise inappropriate today. The term 'person of colour' is more respectful. Some terms are simply racist when used by whites to describe Black people and are therefore offensive.

However those same terms can also be claimed and used by Black people in a manner that subverts the racist meaning.

In this book, the author uses the terms 'African American' and 'Black'. However, the terms used in the extracts from historical sources and quotations have retained the usage of the original. The usage of these terms in the original sources and quotations will help you better understand the perspective of the various authors.

African American

A commonly used term to identify Americans who are the descendants of people (often slaves) from sub-Saharan Africa. In the 1950s and 60s it is estimated that the descendants of slaves constituted approximately 97 per cent of the Black American community. The Reverend Jesse Jackson, a key figure of the civil rights movement and later a prominent Democratic politician, is credited with popularising the term when he ran as a presidential candidate.

black/Black

Black, with lower case 'b', was commonly used by whites to describe African Americans during the 1950s and 60s. From the late 1960s it appears to have become more widely used by African Americans to describe themselves.

In the 21st century there has been a movement to use Black, with a capital 'B'. Today it is regarded by many historians, writers and media outlets as appropriate because it denotes the central element of identity. This can be simply understood as 'black' meaning colour, while 'Black' is an acknowledgement of a shared cultural experience and heritage. Not all scholars, activists or media organisations accept this usage.

Black American

In the 21st century, the term 'Black American' has increasingly been used to describe American descendants of slaves and more recent Black migrants. This includes migrants from Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. Today, approximately 9 per cent of Black people in the United States are foreign-born.

American Civil War

the war fought 1861–65 in the United States between the Northern states (Union) and the Southern states (Confederacy)

Reconstruction Era

the period following the American Civil War (1865–77), during which new laws and amendments to the US Constitution were passed to further civil rights in the United States

South

states formerly associated with the Confederacy during the US Civil War, mainly located in the south-eastern United States, including South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana and Arkansas

Ku Klux Klan

an organisation first established in 1865 as a fraternal society; by 1867 the group had become a white supremacist terrorist organisation

northern

states located in the northern and western United States, including New York, Illinois and Ohio

The extent of racial segregation and discrimination

The economic, educational and political disadvantages African Americans faced had grown out of the period following the **American Civil War**, known as the **Reconstruction Era** (1865–77). During the Reconstruction Era, constitutional amendments and laws were passed that ended slavery and established the rights of African Americans as equal citizens. This led to new opportunities for African Americans. Within 10 years, almost 700 African Americans had been elected to public office. Another 1300 held jobs in public administration. Schools were established for African Americans, including two universities, Fisk University and Howard University. This had angered many in the **South**, where a series of discriminatory laws known as 'Jim Crow' laws were enacted at the local level to undermine the federal laws passed during the Reconstruction Era. The Jim Crow laws effectively removed African Americans' rights. They barred African Americans from using the same public facilities as whites and restricted their right to vote. Violence was used to keep African Americans 'in their place' and deter them from attempting to overturn Jim Crow laws. This violence was perpetrated by white extremists, such as the **Ku Klux Klan** (KKK), and enabled by the police and by the courts.

While segregation was not officially practised in the **northern** states, the extent of racial discrimination against African Americans meant that their lives were effectively segregated

from the rest of American society anyway. African Americans in the northern states still found they were denied an equal education and access to employment and housing opportunities, condemning them to the poorest sections of the rapidly growing cities and the lowest paid jobs in factories.

Jim Crow

The term 'Jim Crow' came from a song first performed in 1828 called 'Jump Jim Crow.' The song was written by Thomas Dartmouth Rice, a white singer who performed the song in **blackface**, portraying a character called Jim Crow as a foolish and dim-witted man. By 1838 the term 'Jim Crow' was used negatively to refer to African Americans.

blackface

the practice of wearing makeup to impersonate a dark-skinned person

Emancipation Proclamation

a proclamation made in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln, leader of the Union during the Civil War, which freed all slaves in the Confederacy (though not in the Union); designed as a war measure to cripple the Confederacy's war effort

Thirteenth Amendment

the amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1865 banning slavery

Fourteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1868 that ensured African American people were included in the definition of citizenship; prevented state and local government bodies from depriving a person of life, freedom or property rights without a fair trial; and gave all citizens equal protection under the law

Fifteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution passed in 1870 allowing all African American men the right to vote and prohibited racial discrimination in voter registration

Civil Rights Act

legislation passed in 1875 giving African American people equal access to public transport and facilities

US Supreme Court

the highest court in United States; able to invalidate a law that violates the US Constitution or stop a president's Executive Orders if they are unconstitutional

Timeline 1.1: The extent of racial segregation and discrimination

- 1865**
 - The end of the American Civil War
 - The Thirteenth Amendment
- 1868**
 - The Fourteenth Amendment
- 1870**
 - The Fifteenth Amendment
- 1871**
 - Ku Klux Klan was banned
- 1875**
 - Passage of the *Civil Rights Act*
- 1896**
 - The *Plessy v Ferguson* ruling
- 1909**
 - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed
- 1925**
 - 25 August: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters formed

The Reconstruction Era (1865–77)

During the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln had issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** (1863) to end slavery in the Confederate states. During the Reconstruction Era, a series of laws were passed to end slavery and to protect the rights of the newly freed. The **Thirteenth Amendment** (1865) to the US Constitution formally freed all slaves throughout the United States. The **Fourteenth Amendment** to the US Constitution was passed in 1868, which recognised African American people as citizens of the United States and gave all citizens equal protection under the law. The **Fifteenth Amendment**, passed in 1870, allowed all African American men the right to vote. Then in 1871, a series of acts were passed, known as the Enforcement Acts (1870–71). These acts protected the rights of African American men to vote and protected the rights of all African American people to receive equal protection under the law. The third Enforcement Act also banned the white extremist group the Ku Klux Klan. Finally, in 1875 the **Civil Rights Act** was passed. This act guaranteed African Americans equal treatment on public transport and equal access to public facilities such as restaurants, waiting rooms, theatres and parks.

Jim Crow laws introduced

Just as African Americans were beginning to access better educational opportunities, wealth and political representation, the rights enshrined by the Fourteenth Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment and the Enforcement Acts were severely curtailed. From the late 1870s, southern states began to pass laws that separated Black and white people on public transport and provided separate areas for Black and white people in public facilities. These

laws were recognised by the **US Supreme Court** in a series of civil rights cases in 1883 and through the case *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896) which established that ‘separate but equal’ access to public transport and facilities was fair and did not contravene the Fourteenth Amendment. *Plessy v Ferguson* effectively undermined the *Civil Rights Act* (1875).

Ten Southern states had passed Jim Crow laws that discriminated against African Americans by 1910. These laws were primarily designed to keep African Americans separate from white Americans – a practice known as segregation. While facilities were still provided for African Americans, including schools, libraries, parks and theatres, these were kept entirely separate from facilities provided for white Americans.

The segregation of public facilities

Since the *Plessy v Ferguson* ruling, segregation had been legally enforceable. States in the South and Southwest such as Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi enforced or permitted segregation. In other states, the practice of segregation was more varied. While states such as California, Illinois and New York had laws in place forbidding discrimination, states such as Kansas and New Mexico allowed some segregation. Other states such as Utah and Maine had no laws in place that either banned or promoted segregation.

In the Southern states where segregation was enforced, there were numerous laws to keep the races apart. Restaurants were forbidden to serve food to people of different races in the same room. Halls, theatres, cinemas, libraries, parks, sporting grounds and other public facilities were also segregated. If a building contained separate rooms or floors for Black and white customers, separate entrances had to be provided. Public transport was also segregated. There were separate areas in buses and trams, with African American people confined to the seats and forced to use a separate entrance. Trains had separate carriages for the different racial groups. Stations and stands also had separate areas for Black and white people to wait. In addition, Black and white people were not allowed to play games together. Racially mixed games of cards, dice, dominoes, checkers, pool, billiards, baseball, softball, football and basketball were specifically banned.



FIGURE 1.2 Segregation permeated the everyday life of Black people in the southern states, as the signs at a bus station in Durham, North Carolina, show in 1940.

Separate but equal?

Despite the idea that segregation, while 'separate', was nonetheless 'equal', the reality was that facilities for white Americans were far superior and more accessible than facilities for Black Americans. Signs reading 'whites only' and 'no blacks allowed' were everywhere in the South, not only to prompt people to keep to their race's facilities but to remind African Americans of their racial 'inferiority'.

In addition, Jim Crow laws also included a range of measures to stop African Americans from accessing the right to vote. The social, economic and political separation of African Americans from the rest of American society ensured that their opportunities and freedoms were decidedly unequal.

The nature of segregation and racial discrimination

In addition to restricting African Americans' access to public facilities, segregation in the South also affected their access to political rights, education, employment and housing. African Americans were deliberately prevented from voting using a range of unfair processes. Schools and colleges were also strictly separate and designed to fit African Americans for low-paid, menial jobs. African Americans also had restrictions on where they could live, and were usually forced to live on the outskirts of towns. Any African American who dared to question or rebel against this situation risked violent retaliation from the KKK, including **lynching**.

From around 1915, thousands of African Americans began to migrate from the South to the North to escape the confines of Jim Crow and to find work. This movement of African Americans from the South to the North was known as the Great Migration. Unlike the South, which was largely an agricultural society, the North was industrialised and many African Americans believed there would be more employment opportunities. Officially, the industrialised North did not enact Jim Crow laws, but a form of racial segregation still

lynching

an illegal public execution undertaken by a mob



FIGURE 1.3 Scott and Violet Arthur and their family arrived in Chicago on 30 August 1920, two months after two of their sons, Irving and Hermann, were lynched in Paris, Texas.

existed through discrimination. A range of highly discriminatory practices in relation to housing and employment in the North kept African Americans from accessing schools and other facilities in well-resourced 'white' neighbourhoods. Moreover, there were still numerous instances where African Americans were barred by business owners in the North from eating at restaurants and attending theatres or cinemas in white neighbourhoods. While the activities of the KKK were more limited in northern states, police and neighbourhood violence against African Americans was nonetheless a feature of life.

The Great Migration

The Great Migration was the movement of six million African American people from the South to the North that occurred between 1915 and 1970. Ninety per cent of African Americans lived in the South in 1910; by 1970, this had fallen to 53 per cent. The Great Migration was prompted by economic opportunities in the industrial cities of the North and the Jim Crow laws in the South.

Voting rights

The Fifteenth Amendment (1870) had granted African American men the right to vote and the **Nineteenth Amendment** (1919) enabled all American women to vote. However, all voters were required to register at their local courthouse in order to be included on voting rolls. Southern states imposed unfair literacy tests, poll taxes that were too expensive for most African Americans and special clauses that advantaged white people whose grandfathers had fought in the Civil War, in order to make sure that most African Americans could not register, effectively stripping them of their right to vote. With 90 per cent of African Americans living in the South in 1900, the Jim Crow laws had a significant impact on the majority of African American people. In Louisiana only 0.5 per cent of African American men remained on the voting rolls by 1910. In North Carolina, African Americans had been eliminated from voter rolls entirely by 1904. By the 1950s, only 3 per cent of African Americans were registered to vote across the South. It was easier for African Americans to access the right to vote in Northern states, but some Northern states still imposed measures that restricted the access of African Americans and poor whites alike, including poll taxes and literacy tests.

This meant that most African Americans were left without any political voice. Moreover, since those who were not registered to vote were also unable to serve on a jury, they could not influence court cases involving African American victims or perpetrators.

Education

Eighteen states in the United States segregated education. In these states, local school boards spent between five and 10 times as much on white students as they did on African American students. Typically, classes for African American children were held in dilapidated school buildings. They were overcrowded, poorly resourced and taught by teachers who had little training themselves. The curriculum of most African American schools in the South was very limited, teaching only basic literacy and numeracy.

Very few African American children who finished primary school in the 1930s had the chance to attend high school or university. In 1932, fewer than 10 per cent of African Americans completed four years of high school. Hardly any African American high schools offered science courses or had courses in foreign languages, music or art. This had barely improved by the 1950s when just 12 per cent of African American adults had completed four years of high school, compared with nearly 40 per cent of whites. The segregation of schools made it very difficult for African Americans to improve their living standards through education and access to better paid jobs. Instead, disadvantage was perpetuated from one generation to the next.

Nineteenth Amendment

an amendment to the US Constitution which came into force in 1920, giving US women the right to vote



FIGURE 1.4 Students in the schoolroom at White Plains Negro School, Georgia, 1941

Employment

While slaves had been freed at the end of the Civil War, labour was still needed on the South's plantations. Southern landowners devised a system that bound their former slaves to work the land in return for a meagre wage. Under this system, known as 'sharecropping', African Americans worked on farms for a one-third share of the crops. Poor white people also became sharecroppers under this system.

Sharecroppers made as little as 65 cents per day. This was mainly because plantation owners found ways to take control of their sharecroppers' income. Plantation owners set up small stores on the plantation which sold fuel, food, clothing and other household items to their sharecroppers. Sharecroppers then purchased items from the stores on credit, at an interest rate of 10 per cent, to be paid out of the crop they harvested. The limited education available in the South for African Americans was designed to ensure that they were only fit for low-paid, menial jobs, such as sharecropping or as domestic servants for white families. It also allowed the system of sharecropping and domestic service to continue. For 90 per cent of African Americans in the South, these jobs were the norm.

By 1940, 23 per cent of African Americans were living in the North, rising to 32 per cent in 1950. In the North, the majority of African Americans worked as factory workers, cleaners and shop workers. But here, discriminatory employment practices meant that few African Americans were employed in the higher-level manufacturing or managerial jobs available. In 1940, the average wage of African American workers was 43 per cent that of white workers.

Housing

In the South, plantation owners established housing for their sharecroppers. These houses were usually log cabins or clapboard (weatherboard) houses made of long thin boards. Most had no glass windows and no plumbing. Until the 1950s, all sharecroppers' homes were located on dirt roads. Housing conditions for African Americans were better in the northern states, but subject to a range of restrictions. Many northern cities instituted zoning laws that prohibited African American families from buying houses and moving into white areas.

During the 1930s, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was established by **Democrat** President Franklin D Roosevelt (1933–45) to build housing across the United States for people during the Great Depression, but this program mainly benefited white families in white communities. Only a small proportion of houses were built for Black families, and those were limited to segregated Black communities. The reason given for this policy was that it was believed that the presence of African American families would bring down the property values of the other homes. Another Depression-era initiative was the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. These organisations created maps of suburban areas, with some areas marked in red, to identify them as 'bad risks' for mortgages or for business investment. This practice was known as redlining. The areas marked in red were usually African American neighbourhoods. Banks would not lend money to people living in a red zone, thus preventing residents from moving to better areas. In addition, banks would not loan money to businesses that wanted to set up services or shops in red zones, leading to the further impoverishment of these neighbourhoods.

The impact of housing discrimination was profound. With limited access to housing in better neighbourhoods, the houses bought by African American families did not increase in value as much as those owned by white families. This meant that they experienced economic insecurity and disadvantage.

Democrat

a member of the Democratic Party, a political party in the United States; during the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the Democratic Party's supporter base was in the south of the United States



FIGURE 1.6 A sharecropper's clapboard house near the town of Marshall, Texas, 1939

Violence

Racially motivated violence against African Americans was widespread. In the North, police brutality was a daily reality for Black people. As more African Americans left the South and moved into Northern cities, white police officers increasingly saw them as a threat and tried to restrict their movement in public spaces. By 1949, every American state had criminalised ‘loitering’, a vague law that allowed police to indiscriminately arrest African Americans in public spaces and to use violence against them if they believed it was ‘necessary’.

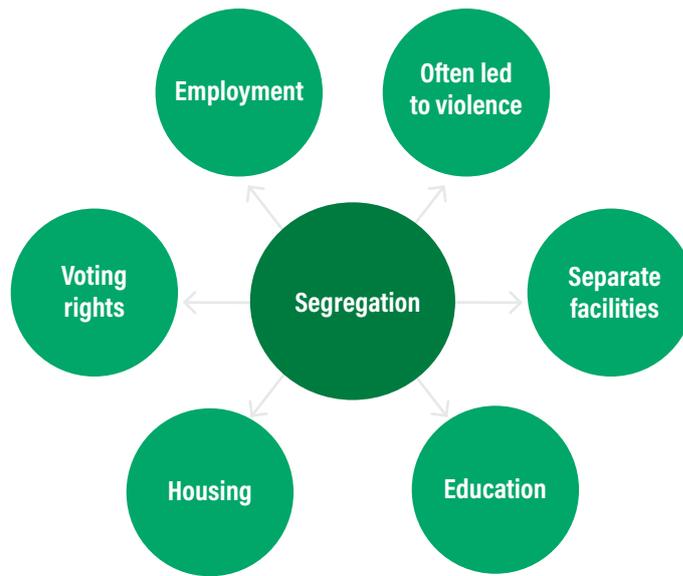


FIGURE 1.7 Impacts of segregation on African American lives

In the South, lynching had long been used by white mobs to ‘keep blacks in their place’, whenever African Americans managed to improve their living standards, exercise their political rights or socialise with white people. There were more than 1000 lynchings between 1900 and 1914. The frequency of lynching had dropped in the 1930s, but spiked following the end of World War II and during the civil rights era. Terrorist groups, such as the KKK, were mainly responsible for the lynchings. These groups also conducted campaigns of harassment, assault and violence against African Americans, largely unrestrained by the police or the courts.

The emergence of the civil rights movement

By the turn of the 20th century, African American leaders began to demand change. Led by WEB Du Bois, they founded the **Niagara Movement** in 1905, calling for African American religious and educational institutions to be strengthened, the ability for men to exercise their right to vote, equal treatment under the law and for economic opportunities. They particularly wanted an end to the practice of sharecropping in the South, which they considered ‘virtual slavery’. The main supporters of the Niagara Movement were middle-class African Americans, the churches and trade union organisers.

The African American middle class

By 1910, in spite of the considerable barriers, 2.8 per cent of African Americans were part of the American middle-class. Even before the Civil War, free African Americans had established their own independent institutions, including universities, businessmen’s

Niagara Movement
an African American civil rights organisation founded in 1905

associations, schools, mutual aid societies and literary societies. This movement into the middle class had been heightened during the Reconstruction Era, as more African Americans had become lawyers, doctors, teachers, Christian preachers, journalists and bankers. They ran a range of successful businesses catering to the African American community, including banks, insurance companies and newspapers. By 1894, the city of Washington DC boasted the largest community of African American professionals in the United States, where more than 3000 families owned their own homes. In the South, there were also middle-class African American families, who formed the basis of the professional classes there.

The role of the African American churches

In both the North and the South, African American churches were the cornerstone of the community. In the South, the church provided emotional and psychological support to poor sharecroppers. The stories of deliverance from oppression, such as that of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land, were strong influences. But for the middle classes in the North and the South, the churches were centres of progressive social reform, inspired by the **Social Gospel**. Church leaders urged their middle-class congregants to 'lift as we climb', meaning that they should use their more privileged position to help poorer African Americans access education, housing and work opportunities. Middle-class African Americans were also encouraged to campaign against violence and segregation in the South. In 1909 an organisation called the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed by Black and white middle-class Christians and Jewish people to fight against lynching, the restriction of African American voting rights, and the institution of segregation.

The role of the preacher was paramount in African American churches. Preachers were looked upon as leaders who brought comfort and spiritual guidance to churchgoers, and led them out of the wilderness to the Promised Land. In his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Niagara Movement leader and NAACP member WEB Du Bois described the African American preacher as 'the supernatural avenger of wrong, and the one who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people.'

African American labour unions

Another important development in the early 20th century was the establishment of African American labour unions. African American workers had been largely excluded from white labour unions. The American Federation of Labor (AFL), then the largest labour union in the United States, admitted only workers with a trade. Since most African Americans were low-skilled workers, the AFL was a mainly white organisation. Other unions were established as segregated, whites-only unions, such as the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors (OSCC). On 25 August 1925, A Phillip Randolph organised the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) for African American porters working for the Pullman Company. He worked tirelessly to have the BSCP officially recognised by the AFL, the Pullman Company and the US government, finally succeeding in 1937. Due to his success as a union organiser, Randolph rose to become one of the most recognised spokespeople for African American civil rights.

In 1936, Randolph joined with members of the NAACP to form a new organisation, the **National Negro Congress** (NNC). This was a civil rights organisation for working-class African Americans that fought for economic justice and political rights.

Social Gospel

a 19th century Protestant movement which advocated that Christians should work for social justice to build 'the Kingdom of Heaven' on Earth



FIGURE 1.8 A Phillip Randolph, key organiser of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Conductors

National Negro Congress (NNC)

an organisation of African American workers, which campaigned for desegregation and workers' rights

The Pullman Company

George Pullman invented the sleeper car in 1859. His company (the Pullman Company) manufactured sleeper cars and also operated them on most railways in the United States. At the end of the Civil War, the Pullman Company started to employ African American men as porters for their sleeper cars. Their job was to carry the passengers' baggage, shine their shoes, set the sleeping berths in the carriages and serve passengers. The wages for Pullman porters were higher than most jobs that were open to African American men; however, the exclusive employment of African American porters was designed to appeal to white middle-class passengers, and give them the 'upper-class' experience of having an African American servant.

Source Study 1.1 Segregation

Source A: An extract from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou became a prominent civil rights activist in the 1960s.

Unlike the white high school, Lafayette County Training School distinguished itself by having neither lawn, nor hedges, nor tennis court, nor climbing ivy. Its two buildings (main classrooms, the grade school and **home economics**) were set on a dirt hill with no fence to limit either its boundaries or those of bordering farms. There was a large expanse to the left of the school which was used alternately as a baseball diamond or a basketball court ... Over this rocky area relieved by a few shady tall persimmon trees the graduating class walked ... Only a small percentage would be continuing on to college – one of the South's A & M (agricultural and mechanical) schools which trained Negro youths to be carpenters, farmers, handymen, masons, maids, cooks and baby nurses ... it didn't worry me that I was only twelve years old and merely graduating from the eighth grade. Besides, many teachers in Arkansas Negro schools had only that diploma and were licensed to impart wisdom.

M Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Bantam Books, New York, 1969, pp 170–2.

home economics

school subject teaching skills useful in the home, such as cooking, sewing, budgeting and childcare

Source B: Segregated facilities



FIGURE 1.9 African American man drinking at a 'colored' water cooler at a streetcar (tram) station, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, July 1939

Questions

1. What does Source A reveal about the nature of segregation experienced by African Americans?
2. Explain how Source B is useful for a historian studying the nature of segregation in the United States.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, write definitions for the following terms: Jim Crow, segregation, lynching, the Great Migration, voter registration and redlining.
2. Outline the effects of the key civil rights legislation passed between 1865 and 1875.
3. Summarise the outcome of *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896).
4. Identify the areas of the United States where legal segregation was practised.
5. Identify the different forms of segregation and discrimination.
6. Define the Niagara Movement.
7. Identify the reasons why the African American church was central to the African American community.
8. What role did A Phillip Randolph play in the civil rights movement?

World War II and civil rights

World War II started in Europe on 1 September 1939, but the United States did not enter the war until 7 December 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Although US troops were supposedly fighting for freedom and democracy against Nazi Germany and militarist Japan, most African Americans remained subject to segregation and discrimination, leaving them decidedly less than free and often restricted from accessing their right to vote.

The opportunities afforded by the war, both in the armed services and on the home front, promised a better life for many African Americans. But their hopes were dashed in the years after the war, as segregation and discrimination continued. The blatant racism of the post-war years, coupled with rising violence, reinvigorated the civil rights movement to mount a concerted campaign to end Jim Crow in all its forms.

Timeline 1.2: Civil rights during World War II

- 1940 ▪ 16 September: *Selective Training and Service Act*
 - 1941 ▪ 25 January: A Phillip Randolph proposed a March on Washington for 1 July 1941
 - 25 June: Executive Order 8802
 - 1941 ▪ 7 December: US entered World War II after Pearl Harbor is bombed
 - 1942 ▪ 31 January: Start of the 'Double V' Campaign
 - 1944 ▪ 3 April: *Smith v Allwright* (1944)
 - 22 June: *Servicemen's Readjustment Act* (GI Bill) passed
 - 1955 ▪ 28 August: The murder of Emmett Till
-

African Americans and World War II

Prior to US involvement in the war, conscription had been introduced through the *Selective Training and Service Act* (1940). Meanwhile, defence industries such as armaments and tank, aircraft and uniform production were booming, as the United States stepped up to fulfill orders from Britain and France and build its own military supplies. Thousands of African Americans migrated from the South during this period, hoping for employment in the defence industries. But both the Army and the defence industries were highly segregated, limiting African American opportunities. This situation brought new momentum to the cause of civil rights.

Segregation in the armed forces

While the *Selective Training and Service Act* (1940) required all white men aged between 18 and 35 to register for conscription to fight the war in the European and Pacific theatres, there were quotas for the number of African American men that could be called up. The Act had stipulated that since young African American men were 9 per cent of the American population, the number of those in the armed forces would exceed no more than 9 per cent. In reality, far fewer were conscripted, because the Army lacked enough segregated facilities.

African American servicemen who volunteered or were conscripted were placed in segregated Army divisions or in white units in support roles such as cooks, labourers, transporters or quartermasters; they also served in the Navy as stewards and messmen (food-servers and kitchen cleaners). Even in the segregated African American units, African American soldiers were usually led by white officers and there were limited opportunities for promotion. African American women who wanted to join the US Army Nurses Corp faced similar barriers, and even though there was a shortage of nurses, only

Selective Training and Service Act

US conscription act which required all men aged 21-45 to register for the draft; a lottery of those registered was then drawn and those selected had to serve at least one year in the armed forces

160 were eventually permitted to join. Defence authorities were concerned about the prospect of African American nurses caring for white troops.

While more than one million African Americans served in the war, others questioned why they should fight for the United States, given that they faced discrimination in the North and the oppressive Jim Crow laws in the South, where most were also unable to vote.



FIGURE 1.10 African American members of the United States Marine Corp, transporting ammunition to the front line on Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, June 1944

The March on Washington Movement (MOWM)

Walter White, leader of the NAACP, and A Phillip Randolph, leader of the BSCP, began meeting with US president Franklin D Roosevelt in 1940 to discuss the integration of the armed forces, but Roosevelt refused to consider it. White and Randolph also wanted the president to ensure that there was no discrimination in employment in the defence industries. The defence industries badly needed workers, but African Americans were pointedly excluded from many of the employment opportunities available. While some had been able to find employment as low-paid cleaners or assembly workers, few were employed as mechanics or technicians, despite having the required skills and training. With the meetings not achieving anything, Randolph then devised a new way to pressure the president.

On 25 January 1941, Randolph proposed a March on Washington ‘for jobs and freedom’. He planned the March for 1 July 1941, and hoped it would draw more than 100 000 African Americans to Washington. With momentum building for the march in the African American community, Roosevelt agreed to establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), using **Executive Order** 8802. The FEPC was originally conceived as an order to prohibit discrimination in training programs run by the federal government. Randolph also demanded that the FEPC should contain a clause to desegregate war industries. When this was agreed to, Randolph cancelled the March. He nonetheless established the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) to ensure that the FEPC upheld its mission.

Executive Order

the president can block any law passed by Congress, present a bill to the Congress and issue an Executive Order to pass a law independently



FIGURE 1.11 Two women working at the Douglas Aircraft Company factory in California during World War II

This proved difficult as the FEPC had no real authority to ensure that employment practices were fair. Many firms and unions did not heed Executive Order 8802 and faced no penalties for noncompliance. In addition, the FEPC staff only numbered 119 people, which was not adequate for the task. The FEPC was also under constant attack from its opponents in Congress, which weakened its influence overall. Nevertheless, the efforts of the FEPC, combined with wartime labour demands, led to some increases in the proportion of African Americans employed as semi-skilled factory workers, from 12.6 per cent in 1940 to 21.5 per cent in 1950, while the proportion of those in manufacturing industries rose from 16.2 per cent in 1940 to 23.9 per cent in 1950.

Wartime race riots

As African Americans poured into the northern cities looking for work in the defence industry, a series of race riots in Beaumont (Texas), Harlem (New York), Los Angeles (California), Mobile (Alabama) and Detroit (Illinois) broke out from June to August 1943 over competition for jobs and housing. The riots were quelled by federal troops and the police, with dozens of African Americans killed in the process. In response to the violence, the NAACP called for more affordable housing and an end to white police brutality.

The Double V campaign

On 31 January 1942, a young man named James G Thompson wrote a letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading African American newspaper. Thompson's letter titled 'Should I Sacrifice to Live "Half-American"?' argued that while African Americans were fighting for democracy in Europe and Asia, they should also 'fight for true democracy at home'. He proposed a 'Double V' campaign (where 'v' stood for victory), with 'the first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within'.

Thompson's letter provoked much enthusiasm in the African American community. The *Courier* decided to take up Thompson's idea and launched the Double V Campaign, declaring that the 'Double V' slogan represented the true battle-cry of African Americans. The *Courier* also sold Double V pins for 5 cents each. In September 1945, the Double V insignia was replaced with a single V, demonstrating that the second victory over 'our enemies from within' had still not been achieved. While the Double V campaign did not result in any solid improvements to the lives of African Americans, it served to encourage African Americans to continue the fight for civil rights at the end of the war.

Civil rights groups

The NAACP had expanded its efforts during the war years to protect the rights of African Americans and saw a dramatic increase in membership, from around 70 000 in 1941 to about 600 000 in 1946. As well as fighting for the desegregation of the military, the NAACP joined the Double V campaign and opened an office in Washington in 1942 to monitor government agencies and influence government legislation.

The NAACP also continued to fight segregation through the courts. NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall fought a case on behalf of an African American dentist, Lonnie E Smith, who had been denied the right to vote in a Democratic Party **primary** in Texas because he was African American. Marshall won the case, known as *Smith v Allwright* (1944), overturning the practice of only allowing white people to vote for candidates in the Democratic Party. This case, in combination with the decision by several states to exempt war veterans from having to pay a poll tax to vote, inspired hundreds of thousands of African Americans to register for voting. The number of African American voters rose from around 700 000 in 1948 to one million by 1952.

primary

in the US political system, a vote for a candidate to lead a political party in an upcoming election



FIGURE 1.12 Tuskegee Airmen planning a mission at Ramitelli, Italy, March 1945

Another civil rights group that emerged during the war was the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was founded in March 1942 by James Farmer. He had been a committed member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an interracial Christian pacifist organisation, serving as their race-relations secretary. While working for FOR, Farmer developed his ideas about the relationship between Christian pacifism and opposition to racism. He came to believe that a nonviolent interracial movement that made use of civil disobedience tactics would encourage the end of segregation in the United States. CORE undertook a series of nonviolent campaigns to desegregate restaurants and theatres in Chicago during the 1940s.

Combat experiences in World War II

Walter White and A Phillip Randolph had been unable to persuade Roosevelt to permit African Americans to be integrated into the military and given a wider range of opportunities, but with troop losses mounting, more African Americans were actually given combat and leadership roles in the military from 1943, serving as pilots, soldiers, tank drivers and officers. In April 1943, the segregated 99th Fighter Squadron (known as the 'Tuskegee Airmen') became the first African American air squadron to serve, and they flew thousands of missions in southern Europe.

Other famous African American units included the 92nd Infantry Division (known as the 'Buffalo Soldiers') who fought in Italy and the 761st Tank Battalion (known as the 'Black Panthers') who served in Normandy, France, under General George Patton. The Black Panther unit also fought as part of an integrated force in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, and in northern Austria where they liberated the Gunskirchen concentration camp. After sustained pressure from Roosevelt's wife, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the US Navy finally began an officer training course for African Americans in January 1944. Thirteen officers graduated in March 1944, but because the Navy still refused to assign African Americans to positions of authority over white sailors on combat ships, they were sent to command labour gangs on shore. At the end of the war, African American servicemen were also part of the US Army of Occupation in Germany (1945-49), serving in in labour and supply units.



FIGURE 1.13 The 'Buffalo Soldiers' of the 92nd Infantry Division, an African American unit commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, Italy, March 1944

Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt was a strong supporter of African American civil rights and tried to persuade her husband to adopt policies that would help African American families. She was also the first US delegate to the **United Nations** (UN) and helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

United Nations (UN)

an international organisation formed at the end of World War II to uphold peace and promote human rights, health, education, and the environment



FIGURE 1.14 Eleanor Roosevelt receiving a human rights award from Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, 12 November 1960

The impact of World War II

Wartime experiences had given African American servicemen confidence and self-assurance. They had fought with valour and enjoyed a range of leadership opportunities. While fighting African American troops had found they were treated with respect. However, when the African American soldiers returned to the United States, instead of being welcomed as heroes, they remained subject to segregation, discriminated against in employment opportunities and forced to live in poor segregated areas.

Employment and wages had improved somewhat for African Americans during the war but were still nowhere near equal to those enjoyed by white Americans. By 1950, the average wage of Black workers had increased to 55 per cent that of white workers, and the number of African Americans employed in professional and technical occupations increased from 2.7 per cent in 1940 to 3.6 per cent in 1952. This was still far behind the white population, where 9.4 per cent worked in professional and technical occupations in 1952. In addition, African Americans were twice as likely to be unemployed during the 1950s, with 4.6 per cent of African Americans versus 2.4 per cent of white Americans unemployed in 1952. Within African American communities there was a saying that they were 'last hired, first fired' due to ongoing discrimination. The NAACP had tried to have the FEPC reinstated after the war, with legal measures to enforce it, but this was never enacted.

Unfair housing policies exacerbated existing problems. In 1944 the GI Bill (which became the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act*) was passed. The GI Bill was a federal government program designed to reward military service and assist veterans with housing, education and employment. While the Act itself was non-discriminatory, racist state and local officials barred African American war veterans from accessing home loans and attending the more prestigious universities. The *Housing Act* (1949) compounded these problems, as it only provided subsidised housing for whites. On top of the earlier Depression-era housing acts, the federal government underwrote US\$120 billion in housing funding between 1934 and 1962. Less than 2 per cent of this went to non-white families.

Worse still, a wave of violence was unleashed against African American war veterans especially when they resisted segregation rules. Those who tried to register to vote, drank from 'whites-only' fountains, or waited at 'whites-only' bus stops were beaten and shot at by white extremists, many of whom were members of a newly invigorated KKK. Some veterans were even lynched. The lynching of two African American veterans in July 1946 led the young Martin Luther King Jr, then a student at Morehouse College, to write a letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* on 6 August 1946 in which he stated that African Americans wanted and deserved the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by all American citizens.

These experiences made African American veterans more determined than ever to end segregation. Veterans in Clarksdale, Mississippi, organised a Progressive Voters League, while in Georgia, they formed the Georgia Veterans League. On 1 February 1946, war veterans in Birmingham, Alabama, marched on the Jefferson County courthouse demanding the right to register as voters. Indeed, many of the key leaders of the civil rights movement were war veterans, including Medgar Evers, Ralph Abernathy, Hosea Williams, Aaron Henry and Whitney Young.

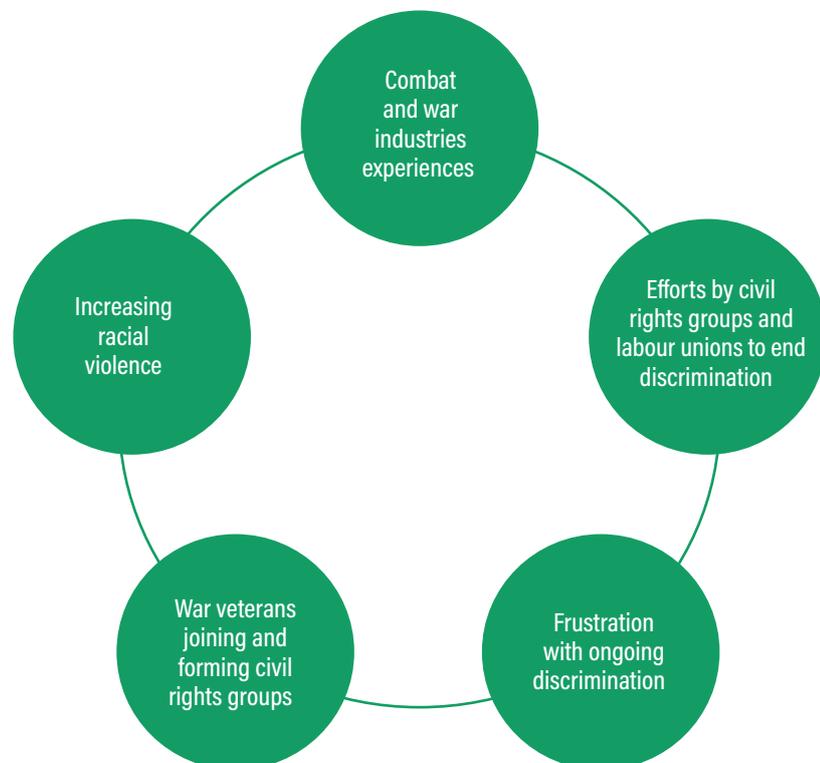


FIGURE 1.15 Factors that demonstrate the impact of World War II on African Americans

Emmett Till's murder

On 28 August 1955, a 14-year-old boy named Emmett Till was visiting his uncle in Money, Mississippi. He was lynched after allegedly whistling at a local white woman. Till was kidnapped, violently beaten and shot in the head. His body was then dumped in the Tallahatchie River. When Till's mutilated body was found and returned to Chicago, his mother, Mamie Till Bradley, insisted on an open-casket funeral so that the world could see what had been done to her son. Mamie Till Bradley's decision to have an open-casket funeral was incredibly courageous. Two African American publications, *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender* newspaper, published graphic images of Till's corpse. Meanwhile the all-white jury found the perpetrators, Roy Bryant and JW Milam, not guilty despite clear evidence that they had indeed killed Till.

The murder of Till and the subsequent acquittal of his murderers would further galvanise African Americans to work for civil rights. On 27 November 1955, an African American woman named Rosa Parks, a member of the NAACP, went to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, to hear civil rights activist Dr TRM Howard speak about the murder of Till. Years later, when remembering why she had decided to play a prominent role in the civil rights movement she stated, 'I thought of Emmett Till and I couldn't go back.'



FIGURE 1.16 Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Bradley, roughly five years before his murder. At his funeral his mother insisted on the casket being left open to show her son's brutally beaten and disfigured corpse.

Source Study 1.2 The impact of World War II on African Americans

Source A: An extract from the article 'Call to Negro America to March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense', by A Phillip Randolph

Dear fellow Negro Americans, be not dismayed by these terrible times. You possess power, great power. Our problem is to harness and hitch it up for action on the broadest, daring and most gigantic scale. In this period of power politics, nothing counts but pressure, more pressure, and still more pressure, through the tactic and strategy of broad, organized, aggressive mass action behind the vital and important issues of the Negro. To this end, we propose that ten thousand Negroes MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS IN NATIONAL DEFENSE AND EQUAL INTEGRATION IN THE FIGHTING FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES. An 'all-out' thundering march on Washington, ending in a monster and huge demonstration at Lincoln's Monument will shake up white America ...

We believe in national unity which recognizes equal opportunity of black and white citizens to jobs in national defense and the armed forces, and in all other institutions and endeavors in America. We condemn all dictatorships, Fascist, Nazi and Communist. We are loyal, patriotic Americans all. But if American democracy will not defend its defenders; if American democracy will not protect its protectors; if American democracy will not give jobs to its toilers because of race or color; if American democracy will not insure equality of opportunity, freedom and justice to its citizens, black and white, it is a hollow mockery and belies the principles for which it is supposed to stand. Today we call on President Roosevelt, a great humanitarian and idealist, to free American Negro citizens of the stigma, humiliation and insult of discrimination and Jim-Crowism in Government departments and national defense.

AP Randolph, 'Call to Negro America to March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense,' *Black Worker*, 14 May 1941.

Source B: Extract from *Hosea Williams: A Lifetime of Defiance and Protest*, by Rolundus Rice

Hosea Williams had served with the US Occupation force in Germany in 1946. He later became a member of the NAACP and also joined another civil rights group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). This extract describes what happened when Williams tried to get a drink of water from a 'whites only' water fountain.

Thirsty, he pleaded with the white female attendant to grant him access to the 'whites only' water fountain. Hewing to southern customs, she flatly refused. He bought some coffee and disposed of the beverage so that he could use the cup to drink some water. 'I hobbled around to the front door; I didn't try to go in. I just leaned in and put the cup up to the dispenser to get me some water.' When a group of whites present at the nearby gas station realized that Williams was disregarding southern norms and mores, they attacked him, punching and kicking the uniformed Army veteran until he lay motionless. In Williams' vivid recollection, 'They beat me up and left me on the sidewalk. They thought I was dead.' ... He spent approximately two months recovering from injuries unrelated to wartime combat. Immobile and mentally broken, Williams spent hours reflecting on the previous two years of his life. In one moment of sobering reflection, he reached the despairing conclusion: 'Goddamn it. I fought on the wrong side.'

R Rice, *Hosea Williams: A Lifetime of Defiance and Protest*, University of South Carolina Press, US, 2022, p 26

Question

1. Compare the value of Sources A and B for a historian studying the impact of World War II on African Americans.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define the following terms: '*Selective Training and Service Act*', 'March on Washington Movement', 'Executive Order', 'Double V campaign' and 'GI Bill'.
 2. Using Figure 1.15, summarise the impact of World War II on African Americans, giving examples for each factor.
 3. Identify the reasons African Americans experienced some social and political change during World War II.
-

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Describe the extent of segregation and discrimination in the United States.
2. Outline the impact of World War II on African Americans in the United States.

Explain

1. Explain the impact of segregation and discrimination in the United States.
2. Compare the nature of segregation in the North and South of the United States.
3. Explain the role of civil rights leaders during World War II.

Integrate sources

1. Explain how World War II affected African Americans. In your response, refer directly to Source A.

Source A: Medgar Evers

Medgar Evers and his brother, Charlie, were prominent civil rights workers in the 1950s and early 1960s.

In 1946, Mississippi state legislature passed a law exempting returning soldiers from paying the poll tax. Without pausing to realize that there were over 80 000 black Mississippians who had served in America's armed forces during World War II, the legislature's actions almost overnight created thousands of highly motivated black potential voters in the state ... Election day was set for July 2, 1946 – Medgar's twenty-first birthday. Medgar, Charles and four other black World War II veterans walked to the county courthouse. A cluster of about twenty well-armed, angry white men stood at the courthouse entrance. According to Charles Evers, they held 'shotguns, rifles and pistols ... We stood on the courthouse steps, eyeballing each other' ... The county sheriff, watching the confrontation, did nothing to assist the blacks in voting. Indeed, the sheriff 'wasn't going to let us vote, but he didn't try to beat us or arrest us,' Charles Evers recalls. He knew he might have to kill us first, and he didn't want to do that.' Finally it was Medgar who decided that it was not worth the bloodshed that would be necessary to try to vote. 'Come on, Charlie, let's go,' Medgar stated. 'We'll get them next time.' As they departed, one enraged racist yelled, 'You damn Evers n-----s going to get all the n-----s in Decatur killed.'

M Evers-Williams and M Marable (eds.), *The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed Through His Writings, Letters and Speeches*, Basic Books, 2005, pp 35–36.

Going further

Create

1. Create an integrated and annotated timeline to show the impact of World War II on African Americans, 1940–46.

Examining primary sources for yourself

1. In groups of two or three, create a collage of signs enforcing racial discrimination. In your work, you can make use of the Library of Congress: Prints & Photographs Reading Room website.
2. In groups of two or three, create an interactive display (using software such as Prezi) to outline the role played by African American servicemen during World War II. Include primary sources such as images, film and documents in your presentation.

Preparing revision notes

1. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the extent of racial segregation.

Form of segregation	Example	Impact

2. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the impact of World War II on African Americans in the United States.

Change due to World War II	Impact

Chapter

2

Formation of civil rights and opposition groups

FIGURE 2.1 Young African American demonstrators march in downtown Birmingham, Alabama May 7 1963. Children and teenagers were urged to protest and be arrested. This would overwhelm the city's legal system and create bad publicity.

Civil rights causes led to the formation of many groups at national and local levels in the United States during the 20th century. National groups in favour of civil rights included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, usually pronounced as the acronym: 'snick'). These national groups were interracial, and each group appealed to specific types of people, such as church leaders, students, lawyers, urban professionals and trade unionists. While all these groups embraced a nonviolent approach to achieving civil rights, they expressed nonviolence differently.

At the same time, organisations formed that were opposed to civil rights. In addition to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), these groups included coalitions of federal and state politicians who worked together to block civil rights legislation. There were also local organisations such as the White Citizens' Councils (WCCs), led by business owners and civic leaders. These groups challenged or obstructed civil rights activists using the political and legal power their members wielded at federal, state and local levels. Perhaps most devastating was that opposition groups were willing to resort to extreme violence to deter the efforts of the civil rights movement.

This chapter will explain:

- the formation and role of civil rights groups including NAACP, CORE, SCLC and SNCC
- the methods employed by civil rights groups to achieve change
- the opposition to civil rights, as demonstrated by the Ku Klux Klan, the White Citizens' Councils and Southern politicians.

The formation, role and methods of civil rights groups

The 'big four' civil rights groups were the NAACP, CORE, SCLC and SNCC. These groups sought to end segregation, secure voting rights and ensure economic justice for African Americans. In the early years of the movement, the NAACP undertook legal challenges to further their aims. Legal challenges involved bringing cases of segregation and discrimination before the US Supreme Court, where NAACP lawyers fought to convince the Court to uphold the US Constitution. Many of these cases were successfully prosecuted by the NAACP, who were able to prove that segregation was unconstitutional.

However, legal victories were not enough to end segregation. State governments needed to be willing to comply with the law and federal governments needed to enforce the law. This was where CORE, SCLC and SNCC proved valuable. Their members engaged in nonviolent direct action, such as boycotts and marches to force federal and state governments to uphold the law. They also raised awareness of civil rights issues among the African American population and support for the movement in the wider community.

The big four groups would go on to play a key role in major campaigns of the civil rights movement: the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56), the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School (1957), the Freedom Rides (1961), the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963) and the Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964).

Timeline 2.1: Key events for the civil rights groups

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1909 | ▪ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed. |
| 1942 | ▪ Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) formed. |
| 1954 | ▪ NAACP won <i>Brown v Board of Education</i> . |
| 1955–56 | ▪ The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) coordinated the Montgomery Bus Boycott. |
| 1956 | ▪ NAACP won <i>Browder v Gayle</i> . |
| 1957 | ▪ Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) formed.
▪ NAACP led the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. |
| 1960 | ▪ The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed.
▪ NAACP won <i>Boynton v Virginia</i> . |
| 1961 | ▪ CORE and SNCC undertook the Freedom Rides, supported by the SCLC. |
| 1962 | ▪ SNCC, CORE and NAACP formed the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO).
▪ SNCC and SCLC's Albany Movement |
| 1963 | ▪ SCLC's Birmingham Campaign
▪ Civil rights groups combined for the March on Washington. |
| 1964 | ▪ CORE and SNCC led the Mississippi Freedom Summer. |
| 1965 | ▪ SNCC and CORE ran the Selma Voter Registration Campaign, supported by SCLC. |
| 1966 | ▪ CORE and SNCC embraced Black Power.
▪ SCLC's Chicago Campaign |
-

Key campaigns

These campaigns are examined in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956)

A key civil rights campaign, aiming to force the bus companies in Montgomery, Alabama to desegregate their buses in accordance with the law.

The desegregation of Little Rock Central High School (1957)

One of the key campaigns of the civil rights movement, which aimed to force Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, to admit African American students in accordance with the law.

The Freedom Rides (1961)

An important civil rights campaign, which sought to force the federal government to uphold the desegregation of transport and facilities relating to interstate travel.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963)

A huge civil rights march in Washington DC that demanded an end to segregation, political rights and economic justice for African Americans.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964)

A major civil rights campaign that supported voter registration in Mississippi.

The NAACP

The first group to make a major contribution to the 20th-century civil rights campaign was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909.

Formation of the NAACP

The NAACP was initiated by white citizens as a response to ongoing incidences of lynchings and race riots in Springfield, Illinois. The group gathered statistics and organised mass protests in an attempt to end the violence. Their report published in 1919, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918*, and the public debate that followed, have been credited with drastically decreasing the incidences of lynching.

By 1920, there were 90 000 people in the NAACP in 600 branches across the United States. Members were Black and white, middle-class and well educated. The aim of the group was to promote equal rights for African American people as citizens of the United States, including their right to vote. Members also wanted to ensure equal opportunities in education and employment. NAACP members saw the application of the law and constitutional rights as the best way to bring about long-term change.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the NAACP was led by Walter White (1929–55) and Roy Wilkins (1955–77).

Methods employed by the NAACP

To achieve equality for African Americans, the NAACP pursued a range of lawsuits that would compel the Supreme Court to formally recognise the legal rights of African American citizens under the Constitution. The NAACP's first victory, *Guinn v US* (1915), saw the Supreme Court rule that the use of the grandfather clause (see below) was a violation of the Fifteenth Amendment. Then in 1935 the NAACP won a case in Baltimore that forced the University of Maryland's Law School to admit African American students. This case began the NAACP's efforts to challenge segregationist laws. In 1954 the NAACP won its most significant case, ***Brown v Board of Education***, which affirmed the Fourteenth Amendment and overturned the segregationist doctrine of 'separate but equal'. The significance of *Brown v Board of Education* was that it gave the cause of civil rights a firm constitutional basis. *Brown v Board of Education* was followed by two other important NAACP victories: ***Browder v Gayle* (1956)** and ***Boynnton v Virginia* (1960)**.

The NAACP also lobbied politicians to ensure the passage of key legislation to further civil rights. Led by NAACP chief lobbyist Clarence M Mitchell, the NAACP helped organise support for the integration of the armed forces in 1948, the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1964, as well as the passage of the *Voting Rights Act* (1965) and the *Fair Housing Act* (1968).

Grandfather clause

While the *right* to vote had been granted to all African American men by the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, some states introduced a legal provision to prevent African Americans from *accessing* the right to vote. For example, in Oklahoma, a law was passed that required voters (in those days, only men) to satisfy a literacy test before they could register to vote. A man could be exempted from the literacy test, however, if he could prove that his grandfather had been a voter or had served as a soldier before 1866. As a result, illiterate whites did not have to sit the literacy test and were automatically able to vote – but illiterate African Americans, whose grandfathers had almost all been slaves before this time, were unable to register. In cases where African Americans were literate, the test was made extremely difficult, so that they would fail.

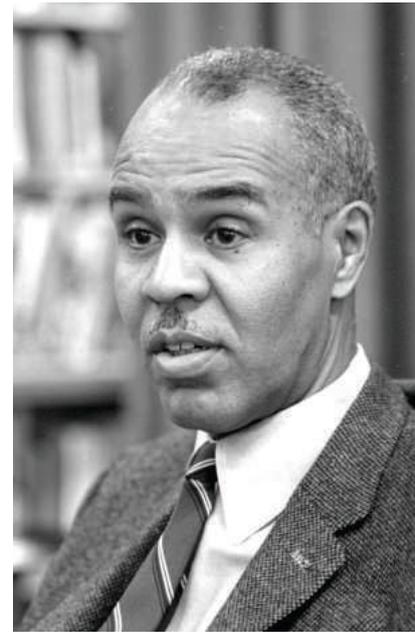


FIGURE 2.2 Roy Wilkins, leader of the NAACP, photographed in 1963

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

Supreme Court ruling that overturned the *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896) ruling and declared that segregation in schools was unconstitutional

***Browder v Gayle* (1956)**

Supreme Court ruling that declared the segregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama was unconstitutional

***Boynnton v Virginia* (1960)**

Supreme Court ruling that determined that segregation on interstate transport and at bus and railway terminals was illegal



FIGURE 2.3 Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP principal attorney

Role of the NAACP

Between 1954 and 1960, the NAACP continued its pursuit of constitutional justice and was able to achieve important legal reforms. The NAACP's success in the Supreme Court would prove crucial to the early desegregation campaigns of the civil rights movement. In 1957, the success of *Brown v Board of Education* led to their own campaign to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. The *Browder v Gayle* (1956) case ultimately enabled the conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56), while the NAACP victory in *Boynton v Virginia* (1960) inspired the Freedom Rides (1961) to end segregation on interstate transport.

The NAACP also conducted its own direct-action campaign to desegregate Little Rock Central High School, while its Youth Council was involved in a range of civil rights demonstrations from 1957 onwards. Otherwise, the NAACP was less focused on direct action protests and played more of a supportive role for other groups. They supported the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 and the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965, campaigned for voter registration, and posted bail and defended civil rights activists who were jailed for taking part in demonstrations and boycotts.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

As the NAACP's actions for civil rights gained prominence, other groups started to form. CORE, for example, was an interracial group established in Chicago in 1942 by activists George Houser, James R Robinson, James Farmer and Bernice Fisher. Farmer would lead the organisation from 1961 to 1966. CORE's approach was nonviolent direct action, inspired by the example of Mohandas Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi), the Indian nationalist leader.

CORE's formation

CORE had been established by men and women, a third of whom were Black and the remainder white. CORE aimed to apply Gandhi's teachings to fight segregation and discrimination in the United States. At the time of CORE's formation, Gandhi was leading

a nonviolent resistance campaign in India against British colonial rule. CORE was established just after the US entry into World War II, during one of the peak years of the Great Migration. Chicago was a major destination for African American people leaving the South because it was an industrial centre producing military equipment and therefore had a high demand for industrial labour. Even though Chicago was a northern city, there was still a great deal of racial discrimination. CORE held a series of campaigns to end discrimination in restaurants and theatres in Chicago.

CORE's methods

CORE employed a range of nonviolent direct actions to confront segregation and discrimination, believing that maintaining an attitude of goodwill towards whites and encouraging public support for civil rights was preferable to aggressive confrontation. The 'sit-in' was their most widely used technique. It was primarily used at restaurants and lunch counters. CORE members divided themselves into three groups – one Black, one white and one interracial. They would enter a restaurant or five-and-dime store just before the lunch hour and sit, waiting for service. If the group containing Black people was not served when it was their turn, the others would refuse to be served, thereby holding up the entire service. Another method was the 'standing line', used at cinemas and swimming pools. When Black people at the front of the line were refused entry, CORE members behind them refused to be served or to step out of the line until the Black people ahead of them had been served. CORE also engaged in boycotts, marches and voter registration campaigns.

CORE was perhaps best known for its nonviolent Freedom Rides. On 10 April 1947, CORE launched its first Freedom Ride, a campaign designed to end segregation on interstate bus travel, known as the Journey of Reconciliation. Eight Black and eight white CORE activists boarded interstate buses and travelled through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky over two weeks. During the journey, the African American riders sat in the front, while the white riders sat at the back, or sat next to each other in defiance of segregation laws. This method was repeated in the Freedom Rides of 1961.

However, the ongoing violence of white supremacists would take its toll on CORE. In particular, the bombing of the 16th St Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four African American girls, and the murders of CORE workers James Chaney and



FIGURE 2.4 Members of CORE marching in Washington DC in memory of the victims of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, 22 September 1963

Black Power

a political philosophy that advocated self-determination for African Americans, including economic and political empowerment and the right to self-defence

Michael Schwerner along with civil rights volunteer Andrew Goodman in 1964 during the Mississippi Freedom Summer campaign, led many CORE activists to abandon their creed of nonviolence. In 1966, an internal power struggle over the tactic of nonviolence led to the elevation of Floyd McKissick as the new director. He moved CORE towards the adoption of ‘**Black Power**’ as a method of achieving civil rights. Black Power advocated Black self-determination and discouraged cooperation with white activists to do so. Furthermore, Black Power rejected nonviolence, calling instead for the right to retaliate with force against the violence of white extremists.

CORE's role

By 1961 there were 53 local CORE groups across the United States, particularly in the north and west of the United States, but also in some southern states too, such as Louisiana, Florida and Kentucky.

CORE's most important role was as a pioneer of nonviolent direct action. CORE's use of sit-ins and stand-ins led other civil rights groups such as the SCLC and SNCC to adopt these methods of peaceful protest to effect change. In addition, CORE had a strong leadership role in a range of nonviolent direct-action campaigns, most notably the Freedom Rides and Mississippi Freedom Summer. CORE also joined the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) to help coordinate a voter registration drive in Mississippi. These efforts culminated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer, where CORE led a voter registration campaign and an education program.

Source Study 2.1 Desegregation campaigns

Source A: Interview with Walter White, 28 May 1954

Now that the 58-year-old decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (in which the Court held that separate facilities for Negroes are legal if equal) has been overruled, the new decision will apply not only directly to education, but indirectly also to other phases of human living. Our next job is in the field of housing, in the field of employment, and in the expansion of the Negro's voting strength. Now let me make clear here that we do not favor bloc voting. But through no choice of his own, on issues like this, the Negro, whatever his economic status, has an understandable concern about human rights and civil rights and equal opportunities, and that Negro vote, both in the South and in the North, will continue to be interested in the job of completing the abolition of segregation.

Interview with Walter White, *US News and World Report*, 28 May 1954, p 54.

Source B: Interview with James Farmer

This extract is part of an interview with James Farmer, in which he discusses how a group staged a protest against segregation in a coffee shop in Chicago.

We went in with a group of about twenty – this was a small place that seats thirty or thirty-five comfortably at the counter and in the booths – and occupied just about all of the available seats and waited for service. ...[The manager] ordered the waitress to serve two whites who were seated at the counter, and she served them. Then she told the blacks, ‘I'm sorry, we can't serve you, you'll have to leave.’ And they, of course, declined to leave and continued to sit there. By this time the other customers who were in there were aware of what was going on and were watching, and most of these were university people, University of Chicago, who were more or less sympathetic with us. And they stopped eating and the two people at the counter she had served and those

whites in the booth she had served were not eating. There was no turnover. People were coming in and standing around for a few minutes and walking out. There were no seats available.

Quoted in H Raines, *My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered*, GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1977, p 31.

Questions

1. Explain the value of the perspective and context of Source A for a historian studying the role of the NAACP in the civil rights movement.
2. Identify the civil rights group and the method of protest referred to in Source B.
3. Explain the value of Sources A and B for a historian studying the methods of protest used by civil rights groups.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define the following terms: 'lawsuit', 'Black Power', 'nonviolent direct action', 'sit-in', 'standing line' and 'Freedom Ride'.
2. Outline the formation of the NAACP.
3. Identify and explain the methods used by the NAACP to achieve change.
4. Summarise the role of the NAACP.
5. Describe the context for the formation of CORE.
6. Identify and explain the methods used by CORE to achieve change.
7. Outline the role of CORE.



FIGURE 2.5 James Farmer speaking at a news conference, 29 December 1964

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

The SCLC was formed by a group of prominent African American civil rights activists including Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker and Martin Luther King Jr, in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1957 following the the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56). Its approach was to support nonviolent direct action, inspired by the examples of Jesus Christ and Gandhi. King was elected as the first leader of SCLC.

Formation of SCLC

SCLC's aim to achieve civil rights was underpinned by Christianity. The group called for equality for African Americans, on the basis that this was intended by God. Furthermore, they believed that segregation was profoundly unChristian, and ending it would free white people from the stain of racism. They also sought to rebuild the United States as a truly Christian country, where its citizens were 'all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28).

The founders of SCLC decided to use the term 'Christian' in the name of the group to attract church leaders, Black and white. They believed that church leaders commanded a great deal of respect in American society, which would be helpful for the civil rights movement. In addition, a church leader could not be sacked from his job for his involvement in the civil rights movement, unlike many other activists. The Black churches were central to African American life in the South, and had long provided a refuge and encouragement to those opposing segregation and discrimination. SCLC's founders also believed that white churches could play an important role in mobilising wider support for the civil rights movement.

The SCLC's methods

The SCLC advocated nonviolent direct action to confront unjust laws. They worked to end segregation, register African Americans to vote and to secure economic justice by supporting the work of local civil rights groups across the South.

In 1957, the SCLC supported the Citizenship Schools program to enhance African American education throughout the South. This program had been established by African American school teacher Septima Clark in 1954 to teach illiterate African Americans to read, so that they could pass voter registration literacy tests, open bank accounts and apply for a driver's licence. Under the wing of the SCLC, the schools also taught students about democracy, civil rights and nonviolent direct-action methods of protest. In conjunction with the Citizenship Schools, from 1957 to 1960 the SCLC ran a Crusade for Citizenship which sought to register thousands of African Americans as voters.

The SCLC also made use of boycotts, as seen in their involvement with the Birmingham Campaign in 1963, where African Americans boycotted businesses in Birmingham, Alabama, that were displaying discriminatory signs against African Americans or refusing to hire African Americans as employees. Another effective use of boycotts was through Operation Breadbasket, a campaign launched in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1962. The intention was to create jobs and improve economic security for African Americans, and the campaign used the slogan, 'Don't buy where you can't work'.

Marches were another important method that the SCLC employed. The SCLC played an important role in organising the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, during which King made his famous 'I Have A Dream' speech. They also organised the Children's March during the Birmingham Campaign in 1963 and the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965 for voter registration.



FIGURE 2.6 The audience at the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama, deliver a standing ovation to the leaders of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), 23 February 1956. The MIA was a predecessor to the SCLC.

The role of the SCLC

The SCLC had a leadership role in several large civil rights campaigns, including the Birmingham Campaign, the Chicago Campaign in 1966 and the Poor People's Campaign in 1967. They coordinated local civil rights groups and worked with them to build a sustained movement to end segregation and promote social and economic justice.

The SCLC helped establish the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the major civil rights organisation for young people. Shortly after a student-led sit-in campaign held between 1 February and 25 July 1960 at Greensboro, North Carolina, to protest against segregation, Martin Luther King Jr addressed a student activist rally at White Rock Baptist Church in South Carolina. King pledged the SCLC's full support and told the students that their actions represented 'a creative protest' that was 'destined to be one of the glowing epics' in the fight for civil rights. SCLC's executive director, Ella Baker, then played a key role in setting up SNCC in 1960 as a nonviolent direct-action civil rights group for youth. The SCLC provided SNCC with US\$800 to hold their first conference and office space at the SCLC headquarters in Atlanta. King had originally hoped that SNCC would become the youth organisation of the SCLC but the students decided to establish SNCC as a separate organisation.

The SCLC also supported the campaigns of other national civil rights groups, including SNCC and CORE. SCLC leader, Fred Shuttlesworth, sheltered the Freedom Riders in 1961 when they arrived in Alabama, and SCLC president, King, used his rising prominence to publicise and encourage the Freedom Rides from Montgomery's First Baptist Church. The SCLC also supported SNCC's Albany Movement in 1961, the NAACP's desegregation campaign in St. Augustine in 1964 and the SNCC's Selma Voting Rights Movement in 1965. Due to King's fame, the SCLC was able to attract an annual income of US\$1.5 million in donations and support a staff of 200 people. This was used to assist the other civil rights groups, both in terms of providing extra funding and providing support when negotiating with white officials.

King's fame and continued efforts to negotiate with US presidents ensured that the SCLC played a major role in promoting the civil rights movement and in securing important legislation. The *Civil Rights Act* (1964) was prompted by the Birmingham Campaign; the *Voting Rights Act* (1965) followed the SCLC-organised March on Selma; and the *Fair Housing Act* (1968) followed the assassination of King as a tribute to his and the SCLC's efforts to improve housing for African Americans.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

SNCC was formed as an interracial student organisation in 1960 for high school and university students. At first, SNCC employed nonviolent direct action to force authorities to implement civil rights. The group was known for its fearlessness and resolve in the face of violence and intimidation.

Formation of SNCC

On 1 February 1960, four Black students from North Carolina A&T College sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The counter was reserved for white customers only. The four students refused to leave and remained seated for almost an hour until the store closed. This action led to other Black students staging lunch counter protests of their own. By the end of the month, sit-ins had taken place at more than 30 locations in seven states, and by the end of April more than 50 000 students had participated.

Many of the student sit-in protesters were affiliated with the NAACP Youth Council. While the NAACP publicly supported the sit-ins, some within the organisation were uncertain about the usefulness of student-led civil disobedience. However, Ella Baker from the SCLC held a meeting of activist students in Raleigh, North Carolina, on 15–17 April 1960, which led to the foundation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

SNCC was founded as a strictly democratic group, with no hierarchy. Full agreement from all participants was sought before SNCC would engage in a particular action. This was an important element, given that there were significant risks involved in undertaking their preferred kind of nonviolent direct action.

A&T College

North Carolina A&T College was an agricultural and technical college for African Americans. Originally founded as the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race in 1891 to teach agriculture, horticulture, English and mathematics, the college had expanded its offerings to include teaching, nursing and science by the 1940s.

SNCC's methods

At first, SNCC made use of the sit-in and boycott methods that had been established by CORE and the SCLC. These methods were employed at lunch counters, restaurants, stores and theatres, and during the Freedom Rides in 1961, which SNCC joined. Members of SNCC also participated in 'kneel-ins' outside whites-only churches and swimming pools, in order to demonstrate a 'Christian' form of nonviolent protest against segregation.

From 1961, SNCC also began to employ a strategy known as 'jail, no bail'. This involved being arrested for civil rights actions, going to jail and then refusing bail. 'Jail, no bail' had been pioneered by eight CORE activists in 1960. SNCC agreed to adopt this method as a means of filling the jails with activists, to cause inconvenience and expense to law enforcement officers and also to attract the attention of the media to the injustice of segregation. Moreover, SNCC believed that to pay bail was to accept that their arrests had been valid. 'Jail, no bail' was used by many SNCC activists during the Freedom Rides.

Another method of civil rights advocacy used by SNCC was the deployment of field secretaries who worked to expand African American voter registration in the South. Adopted by SNCC in October 1961, voter registration was seen as vital. This was especially the case in areas such as Mississippi and Georgia, where most of the population was African American,

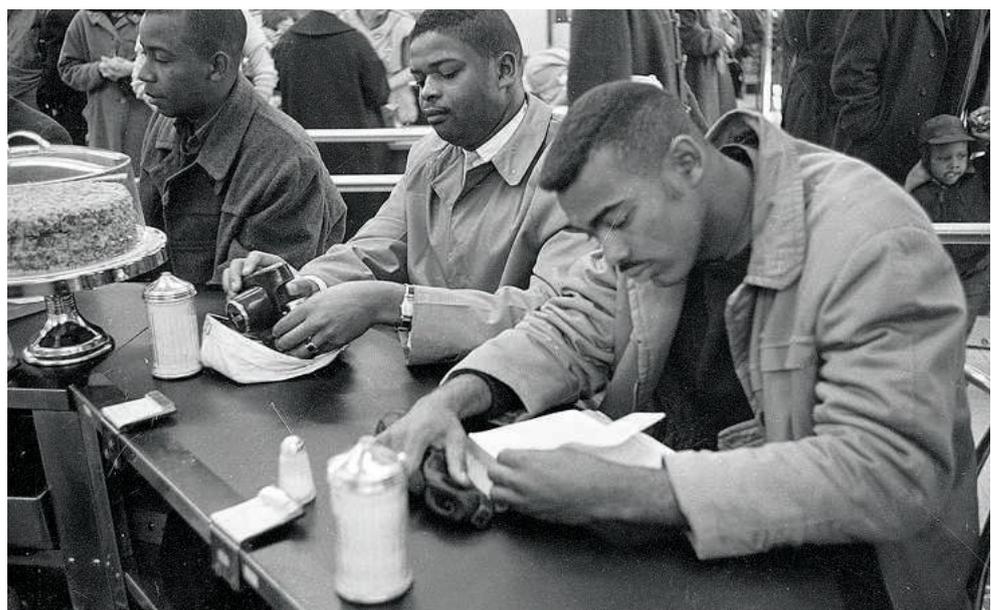


FIGURE 2.7 Three student activists taking part in a sit-in at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Durham, North Carolina, 10 February 1960

but where political leaders were white supremacists. The use of field secretaries, who embedded themselves into poor Black communities and worked to empower the people there, was an entirely new approach to the civil rights struggle and in direct contrast to the older methods used by groups such as the NAACP, where educated middle-class activists sought to use the courts to provide justice for African Americans. The field secretaries aimed to expose the unjust civil rights situation in the South, provide literacy classes for African Americans, register voters and raise awareness about SNCC. Field secretaries, however, soon found that their presence was unwelcome. They, and those who were associated with their work, were subject to violent reprisals from white officials.

Like CORE, the slow progress and the unrelenting violence led many SNCC members to question their commitment to nonviolence. During the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer campaign, three civil rights workers were murdered and 84 people were assaulted. There were also 35 attempted shootings, 37 church bombings and 1000 arrests. More violence befell SNCC activists during the Selma-to-Montgomery marches in 1965. In addition, the federal government's response to SNCC's efforts to expand voter registration and empower African Americans to participate in democracy was hugely disappointing. In 1966 the new SNCC leader, Stokely Carmichael, encouraged SNCC members to abandon the non-violent approach practised by 'old' people in the NAACP and SCLC, and instead embrace militant separatism and black nationalism, with Black Power as their key objective.



FIGURE 2.8 The insignia of SNCC

The kneel-in

The parallel between the kneel-in and 'taking the knee' as a form of nonviolent direct-action protest in the Black Lives Matter movement was noted almost immediately by the Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, which released an image of King kneeling in prayer during the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. The image of King went viral in 2017 after then-President Donald Trump claimed that NFL players who took the knee to protest against racism were 'disrespecting the flag.'



FIGURE 2.9 San Diego, California, 31 May 2020; Black Lives Matter campaigners 'take a knee' outside the Hall of Justice.

SNCC's role

SNCC's key role was empowering young people in the civil rights movement. Older workers in the civil rights movement had provided SNCC with advice and a network of contacts throughout the South. However, SNCC provided the civil rights movement with the energy and dedication needed to sustain direct action campaigns.

This was particularly significant when SNCC members demonstrated their steadfast commitment to risk and undergo violent reprisals for direct action from civil rights opponents. SNCC's continued endurance of white extremist violence drew media attention that directly benefited the movement. The photographic and film images of the violence inflicted on SNCC activists during the Freedom Rides helped to convince King and the SCLC of the importance of creating a crisis in their own campaigns, so that the media would pay attention and thus provoke international outrage at racist policies in the South.

SNCC was proactive in using photography, film and music, and its own newspaper, *The Student Voice*, to promote its campaigns. From 1962, SNCC employed its own photographers, established an a capella singing group (the Freedom Singers, later known as Sweet Honey in the Rock) and collaborated with documentary makers. SNCC photographers provided media outlets with images of SNCC protests, which advertised the work of SNCC and also provided visual evidence of police brutality against nonviolent young people as they fought for equality. A SNCC photograph featuring a 'kneel-in' protest outside a segregated swimming pool in Cairo, Illinois, in 1962 was reframed as SNCC poster with the caption, 'Come Let Us Build a New World Together'. Ten thousand copies were printed, and sold for US\$1 each. The posters quickly sold out. These initiatives would contribute to the growing importance of media to the civil rights movement.

SNCC also played an important role in the civil rights coalition known as the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), formed in Mississippi in 1962. COFO was designed to coordinate the voter registration campaigns of SNCC, CORE and NAACP. Led by SNCC activist Bob Moses, SNCC provided the majority of COFO workers. COFO formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) as an interracial political party to challenge the Democratic Party's selection of an all-white group of delegates to represent Mississippi at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in New Jersey.

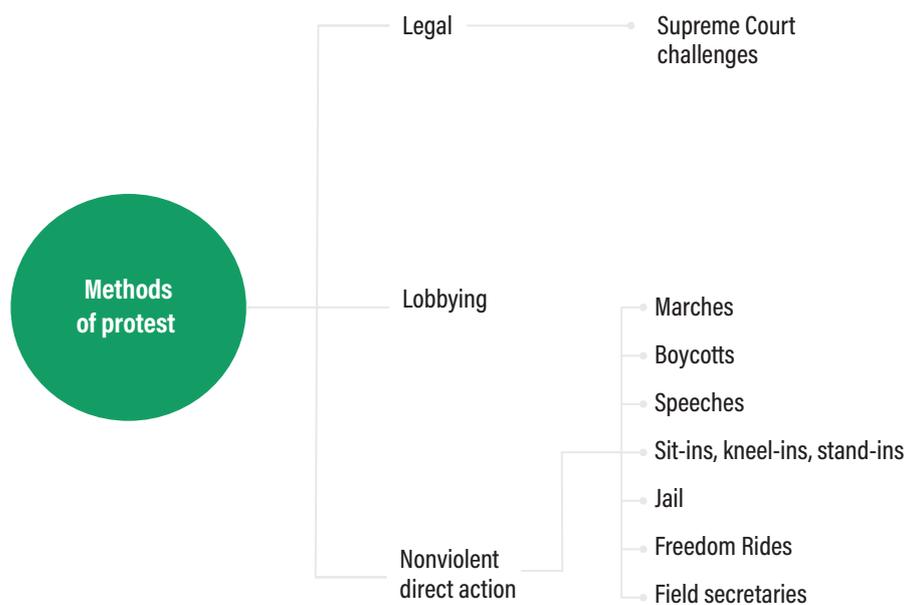


FIGURE 2.10 Methods of protest used by civil rights groups

Source Study 2.2 The SCLC and SNCC's campaigns

Source A: SCLC pamphlet, 22 May 1958

The Negro minister can be more independent than most other community leaders. As a pastor, his 'job' is his church. Pastors can adjust their time and schedules to perform community services more naturally and easily than most other persons.

Churches are located in practically every community in which people live. The church membership meets weekly, usually each Sunday and often several members meet during the week. Churches are committed to the ideal of serving or meeting the basic needs of people and having concern for their problems. Churches cross all age, economic, educational, cultural, class and geographical lines in society. Churches have the resources and techniques for motivating people to voluntary and altruistic service. Churches can remain free of narrow partisan politics more easily than most other types of organization.

SCLC, 'Some Reasons Why the Church Should Take the Lead in Registration and Voting', 22 May 1958, www.crmvet.org/docs/5805_sclc_churches.pdf

Source B: Extract from *The Student Voice*, February 1961

The Student Voice was a newspaper of SNCC

Standing behind the belief in 'jail versus bail,' a total of ninety-nine students entered jail during the first week of February with the determination to remain there ... Nine of them, Friendship College students [from Rock Hill, South Carolina], went in on February 1 ... In Rock Hill, the 9 students arrested on February 1, were put on the chain gang! Two days later SNCC met in Atlanta. From this meeting came the statement: 'There are nine students here serving thirty days on the York County chain gang for sitting at lunch counters and requesting service. Their sitting-in shows their belief in the immorality of racial segregation and their choice to serve the sentence shows their unwillingness to participate in any part of a system that perpetuates injustice. Since we too share their beliefs and since many times during the past year, we too have sat-in at lunch counters, we feel that in good conscience we have no alternative other than to join them.' And so, after the meeting, four members of SNCC went to Rock Hill – to a drug store, were arrested and sentenced ... From our direct reports of Rock Hill we tell our readers the following: The nine students who went to jail Feb. 1, the four who joined them, the entire student body of Friendship College, all have called on students everywhere to come in and fill the York County Jail! We repeat – a direct call has come from Rock Hill, asking students to join the movement there. SNCC is echoing their plea and saying GO TO ROCK HILL NOW!

SNCC, *The Student Voice*, Vol. 2 No. 2, February 1961, p 1, content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll2/id/50093

Questions

1. What reasons does Source A give for Christian ministers taking a leadership role in the civil rights movement?
2. What does Source B reveal about the nature of student activism for civil rights?
3. Explain the value of Source B for a historian studying the methods of protest used by SNCC.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, write definitions for the following terms: 'boycott', 'kneel-in', 'jail, no bail', 'field secretary'.
2. Using Figure 2.10, outline the methods used by civil rights groups and give an example of groups using each method.
3. Outline the aims behind the formation of the SCLC.
4. Summarise the methods used by the SCLC to achieve change.
5. Identify and explain the role of the SCLC.
6. Describe how SNCC was formed.
7. Identify and explain the methods used by SNCC to achieve change.
8. Draw a mindmap to describe the role of SNCC.
9. Explain why CORE and SNCC adopted Black Power in 1966.

The opposition to civil rights

Groups opposing civil rights, such as the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens' Council, were united in their support for the idea of white supremacy and the desire to maintain segregation. They were supporters of tradition and the status quo (that is, keeping things as they were), and were determined to resist the social changes that the civil rights movement was attempting to introduce. Both groups relied largely on local organisation and support.

In addition to the role played by community-based opposition organisations, government leaders who opposed the passage of civil rights legislation formed a formidable barrier. Leaders at a federal level were worried about upsetting their Southern supporters and were therefore reluctant to openly endorse civil rights. Meanwhile, state governors were often elected for their promises to uphold segregationist policies and frequently used state law enforcement agencies to prevent civil rights activists effecting change. These politicians used their position and their power to consistently block reform.

Timeline 2.2: Key events for the opposition to civil rights

- 1945-54**
- The third formation of the Ku Klux Klan
 - The White Citizens' Council formed
- 1956**
- Beginning of the 'Massive Resistance' campaign
 - The *Southern Manifesto* signed

The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) dates back to the Reconstruction Era. It first developed as a white supremacist group based in the South to oppose the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the US Constitution, which had abolished slavery and granted citizenship rights to African Americans. The group relied on violence and intimidation to keep African Americans 'in their place'. In 1871, the US government had passed the third Enforcement Act, which made the KKK's acts of intimidation a federal offence. This effectively wiped out KKK activity.

The KKK re-emerged at Stone Mountain, Georgia, in 1915. In part, the Klan's re-emergence had been inspired by the DW Griffith film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which portrayed the formation of the original Klan as a defining moment in American

history. The film had also shown Klan members wearing white robes and pointed hoods. These were quickly adopted by the second incarnation of the Klan as a uniform.

In addition to its opposition to African American civil rights, the KKK was now strongly anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic (prejudiced against Jews) and promoted the idea that American-born whites were superior to immigrants. More than 20 million immigrants had arrived in the United States between 1880 and 1920. Many were poor and illiterate, and came from central, southern and eastern Europe. Strikingly, a large proportion of these new immigrants were Catholic and Jewish, contrasting with the earlier immigrants to the United States who were mainly Protestant and from northern and western Europe. The new KKK movement quickly spread beyond the South, taking hold in northern cities such as Detroit, New York and Chicago. Its membership reached six million in 1924, but its influence fell away under the pressure of leadership scandals, the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II.

The KKK after World War II

The KKK re-emerged in its third iteration after World War II. In October 1945, an obstetrician named Samuel Green formed the Association of Georgia Klans. The group began to hold cross-burning meetings on Stone Mountain and by 9 May 1946 had enough followers to be staging official initiation ceremonies. Green's Association of Georgia Klans was a model for other regional and local Klan groupings.

There were a number of issues driving the post-war re-formation of the Klan. Foremost was the return of African American servicemen from World War II. Having served their country, these men were demanding better treatment and an end to segregation. Klansmen were strongly opposed to the notion of equality between Black and white Americans. Another factor was the influx of refugees and immigrants after the war, many of whom were Jewish Holocaust survivors and Catholic migrants from Eastern Europe escaping



FIGURE 2.11 The KKK on parade in Washington DC, 13 September 1926

communism

a political system where the state owns all property and means of production

post-war **communism** in their home countries. The post-war labour movement was a third factor in the re-formation of the Klan. Klansmen believed labour activism for improved working conditions was a manifestation of communism. The Supreme Court judgement of *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954, however, was the most important reason for the third emergence of the Klan, which focused its operations firmly on opposing civil rights.

While some Klan leaders, such as Green, were well-educated, most of the KKK was made up of local groups of working-class and lower-middle-class whites who attacked civil rights supporters in their neighbourhoods. One group originally established in 1953, known as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta, Georgia, boasted more than 12 000 members by 1958. Another Klan group was established in Birmingham, Alabama, where they committed a vicious assault on an African American handyman. There was also a group situated in Texas, called the Knights of the Flaming Sword in Texas and led by Roy Elonzo Davis, a prominent leader in the Second KKK. These groups were generally independent of each other and operated on a local level.

The KKK's methods

The Klan actively created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, walking through Southern towns wearing their KKK regalia during the day and driving through the towns at night harassing African American neighbourhoods. They also held rallies where they burned crosses and whipped up opposition to civil rights. The rallies were characterised by white supremacist rhetoric and the incitement of violence. At a Klan rally held outside Monroe in North Carolina on 9 August 1957, one Klan leader told the assembled masses that African Americans calling for the desegregation of schools 'don't want an education, they want a funeral',¹ while those who sought entry to segregated swimming pools were 'not looking for a bath, [but] looking to get killed.'²

Indeed, Klansmen were known to be directly responsible for the murders of at least 14 Black and white civil rights supporters. Klan members also bombed at least 138 homes and churches throughout the South.

Klan groups were often closely allied with the police and committed violent assaults on civil rights activists without any police restraint. In 1961 a large Klan organisation was established in Alabama, the United Klans of America. This group was involved in the savage assaults on the Freedom Riders in 1961. Due to their notoriety, the group's numbers had swelled to almost 50 000 by 1965. In states such as Alabama and Mississippi, Klan members also forged close alliances with state governors and were frequently able to evade arrest. When Southern law enforcement agencies did arrest KKK members for their acts of violence and murder, Klan members were usually acquitted or given lenient sentences.

The White Citizens' Council (WCC)

The White Citizens' Council (WCC, also known as the Citizens' Councils of America) was formed in Mississippi in October 1954 in response to the passage of *Brown v Board of Education*. Its members were professionals, businesspeople and cotton planters and, as such, it represented the elites of Southern society, giving it a veneer of respectability. The WCC established branches throughout the South, and its branch leaders were often also the local bank presidents, which gave them significant power in small Southern communities. The WCC had very close links to local and state government, and even received funding from these bodies. By the end of 1954, the WCC had 25 000 members in Mississippi and Alabama. This had doubled by the beginning of 1956.

The WCC engaged in a range of strategies to hold back civil rights progress. These included making use of the economic and political powers that its supporters held in their communities. Employers who were members of the WCC sacked Black and white workers who supported civil rights. WCC members pressured insurance agencies to cancel policies for vehicles and homes owned by supporters of civil rights, while WCC bank employees ensured that civil rights supporters were unable to secure loans. In addition, WCC members

blocked any measures to recognise civil rights in community organisations such as school boards or church groups. They published lists of the names of white people who signed petitions opposing segregation to encourage the rest of the community to retaliate against them. The WCC was also particularly effective in preventing African Americans from enrolling to vote by using intimidation and obstructive tactics at registration offices.

To maintain its momentum, the WCC spread vicious anti-integrationist propaganda throughout the white community. They hosted essay competitions for high school students on 'Why separate schools should be maintained for the white and Negro races.' They also ran newspaper advertisement, and printed and distributed millions of pamphlets to persuade Southern white people of 'white supremacy' and of the dangers posed to white women by Black men.

Violence and the WCC

The WCC stated that it was against violence and did not engage in the kind of tactics used by the KKK. However, while it may not have been official policy, the WCC did commit acts of violence, including murder, against civil rights advocates. At times, WCC leaders openly advocated the use of violence, including lynchings, arson and rape to counter desegregation. At a meeting held in Montgomery, Alabama, during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956, WCC leader James Eastland distributed a flyer which called for the 'abolition of the Negro race' using 'guns, bows and arrows, sling shots and knives'. The renowned African American singer Nat King Cole was assaulted in Birmingham, Alabama, by WCC members while he was on tour there in 1956. Then on 12 June 1963, WCC member Byron de la Beckwith murdered NAACP's Mississippi leader, Medgar Evers. The WCC paid Beckwith's legal expenses at his trial, in which he was found not guilty.

The façade of middle-class respectability and its connections to state government leaders meant that the federal government did not intervene to stop the WCC. In 1956 Martin Luther King Jr had appealed to President Eisenhower to investigate violence perpetrated by WCC members after civil rights activists' homes in Montgomery, Alabama, were bombed, and effigies of a Black man and a white man who 'talked integration' were hanged in downtown Montgomery. However, the Attorney-General, Herbert Brownell, rejected King's appeal, writing that 'the activities of the White Citizens Council ... [do] not appear to indicate violations of federal criminal statutes'.³

Federal and state officials

Federal and state politicians effectively thwarted the aims of civil rights organisations, using delaying tactics and obstruction, and by ignoring violence.

The US Senate

Civil rights bills that passed the US House of Representatives were often defeated when they reached the Senate, or had to be significantly altered to gain enough support to pass. This was the fate of President Eisenhower's 1957 Civil Rights Bill and of the Civil Rights Bill originally presented by President John F Kennedy (1961–63) in 1963. Indeed, when Kennedy had announced his intentions to introduce a Civil Rights Bill on 11 June 1963, Senator Russell Long from Louisiana vowed he would 'fight that proposition till hell freezes over', while Senator Harry F Byrd from Virginia declared he was 'opposed to every line' of the legislation, and would 'fight it to the bitter end'.

Rules unique to the US Senate enabled senators to undertake a 'fight to the bitter end'. Senate rules permitted almost unlimited debate on a bill. This meant that a small number of senators could delay the passage of any legislation they opposed through endless debate that went on for days or even weeks. This process is known as 'filibustering'. Senators who were opposed to civil rights aimed to frustrate the supporters of civil rights in the Senate by making long, boring speeches in the hope that any civil rights legislation would be defeated, amended or 'watered-down'.

Massive Resistance

A group of Southern senators and state politicians, led by Senator Byrd, also embarked on a campaign of 'Massive Resistance' in response to the NAACP's victory in the *Brown v Board of Education* case. On 24 February 1956, Byrd announced his Massive Resistance campaign to oppose the integration of public schools. The Massive Resistance movement campaigned for state governments to pass amendments to state constitutions that repealed compulsory school attendance, so that the state government could close schools rather than allow integration. Massive Resistance tactics also included providing 'tuition grants' so that white students could attend whites-only private schools and authorising school boards to assign students to schools based on their race. The school closure and pupil placement tactics were employed in several states in the South, including Virginia, Louisiana, Arkansas and North Carolina.

Another form of Massive Resistance was the use of legislation to outlaw civil rights organisations. More than 200 laws were passed between 1956 and 1960 targeting civil rights activists. The NAACP was specifically outlawed in Alabama in 1956, and there were attempts to force the NAACP to publish its membership lists in Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The ongoing harassment led to the decline of NAACP membership across the South from 128 000 in 1955 to 80 000 in 1957. While the courts eventually overturned the anti-NAACP laws, including those in Alabama, the long period of litigation reduced the ability of the NAACP to operate effectively.



FIGURE 2.12 Three students at Clinton High School picketed their school when it became the first state-supported school in Tennessee to integrate. The boys are, from left, Buddy Trammell, Max Stiles and Tommy Sanders. Engagement in segregationist campaigns was not limited to the Klan, local elites or politicians.



FIGURE 2.13 Protesters outside an NAACP convention on 22 June 1964, held at the Grand Ballroom of the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Washington DC. The protesters hold anti-communist and anti-Semitic signs.

The Southern Manifesto (1956)

Nineteen US senators and 82 members of the House of Representatives (all from the South and almost all from the Democratic Party) signed the *Declaration of Constitutional Principles*, known as the *Southern Manifesto*, in 1956 to register their opposition to the Supreme Court's passage of legislation that forced states to desegregate public spaces and schools. The *Southern Manifesto* was presented to the House of Representatives on 12 March 1956 by House Rules Committee Chair Howard Smith, the Virginia representative. Smith argued that the Supreme Court's ruling had created 'chaos and confusion' and destroyed 'amicable relations between the white and Negro races.'

Permitting violence

Local white and state authorities continued to ignore acts of violence against African Americans and extended this strategy to those in the civil rights movement, regardless of whether they were Black or white. Activists from every major civil rights group suffered assault, bombings and murders at the hands of white extremists. The NAACP was a particular target because of its success in the Supreme Court, which had led Southern politicians to blame the NAACP for the 'crisis of desegregation'. NAACP members Harry and Harriette Moore died from injuries sustained when their house was bombed in 1951. NAACP lawyer, Alexander Looby, had his house bombed in 1960, and Arthur Shores' house was targeted on several occasions. Murdered NAACP workers included Reverend George W Lee (1955), Medgar Evers (1963), Louis Allen (1964) and Vernon Dahmer (1966). The perpetrators were not brought to justice for decades, if at all.



FIGURE 2.14 Perry Blevens, aged 7, with Sherley Ann Bowman riding in a KKK motorcade in Macon, Georgia, 14 April 1956

Source Study 2.3 Opposition to the civil rights movement

Source A: Extract from Central Alabama White Citizens' Council pamphlet, 1954

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 heritage of sixty centuries. This integration scheme ties right in with the new, one world, one creed, one race philosophy fostered by the ultra-idealists and international left-wingers. If we submit to this unconstitutional, judge-made integration law, the malignant powers of atheism, communism and mongrelization will surely follow, not only in our Southland but throughout our nation. What decision are you going to make for those baby children at home?

Central Alabama Citizens' Council, Montgomery, AL, 'The Citizens' Council', Association of Citizens' Councils, Winona, Mississippi. (Headquarters), c.1954, cited in D Shultzner, 'The Social-Psychological Origins of the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Social Interaction and Humiliation in the Emergence of Social Movements' Mobilization', *International Quarterly*, 18, 2, 2013, p 133.

Source B: Extract from the *Southern Manifesto*, 1956

In the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 the Supreme Court expressly declared that under the Fourteenth Amendment no person was denied any of his rights if the states provided separate but equal public facilities ... This interpretation, restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the states and confirmed their habits, customs, traditions and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and common sense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children.

Though there has been no constitutional amendment or act of Congress changing this established legal principle almost a century old, the Supreme Court of the United States, with no legal basis for such action, undertook to exercise their naked judicial power and substituted their personal political and social ideas for the established law of the land.

This unwarranted exercise of power by the court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the states principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through ninety years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.

The Southern Manifesto on Integration, 12 March, 1956 from Congressional Record, 84th Congress Second Session. Vol. 102, part 4. Washington, D.C.: Governmental Printing Office, 1956; www.thirteen.org/wnet/supremecourt/rights/sources_document2.html

Questions

1. How does Source A attempt to persuade readers to join the Citizens' Council?
 2. What are the reasons identified in Source B why segregation should be maintained?
 3. What arguments could you make to question the accuracy of the assertions contained within Source B?
-

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define 'integration' and 'filibuster'.
 2. Identify the reasons for the formation of the first and second KKK.
 3. Summarise the reasons for the formation of the third KKK.
 4. Outline how the KKK opposed the civil rights movement.
 5. Contrast the supporters of the WCC with the KKK.
 6. Explain why the WCC's opposition to the civil rights movement was effective.
 7. Construct a mindmap to explain why the US government was a significant source of opposition for the civil rights movement.
-

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Outline the formation of ONE civil rights group.
2. Describe the methods used by ONE civil rights group.
3. Outline the methods used by ONE opposition group to oppose civil rights.

Explain

1. Explain the role of the NAACP in the civil rights movement.
2. Explain the significance of the SCLC to the civil rights movement.
3. Explain the significance of SNCC to the civil rights movement.
4. Compare the methods of protest used by two civil rights groups.
5. Compare the role of CORE with the role of the SCLC in the civil rights movement.
6. Explain the reasons for the formation of civil rights groups.

Evaluate

1. To what extent did the methods of protest differ between the civil rights groups?
2. Assess the role of the SCLC in the civil rights movement.

Integrate sources

1. Account for the effectiveness of opposition groups in opposing civil rights. In your response, refer directly to Source A.

**Source A: Extract from Richard Baudouin (ed.),
*Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence***

All told, the Klan's campaign of terror against the civil rights movement resulted in almost 70 bombings in Georgia and Alabama, the arson of 30 black churches in Mississippi and 10 racial killings in Alabama alone. Klansmen were often operating in an atmosphere of official disapproval but unofficial acceptance of their tactics. While Southern law enforcement authorities made **perfunctory** efforts to arrest and prosecute the bombers, politicians pledged resistance to integration, and communities responded by closing ranks against blacks. [However], the acts of violence finally began to arouse public indignation in the South and across the nation.

Richard Baudouin (ed.), *Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence*, Southern Poverty Law Centre, Montgomery, Alabama, 1997, p 27.

perfunctory

obligatory, routine, token

Going further

Create

1. Create an integrated and annotated timeline of the formation of civil rights and opposition groups.

Examine primary sources for yourself

1. In groups of two or three, prepare a speech to promote one of the civil rights groups. Your speech should make reference to:
 - a. the formation of the group
 - b. the target audience and provide reasons why they should join the organisation
 - c. methods used by the group
 - d. examples of campaigns

In your presentation, make specific use of three primary sources to support your argument.

- Library of Congress: The NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom
- Citizen U: Primary Source Nexus, The NAACP
- The Civil Rights Movement Archive, This is Core (1961)
- Christopher Newport University: Primary Sources: CORE
- The Civil Rights Movement Archive, SCLC Documents
- SNCC Digital Gateway: The Story of SNCC

Prepare revision notes

1. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the formation, leaders, methods and key campaigns of each civil rights group.

Civil rights group	Formation	Leaders	Methods used	Key campaigns

2. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the methods used by the opposition groups and examples of civil rights campaigns where these methods were employed.

Opposition group	Methods used	Examples of campaigns

Endnotes

- 1 JW Vander, 'The Klan Revival', *American Journal of Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, Mar 1960, Vol 65, No 5, p 461.
- 2 JW Vander, 'The Klan Revival', *American Journal of Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, Mar 1960, Vol 65, No 5, p 461.
- 3 Letter from Warren Olney III to Martin Luther King Jr, 7 September 1956, kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/warren-olney-iii

Campaigns for desegregation



FIGURE 3.1 Members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union picket Woolworths for its segregationist practices, in support of SCLC's Birmingham Campaign, 1963

The Montgomery Bus Boycott, the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School and the Freedom Rides were by no means the first attempts to challenge segregation in the United States but they were nonetheless highly significant campaigns. These three major campaigns were not entirely successful – indeed, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, in particular, achieved relatively small gains. What distinguished these campaigns, however, was the context of the Cold War, the emergence of a charismatic leader in Martin Luther King Jr, the dramatic violence of a revived KKK in the South and the extensive media coverage of the events. The lessons learned by the civil rights movement in these campaigns were implemented in the 1963 Birmingham Campaign, which resulted in the promise of a Civil Rights Bill to end segregation.

This chapter will explain the significance of the following events:

- the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56)
- the desegregation of Little Rock High (1957)
- the Freedom Rides (1961).

The chapter also note the importance of the 1963 Birmingham Campaign, the role of Martin Luther King Jr and the extent of social and political change from 1955–63.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56)

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a civil rights campaign to abolish the laws enforcing racial segregation on buses in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. Under these laws, African Americans were forced to ride in the back of the bus, while whites sat in the front. African American passengers were also required to enter the bus from the rear door and to surrender their seat to a white person if the bus was full. The white bus drivers frequently abused African American passengers in an effort to enforce these laws. After a year-long boycott of the buses, combined with hard-fought court action undertaken by the NAACP, African Americans were able to overturn the segregation laws on buses in Alabama.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott is often thought of as the trigger of the civil rights movement. However, the boycott was a culmination of a much longer history of responses to racist violence and campaigns to end segregation. Earlier attempts by the NAACP and other activists to desegregate bus travel in Virginia in 1946 and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1953, had failed because Southern states had been able to enact more Jim Crow legislation. The leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycott learned from these earlier struggles and were therefore able to campaign more effectively.

Timeline 3.1: The Montgomery Bus Boycott

- 1946 • Women's Political Council (WPC) formed
- 1955 • 1 December: Rosa Parks arrested for disorderly conduct
 - 5 December: WPC staged a one-day boycott of Montgomery buses
 - 5 December: Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) formed and Martin Luther King Jr elected as head of the organisation
- 1956 • 30 January: Martin Luther King Jr's house bombed by the KKK
 - 1 February: NAACP filed the lawsuit *Browder v Gayle* on behalf of five women arrested for refusing to obey segregation laws on the buses
 - 21 February: Arrest of 89 activists, including Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks, under the *Alabama Anti-Boycott Act* (1921)
 - 13 November: US Supreme Court upheld the federal district court ruling in *Browder v Gayle* that Alabama's laws segregating buses were unconstitutional
 - 21 December: US Supreme Court ordered desegregation of buses in Montgomery
- 1957 • 10 January: Four churches and two homes bombed in Montgomery

Segregation on Montgomery buses

In 1949 an African American English professor named Jo Ann Robinson moved to Montgomery, Alabama, to teach English at the Alabama State College. On her arrival, Robinson joined the **Women's Political Council (WPC)**, an organisation for professional and middle-class African American women. The WPC encouraged women to become involved in their local community, increased voter registration among African Americans and helped African American women who had been victims of rape or violent assault.

One night, Robinson was verbally abused by a bus driver for sitting in the whites-only section of the bus. She discussed the incident with other women in the WPC who related that they had had similar experiences and that it was typical for Montgomery. Robinson tried to raise her concerns with the mayor of Montgomery, William A Gayle, but he refused to listen. She then contacted ED Nixon, state president of the NAACP in Alabama, to discuss the possibility of mounting a court challenge to segregation on buses. In addition to his role in the NAACP, Nixon was also president of the Montgomery branch of the BSCP and a long-time civil rights worker. Before the activists could mount the court challenge, however, they needed someone to voluntarily violate the bus seating law and be arrested for it.

Rosa Parks and the beginning of the boycott

The activists' chance came on 1 December 1955 when Rosa Parks, a seamstress, was arrested for refusing to move from her seat to one at the back of the bus. A white man had entered the bus and, even though the bus was fairly empty, the bus driver insisted that the white man should not have to sit so close to an African American person. Parks insisted that she be allowed to sit where she was, as there were two other empty seats and an aisle between her and the white man. When police officers boarded the bus and demanded that she move, Parks again refused. She was subsequently arrested and charged with 'refusing to obey the orders of a bus driver'.

Rosa Parks had been an active member of the civil rights movement since 1943 when she had joined the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP and worked as a secretary for ED Nixon. Nixon asked Parks if she would allow her arrest to be a test case to challenge the legality of segregation on Montgomery's buses. Parks was considered the ideal person to stand in a legal case against the segregation laws as she was married, employed and dignified. At the same time, Jo Ann Robinson and the WPC wanted to use Parks' arrest as a reason to initiate a bus boycott to 'break the system'. When Parks agreed, Robinson

Women's Political Council (WPC)

a grassroots organisation of middle-class African American women in Montgomery, Alabama, formed in 1946; it encouraged voter registration, protested against the abuse of African Americans on city buses, opposed segregated parks, educated high school students about democracy and ran adult literacy classes to raise eligibility for voter registration

immediately had 35 000 flyers printed to advertise the boycott. African American Christian ministers in Montgomery promised to encourage their congregations to support the boycott, which was planned for the following Monday, 5 December 1955. While Parks was in court being tried on charges of disorderly conduct, more than 50 000 people – 90 per cent of the African American community – were boycotting the buses. The success of the boycott prompted calls for the boycott leaders to harness the momentum into a larger protest campaign.



FIGURE 3.2 Rosa Parks, with reporter Nicholas C Criss, takes a formerly 'white only' seat on a Montgomery bus on 21 December 1956, the day the service was integrated.

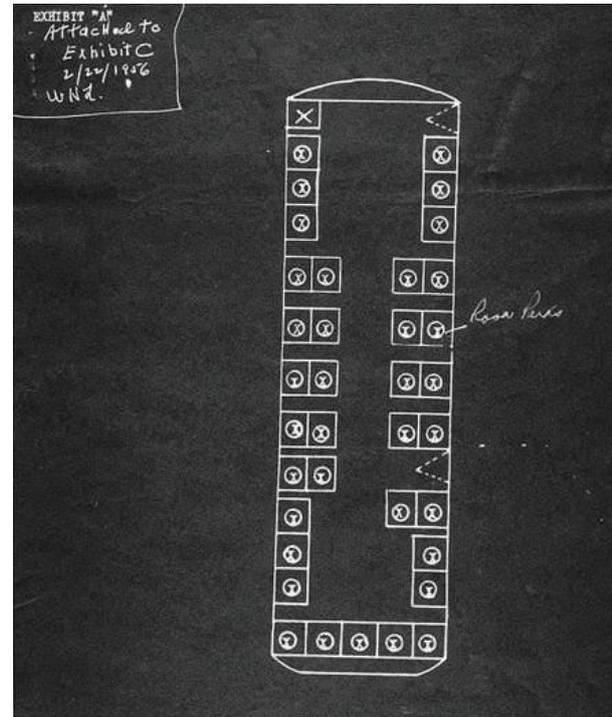


FIGURE 3.3 Diagram used during Rosa Parks' trial to show where she was seated on the bus on 1 December 1955

Extending the boycott

On the afternoon of 5 December, a meeting was held at Mt Zion AME Church. There, Montgomery's Black leaders established the **Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)** to oversee the continuation and maintenance of the boycott. They elected Martin Luther King Jr, the 26-year-old minister of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and a newcomer to Montgomery, to lead the MIA. Rosa Parks, meanwhile, undertook a role as one of the directors of the MIA.

The boycott lasted 381 days, from 5 December 1955 to 20 December 1956. For the entire period, African American protesters refused to ride the buses and walked to work. Since African Americans comprised 75 per cent of bus riders in Montgomery, the bus company suffered a significant downturn in profits. Black and white people with cars who sympathised with the boycott offered rides to the protesters.

Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

grassroots organisation formed by Christian ministers, WPC members, NAACP members and other African American community leaders to oversee the extension of the original one-day bus boycott led by the WPC; the MIA also aimed to improve race relations in Montgomery

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was an African American Protestant denomination formed in 1794, after the white churchgoers of St George's Methodist Church refused to worship with Black churchgoers and insisted on segregated seating.

Martin Luther King Jr's role

Martin Luther King Jr was elected as president of the MIA because he was a newcomer, and therefore had no enemies in Montgomery. In addition, as a church minister his employment was not dependent on white businessmen or politicians, making him immune to economic reprisals for his involvement. Black churches formed a key base for civil rights activism, providing a place to hold mass meetings and distribute information. They also lent a religious significance to the civil rights movement.

At 7 pm on 5 December, following the decision to extend the one-day boycott, King spoke to 5000 people on behalf of the MIA at the Holt Street Baptist Church. He called on listeners to hold fast to the conviction that their actions for justice were not wrong and that participation in the boycott was doing God's work. King's speech aroused intense enthusiasm for the cause. It also served to ignite African American recognition of him as a respected civil rights leader. King continued to give inspiring speeches at mass rallies in Montgomery to maintain the community's commitment to the boycott throughout the campaign. He also spoke at venues across the United States to promote wider support for the boycott.



FIGURE 3.4 Martin Luther King Jr addressing the congregation at Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, Howard University, Washington DC, 7 December 1956

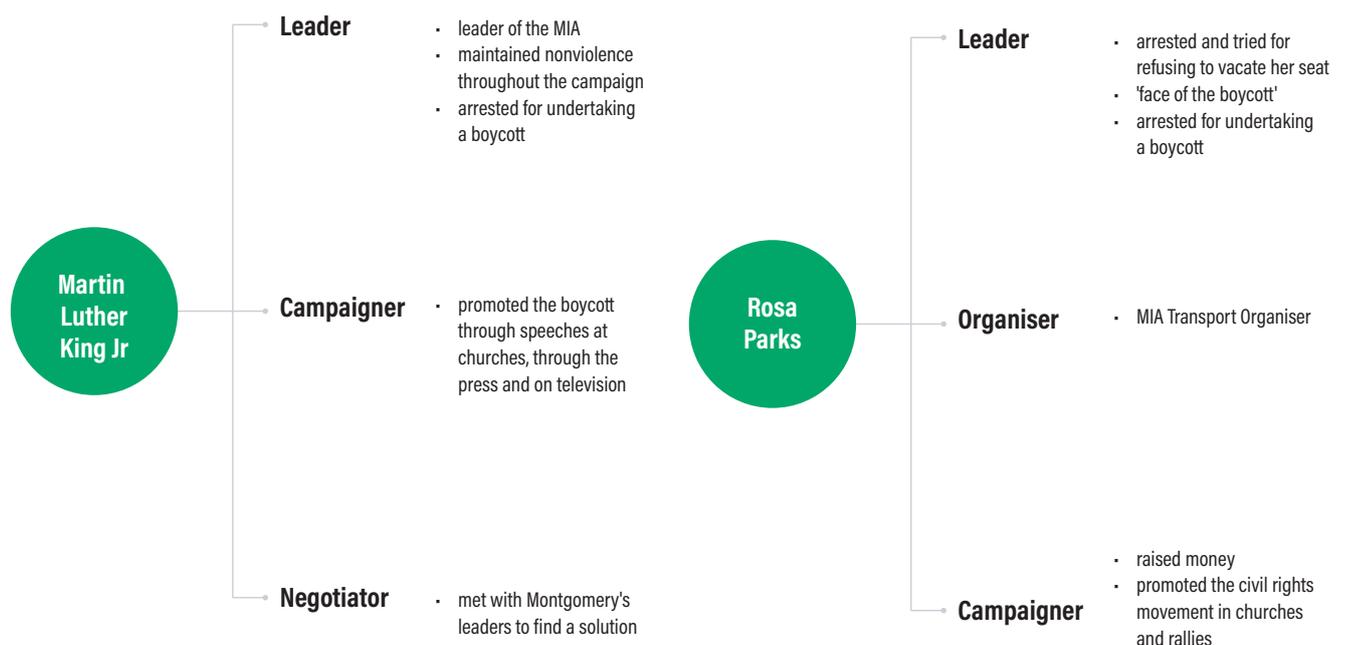
In addition to his role as spokesperson for the MIA, King and other MIA leaders met with white officials during the first few weeks of the boycott to negotiate better treatment for African Americans. The MIA leaders requested that white bus drivers refrain from abusing African American women, called for Black bus drivers to be hired and requested a change to the rules of segregated travel on buses that forced Black people to stand even when there were (white-designated) seats available. They also agreed that African Americans would move to vacant seats towards in the rear of the middle section of the bus if whites came on board and required seats in the middle section. King repeatedly told white authorities that the MIA was not seeking an end to segregation, merely calling for better treatment of African American passengers. He had resisted the NAACP's offer to file a lawsuit against the

city of Montgomery in pursuit of desegregation because he believed that another lawsuit so soon after the passage of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) would further antagonise white supremacists. He also thought that white officials in Montgomery would respond to reason and negotiation. However, all of the MIA's proposals for fair treatment were rejected.

King himself then became a target for white harassment and violence. On 26 January 1956, he was arrested for driving 30 miles per hour in a 25 mph speed zone and jailed. He also regularly received death threats. On 30 January, King's house was bombed by the KKK while he was addressing a congregation of 2000 people at the First Baptist Church, Montgomery. When a crowd of 400 armed African Americans gathered outside King's bombed home in protest, King persuaded the crowd to avoid violence, calling on them to 'love their white brothers'. King's courageous emphasis on nonviolence and forgiveness set the tone for the campaign.

Then on 21 February, state authorities arrested Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks, along with 89 other boycott leaders, under the *Alabama Anti-Boycott Act* (1921) in an effort to upend the boycott. King was ordered to pay a \$500 fine or serve 386 days in jail. His fine was later paid by a supporter. Despite King's conviction, the trial itself had been beneficial for the civil rights activists. It had exposed the systematic mistreatment of African Americans in Montgomery and the widespread African American opposition to segregation. It also emboldened the MIA and their supporters to maintain their belief in their cause.

The rejection of the MIA's modest proposals, the ongoing harassment and the outcome of the trial radicalised King and the MIA. They realised that white officials would never agree to a compromise with them, so they decided to ask the NAACP to fight a court case on their behalf to establish that segregation on buses was unconstitutional. To file a lawsuit challenging a state's laws was a radical act in 1955, even more provocative than a mass boycott. The MIA had previously determined that they did not want to upset the white authorities by involving the NAACP, whose success in overturning segregation in schools through *Brown v Board of Education* had aroused the animosity of segregationists throughout the Deep South. But now they recognised that only radical action would enable African Americans to achieve their rights.



FIGURES 3.5 AND 3.6 The roles of Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks during the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Rosa Parks' role during the boycott

As the face of the boycott, Parks inspired tens of thousands of Black citizens to boycott the Montgomery city buses for more than a year. In her role as a director of the MIA she served as a coordinator of the MIA Transportation Committee, through which she organised a carpool system of 325 volunteer drivers to help 30 000 people get to work. Although Parks was arrested for her participation in the boycott, her case was eventually dismissed.

Parks also campaigned in churches and other organisations to raise funds and publicise the MIA and the NAACP. She travelled across the United States making appearances and giving speeches in Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle and New York. On 24 May 1956 she addressed a 'Heroes of the South' fundraiser rally at Madison Square Garden, New York.

Parks' prominence in the Montgomery Bus Boycott exacted a significant personal cost. On 7 January 1956 she was sacked from her job at the Montgomery Fair department store where she had worked as a seamstress since September 1954. Her husband, Raymond, lost his job as a barber, leaving the couple in dire financial straits. She received constant death threats throughout the campaign and beyond, leading to ongoing health conditions such as insomnia and stomach ulcers. Rosa and Raymond left Montgomery in August 1957 due to the death threats and employment blacklisting. Rosa continued to work for civil rights until her death in 2005.



FIGURE 3.7 Rosa Parks had her fingerprints taken by Deputy Sheriff DH Lackey after her arrest for violating the *Alabama Anti-Boycott Act* (1921).

***Browder v Gayle* (1956)**

NAACP attorneys Fred Gray and Charles Langford pursued the cause of bus desegregation through the courts in a case known as *Browder v Gayle*. On 5 June 1956 the US District Court ruled that Montgomery's segregation law violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. The Supreme Court upheld the District Court's ruling on 13 November. After an unsuccessful appeal by the state of Alabama, the Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of buses in Montgomery on 21 December 1956. Following the court victory, the MIA ended the boycott.

Social and political change resulting from the Montgomery Bus Boycott

The Montgomery Bus Boycott achieved a range of social and political changes, including a growing awareness of the civil rights movement and the launch of Martin Luther King Jr as a key leader of the movement. More ominously, however, the boycott also helped reinvigorate opposition groups such as the KKK, whose violent actions and obstructions would affect the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and influence the civil rights movement's fate in the long term.

Impact on the civil rights movement

The campaign certainly led to many positive outcomes for the civil rights movement. While the MIA's campaign had been confined to the small city of Montgomery, it had nevertheless brought a new focus to the cause of desegregation and raised the African American community's hopes for change. It had also characterised the movement as nonviolent, righteous and determined, winning the support of white people in the American mainstream. Furthermore, it had prompted the success of *Browder v Gayle* (1956), demonstrating the significance of the NAACP's efforts to fight segregation through legal challenges. Importantly too, the Montgomery Bus Boycott prompted the interest of the media. This would prove crucial to the ongoing fortunes of the movement.

The media's role

While Black newspapers such as *Jet* and *The Birmingham World* had covered the protest from the beginning, it was not until the bombing of King's house and his arrest that the mainstream media began to pay attention. The *New York Times* published its most significant story on the boycott following King's arrest. The story contained interviews with boycott leaders, including a quote from King that the protesters were committed to nonviolence. King was also interviewed for Telenews (a syndicated newsreel service for television).

Impact on Martin Luther King Jr

The boycott also launched the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr, who went on to help form the SCLC on 10 January 1957. The media fostered the rising prominence of King as a leader of the civil rights movement, revealing him to be an engaging and well-spoken young man, with a compelling message of nonviolence and justice. When King was asked whether he was 'afraid' following the bombing of his house, King responded that he was not, and that a person needed to 'stand up and be counted', regardless of the consequences. In the days that followed, national newspapers began to portray King as the 'American Gandhi'.

Impact on the role of opposition groups

White leaders had assumed that the protesters would quickly lose enthusiasm for the boycott. When the boycott continued, however, the WCC launched its own campaign to fight against desegregation. In January 1956 the WCC held a rally in Montgomery that was attended by 1200 people, including the mayor of Montgomery, William A Gayle, and the Montgomery police commissioner. While the WCC never called for violence against the protesters, their membership in the WCC sent a clear message to the public that strident opposition to desegregation was acceptable.

Black carpool drivers found their vehicles vandalised, their brakes cut and their petrol tanks filled with sugar. Nails were scattered across the streets of Black neighbourhoods to puncture car tyres. White people in cars began hurling food, stones and balloons filled with urine at African Americans walking to work. Meanwhile, white people who supported the boycott suffered economic attacks from the WCC. One white woman, after praising the determination of the African American community, was fired by her employer and began receiving threatening phone calls late at night. With very few exceptions, most sympathetic white people played it safe and kept their mouths shut.

The KKK was also active during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Members regularly walked through Black neighbourhoods to intimidate the protesters. They also held mass meetings where they encouraged Klan members to see themselves as ‘white saviours’. A speaker at a Klan rally held on 9 November 1956 promised listeners that ‘America was saved by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.’¹ A flyer advertising a cross-burning rally for the evening of 24 November 1956 read: ‘We believe in white supremacy. We need you – you need us.’ A day after the *Browder v Gayle* verdict, shots were fired at King’s house. In the following days, a young woman was assaulted as she alighted from a bus and more shots were fired at two buses. On 10 January 1957, the Klan bombed five Black churches and the home of a white minister, Reverend Robert Graetz, who had publicly supported the bus boycott. Seven KKK members were arrested for the bombings, but all were subsequently acquitted.

Impact on desegregation

Montgomery’s white leaders did their best to mar the achievements of the boycott. Mayor Gayle immediately suspended the bus service following the outbreak of violence. When it was restored, African Americans were technically free to sit in any part of a bus they wished, but many felt intimidated and returned to sitting at the back of the bus. Montgomery officials then passed new laws that extended segregation, widening the list of leisure and sporting activities that Black and white people were not allowed to play together. Bus stops also remained segregated.

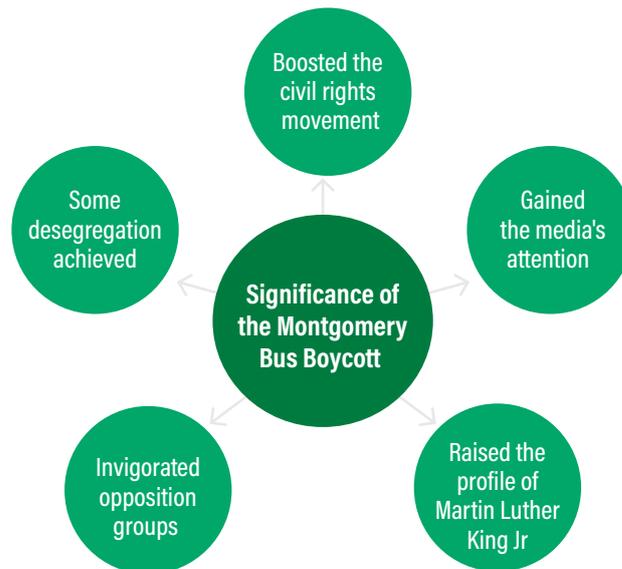


FIGURE 3.8 The significance of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Source Study 3.1 Montgomery Bus Boycott

Source A: An extract from Rosa Parks' notebook, 1955

Rosa Parks kept notebooks and diaries that documented her experiences during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This excerpt from her notebook contains reflections on her arrest on 1 December 1955.

I had been pushed around all my life and felt at this moment that I couldn't take it anymore. When I asked the policeman why we had to be pushed around, he said he didn't know. 'The law is the law. You are under arrest.' I didn't resist.

I want to feel the nearness of something secure. It is such a lonely lost feeling that I am cut off from life ... There is just so much hurt, disappointment and oppression one can take... We soothe ourselves with the salve of attempted indifference, accepting the false pattern set up by the horrible restriction of Jim Crow laws. Let us look at Jim Crow for the criminal he is and what he had done to one life multiplied millions of times over [in] these United States and the world.

Rosa Parks Papers 1955-1958, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (029.00.00); www.loc.gov/static/classroom-materials/rosa-parks/documents/reflections.pdf

Source B: George Mitchell, 'Record of Report on the Montgomery Bus Boycott at the Highlander Folk School'

Mitchell was the Director of the Southern Regional Council, a civil rights group based in Atlanta, Georgia, which campaigned for voter registration and political awareness among African Americans.

One thing that all my experience has taught me in the South is that one reason that the Negro people have never been able to get anything is because they never organized together. What has happened in the last five months [at the Montgomery Bus Boycott] is that the Negro people are rapidly getting organized. And they are going to get what they're after because they have a united mind. The Citizens Councils think they can scare others but they can't because they're dealing with a united mind.

George Mitchell, 'Record of Report on the Montgomery Bus Boycott at the Highlander Folk School', Tennessee, 4 March 1956, www.crmvet.org/disc/5603_parks_mbb.pdf

Questions

1. Explain two ways in which the content of Source A is useful to historians of the civil rights movement.
2. Why is the perspective of Source A valuable?
3. What does Source B reveal about the significance of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define the following terms: 'WPC', 'MIA' and 'negotiation'.
2. Identify the civil rights groups and the methods of protest used in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
3. Create a cause-and-effect diagram to show the main events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
4. Using Figure 3.5, summarise the key elements of Martin Luther King Jr's role in the boycott.
5. Using Figure 3.6, summarise the key elements of Rosa Parks' role in the boycott.
6. Describe the role of opposition groups in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
7. Using Figure 3.8, describe each of the social and political changes that resulted from the boycott.

The desegregation of Little Rock Central High School (1957)

The desegregation of Little Rock Central High School was an NAACP campaign to enforce the outcomes of the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) case. The US Supreme Court had ruled that segregation in schools was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. While the NAACP had been successful in winning the case, the ruling had little practical effect and most schools remained segregated in the South. Moreover, a follow-up ruling in 1955 (known as **Brown II**) had unintentionally provided Southern states with the opportunity to delay the desegregation of their schools. *Brown II* ruled that desegregation should be implemented with 'all deliberate speed', but this was an ambiguous phrase that was used by many Southern states to delay desegregating their schools.

The *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) ruling prompted a few school districts to comply with the order to desegregate schools, mainly because there were significant financial benefits to compliance. In Charleston, Arkansas, the school board readily agreed to desegregate Charleston High School to avoid the cost of busing the 14 African American students who lived in Charleston to the all-Black Lincoln High School, located 32 kilometres west of the city. The Fayetteville School Board, also in Arkansas, enrolled nine Black students in the local high school in 1955, thus saving the city \$5000 per year (the cost of busing students to Black schools at Fort Smith, 95 kilometres away, and Hot Springs, 240 kilometres away). As Fayetteville's Superintendent of Schools, Wayne White, noted, 'Segregation was a luxury we could no longer afford.'² These districts had encountered little opposition to school integration, but this would change dramatically in 1957.

Timeline 3.2: The desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

- 1954 ▪ 17 May: US Supreme Court ruled against segregation in *Brown v Board of Education* (1954)
- 1955 ▪ 31 May: *Brown II* ruling
- 1956 ▪ Capital Citizens' Council (CCC) formed
- 1957 ▪ August: Mothers' League of Central High School formed
 - 2 September: Governor Faubus called out the Arkansas National Guard to surround Little Rock Central High School
 - 3 September: District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas ordered that desegregation proceed as planned

Brown II (1955)

a Supreme Court amendment to *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), which determined that all schools should be desegregated 'with all deliberate speed' - a vague direction that did not specify a particular date

- 4 September: First day of integration at Little Rock Central High School
 - 14 September: President Eisenhower met with Governor Faubus to demand that Faubus stop using the National Guard to prevent integration and respect the federal law of desegregation
 - 20 September: Governor Faubus removed the National Guard from Little Rock Central High School
 - 23 September: Police tried and failed to protect the Little Rock Nine as they attempted to return to school
 - 24 September: President Eisenhower sent in 101st Airborne Division to protect the Little Rock Nine
 - 25 September: Little Rock Nine's first full day at school
- 1958**
- 25 May: Ernest Green graduated from Little Rock Central High School
 - 15 September: Governor Faubus closed all schools in Arkansas

Plans to desegregate Little Rock Central High School

In 1955 the superintendent of the Little Rock School District, Virgil T Blossom, formed a plan to integrate schools there. Little Rock was Arkansas' largest school district. The city had a population of 100 000, of whom 25 per cent were African American. The gradual process of integration was set to start at Little Rock Central High School on the first day of the school term, 4 September 1957.

However, under pressure from segregationists, Blossom decided to make some changes to his original plan to desegregate Little Rock schools. While gradual integration would still begin on 4 September, his new plan allowed white students to withdraw from majority-Black high schools in Little Rock and be bused to a majority-white school of their choice. The revised Blossom plan was strongly opposed by the NAACP, which filed a lawsuit against the school board and called for the reinstatement of the original Blossom plan. The courts rejected their demands.

The response of opposition groups

Meanwhile, two local groups strongly opposed to integration were formed: the **Capital Citizens' Council (CCC)** and the **Mothers' League of Central High School**. The CCC was a local movement led by white Christian ministers, lawyers and businessmen that was actively supported by around 35 per cent of the city's population, including working- and lower-middle-class residents. In an attempt to stop integration, the CCC disrupted school board meetings, held rallies and encouraged defiance through anti-integrationist propaganda. One CCC advertisement read, 'If you integrate Little Rock Central High in September, would the Negro boys be permitted to solicit the white girls for dances?' The CCC also petitioned the Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, to intervene and stop the integration of Little Rock Central High.

The Mother's League of Central High School was a women's organisation formed in August 1957 to oppose the segregation of Little Rock Central High School. Most League members were married working-class and lower-middle-class women, but only 20 per cent actually had a child attending the high school. The League argued for maintaining segregation, citing the rights of states to govern themselves and the concern that allowing Black and white children to mix might lead to white children being 'forced to struggle for an education.'

Capital Citizens' Council (CCC)

an organisation formed in 1956 in Arkansas to resist the desegregation of schools

Mothers' League of Central High School

an organisation formed in August 1957 to resist the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

The 'Little Rock Nine'

The NAACP began preparations to register nine Black students at Little Rock Central High School in anticipation of integration starting on 4 September. The students, known as the 'Little Rock Nine', were Thelma Mothershed Wair, Minnijean Brown Trickey, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford and Melba Pattillo Beals. Before term began, the Little Rock Nine were advised that they needed to be prepared for strong opposition, including violence, from groups opposed to integration. The students practised responses to potential situations they might have to face and were trained in nonviolent responses.

Governor Faubus' response

On the evening of 2 September 1957, Governor Faubus gave an address that was broadcast on radio and television. He told the citizens of Arkansas that he had called out the Arkansas National Guard to surround Little Rock Central High School because he had been informed that thousands of white supremacists from all over Arkansas were heading towards Little Rock. He therefore called on all African Americans to stay away from Central High School, declaring that, otherwise, 'blood will run on the streets'. Faubus' decision to use state troops to prevent the implementation of federal law shocked the nation. Fearing violence, the Little Rock School Board ordered the nine students to stay at home. However, US District Court judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Ronald Davies, ordered that desegregation proceed the following day.



FIGURE 3.9 The Little Rock Nine with NAACP leader Daisy Bates, standing second from the right

The attempted desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

Determined to carry on with the desegregation of Little Rock Central High, NAACP president Daisy Bates organised a range of measures to protect the students. She informed the parents of eight of the students to bring their children to her home the following morning. From there, the students would be accompanied to the school by local Christian ministers, Black and white, with two ministers in front of and two behind each child. To ensure that her plan to protect the children worked, Bates also notified the police and persuaded them to attend the high school.

Elizabeth Eckford

Bates had not informed the parents of one student, Elizabeth Eckford, of the change of plan. The Eckfords did not have a telephone and no one visited their home on 3 September to let them know. On the morning of 4 September, Elizabeth boarded a bus to school. When she arrived, she was confronted by an angry mob of white people who had gathered at the school's entrance. Some were, as Governor Faubus had suggested, committed segregationists from other states, but many in the crowd were local members of the CCC and the Mother's League. Elizabeth tried to enter the school grounds, but her way was blocked by the National Guard, who directed her to move away from the school. As she tried to step away, the mob surged towards her, screaming racist abuse. Elizabeth made it to a bus stop. While she waited for a bus to arrive, the mob kept chanting anti-integrationist slogans such as, 'Two, four, six, eight – we don't want to integrate!' and threatening to lynch her. A group of reporters from the *Arkansas Gazette* and *Life* magazine crowded around her to take her photograph, while a television reporter from the CBS network tried to interview her. Finally, a white woman named Grace Lorch helped Elizabeth onto a bus and rode with her until it was safe.

Desegregation stalled

Meanwhile, the remaining eight students of the Little Rock Nine had arrived at school. They, too, were prevented from entering. For the next two-and-a-half weeks the Little Rock Nine stayed home as NAACP lawyers and federal judge Ronald Davies fought Arkansas' officials over the question of desegregation.

On 8 September Governor Faubus appeared on national television again to insist that the federal government withdraw its demand for the integration of schools. The following day, Judge Davies issued an injunction against Faubus for interfering with federal law. Twelve days later, Davies further ruled that it was illegal for Faubus to use the National Guard to prevent children from attending school. In response, Faubus removed the National Guard from Central High School. On the one hand, the rights of the Little Rock Nine to return to school had been upheld; but on the other hand, the removal of the National Guard left only the police to ensure their safety.

Little Rock Central High is desegregated

On 23 September, a mob of more than 1000 white people stood in front of the school, shrieking abuse and making violent threats. With the help of police escorts, the Little Rock Nine were able to enter through a side entrance. When the mob learned that the students had entered the school they became hysterical, pushing through wooden crowd barricades and overwhelming police. The police could not control them and, fearing for the Little Rock Nine's safety, removed the students from the school.



FIGURE 3.10 Elizabeth Eckford arrives at Little Rock Central High School in the midst of angry protesters, 4 September 1957

Republican Party

US political party, formed by Abraham Lincoln in 1854; its support base was mainly in the North of the United States during the 1940s, 50s and 60s

President Eisenhower's role

President Eisenhower (1953–61) was a popular **Republican Party** leader who had served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during World War II. He was also dependent on Southern voter support and was reluctant to engage directly with the issue of civil rights. In response to Faubus' decision to post the National Guard at Little Rock High on 2 September, Eisenhower had declined to intervene.

It was not until 14 September that Eisenhower finally met with Faubus. At this meeting he urged Faubus to respect the federal law. He believed that Faubus would comply with his directions, but Faubus did nothing until the District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas ordered him to stop using the Arkansas National Guard to prevent integration. The chaos that erupted when Faubus removed the National Guard from the school provoked intense criticism from the international media. To quash the negative reports circulating about the United States, President Eisenhower ordered the US Army's 101st Airborne Division to restore order. He also federalised the Arkansas National Guard, thus taking it out of Faubus' control. Eisenhower then addressed the nation on television from the White House on the evening of 24 September. In his address, he called attention to the necessity of law and order, and to his obligation as president to 'support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the federal courts.'



FIGURE 3.11 President Eisenhower addressed the nation on television to explain his reasons for sending the 101st Airborne Division to Arkansas, 24 September 1957.

The Little Rock Nine enter Central High School

Protected by the 101st Airborne, the African American students had their first full day at Central High School on 25 September. That day, as the *New York Times* reported, some classrooms were half-empty, and 'from time to time groups of [white] students threw down their books and walked out of school. Some of them chanted "two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate."'

Troops remained in Little Rock for the rest of the 1957–58 school year. The Little Rock Nine completed the year at Central High School, but were subjected to a sustained campaign of physical and verbal abuse by many of the other students. Vice-Principal for Girls at Central High School, Elizabeth Huckaby, noted that between October 1957 and

March 1958, Elizabeth Eckford had been hit with a shower of sharpened pencils, shoved in the hallway, kicked, punched, knocked flat, spat upon, had a soda bottle thrown at her, been attacked with rock-filled snowballs, been hit by an egg, and had broken glass thrown at her.



FIGURE 3.12 Troops of the 101st Airborne Division escort the Little Rock Nine into school, 25 September 1957.

Social and political changes after Little Rock Central High

The efforts to desegregate Little Rock High met with some positive social and political changes for the civil rights movement. The school had been forced to desegregate and the president had demonstrated his willingness to uphold the law. The media had again proved highly useful to the movement, both shocking the nation and provoking highly embarrassing international condemnation. However, there were also many negative outcomes. At the end of the school year, Governor Faubus and opposition groups moved decisively to prevent ongoing integration. The 1957 Little Rock crisis also led to the aggressive implementation of Massive Resistance methods across the South that not only brought school desegregation to a halt, but also undid desegregation in places where peaceful progress had already been made.

Positive outcomes

The Little Rock Nine completed the school year at Little Rock Central High School. On 25 May 1958, Ernest Green became the school's first Black graduate. The action taken by Eisenhower had also buoyed the hopes of the civil rights movement that the president would continue to uphold the Constitution.

The media's role

Press photographers, journalists and television reporters descended on Little Rock Central High School from all over the United States. The dramatic event was a media magnet, showcasing appalling white supremacist mob behaviour, contrasted with the quiet dignity of the Black students. Reporters often found themselves subjected to assault and abuse as they tried to capture the moment. The presence of the media had a profound impact on the situation, both widening support for the civil rights movement and provoking a response from the Eisenhower government.

The desegregation of Little Rock Central High was the first civil rights story featured prominently on television, running as the lead news item for several weeks. Television was still a relatively new medium in 1957. Although available from 1928, it was not until after World War II that television ownership would become more widespread, rising from 9 per cent of households in 1950 to 78.6 per cent by 1957. The ugly scenes and sounds captured on film for the television news of angry white mobs assaulting Black school students at Little Rock shocked many US viewers. The images of the 101st Airborne having to escort the students into the school just weeks later were also disturbing.

To the government's mortification, the event attracted the attention of the international press, featuring in newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), *Tokyo News* (Japan), *El Nacional* (Mexico), *L'Osservatore Romano* (the Vatican), the *Globe & Mail* (Canada), the *Manila Herald* (the Philippines) and *Pravda* (the Soviet Union). Because the United States had positioned itself as the head of the free world during the **Cold War**, there were calls for leadership from US allies and heavy criticism from supporters of the Soviet Union. While the *Sydney Morning Herald* welcomed the intervention of President Eisenhower, stating that his actions would be 'welcomed by his friends in the free world', the *Globe & Mail* opined that the events at Little Rock made it hard to deflect Communist accusations that the United States was 'the inveterate enemy of all coloured people everywhere'. Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, meanwhile, pointed out that the events at Little Rock exposed the 'façade of so-called "American democracy"'. The international press also questioned the moral standing of the United States. *El Nacional* wondered how the United States could lay claim to 'true civilization and Christian conscience', while in the Philippines, the *Manila Herald* argued that the United States' treatment of its African American population contradicted its notions of 'equal justice and fair play'.

Photographs of the event proved equally as powerful as the articles, both encouraging support for civil rights and damaging the reputation of the United States. Press photography had improved significantly by the time of the Little Rock Central High incident. This was partly a reflection of better technology, with small, lightweight, wide-angle lens cameras and mobile darkrooms allowing photographers to easily attend marches and demonstrations, capturing fast-moving and unpredictable events. At the same time, newspaper and magazine

production had become cheaper, fostering a high demand for news stories and dramatic images. The civil rights movement benefited from the public demand for sensational photos and, in turn, provided the photographers with events that produced dramatic scenes of racist brutality against children, women and students. The images of Elizabeth Eckford, alone and threatened by angry whites, would prove particularly striking, generating intense sympathy from all over the United States and the world. Soon after the publication of the photos, Elizabeth was receiving 50 letters of support per day and gifts from white American supporters of civil rights.

Opposition groups

Faubus appeared on national television on 26 September 1957. He was outraged that the president had sent in the 101st Airborne, which he described as 'an army of occupation'. He declared that Arkansas had the right to

Cold War

the period from the end of World War II to 1991, characterised by political tensions, militarism and economic rivalry between the United States and its allies (known as the 'West') and the Soviet Union and its allies (known as the 'Eastern bloc')

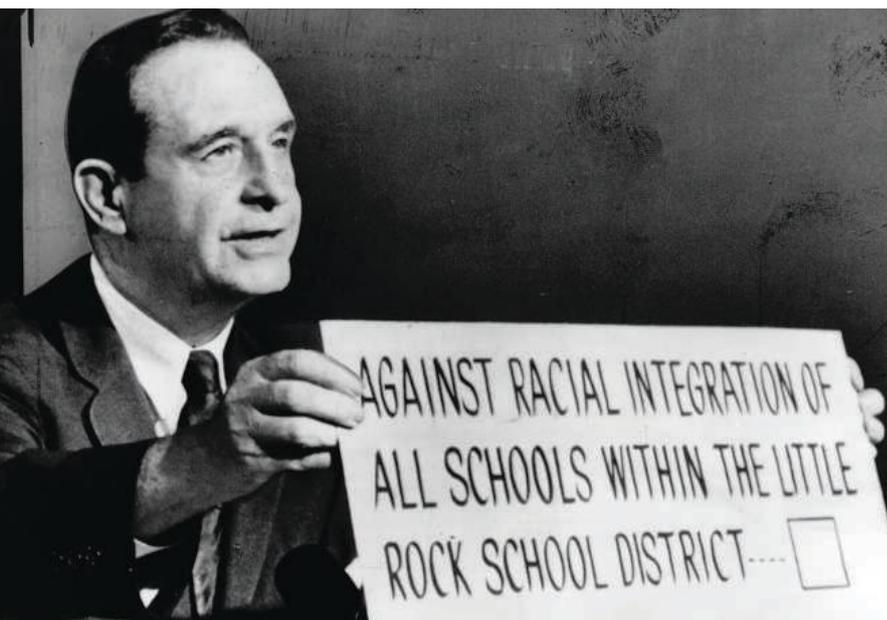


FIGURE 3.13 Governor Faubus holds a sign reading 'Against Racial Integration of All Schools within the Little Rock School District' during a television appearance on 26 September 1957.

solve its own problems peacefully, without federal intervention ‘against a defenceless state’. When federal troops were withdrawn from Little Rock Central High at the end of the school year, Governor Faubus signalled that he would close Little Rock’s public schools for the following 1958–59 school year, pending a public vote. Little Rock citizens voted 19 470 to 7561 against integration and the schools remained closed, sending thousands of families scrambling to find alternative education for their children. The remaining members of the Little Rock Nine completed their education by correspondence or left Little Rock and went to schools in other states. Faubus was returned as governor with a landslide re-election victory in 1958.

The reopening of Little Rock schools

Adolphine Fletcher Terry, a white political activist, organised an army of 2000 women in the Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools (WEC). In 1959, the WEC and Black voters campaigned successfully to reopen the schools.



FIGURE 3.14 Rally at the Arkansas State Capitol Building, Little Rock, Arkansas, to protest against integration and the reopening of schools, 20 August 1959

Meanwhile, members of the CCC formed the Little Rock Private School Corporation and opened the tuition-free TJ Raney High School late in October 1958 in a double-storey, 32-room former orphanage. A private school for whites only, the Little Rock Private School Corporation had raised US\$175 000 in the first month of their funding drive. The Ku Klux Klan also responded to the perceived integration crisis, offering reward money to kill members of the Little Rock Nine. They offered US\$10 000 to whoever would kill Melba Pattillo Beals.

If anything, Little Rock foreshadowed years of delay to school integration and encouraged the growth of white opposition. Massive Resistance tactics persisted: by 1961, three states – South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi – still maintained completely segregated school systems, School administrators in other states developed a range of strategies to stall the integration of their schools, such that by 1964, only 2.3 per cent of Black students attended school with white students.

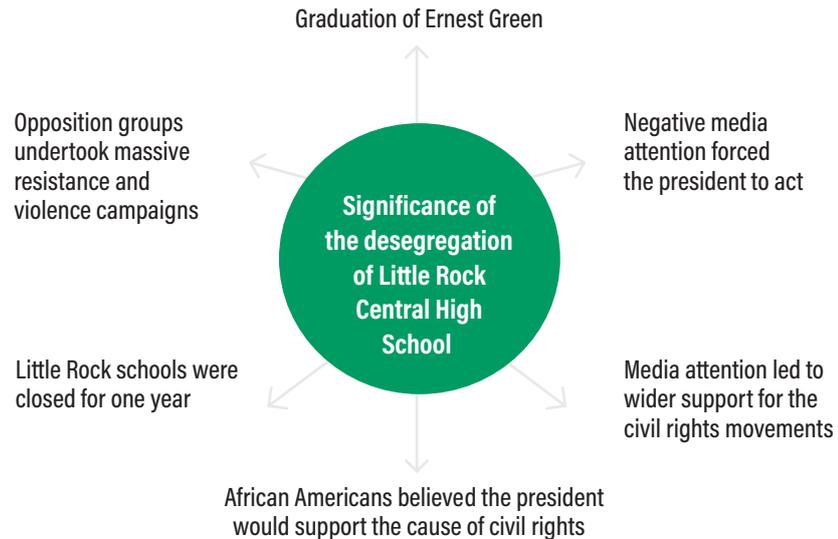


FIGURE 3.15 Significance of the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

Source Study 3.2 Desegregating Little Rock Central High School

Source A: Telegram from the parents of the Little Rock Nine to President Eisenhower, 1 October 1957

We the parents of the nine Negro children enrolled at Little Rock Central High School want you to know that your action in safe guarding their rights have [sic] strengthened our faith in democracy. Now as never before, we have an abiding feeling of belonging and purposefulness. We believe that freedom and equality with which all men are endowed at birth can be maintained only through freedom and equality of opportunity for self-development, growth and purposeful citizenship. We believe that the degree to which people everywhere realize and accept this concept will determine in a large measure America's true growth and true greatness. You have demonstrated admirably to us, the nation and the world how profoundly you believe in this concept. For this we are deeply grateful and respectfully extend to you our heartfelt and lasting thanks.

Telegram from parents of Little Rock Nine to President Eisenhower, 1 October 1957.
www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/civil-rights-little-rock/little-rock-telegram.pdf

Source B: Extract from *Warriors Don't Cry*, by Melba Pattillo Beals

In this extract, Beals describes her experiences on 23 September at Little Rock Central High School.

Amid noise and confusion, the driver urged us to get out quickly. The white hand of a uniformed officer reached out toward the car, opening the door and pulling me toward him as his urgent voice ordered us to hurry. The roar coming from the front of the building made me glance to my right. Only half a block away, I saw hundreds of white people, their bodies in motion, their mouths wide open as they shouted their anger...

'The n-----s! Keep the n-----s out!' The shouts came closer, the roar swelled as though their frenzy had been fired up by something. It took a moment to digest the fact that it was the sight of us.

Hustled along, we walked up the few concrete stairs, through the heavy double doors that led inside the school, and then up a few more stairs. It was like entering a darkened movie theatre—amid the rush of a crowd eager to get seated before the picture begins. I was barely able to see where we were rushing to. There were blurred images all around me as we moved up more stairs. The sounds of footsteps, ugly words, insulting shouts, and whispered commands formed an echoing clamor.

'N-----s, n-----s, the n-----s are in.' They were talking about me. The shouting wouldn't stop: it got louder as more joined in.

'They're in here! Oh God, the n-----s are in here!' one girl shouted, running ahead of us down the hallway.

'They got in. I smell something...'

'You n-----s better turn around and go home.'

M Patillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High*, Washington Square Press, New York, 1995, pp 108–109.

Questions

1. What is the context of Source A?
2. Explain why Source B is useful for a historian studying the extent of segregation and discrimination.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define the following terms: 'desegregation,' 'CCC,' 'Mother's League of Central High School' and 'National Guard.'
2. Outline the response of the Little Rock School Board to legislation to desegregate schools.
3. Identify the opposition groups and their methods to oppose integration.
4. How did Governor Faubus try to prevent the integration of Little Rock Central High School?
5. Summarise the main events of 4–20 September 1957.
6. List the reasons the President Eisenhower became involved in the Little Rock crisis.
7. Using Figure 3.15, identify the social and political changes that resulted from the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School.

The Freedom Rides (1961)

In 1958 an African American university student named Bruce Boynton was arrested for entering a 'whites only' restaurant at the Trailways Bus Station in Richmond, Virginia. He was tried and found guilty of entering a premises 'without authority'. Boynton appealed his conviction, but his appeal was unsuccessful.

The NAACP decided to take his case to the US Supreme Court, where NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall argued that the racial segregation of public transport and facilities for travellers (such as motels, restaurants and terminal facilities) was illegal because it violated the *Interstate Commerce Act*, which forbade discrimination in interstate transportation. Marshall successfully won the case of *Boynton v Virginia* (1960) and the Supreme Court ruled that the segregation of bus and railroad terminals was illegal. However, although the law now upheld the illegality of segregation on interstate transport, there was no measure enacted to enforce this ruling. This led to the decision by CORE to revive its Freedom

Ride of 1947, where Black and white people travelled together across state lines to test the court ruling against the segregation of interstate travel and force the federal government to uphold its own laws.

Timeline 3.3: The Freedom Rides

- 1960 ▪ 5 December: *Boynton v Virginia* (1960)
- 1961 ▪ 4 May: Freedom Riders left Washington DC
- 14 May: One Freedom Ride bus attacked by the KKK at Anniston; Freedom Riders in the second bus assaulted at Birmingham, Alabama
- 17 May: Diane Nash organised for the Freedom Rides to continue
- 20 May: Freedom Riders attacked in Montgomery, Alabama
- 21 May: US Marshals ordered to Alabama to protect the Freedom Riders
- 21 May: The First Baptist Church siege, Montgomery, Alabama
- 24 May: Freedom Riders left Montgomery for Jackson, Mississippi; they were arrested and imprisoned
- 1 November: Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) agrees to comply with the law to desegregate interstate transport

The first stage of the Freedom Rides

On 4 May 1961, CORE sent two buses from Washington DC to New Orleans, Louisiana. Led by CORE director James Farmer, 13 riders (seven Black and six white) from CORE and SNCC rode Greyhound and Trailways buses. Sitting together, the activists planned to ride through Virginia, North and South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi, before concluding their ride at New Orleans, Louisiana. The group planned to challenge segregation along the way by using the facilities designated for the opposite race at every bus terminal as they travelled through each state. James Farmer stated that the aim of the Freedom Rides was to 'create a crisis' that would compel the government to uphold the law.

King warns the Freedom Riders

When the Riders arrived in Atlanta, Georgia on 12 May, they were met by Martin Luther King Jr. The Riders hoped that King would join them, but instead, he urged them to reconsider their route, warning them that they would never make it through Alabama. He had learned that the KKK and the police in Alabama planned to stop the Riders by brute force. The Riders were nonetheless determined to press on.

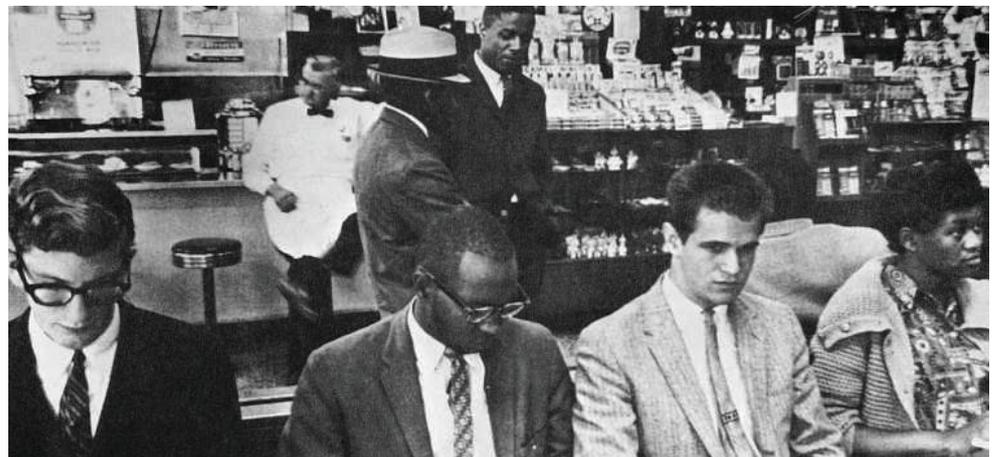


FIGURE 3.16 Freedom Riders in the 'whites only' section of a waiting room during the Freedom Rides, 1961

Violence in Alabama

The Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety was Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor. He was a staunch segregationist and had close ties to the KKK. Connor and local Police Sergeant Tom Cook planned to bring the Freedom Ride to a stop in Alabama. They decided to allow the KKK to attack the Freedom Riders in Anniston, Alabama, for a full 15–20 minutes before the police arrived. When the Freedom Riders reached Anniston on 14 May, one of their buses was forced off the road by the KKK. The KKK then threw a firebomb inside, hoping to burn the riders to death. The riders escaped the bus but were beaten by KKK members. The arrival of police finally put an end to the violence.

When the second bus reached Anniston, it was boarded by eight KKK members who attacked the Freedom Riders. The bus managed to continue to Birmingham, Alabama, where the Riders were attacked again, this time by a mob wielding iron pipes, bicycle chains and baseball bats. Again, police remained blocks away, allowing the mob free rein, with the result that one rider was bashed into a coma and another paralysed.

The destruction of their buses and the extent of the violence resulted in the Greyhound and Trailways bus companies withdrawing their services. They could not find a bus driver who was prepared to take the Freedom Riders further. Many of the CORE Freedom Riders decided to abandon the ride and fly to New Orleans.



FIGURE 3.17 The burnt Freedom Riders’ bus that was forced off the road in Anniston, Alabama, 14 May 1961

The Freedom Rides continue

In spite of the violent attacks, Diane Nash, a SNCC activist, was determined that the Freedom Rides should continue, arguing, ‘We can’t let them stop us with violence. If we do, the movement is dead.’ She recruited a group of 10 student activists from Nashville, Tennessee. They arrived in Birmingham, Alabama on 17 May, where they boarded a new bus, ready to continue the Ride. SNCC members John Lewis and Hank Thomas, who had been original Riders, agreed to join the Nashville students and finish the Ride with them.

The new bus had been organised by Attorney General Robert Kennedy. While the newly elected President John F Kennedy (1961–63) was reluctant to get involved with the Freedom Riders’ cause, his brother Robert Kennedy had argued as Attorney General that

the federal government needed to do something quickly to ensure the Rides were concluded and the adverse media reportage shut down as soon as possible. Robert Kennedy had personally called the Greyhound bus company to request that they provide the Riders with another bus. He also directed the Alabama Governor, John M Patterson, to ensure there was protection for the Riders as they travelled through Alabama.

At first, Governor Patterson did indeed provide protection for the Riders, including an entourage of police cars and a private plane overhead. However, once the bus reached the outskirts of Birmingham, the protection disappeared. When they arrived in Montgomery on 20 May, a mob was waiting, calling out, 'Kill the n-----s!' As the Freedom Riders left the bus, the mob began to beat them severely. John Lewis was left unconscious in a pool of blood outside the Greyhound Bus Terminal, while Jim Zwerg, a white student who had joined the group in Nashville, was also beaten unconscious. Speaking from his hospital bed, Zwerg told reporters, 'Segregation must be stopped. It must be broken down. Those of us on the Freedom Ride will continue ... We're dedicated to this, we'll take hitting, we'll take beating. We're willing to accept death.' Exasperated with Patterson's refusal to maintain law and order, Robert Kennedy ordered 400 US Marshals to Alabama to protect the Freedom Riders.



FIGURE 3.18 John Lewis (left) and Jim Zwerg (right), both of whom were brutally beaten in Montgomery

The First Baptist Church siege

On 21 May, Martin Luther King Jr arrived in Montgomery to support the Freedom Riders. As he was giving a rousing speech at the First Baptist Church, 3000 angry white people also assembled outside. US Marshals had gathered outside the church and formed a protective perimeter, but the mob outnumbered the Marshals and began to hurl rocks and bricks through the church windows and burn cars. They also threw incendiary bombs at the church and threatened to burn it down. More than 1500 people, including reporters and television camera operators, remained trapped inside the church as tear gas seeped inside. The trapped people sang hymns and prayed to uphold their spirits. King encouraged the congregation to 'adhere to nonviolence' and reminded them that they should not be afraid, for they had 'won the moral victory'. The US Marshals held the line until finally, at 10 pm, martial law was declared by Governor Patterson, with state police and the Alabama National Guard called in to restore order.



FIGURE 3.19 The route travelled by the Freedom Riders, 4–24 May 1961

However, once the mob had dispersed, the National Guard then refused to allow the besieged people to leave the church. Patterson had insisted that they remain in the church under martial law because they were ‘outside agitators’ who had come into Alabama ‘to violate our laws and customs’. It was not until 4 am that the Alabama National Guard was instructed to let everyone out of the church.

Arrival in Mississippi

On 24 May, Alabama National Guards were posted at the Montgomery bus terminal as two buses containing 27 Freedom Riders left to continue their journey south. James Farmer rejoined the group for the last leg of the Freedom Ride. Diane Nash had tried to convince King to join them too. He had initially indicated that he would come along, but he was dissuaded by Ralph Abernathy and other SCLC advisors. Six guardsmen travelled on the buses with the Riders, while police cars and helicopters overhead protected them to the Alabama–Mississippi border. Once in Mississippi, the Mississippi National Guard escorted the buses to the bus terminal in Jackson.

On their arrival at the bus terminal, however 163 Freedom Riders were arrested and tried for disturbing the peace. The first group of 45 Riders to be sentenced spent 60 days in a maximum security prison, Parchman Farm. Adopting the ‘jail, no bail’ strategy, the Freedom Riders refused to accept bail and aimed to ‘fill the jails’, forcing the state of Mississippi to cover the costs of their incarceration. In response, Mississippi prison officials put the jailed Riders to work in chain gangs and subjected them to harsh treatment and assault.

Meanwhile, CORE, SNCC and the SCLC formed the Freedom Riders' Coordinating Committee and vowed to continue the Rides into the summer of 1961. By September, more than 60 different Freedom Rides (300 Riders) went to Jackson, Mississippi, where all Riders were arrested. Hundreds of others converged on Jackson to support those imprisoned.

President Kennedy's role

Attorney-General Robert Kennedy continued to work on ensuring that the Freedom Rides were brought to a quick conclusion. He made a deal with Mississippi's governor, Ross Barnett. The Attorney-General explained that President Kennedy promised that the federal government would make no attempt to enforce the rights of the Riders to use any of the facilities in the Jackson bus terminal. In return, Barnett agreed to ensure that there were no scenes of violence. He had then allowed Mississippi police to arrest the Riders when their buses pulled into the terminal. The arrest and imprisonment of the Freedom Riders was the outcome of Kennedy's deal with Barnett.

After months of international media attention on the Freedom Riders, Robert Kennedy finally pressured the ICC to comply with the law and allow Black passengers to sit and be served wherever they wanted on interstate buses, trains and in travel terminals. The policy went into effect on 1 November 1961. Although African Americans still encountered some resistance to the desegregation of bus terminal facilities, eventually the law took hold and segregation on interstate transport ended.

Social and political change resulting from the Freedom Rides

In addition to the ICC ruling, the Freedom Rides led to a range of other important social and political outcomes. The Rides invigorated the civil rights movement with the injection of young activists and marked the point at which the civil rights movement determined that racist violence and repression must never deter the struggle for desegregation. Significantly, the Rides also gained more media attention, which fostered further public sympathy for the movement both in the United States and elsewhere. At the same time, however, the deal between Attorney-General Robert Kennedy and Ross Barnett had resulted in more violence against civil rights activists.

Outcomes for the civil rights movement

The Rides showed that the youth of the civil rights movement were willing to take up the fight beyond the more passive methods of sit-ins, boycotts and court challenges, and risk violence, jail and even death to achieve their aims. This sent a clear message that the indulgence of Southern governors for the KKK's program of sustained violence against the civil rights movement would be met with resistance. It also gave the SNCC activists credibility in the wider movement.

New civil rights leaders, such as John Lewis, Diane Nash, James Bevel, Wyatt Tee Walker and Stokely Carmichael, emerged from the experience of the Freedom Rides. In time, their influence would steer the movement in new directions. More ominously, the Freedom Rides started to create a division between the emerging youth leaders and the older members of the civil rights movement. King's decision not to join the Rides was ridiculed by some of the youth activists, who felt that he was more interested in being 'the face of the movement' rather than actually doing any of the 'dangerous work'.

The formation of the civil rights coalition

In the meantime, the Rides also brought CORE, SNCC and the SCLC together for the first time as a civil rights coalition of groups working for desegregation through nonviolent direct action. CORE and James Farmer were propelled into the spotlight. CORE's membership grew rapidly and new chapters were established all across the Northern states as well as in North and South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. SNCC also became a well-

known organisation, and began to develop new strategies to empower African Americans, based on voter registration and political representation.

The media's role

The media's coverage of the event had demonstrated the significance of James Farmer's determination to 'create a crisis'. The story of the Freedom Rides stunned Americans through television, newspapers and radio, rallied support for civil rights, and encouraged other young people to become Freedom Riders themselves. In the context of the Cold War, the media's reportage of the Freedom Rides proved embarrassing and difficult for President Kennedy. If he continued to do nothing, it would provide the Communist bloc with ready ammunition to mock US claims to be the leader of the 'free world'. On the other hand, any overt accommodations of civil rights could potentially jeopardise his own re-election chances with Southern voters.

In the South, the press had roundly condemned the Freedom Riders as 'intruders' and troublemakers. Yet not all press coverage in the North was positive either. While broadly supportive of the desegregation of public transport, many newspapers in the North depicted the Freedom Riders as 'foolhardy' and disruptive, as much to blame for the violence as the KKK. However, within days the photographic images of KKK and white supremacist violence against the Freedom Riders proved powerful. Many Americans who thought the Freedom Riders themselves were misguided were nonetheless deeply affected by the images of burnt buses, vicious assaults and bloodied bodies. Moreover, for an international audience, these images were not 'cushioned' by the long-term cultural accommodations of segregation, and provoked outrage.

CBS reporter Howard K Smith happened to be in Birmingham on the night of 13 May. An anonymous tip-off informed him that there would be an outbreak of violence when the Freedom Riders' buses pulled into the bus terminal the following day. Smith became an eyewitness to the violence of 14 May as KKK members attacked the Freedom Riders. Smith sent his report to the CBS radio network and continued to make live updates from his hotel



FIGURE 3.20 A mob attacks Freedom Riders in Birmingham, Alabama, 14 May 1961. This photograph was taken by Tommy Langston of the *Birmingham Post-Herald*. Langston was also beaten and his camera was smashed.

room throughout the day, telling listeners that ‘the toughs’ had ‘grabbed passengers into alleys and corridors’ around the bus terminal and beaten them with pipes and fists. He noted how one passenger, a white man named James Peck, had been knocked down by ‘twelve of the hoodlums’ and had his face ‘beaten and kicked until it was a bloody pulp’.

Smith’s broadcast created a sensation in the United States. By the following day, the photographs of the burning bus in Anniston and the violence in Birmingham had appeared in newspapers everywhere, drawing international attention again to racial violence in the United States. On the evening of 18 May, Smith’s CBS television report *Who Speaks for Birmingham* was aired. The story featured interviews with Black and white citizens who were appalled by the violence, interspersed with images of the KKK and local mobs.

The violence against the Freedom Riders when they had arrived in Montgomery was front-page news, further horrifying the nation. A large photograph of Jim Zwerg lying bruised and beaten in his hospital bed was juxtaposed with the President’s announcement that US Marshals would be sent to Alabama. Zwerg’s courage and commitment rang clear in the television interview given from his hospital bed, which was aired across the nation.

When the buses left Montgomery for Mississippi, there were 20 members of the press on board. A week later, stories about the Freedom Riders featured in every national newspaper. Pictorial magazines, including *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek*, also featured extensive photography and reports about the Riders and their cause. The media coverage, particularly its exposure of the violence inflicted by white people, kept the Freedom Rides in the news cycle, creating increased sympathy for civil rights and enthusiasm for the cause of desegregation.

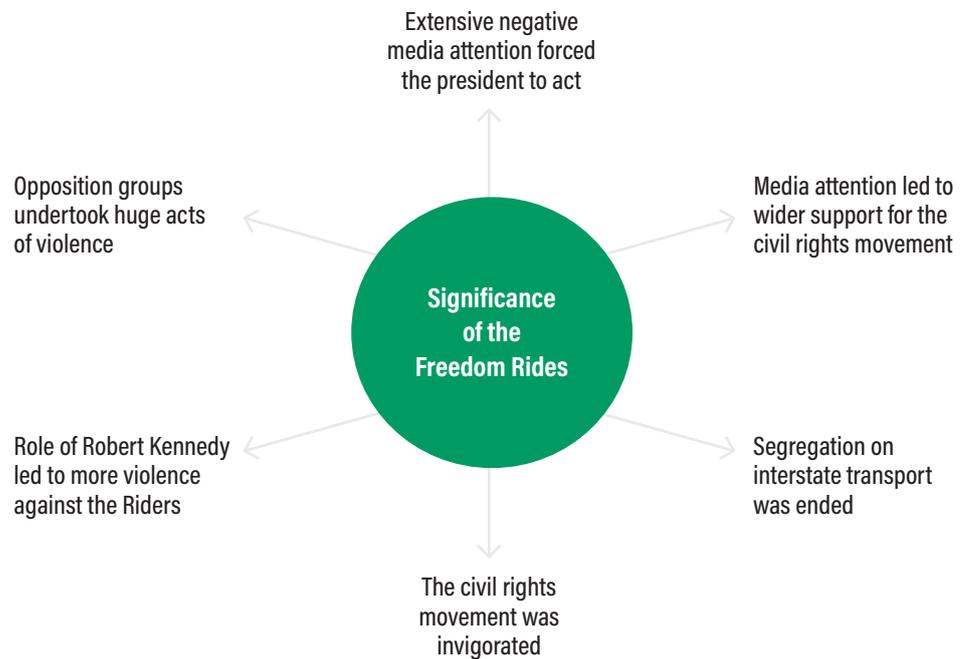


FIGURE 3.21 The significance of the Freedom Rides

Source Study 3.3 The Freedom Rides (1961)

Source A: Susan Hermann interview

Susan Hermann was a white psychology student studying at Fisk University, Tennessee. She was interviewed for the Los Angeles newspaper *The Daily Mirror* on 22 May 1961, two days after she had joined the Freedom Rides.

We were all prepared to die – and for a while on Saturday I thought all 21 of us would die at the hands of that mob in Montgomery. We did not fight back. We do not believe in violence. We were freedom riders, two white girls, one white boy and 18 Negroes, trying to ride in buses through Alabama to New Orleans to help the cause of true freedom for all the races ... The mob kept closing in and starting yelling, ‘Get ‘em! Get ‘em!’ They picked up Jim Zwerg ... the only white boy in our group, and threw him on the ground. They kicked him unconscious. Still, we didn’t fight back. But we didn’t believe in running either. I saw some men hold boys, who were nearly unconscious, while white women hit them with purses. The white women were yelling ‘Kill them!’ and other nasty shouts. The police came and said they would put us in protective custody. They acted like we were crazy. They just couldn’t understand why we would be freedom riders. But even though they did not believe in what we were doing, they did protect us and in that sense upheld the law.

Susan Hermann, interviewed by *The Daily Mirror*, Los Angeles, on 22 May 1961; atimesblogs.latimes.com/thedailymirror/2011/05/freedom-rider-we-were-all-prepared-to-die.html

Source B: Diane Nash, 25 January 2017

I think having been trained with Gandhi’s brand of nonviolence made our group so closely knit. If some one individual was being beaten severely, we could come to his or her aid without being violent. We would put our bodies between them and the cause of the harm. To be part of a group where I would sacrifice my body and then have every confidence that someone else would sacrifice their body for me was a remarkable experience. We were determined to not let each other down. We understood and admired each other. We understood the courage and the commitment that was required. Music was another thing. We would sing together, and that would steel us to keep going. The ultimate thing, though, was that we knew that if we did not continue going, we would have to allow ourselves to be segregated. That was just not acceptable. Black people had really had it. Before we started, we considered what it was going to take to eliminate segregation. Keep in mind that this was a system that lynched people, that was incredibly inhumane. We decided that we would do whatever it took. If the path to desegregation went through the jailhouse, then we would do that. If it meant standing up to violence and getting beaten, we would do that. If it meant getting killed, some of us were going to get killed. We did not underestimate segregation’s power and viciousness, and we deliberately gave each other courage.

Diane Nash, Q&A following her address for the 2017 Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote Address, Yale University, 25 January 2017; aledailynews.com/blog/2017/01/27/diane-nash-an-activists-lessons-for-a-new-generation/

Question

1. Compare the value of Sources A and B for a historian studying the significance of the Freedom Rides.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define 'create a crisis' and 'ICC'.
2. Identify the main civil rights groups involved in the Freedom Rides and their methods of protest.
3. Outline the main events of the Freedom Rides.
4. Explain the relationship between the KKK and Southern politicians.
5. Outline the role of Martin Luther King Jr in the Freedom Rides.
6. Describe the role of President Kennedy in the Freedom Rides.
7. Use Figure 3.21 to categorise the positive and negative outcomes of the Freedom Rides for the civil rights movement.
8. Summarise the social and political changes that resulted from the Freedom Rides.

The Birmingham Campaign (1963)

The Birmingham Campaign was conducted by the SCLC in conjunction with the **Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR)** in the spring of 1963. It aimed to desegregate Birmingham and lobby for fairer employment opportunities for African Americans. The SCLC had taken part in a desegregation campaign in Albany, Georgia, in 1961–62, in support of the SNCC, the NAACP and local civil rights groups, but this had been largely unsuccessful. In part, the failure of the Albany Campaign was due to its broad nature. King recognised the mistakes they had made in Albany and was determined not to repeat them in Birmingham, through a more targeted campaign of nonviolent direct action.

The Birmingham Campaign was most renowned for the role played by college and school students who took part in nonviolent marches to protest against segregation. These actions resulted in the use of police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses against children and young people. The appalling violence used by police and state authorities during the Birmingham Campaign shocked people around the world. It also prompted President Kennedy to promise a Civil Rights Bill that would legislate desegregation. At the same time, the Birmingham Campaign contributed to King's heightened recognition as a spokesperson for the civil rights movement and laid the groundwork for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Timeline 3.4: The Birmingham Campaign

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1961–62 | • 1 November–10 August: The Albany Campaign |
| 1963 | • 3 April: SCLC joined with ACMHR to launch the Birmingham Campaign |
| | • 10 April: Birmingham City Council obtained an injunction against boycotts |
| | • 12 April: Martin Luther King Jr and other activists jailed |
| | • 20 April: King released from jail |
| | • 2 May: Start of the Children's Crusade |
| | • 10 May: Birmingham Truce Agreement signed |
| | • 12 May: Gaston Motel bombed |
| | • 11 June: Kennedy's <i>Report to the American People on Civil Rights</i> televised |
| | • 12 June: Assassination of Medgar Evers, NAACP field director, Mississippi |

Segregation in Birmingham

Birmingham in Alabama was one of the most segregated cities in the South. There had been numerous campaigns during the 1940s to end segregation, but these had resulted in

Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR)

an African American civil rights organisation based in Alabama that aimed to end segregation; established in 1956 after the NAACP was outlawed from Alabama

extreme KKK violence, including house bombings. Indeed, so many houses were bombed, that Birmingham became known as ‘Bombingham’. In 1956 Fred Shuttlesworth, a Christian minister, founded the ACMHR to work on ending segregation in Birmingham. Shuttlesworth’s tactics included nonviolent direct action and challenging Birmingham’s segregation laws in the courts. When Shuttlesworth mounted a legal campaign against the segregation of Birmingham’s city parks, the courts found that the segregation of parks was indeed unconstitutional. However, city officials did not respond by lawfully desegregating the parks, but by closing them instead. Shuttlesworth also tried to desegregate buses in Birmingham, following the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Meanwhile, the KKK bombed Shuttlesworth’s home and church. In 1963 Shuttlesworth called on the SCLC to help his campaign.

Project C

On 3 April 1963 the SCLC agreed to join ACMHR in Birmingham for a huge direct-action campaign to attack the city’s segregation system, focusing on the shopping and government districts. To this end, the SCLC undertook a large-scale boycott of downtown merchants. Since it was the Easter season, the second-biggest shopping season of the year, the SCLC reasoned that a consumer boycott would have a significant impact. For six weeks, supporters of the boycott ensured that African Americans were not buying from stores that displayed segregationist signs or had refused to hire African American workers.

In addition to the boycott, the SCLC also undertook nonviolent direct-action protests. These actions were specifically designed to provoke a violent response from white extremists in Birmingham. The SCLC believed that ardent segregationist ‘Bull’ Connor could be relied on to use his position as Commissioner of Public Safety to instruct police to respond with brutality and mass arrests. This would, in turn, attract media attention, gain public sympathy for the civil rights movement and pressure President Kennedy to intervene. Known as Project C (where ‘C’ stood for confrontation), civil rights activists conducted sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, kneel-ins outside segregated churches and City Hall, and a voter registration march.

Initially, these tactics were ineffective. Even though Bull Connor was using police dogs against the demonstrators and arrested hundreds, this did not result in the kind of media attention that the SCLC had hoped for. White residents of Birmingham were dismayed at the disruption to their shopping precinct, rather than concerned about the injustices suffered by fellow citizens. Even some African Americans disapproved, believing that the sit-ins and voter registration protests were misguided. The editor of the African American newspaper in Birmingham, *The Birmingham World*, called the protests ‘wasteful and worthless’, and encouraged the civil rights movement to use the courts instead to change segregation laws.



FIGURE 3.22 Civil rights activists conduct a kneel-in outside City Hall, Birmingham to protest against segregation

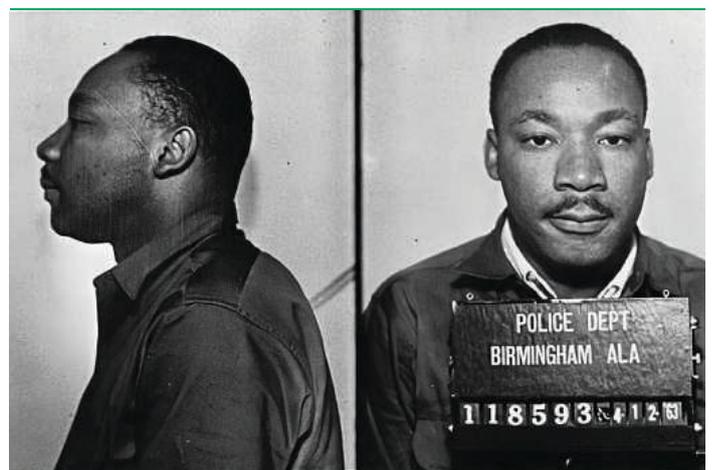


FIGURE 3.23 Mugshot of Martin Luther King Jr on his arrest in Birmingham, 12 April 1963

By 10 April the city government had obtained a state Circuit Court injunction against the protests and the boycott. After heavy debate, SCLC and ACMHR leaders decided to disobey the court order, even if it meant risking arrest. On Good Friday, 12 April, King and 50 other activists were arrested for violating the anti-protest injunction. The activists were eligible for bail, but they refused the offer, knowing that if they continued to stay in prison they would attract media attention for their campaign in Birmingham. During his time in jail, King penned the 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' on the margins of the *Birmingham News*, in reaction to a statement published in that newspaper by eight Birmingham clergymen who had condemned the protests. King was finally released on 20 April 1963.



FIGURE 3.24 Ushers at the segregated Sixth Ave Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, turn away three African Americans from Easter Sunday services, 14 April 1963.

The Children's Crusade

By the end of April, fewer African American adults were coming forward to participate in the boycotts and demonstrations. Fearful of repercussions, including the loss of their jobs, they were unwilling to risk arrest. To sustain the campaign, SCLC organiser James Bevel proposed using children and teenagers in demonstrations. Bevel reasoned that if children and young people were sent to jail, it would not hurt families economically. Bevel, a veteran of the Freedom Rides, held sessions to instruct students in the nonviolent protest method. On 2 May, 1500 African American high school students attempted to march into downtown Birmingham, and 1200 were arrested. The use of children was controversial, but it had the desired effect. The arrest and incarceration of children and teenagers was front page news in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

The following day, hundreds more children gathered. Bull Connor directed local police and fire departments to use force to halt the demonstrations. High-pressure fire hoses and police dogs were then employed against the young activists. Young people being slammed into the ground by fire hoses and attacked by police dogs and clubs made for highly sensational film footage and photographs for the media covering the protests. The images they captured appalled and embarrassed the nation as they appeared on television and in newspapers all over the world. A shocking image in the *New York Daily News* on 8 May 1963 showed a woman pinned to the ground with a policeman's knee on her neck.

Meanwhile, the arrests of children continued. By 6 May the jails were so full that it was taking officials four hours to serve breakfast to all the inmates. A stockade at the state fairgrounds had to be transformed into a makeshift jail to hold all the extra prisoners.

News of the extreme violence and mass arrests of children triggered international outrage. In the USSR, the incident was used as strong evidence of the falsity of US claims to be the leader of the 'free world'. Celebrities also began to get involved, such as folk singer Joan Baez, baseball player Jackie Robinson and comedian Dick Gregory, who arrived in Birmingham to show their support. Meanwhile, no business of any kind was being conducted in the downtown shopping area.

Social and political changes resulting from the Birmingham Campaign

The Birmingham Campaign provoked a range of social and political changes. The images of police dogs and fire hoses being used against children had distressed African Americans and other Americans throughout the United States. Many wondered why President Kennedy had done nothing to stop the violence. In response, Attorney-General Robert Kennedy sent his chief civil rights assistant, Burke Marshall, to facilitate negotiations between prominent Black citizens and representatives of Birmingham's Senior Citizens' Council, the city's business leadership.

The Birmingham Truce

The Senior Citizen's Council sought a moratorium on street protests as an act of good faith before any final settlement was declared and Marshall was able to persuade campaign leaders to halt the demonstrations. By 10 May, negotiators had reached an agreement (known as the Birmingham Truce Agreement). In return for calling off the campaign, city officials agreed to enforce the removal of the segregationist signs in shops, in toilet facilities and on drinking fountains. They also promised that lunch counters would be desegregated and African American employment programs launched.

The reputation of Martin Luther King Jr gained further prominence, and he became widely known as the leader of the civil rights movement. Inspired by the success of the Birmingham Campaign, Medgar Evers of the NAACP in Jackson, Mississippi, called for a biracial committee to address segregation concerns there and began organising a similar demonstration.

The Birmingham Riot

White opposition to the Birmingham Truce was swift. On the night of 11 May, the KKK held a rally in nearby Bessemer, Alabama, where Klan leader Robert Shelton called on the crowd to 'give their lives if necessary to protect segregation in Alabama'. Shortly after the Klan meeting ended, bombs exploded at the parsonage of King's brother, AD King, and at the Gaston Motel where King had been staying. He had left only hours before.

In response to the bombing, a riot erupted in the streets of Birmingham. Frustrated with the failure of the police to stop the bombings, 2500 people gathered and began throwing rocks and lighting fires. The police drove an armoured vehicle down the street, spraying tear gas at the crowd, while state troopers armed with submachine guns arrived. This time, Kennedy was swift to act, sending in 3000 federal troops to control the unrest.



FIGURE 3.25 A police officer and a police dog attack an African American teenager.



FIGURE 3.26 President John F Kennedy addresses the nation, 11 June 1963

Report to the American People on Civil Rights

The tumult of the Birmingham Riot, coupled with the international outrage at the police violence that had accompanied the Children’s Crusade, had proved highly embarrassing for the Kennedy administration, especially as it sought to convince the newly decolonised independent nations in Africa of the value in aligning with the United States rather than the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, racial tensions continued to flare up in Alabama, following the decision of the state governor, George Wallace, to refuse the admission of African American students to the University of Alabama. Kennedy decided that the Birmingham riots set a dangerous precedent and that legislation was needed immediately to quell community frustrations.

On 11 June 1963, Kennedy made an address on national television, called the *Report to the American People on Civil Rights*. Kennedy noted that the events in Birmingham were a sign that the call for desegregation could no longer be ignored. He maintained that legislation was needed that gave ‘all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments’ and ‘greater protection for the right to vote’. Kennedy then promised a Civil Rights Bill to enforce desegregation.

Within hours of the broadcast, NAACP’s field director in Mississippi, Medgar Evers, was assassinated by WCC member Byron De La Beckwith. In the 10 weeks following Evers’ murder, there were 758 protest demonstrations in 186 American cities.



FIGURE 3.27 The role of leadership in the civil rights movement

Source Study 3.4 The Birmingham Campaign

Source A: Fred Shuttlesworth, ‘The Birmingham Manifesto’, 3 April 1963

The Negro protest for equality and justice has been a voice crying in the wilderness. Most of Birmingham has remained silent, probably out of fear. In the meanwhile, our city has acquired the dubious reputation of being the worst big city in race relations in the United States. Last fall, for a flickering moment, it appeared that sincere community leaders from religion, business and industry discerned the inevitable Confrontation in race relations approaching. Their concern for the city’s image and commonweal of all its citizens did not run deep enough. Solemn promises were made, pending a postponement of direct action, that we would be joined in a suit seeking the relief of segregation ordinances. Some merchants agreed to desegregate their rest-rooms as a good-faith start, some actually complying, only to retreat shortly thereafter. We hold in our hands now, broken faith and broken promises.

fall

North America, autumn

commonweal

the wellbeing of the public

We believe in the **American Dream** of democracy, in the **Jeffersonian** doctrine that ‘all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these being life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’

FL Shuttlesworth and NH Smith, Birmingham Manifesto, April 3, 1963,
www.crmvet.org/docs/bhammanf.htm

Source B: Donald M Wilson, Memorandum

Donald M Wilson wrote this report on the international response to racial tension in Alabama for President Kennedy. Wilson was the Acting Director of the **US Information Agency (USIA)**.

This most recent crisis in US race relations has received critical attention throughout the world, but the portrayal of events has been more balanced and moderate than in previous cases. Many headlines were sensationalised, pictures played up the brutality of police measures, but most reportage was straight with little slanting. Comment and editorials were generally scarce. Some notable exceptions to this pattern occurred in Ghana and Nigeria, especially where the press and other media poured out **caustic** denunciation of the racial outrage ...

Most attention was given to the use of brutality and especially dogs against the Negro demonstrators. Many papers, particularly in Europe and India, showed unusual sympathy and understanding of the race issue, but the failure of the Federal Government to intervene caused considerable questioning.

After a hesitant beginning, Moscow unleashed a propaganda blast on Birmingham which is currently running at some 25 per cent of its total international radio output. This is more attention than previously given to a US racial disturbance. Moscow has declared that incidents such as Birmingham gave a clear picture of the true meaning of American democracy. Much of this propaganda was beamed to African audiences. Local communist media throughout the world joined in the propaganda to discredit the United States.

DM Wilson, Memorandum for the President: Summary of Foreign Reaction to Racial Tension in Birmingham, Alabama, 17 May 1963 civilrights.jfklibrary.org/media-assets/project-confrontation.html#Public-Opinion--Global-Headlines

American Dream

a belief that US citizens enjoy freedom, equality and democratic rights and that all have the opportunity to increase their wealth through hard work

Jeffersonian

Thomas Jefferson was the main author of the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776, which Shuttlesworth quotes

US Information Agency (USIA)

a public relations organisation that strove to promote US policies and values throughout the world, using press, radio, television and film

caustic

sharp, stinging, bitter

Questions

1. What evidence does Source A contain about the nature and impact of segregation and discrimination?
2. What does Source B reveal about the relationship between the civil rights movement and the context of the Cold War?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Write a four-line description of these events: ‘Project C’, ‘Children’s Crusade’, ‘Birmingham Truce’, ‘Civil Rights Bill’.
2. Outline Fred Shuttlesworth’s efforts to desegregate Birmingham.
3. Describe the aims and methods used in Project C.
4. Outline the role of Martin Luther King Jr during the Birmingham Campaign.
5. List the key reasons for the success of the Children’s Crusade.
6. Construct a mindmap to show the outcomes of the Birmingham Campaign.
7. How did the Birmingham Campaign lead to social and political change?
8. Outline Kennedy’s reasons for promising a Civil Rights Bill.
9. Using Figure 3.27, describe the role of James Farmer, Diane Nash, Fred Shuttlesworth and Martin Luther King Jr in the campaigns for desegregation, 1955–63.

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Outline the key events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
2. Describe the role of opposition groups during the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
3. Outline the key events of the desegregation at Little Rock Central High School.
4. Describe the roles of civil rights leaders in the Freedom Rides.

Explain

1. Explain the role of Rosa Parks in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
2. Explain the significance of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
3. Explain the significance of the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School to the civil rights movement.
4. Explain the impact of the Freedom Rides on the civil rights movement.
5. Explain the role of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy in fulfilling the aims of the civil rights movement.

Evaluate

1. To what extent were the methods used by civil rights groups successful in the desegregation campaigns of 1955–63?
2. Assess the importance of leadership to the outcomes of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
3. Assess the role of the NAACP in the desegregation campaigns of the civil rights movement.

Integrate sources

1. To what extent was the aim of desegregation achieved by the civil rights movement? In your response, refer directly to Source A.

Source A: Extract from Adam Fairclough, 'The Little Rock Crisis: Success or Failure for the NAACP?'

It is tempting to conclude ... that Little Rock was a defeat for the Civil Rights movement. Scholars such as Michael Klarman and Gerald Rosenberg have argued that the Brown decision was more successful in stiffening white resistance to integration than in bringing about change ... But such a conclusion would be wrong ... In the event, the issue was decided in favor of the black plaintiffs. For all the ambiguities and political complications of the affair, the Little Rock crisis was a clear defeat for the cause of segregation.

A Fairclough, 'The Little Rock Crisis: Success or Failure for the NAACP?', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Autumn, 1997, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp 372–373.

2. Account for Martin Luther King Jr's rise to prominence as a leader of the civil rights movement between 1955 and 1961. In your response, refer directly to Source B.

Source B: Extract from Danielle L McGuire and John Dittmer (eds.), *Freedom Rights*

King's philosophy and tactics of nonviolent direct action, the campaigns he launched and his distinct and inspirational voice shaped the popular perception of the movement for both blacks and whites. Enemies of the movement had many targets, but none as convenient or larger than life as King. Within the movement, no matter the organization's competing style, activists had to reckon foremost with King. He served as the movement's mediator among groups and as the ambassador to white America.

DL McGuire and J Dittmer (eds.), *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, University Press of Kentucky, 2011.

Going further

Create

1. Create an integrated and annotated timeline of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the desegregation of Little Rock Central High, the Freedom Rides and the Birmingham Campaign between 1955 and 1963.

Examine primary sources for yourself

1. In groups of two or three, prepare a presentation that responds to one of the following:
 - a. Compare the methods used by two different civil rights groups to end segregation.
 - b. With reference to one key event, explain the ways in which the civil rights movement was successful.
 - c. Demonstrate the significance of the role of Martin Luther King.
2. In your presentation, make specific use of three primary sources to support your argument. Search for relevant sources using the following terms.

The Rosa Parks Collection

The Holt Street Baptist Church speech, 5 December 1955

Newspaper clippings: The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Christopher Newport University: Civil Rights in America Events—Central High

The Martin Luther King Papers Project: Statement to the Freedom Riders Rally, First Baptist Church, 21 May 1961

SNCC Digital Gateway: The Freedom Rides

Watch

1. Watch *Eyes on the Prize* (1987), episodes 1–3. As a class, discuss the reasons why African American people were able to stand up to segregation.

Prepare revision notes

1. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the key events of each campaign and the significance of each campaign, noting the campaign's impact on the civil rights movement, leaders, the media, opposition groups and social and political change (as applicable).

Campaign	Key events	Significance

Endnotes

- 1 JW Vander, 'The Klan Revival', *American Journal of Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, March 1960, Vol. 65, No. 5 p, 461.
- 2 Southern School News, September 1954, p 2, cited in JA Kirk, 'Not Quite Black and White: School Desegregation in Arkansas, 1954-1966', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Autumn 2011, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Autumn 2011), p 231.

Chapter

4

Campaigns for economic and political rights

FIGURE 4.1 Crowds from the March on Washington bathe their feet in the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.



The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963) and the Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964) were two significant civil rights campaigns that primarily sought to improve economic and political rights for African Americans. The Selma to Montgomery March (1965) was another important campaign with these aims.

The three campaigns would contribute to the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) and the *Voting Rights Act* (1964). This legislation would go some way towards achieving the civil rights movement's goals of desegregation and voting rights. However, the legislation did not address the causes of economic disadvantage or enact measures to outlaw extremist violence. Moreover, the campaigns of 1963–65 further exposed the extent of racism and brutality that persisted in the South. The violence of this period would directly contribute to the radicalisation of the civil rights movement and a split in the civil rights coalition.

This chapter will explain the significance of the following events:

- the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963)
- the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964)
- the Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964).

It will also note the importance of the Selma to Montgomery March (1965), the *Voting Rights Act* (1965), the role of Martin Luther King Jr and the extent of social and political change from 1963 to 1965.

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963)

The March on Washington was the pinnacle event of the civil rights movement, a protest drawing hundreds of thousands of people, Black and white, to march together. Concluding the march, Martin Luther King Jr's 'I Have a Dream' speech was an eloquent call for freedom and equality. Drawing on a combination of Christian themes, the *Declaration of Independence* (signed in 1776) and the US Constitution (established in 1788), King was able to construct a persuasive argument that urged support for racial equality as both deeply Christian and quintessentially 'American'.

Importantly, the March on Washington also marked the civil rights movement's increasing emphasis on economic and political rights, including fair access to employment, the elimination of poverty and the protection of political rights. These aims had always been part of African American activism, particularly within the Black labour movement, but became more prominent in the civil rights movement following the March.

Timeline 4.1: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

- 1960 ▪ 27 May: Negro American Labor Council (NALC) formed
 - 1963 ▪ 23 March: NALC formalised a plan for a March on Washington to demand jobs and freedom
 - 28 August: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
-

Negro American Labor Council (NALC)

African American workers' organisation formed in 1960 to provide trade unionist support for the civil rights movement

Planning the march

Against the backdrop of the Birmingham Campaign, the **Negro American Labor Council (NALC)** began planning a March on Washington. NALC was an organisation of African American trade unionists led by BSCP leader A Phillip Randolph. They aimed to revive the March on Washington Movement (1941–46), which had successfully pressured President Roosevelt into establishing the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) and signing Executive Order 8802. But the FEPC had been closed down shortly after the war. By 23 March 1963, NALC had formalised a plan for a march to demand a permanent FEPC and an end to discriminatory employment practices.

NALC's proposal for a 'March on Washington for Jobs' initially faced resistance from other civil rights leaders who were concerned that a focus on social justice issues would be a distraction from their campaigns for desegregation in the South. Roy Wilkins, leader of the NAACP, feared that a march for social justice would undermine efforts to pass the Civil Rights Bill, while King was focused on the Birmingham Campaign and had hoped to take his protest against segregation to Washington. To resolve these concerns, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, the executive secretary of the National Council for a Permanent FEPC and a member of the NAACP, convinced Randolph to meet with King and plan a march that would address both the economic problems and segregation. By May, the leaders of the SCLC, NAACP, SNCC and CORE had resolved to march with NALC, calling for 'Jobs and Freedom'. The leaders then notified President Kennedy that they intended to march on 28 August 1963, the eighth anniversary of Emmett Till's murder.

Marching for jobs and freedom

On 28 August 1963 in Washington DC, 250 000 protestors converged on the National Mall to demonstrate for full civil, political and economic rights for African Americans. Bringing together civil rights activists, trade unionists and leaders of religious organisations, the March on Washington was one of the largest demonstrations for human rights in US history and a spectacular example of the power of nonviolent direct action. The same year was also the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's **Emancipation Proclamation**. One of the major themes of the rally was that African Americans were still not free, but were living lives that were chained by poverty and discrimination.

The official demand of the March on Washington was 'jobs and freedom'. Marchers called for prohibitions against employment discrimination, an increase in the minimum wage, employment protections for all low-paid workers, and a federal training program for all unemployed workers, Black and white. They also sought the immediate passage of Kennedy's proposed Civil Rights Bill and stronger laws to desegregate schools, protect voting rights and end unfair housing practices.

The march began at the Washington Monument and ended at the Lincoln Memorial, where representatives of the sponsoring organisations delivered speeches. A Phillip Randolph was the first speaker. He opened his speech with the declaration that the marchers were 'the advanced guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom' and called for placing the 'sanctity of human dignity' over the 'sanctity of private property'. John Lewis, one of the leaders of SNCC, also spoke. Lewis had been counselled by Randolph to 'tone down' his critique of the Kennedy administration. Lewis nonetheless proclaimed that the Civil Rights Bill would not do anything for the poor or for low-paid workers and called for a revolution against a system that was dominated by vote-driven politicians 'who build their careers on immoral compromises'. Roy Wilkins, who spoke later, attacked Kennedy's proposed Bill as too moderate. He argued that if it was weakened in any way it would be no more than 'sugar water' and called on Kennedy to join with the civil rights movement to strengthen the legislation.

Emancipation Proclamation

a proclamation made in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, which had freed all slaves in the Confederacy (though not in the Union); designed to cripple the Confederacy's war effort



FIGURE 4.2 Marchers with placards demanding civil rights, 28 August 1963. The placards summarise many of the key calls of the civil rights' campaigns to 1963.



FIGURE 4.3 Martin Luther King at the March on Washington

In between the speakers, the crowds were entertained by a range of high-profile musicians. Black spirituals, gospel music and protest songs had played a significant role in the civil rights movement. Songs such as 'We Shall Overcome' and 'Jesus Is With Me' were staples for members of the SCLC during their campaigns, while 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round', 'We Shall Not Be Moved' and 'Oh Freedom!' were sung by SNCC field workers. These songs served to encourage and inspire civil rights activists to keep fighting, despite the hardships and the violence they encountered. At the March, famous African American singers such as Mahalia Jackson, Odetta Holmes and opera singer Marian Anderson were joined by white folk singers Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Bob Dylan. Odetta Holmes performed 'I'm On My Way' as marchers arrived at the Lincoln Memorial. Joan Baez sang the SNCC favourite 'Oh Freedom!' and led the crowd in 'We Shall Overcome'. Folk group Peter, Paul and Mary performed their hit 'If I Had a Hammer' and Bob Dylan sang his new song 'Blowin' in the Wind'. Marian Anderson's 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands' would later conclude the march. Mahalia Jackson sang 'How I Got Over' and 'I've Been 'Buked and I've Been Scorned' preceding Martin Luther King Jr, the last speaker of the day.

King delivered what became the most famous speech of the entire civil rights era, the 'I Have a Dream' speech. King began his speech outlining the links between racial equality and economic justice. His speech is mainly remembered, however, for its optimistic vision of a future world in which people were judged not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Social and political changes resulting from the March on Washington

The March on Washington inspired a range of social and political changes, including support for civil rights legislation and positive attitudes towards King and the civil rights movement. The media played an important role in promoting these changes.

Attitudes toward civil rights

In terms of its impact on attitudes toward civil rights, the March was hugely successful. For many Americans, the March on Washington was their most significant encounter with the civil rights movement. Gallup polls conducted immediately after the March showed that more than 75 per cent of white Americans supported ending segregation in public facilities and schools, and for African Americans to have equal access to job opportunities. Two-thirds of them supported the passage of Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill. In addition, for those who had participated in the March (most having never participated in a civil rights protest before), the sense of unity and purpose inspired by the March was a transformative experience that led them to embrace social reformist activism. For many African Americans who had travelled to Washington from the South, the March was both a euphoric and cathartic experience which showed them that they were not alone in their lifelong struggles against poverty and discrimination.

The impact on King's leadership

King's reputation continued to climb as a result of the March on Washington. Gallup polls showed that King's popularity reached a new peak of 43 per cent in 1964. He became *Time's* Man of the Year for 1963 and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was in high demand as a speaker, travelling to Europe and throughout the United States to speak about civil rights.

The impact on the civil rights movement

The March drew criticism from some civil rights activists. One critic was an increasingly prominent activist called Malcolm X. Unlike King and most of the civil rights movement, Malcolm X did not agree with the nonviolent direct-action method and derided the March on Washington because of its nonviolent, integrationist approach. He was also opposed to Black activists cooperating with whites, calling the March the ‘Farce on Washington.’ Some members of SNCC were also disillusioned after the March, believing that the militant message of economic justice and political reform had been watered down to make the March ‘respectable’ and accommodate the Kennedy administration.

However, the March had seen the collaboration between the NAACP, CORE, SCLC and SNCC, in conjunction with the NALC and other local civil rights organisations, labour unions and religious groups. While the NAACP, CORE, SCLC and SNCC had worked cooperatively in earlier civil rights protests, the March was the first time all four groups had joined together in the same event. After the march, King and other civil rights leaders met with President Kennedy and Vice-President Lyndon B Johnson at the White House, where they discussed the need for bipartisan support of civil rights legislation.

In addition, the March led to the writing of ‘A Freedom Budget for All Americans’ by King, Randolph and other March organisers. Finally published in 1967, the document was said to contain the ‘full goals of the March’: the abolition of poverty, a minimum wage for all workers and universal healthcare for all US citizens. The document was endorsed by civil rights leaders, academics, religious leaders and labour movement representatives.

The impact of media influence

The March was extensively covered by press, radio and television. US television networks ABC and NBC provided regular reports during the day, CBS offered live coverage of the event and the Educational Radio Network (ERN) completely covered it from 9 am. The March on Washington was one of the first major news events to be broadcast globally over the new Telstar satellite communications system. Viewers in Europe could see the events in Washington unfold as they happened. Most significantly, until the March on Washington, many Americans had never heard King deliver a full speech, only brief excerpts of his speeches on radio or television. The broadcasts ensured that his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech was heard in its entirety right across the country and around the world.

The March also inspired solidarity marches around the world. The international press lauded the march, presenting it as an example of US freedom and democracy. Indeed, the USIA had capitalised on the opportunity to promote the March on Washington as the ‘American ideal’, producing its own film *The March* (1964) for distribution outside the United States, to demonstrate ‘American freedom’ to its Cold War allies and enemies alike.

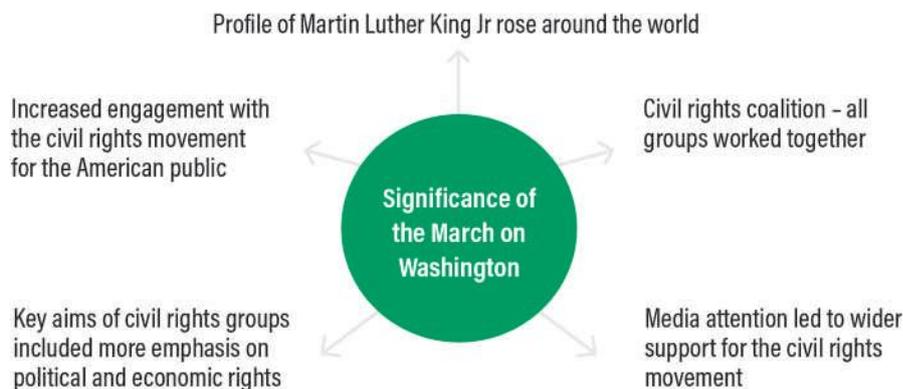


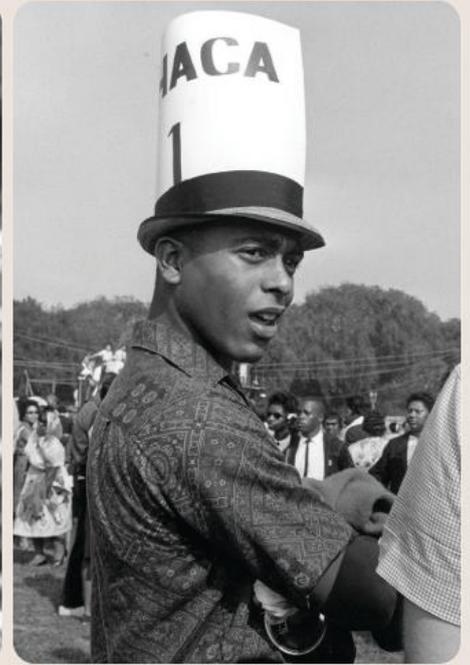
FIGURE 4.4 Significance of the March on Washington

MARCH ON WASHINGTON 28 AUGUST 1963

The March on Washington was a high point of the Civil Rights movement's many campaigns. Photographic images highlighted the presence of movie stars, singers and the festival-like atmosphere. This characterisation of the event has been criticised as diminishing its key message of civil rights and economic justice.



ABOVE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT FIGURE 4.5 Volunteers at the Riverside Church, New York, made thousands of lunch packs for the marchers, consisting of cheese sandwiches, cake and an apple. TOP RIGHT FIGURE 4.6 Black and white onlookers watch the March together. LOWER FIGURE 4.7 Civil rights leaders link arms at the head of the March.



ABOVE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT FIGURE 4.8 Odette Holmes sings "I'm On My Way" at the March on Washington; TOP RIGHT FIGURE 4.9 Young man at the March; CENTRE RIGHT FIGURE 4.10: Young women reading a program for the March; LOWER RIGHT FIGURE 4.11: Civil rights leaders in front of the Lincoln Memorial; LOWER LEFT FIGURE 4.12 Singer Sammy Davis Jr and NAACP leader Roy Wilkins being interviewed; CENTRE LEFT FIGURE 4.13 Actor Charlton Heston, writer/activist James Baldwin, actor Marlon Brando and singer/activist Harry Belafonte (back, right) at the March.

MARCH ON WASHINGTON



FIGURE 4.14 A crowd of 250 000 people listened to the speeches at the March on Washington.



The 16th Street Baptist Church bombing

The heady optimism of the March was short-lived. Even as some of the marchers were returning home, their buses were pelted with stones and bullets as they drove through Baltimore in Maryland. Other marchers were beaten as they waited at bus depots. Meanwhile, desegregation in Birmingham had been slow and it was not until 4 September that Birmingham's public schools were integrated. Then on 15 September, the KKK bombed Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four young girls. King delivered the eulogy at the joint funeral of three of the victims, preaching that the girls were 'the martyred heroines of a holy crusade for freedom and human dignity'.

In the aftermath of the bombing, violence erupted as African American and white youths attacked each other, throwing bricks and firebombing stores. Police were called in to control the rioting, shooting two African American teenagers in the process. King and Fred Shuttlesworth begged President Kennedy to intervene, warning that, 'if something isn't done to give the Negro a new sense of hope and a sense of protection, there is a danger that we will face in that community the worst race riot that we've ever seen in this country',¹ but Kennedy refused to send federal troops to Birmingham.

The distress and outrage of civil rights activists at Kennedy's inaction was palpable. In desperation, Diane Nash of SNCC urged civil rights activists to mount a large civil disobedience campaign in Alabama, while writer James Baldwin organised a demonstration in New York, calling on the UN to intervene. At the seventh annual convention of the SCLC, held in Richmond, Virginia, on 26 September, Wyatt Tee Walker (a key organiser of Project C) declared, 'We have been duped – or have duped ourselves – into believing that the chains have been broken, when in truth we have only been chained more securely. Half-freedom has in many instances been worse than no freedom at all.' While King was able to calm SCLC members, many left the meeting feeling that the hopes they had held during the March on Washington would never be realised.



FIGURE 4.15 Mourners at the funeral of Carol Robertson, aged 14, a victim of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, 17 September 1963

Source Study 4.1 The March on Washington

Source A: *Time*, 6 September 1963

Time is a mainstream American weekly photographic magazine.

It was in the probable effects on the conscience of millions of previously indifferent Americans that the march might find its true meaning. The possibility of riot and bloodshed had always been there; and in the US's 'open society' they would have been plainly visible for the whole world to see. But the marchers took that chance, and the US took it with them. No one who saw the proceedings could come to any other conclusion than that those scores of thousands of marching Negroes were able to accept the responsibilities of first-class citizenship.

Time, 6 September 1963, p 15

Source B: Extract from *Walking with the Wind* by John Lewis and Michael D'Orso

In the days that followed, too much of the national press, in my opinion, focused not on the substance of the day but on the setting. Their stories portrayed the event as a big picnic, a **hootenanny** combined with the spirit of a revival prayer meeting. Too many commentators and reporters softened and trivialized the hard edges of pain and suffering that brought about this day in the first place, virtually ignoring the hard issues that needed to be addressed, the issues that had stirred up so much trouble in my own speech. It was revealing that the quotes they gathered from most of the congressional leaders on Capitol Hill dealt not with the legislator's stand on the civil rights bill but instead focused on praising the 'behavior' and 'peacefulness' of the mass marchers.

John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, Simon and Schuster, 2015, pp 229–230.

hootenanny

American slang; an informal gathering, featuring folk music

Questions

1. Compare and account for the perspectives of Source A and Source B.
2. Search online and read Martin Luther King Jr's 'I Have a Dream' speech.
 - a. Contrast the message of the opening two paragraphs of the speech with the closing section (starting with 'I still have a dream').
 - b. Using the source, explain how King's vision was integrationist.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words explain the significance of 'NALC' and 'USIA'.
2. Identify the civil rights groups and the methods of protest used in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
3. Outline the aims of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
4. Outline the role of King during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
5. Using Figure 4.4, outline the outcomes of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
6. How did the March on Washington lead to social and political change?
7. Identify two key outcomes for the civil rights movement after the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing.

The *Civil Rights Act* (1964)

The *Civil Rights Act* (1964) marked a turning point in the civil rights movement. It referenced many of the goals sought by civil rights movement, such as desegregation, voter registration and economic opportunity. It also demonstrated to the nation that the US government was willing to act to protect the rights of African Americans, giving many activists hope for the future. When Southern business owners tried to challenge desegregation, their cases were effectively overturned by the Supreme Court. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War, it gave a clear indication to the world that the US government was strongly in favour of civil rights and improving the lives of all its citizens.

However, while some parts of the legislation produced clear benefits, other outcomes were more limited. In particular, opposition groups were able to exploit the weaknesses of the *Civil Rights Act* and continue to block African American voter registration. Police harassment and violence towards civil rights protesters also continued.

Timeline 4.2: The *Civil Rights Act* (1964)

- 1963**
 - 19 June: Kennedy sent the Civil Rights Bill to Congress
 - 22 November: Assassination of President John F Kennedy
 - 1964**
 - 10 February: The Civil Rights Bill passed the House of Representatives
 - 26 March: Debates on the Civil Rights Bill began in the Senate; Southern Senators employed Massive Resistance tactics, launching a filibuster
 - 10 June: US Senate voted to end discussion of the Bill (cloture), thus ending the filibuster
 - 2 July: *Civil Rights Act* signed into law
 - 1968**
 - 8 February: Orangeburg Massacre
-

The Civil Rights Bill

On 19 June 1963, Kennedy sent the Civil Rights Bill to Congress. The bill contained provisions that ended segregation in schools and public transport and gave the Attorney-General the power to withdraw federal funding from any state or local government program that practiced discrimination. The bill went to the House of Representatives' **Judiciary Committee** for appraisal. The Judiciary Committee strengthened the bill so that it included the protection of equal employment rights, extended the elimination of segregation in public facilities and authorised the government to file lawsuits against anyone who tried to stop protesters from exercising their freedom of speech.

By October the bill had passed to the **Rules Committee**, headed by staunch Southern Democrat Howard W Smith, where it stalled. Kennedy was now engaged in a delicate political balancing act. On the one hand, he wanted to keep faith with the civil rights movement and its white liberal supporters. On the other hand, he did not want to alienate his traditional Southern Democrat supporters.

Johnson's amendments of the Civil Rights Bill

On 22 November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. He was succeeded as president by Lyndon B Johnson, a Southern Democrat from Texas. Despite his background, Johnson took the responsibility of fulfilling Kennedy's legacy seriously.

As pressure continued to build over civil rights protests in early 1964, Johnson asked Congress to honour Kennedy by passing the *Civil Rights Act*. But first, Johnson watered down some of the provisions to reduce opposition from segregationists. He assured employers that they would not be subject to any racial quotas for hiring employees. He also diluted the regulations relating to voter registration.

Judiciary Committee

a committee in the US House of Representatives that ensures that bills comply with the laws of the United States

Rules Committee

a committee in the US House of Representatives that determines the rules under which a bill will be presented to the Senate



FIGURE 4.16 Martin Luther King Jr, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Roy Wilkins and Vice President Lyndon B Johnson, after a special White House conference on civil rights, 22 June 1963

This led to the passage of the Civil Rights Bill through the House of Representatives. On 30 March, the bill came before the Senate. From Northern senators, support for the bill was almost guaranteed. After all, much of the legislation was aimed at ending discrimination in the South. However, for Southern senators the bill represented a direct threat to their ‘Southern way of life’. Outnumbered by Northern senators in favour of passing the bill, Southern senators launched a filibuster to prevent its passage.

Massive Resistance

Led by Richard Russell of Georgia, the Southern senators embarked on a long series of speeches to hold up passage of the bill. Russell stated that the South was ‘determined to resist to the bitter end’ an Act that would bring ‘social equality and intermingling’ of the races. Another Southern senator, Strom Thurmond, declared that the Civil Rights Bill was ‘unconstitutional, unnecessary [and] unwise’. By 9 June, the filibuster had already lasted 60 days, when **Democratic Whip** Hubert Humphrey moved to end the filibuster by asking the Senate to vote in favour of **cloture**. Meanwhile, Senator Robert Byrd had started his 800-page filibuster speech, which would last 14 hours and 13 minutes. The Senate voted in favour of cloture on 10 June.

The bill passed through the Senate, just over year after the late President Kennedy had initiated it, with 73 to 27 in favour. Ninety-two per cent of Northern senators voted in favour, compared with only 5 per cent of Southerners. President Johnson signed the bill on 2 July 1964 in a nationally televised ceremony.

The significance of the *Civil Rights Act*

With the passage of the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*, the federal government was able to provide support for social and political changes that would make for a more just and inclusive American society. The Act ushered in a new era in which Americans could seek legal redress for a range of civil rights violations. The most important of these related to the desegregation of public and private facilities, and schools. The Act also offered some

Democratic Whip

a senior member of the Democratic Party in the US Senate who ensures that party members vote along party lines

cloture

a procedure used by the US Senate for ending a debate and taking a vote

protections of voting rights and outlawed discrimination in employment. However, the provisions for voting rights and equal employment opportunity did not go far enough, and serious abuses still occurred. Moreover, civil rights leaders had specifically called for the Act to protect peaceful protesters from police brutality. This last request was not enshrined in the Act at all.



FIGURE 4.17 President Lyndon B Johnson signs the *Civil Rights Act*, 2 July 1964

Segregation outlawed

The Act banned the segregation of public swimming pools, public theatres, parks, civic halls and other government facilities provided for the community. It also outlawed discrimination based on race, colour, religion or national origin in facilities related to interstate transport and commerce, such as hotels, motels, restaurants, petrol stations and stadiums.

The desegregation of schools was also reinforced. While the passage of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) had demonstrated that segregated education was unconstitutional, the states had been able to slow or resist the integration of schools because education was a state responsibility. The *Civil Rights Act* authorised the US Attorney-General to file lawsuits against the states to enforce desegregation in schools. The Act also made provision for the removal of federal government funding from any organisation that practised discrimination, such as universities.

Attempt to protect voting rights

States had routinely used a range of measures to prevent African Americans from registering to vote. The Act specifically forbade the unequal use of voter registration requirements. It further required states to compile data on voter registration and the counting of votes in elections. However, the Act did not ban literacy tests, a key method used by Southern states to obstruct African American voter registration.

Attempt to ensure economic opportunity

The Act prohibited discrimination by employers on the basis of race, colour or sex. It also established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC's role was to investigate cases where employers had discriminated against a person because of their race, colour, nation of origin, or sex. One limitation of the EEOC was that it would only investigate instances of employer discrimination where workplaces employed 25 or more workers; in addition, the EEOC was unable to force individuals, employers or trade unions to stop violating the employment provisions of the *Civil Rights Act*.

Omission of protections against police violence

The *Civil Rights Act* contained no provisions to prohibit police violence against peaceful protesters. This had been a key demand of the civil rights movement. Indeed, King had noted in his 'I Have a Dream' speech that the struggle for civil rights would continue as long as African Americans were the victims of 'the unspeakable horrors of police brutality'.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, almost every instance of rioting and civil unrest in the North that involved African Americans was related to an incident with the police. For example, in 1958 NAACP's newspaper *The Crisis* had published the results of their investigation into police brutality in Detroit, revealing that between January 1956 and July 1957 there had been 103 separate instances of police brutality against African Americans. These included 33 physical assaults, 23 instances of verbal abuse and assault and 12 illegal searches of homes. In 1963, riots had erupted in Detroit following the unprovoked police shooting of African American woman Cynthia Scott. In 1964, police violence had led to the East Harlem riots and the riots in Rochester, Jersey City, Dixmoor and Philadelphia. In the South, police brutality had been repeatedly demonstrated, not only against nonviolent civil rights protesters during the Freedom Rides in Birmingham and elsewhere, but also against ordinary individuals as they attempted to enrol to vote, or otherwise go about their daily lives.



FIGURE 4.18 Demonstrators at the March on Washington carrying signs calling for voting rights and an end to police brutality, 28 August 1963

Limitations	Achievements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • businesses of fewer than 25 employees exempt from discriminatory hiring practices • EEOC had limited powers • issue of police violence not addressed • use of literacy tests for voter registration still permitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • segregation in schools and universities ended • restaurants and transport desegregated • unequal use of voter registration requirements forbidden • discrimination on the basis of race forbidden in employment

FIGURE 4.19 Outcomes of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964)

Social and political changes resulting from the *Civil Rights Act*

While many hoped that the *Civil Rights Act* had achieved the goals of desegregation, the protection of political rights and furtherance of economic rights, in the immediate aftermath of the Act it became clear that only some of these goals had been met.

Desegregation of interstate travel facilities

The Act had forced the desegregation of facilities that were related to interstate travel and commerce but had not desegregated all private businesses. A wave of court cases ensued, as Southern business owners of motels and restaurants tried to argue that they were exempt from the *Civil Rights Act* and could continue to oppose the integration of their workforce and their customers. Every case was overturned. In *Heart of Atlanta Motel v United States* (1964), the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government could force the motel to rent rooms to African Americans. Similarly, when a restaurant tried to argue against serving African Americans (*Katzenbach v McClung*, 1964), the Court ruled that the federal government had the right to desegregate restaurants.

However, resistance to the limitations of the *Civil Rights Act* regarding desegregation continued for years. On 5 February 1968, school and college students from Orangeburg, South Carolina, began their attempt to desegregate the All Star Bowling Alley. The bowling alley owner, Harry K Floyd, argued that the *Civil Rights Act* did not apply to his bowling alley because it was a private business that was not related to interstate travel and commerce. However, the bowling alley operated a lunch counter, and therefore came under the same rules that applied to restaurants. Two hundred students conducted a series of nonviolent protests at the bowling alley, but were arrested and attacked by police and the National Guard. On 8 February, the students shifted their protest to South Carolina State University. When police attended, the students threw stones and other objects. In response, police officers fired into the crowd, killing three students and injuring 27 others.

While the federal government brought charges against the police for using excessive force at a university campus, the police argued that the students had been armed and shot at the police. Even though no students were found to be carrying guns, all police officers were acquitted. Ultimately, All Star Bowling Alley was forced to desegregate.

Desegregation of education

The Supreme Court decision *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) had overturned the doctrine of 'separate but equal' and outlawed segregation in schools, but many state governments had fought against the legislation through the implementation of Massive Resistance, effectively delaying the application of the law for many years. Ten years after *Brown v Board of Education*, only 2.3 per cent of African American students across the United States attended an integrated primary or secondary school. While the integration figures were higher in the Northern states, education was still largely structured along racial lines. In the South, less than 1 per cent of African Americans went to an integrated school.

The *Civil Rights Act* enforced school desegregation, and by 1968 the percentage of Black students attending majority-white schools had increased to 23 per cent. The number of African American students completing at least four years of high school also improved, from 20.1 per cent in 1960 to 31.4 per cent in 1970. African American attendance at college, however, only improved marginally, from 3.1 per cent in 1960 to 4.4 per cent by 1970. The percentage of Black people attending high school and university, in spite of these increases, was markedly lower than rates in the white community.

Limited protection of voting rights

While the *Civil Rights Act* had called for the equal application of voter registration measures, this requirement was easily overcome by states in the South. Voter registration remained low and Southern states continued to make use of unfair regulations and intimidation tactics to stop African Americans from registering.

Improved employment opportunities

After World War II, the number of African American men and women employed in professional jobs or as skilled tradesmen increased significantly. In 1950, more than half of African American women had been employed as domestic servants or agricultural labourers, but by 1968 only 20 per cent held such jobs, with more African American women holding professional, clerical or service jobs. The incomes of African American families also improved, rising by 40 per cent between 1947 and 1967.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which the *Civil Rights Act* contributed to these improvements. While the largest gains for African Americans were made after 1964, indicating that the *Civil Rights Act* may have had an influence, the US economy was booming in the 1950s and 1960s, with Gross Domestic Product, a measure of total production in an economy, increasing by 50 per cent between 1960 and 1970, and a nationwide shift towards more white-collar employment. Meanwhile, the income gap between white and African American families still remained large, with African American families earning only 72 per cent of the income earned by white families in 1969. The continuing high levels of poverty in African American families (35 per cent in 1970 and 19.5 per cent in 2020) indicate that the legislation passed during the civil rights era fell short of its objectives.

Social attitudes

Public opinion and social attitudes to civil rights is another way of considering the impact of social change during the civil rights era. A Gallup poll in October 1964 reported that the public approved of the *Civil Rights Act* by nearly two to one (58 per cent to 31 per cent). However, once the implementation of the Act began, support for civil rights had dropped. In 1965, Gallup polls found growing numbers of Americans saying that the Johnson administration was moving too fast overall on integration. In March, 34 per cent held that view, and by May that sentiment rose to 45 per cent, with only 14 per cent expressing the view that it was not moving fast enough. Southerners, in particular, viewed that change was 'too fast', with 61 per cent of Southerners in May 1965 stating that the government was moving too quickly to implement civil rights.



Source: Amitabh Chandra, 'Labor market dropouts and the racial wage gap', Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, University of Kentucky, 2001; based on US Census data

FIGURE 4.20 Wage disparity between Black and white Americans

Source Study 4.2 *The Civil Rights Act (1964)*

Source A: *The Civil Rights Act (1964)* (summarised)

Title I: Voting Rights: Barred unequal application of state voter registration requirements for federal elections.

Title II: Public Accommodations: Prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin in certain places of public accommodation, such as hotels, restaurants, and places of entertainment.

Title III: Desegregation of Public Facilities: Permitted the US Justice Department to sue to secure desegregation of certain public facilities owned, operated, or managed by any state or subdivision of a state.

Title IV: Desegregation of Public Schools: Authorised the US Attorney-General to receive complaints alleging denials of equal protection, to investigate those complaints, and to file suit in US District Court to seek desegregation of the school. Also authorised the Secretary of Education to provide funds to school boards to assist with their desegregation efforts.

Title V: The Civil Rights Commission: Addressed procedures for the Civil Rights Commission, broadened its duties, and extended its life through January 1968. Its duties included investigating allegations that citizens were deprived of their right to vote or to have their vote properly counted. It also studied legal developments related to a denial of equal protection of the law, particularly in the domains of voting, education, housing, employment, public accommodations, transportation and the administration of justice.

Title VI: Non-Discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs: Prohibited discrimination by recipients of federal funds on the basis of race, color or national origin.

Title VII: Equal Employment Opportunity: Outlawed employment discrimination by businesses affecting commerce with at least 25 employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Title VIII: Registration and Voting Statistics: Directed the Census Bureau to collect registration and voting statistics based on race, color and national origin but provided that individuals could not be compelled to disclose such information.

Title IX: Intervention into Court Cases: Permitted the United States to intervene in pending suits alleging a denial of equal protection of law under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on account of race, color, religion or national origin.

Title X: Community Relations Service: Created the Community Relations Service to aid communities in resolving disputes relating to discriminatory practices based on race, color or national origin.

Title XI: Court Proceedings and Legalities: In any proceeding for criminal contempt arising under Title II, III, IV, V, VI, or VII of this Act, the accused, upon demand therefore, shall be entitled to a trial by jury.

The Civil Rights Act, 1964; www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/civil-rights-act

Questions

- Using Source A and your existing knowledge, outline the impact of the *Civil Rights Act* on segregation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- In your own words, define 'cloture'.
 - Using the timeline and your knowledge, create a diagram to show how the Civil Rights Bill became an Act.
 - Outline the methods used by opposition groups to oppose the Civil Rights Bill.
 - Describe the main features of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964).
 - Using Figure 4.19, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Civil Rights Act.
 - Draw a mindmap to explain the significance of the Civil Rights Act.
 - Outline the social and political changes resulting from the Civil Rights Act.
-

MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER, 1964

More than 1000 volunteers travelled to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to participate in the project. Combining the energies of the major civil rights movements as the Council of Federated Organizations, the volunteers ran voter registration campaigns in Black communities and and Freedom Schools.



1000 STUDENTS WANTED
for the
Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee's
MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER PROJECT.

HEAR CHARLES COBB
- SNCC FIELD SECRETARY
IN GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

TELL OF SUMMER '64 PROGRAMS IN
-- VOTER REGISTRATION / TUTORING / FREEDOM SCHOOLS / COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION / RESEARCH / RECREATION --
-- and HOW TO JOIN "MISS FREEDOM SUMMER."

TUESDAY, APR. 7 - 726 COMMERCE
3-5 P.M.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION / The UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION
2 Washington Sq. N - Rm. 34 - GR7-0404
is the NYU information & recruiting center.

What You Can Do:

This is your FREEDOM SUMMER. It will not work without your help.

COFO is asking you to:

- provide housing for the people who are coming to work here.
- look for buildings which can be used for Freedom Schools and Community Centers.
- get names of students who want to go to Freedom Schools.
- let us know when you have meetings or arrange meetings so we can come answer questions about the FREEDOM SUMMER.

Many people are coming here to work during our FREEDOM SUMMER. They want to learn about Mississippi. They feel that the problems here are the problems of people all over the country. Most of them will be college students, both Negro and white.

COFO is your organization. The things it is trying to do should be done by the state. The people who have been elected to run the state say that they do not have to do things for Negroes.

IT IS THE FAULT OF THE STATE that you cannot:

- find work
- read and write
- send your children to better schools.

If you work with COFO you will be working to get yourself the better conditions you deserve.

What Is COFO?

COFO is an organization made up of all the civil rights and local citizenship groups in Mississippi which decided they must work together to improve conditions in Mississippi.



For more information:

Write to - COFO STATE OFFICE
1017 Lynch Street
Jackson, Mississippi

Or call - 352-9605

Other offices near you:

- CLARKSDALE - 213 4th Street
phone - 624-2913
- COLUMBUS - 1323 6th Ave. North
phone - 328-8916
- GREENWOOD - 708 Avenue N
phone - 453-1282
- HATTIESBURG - 507 Mobile Street
phone - 584-7670
- MERIDIAN - 2505 1/2 5th Street
phone - 485-9286



Council
Of
Federated
Organizations



**MISSISSIPPI
FREEDOM
SUMMER**



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR UPPER LEFT FIGURE 4.21 Roadside signs promote the Freedom Summer; **MID UPPER LEFT FIGURE 4.22** A New York University SNCC branch handbill calling for volunteers; **UPPER RIGHT FIGURE 4.23** Organisers and volunteers 'return' to a local branch of the Freedom Democratic Party; **LOWER RIGHT FIGURE 4.24** Reverse side of flyer advertising the projects to be undertaken during the MFSP; **LOWER LEFT FIGURE 4.25** Front of flyer for the MFSP

Freedom Schools



FREEDOM SCHOOLS will be during the summer. They are schools where high school students will be able to talk about things they can't talk about in regular school. They will learn about civil rights.

There will be classes for students who:

1. have trouble with their lessons in regular school and want to do better,
2. like to read and want to learn more than they are taught in regular school.

There will be singing, dancing, sports, hikes and many other things for all students.

Some of the FREEDOM SCHOOLS will be for people who spend 6 weeks away from home to live at them.

ALL OF THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS WILL BE FREE.

Voter Registration

ARE YOU A REGISTERED VOTER?

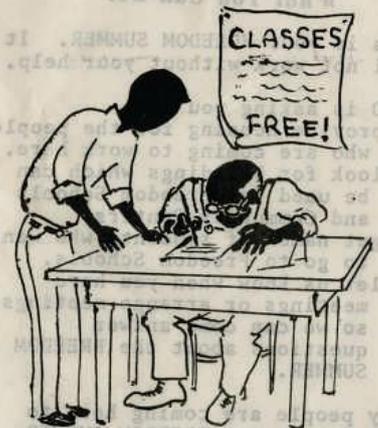
If we were all voting then things would be better in Mississippi.

- We would have:
- enough food
 - more jobs
 - better schools
 - better houses
 - paved sidewalks

People coming here this summer can work with you on VOTER REGISTRATION. They can knock on doors, teach the registration forms and drive people to the courthouse. They can help in any way you want them to.



Community Centers



A COMMUNITY CENTER is a place where everyone can do many different things. It will be mostly for adults and will offer many chances for them to learn things to help them live better.

COMMUNITY CENTERS will have:

- job training programs
- classes for people who cannot read or write
- classes on child care
- health programs
- adult education and Negro history classes
- music, drama, and arts and crafts workshops

If you have small children, they will be taken care of while you enjoy the COMMUNITY CENTER.

EVERYTHING AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER WILL BE FREE.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964)

The murder of NAACP worker Medgar Evers on 12 June 1963 had drawn the nation's attention to the violent oppression experienced by African Americans in Mississippi. In response, SNCC leader Robert (Bob) Moses decided to launch the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project in June 1964 to continue Evers' work and push for desegregation and voting rights in Mississippi.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was devised as a grassroots movement organised by the Mississippi branches of the NAACP, SCLC, CORE and SNCC. It was supported by more than 1000 interstate volunteers. The Freedom Summer Project aimed to register African Americans to vote; create a new interracial political party to provide an alternative to the dominant Democratic Party; and build a community-based system of Freedom Schools that taught African American history, voting rights and literacy to African Americans.

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project did not achieve its objectives, but it nonetheless transformed the lives of many of those who took part. White volunteers from across the United States were humbled by the impoverished Black families in Mississippi who had shared their homes and their resources, leading the white volunteers to question the America they thought they had known. Meanwhile, Black Mississippians experienced being treated as equals by whites for the first time in their lives. At the same time, however, the Mississippi Freedom Summer deeply affected the civil rights movement, opening fault lines between Black and white activists. It also led many Black activists to conclude that armed defence was a necessity in an atmosphere of unrelenting and unchecked violence.

Timeline 4.3: The Mississippi Freedom Summer

- 1962 ▪ Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) formed
 - 1964 ▪ 14 June: Volunteers arrived for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project
 - 21 June: James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman murdered
 - 2 July: The passage of the *Civil Rights Act*
 - 4 August: The bodies of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman found
 - 24–27 August: The Democratic Party National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey
-

Political rights in Mississippi

Mississippi was a poor rural state, where segregation remained deeply entrenched. More than 85 per cent of African Americans in Mississippi lived below the poverty line. Even though they made up 45 per cent of Mississippi's population, only 6.7 per cent of the Black population were registered to vote. SNCC field workers had been in Mississippi since 1961, trying desperately to register African Americans using a variety of tactics, but these had failed. KKK terrorism, incarceration, economic retaliation and police violence had ensured that only a few hundred voters were registered over a two-year period.

Politics in Mississippi was dominated by the Democratic Party, which in Mississippi was a whites-only, pro-segregationist party. Even African Americans who were registered to vote were unable to join the Democratic Party, let alone challenge or influence policies. For its part, the federal Democratic Party made no effort to reform its Mississippi branch.

In 1962, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) was formed by the Mississippi branches of the NAACP, CORE, SCLC and SNCC to coordinate efforts to improve rates of voter registration and education. Of the four groups associated with COFO, SNCC provided the majority of activists. In the summer of 1963, COFO conducted a 'Freedom Vote' campaign, during which 80 000 disenfranchised African Americans cast a 'mock' vote for Aaron Henry, a leader of COFO and an African American war veteran. Although it was only an exercise, it nonetheless demonstrated the strong desire of African Americans in Mississippi to be able to register and use their right to vote.

Preparations for Freedom Summer

In June 1964, another COFO leader, Bob Moses, launched the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. The main focus of the project was to progress voter registration. A second aim of the project was to build support for a new political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The MFDP was founded by Bob Moses, Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker as a truly democratic party that was open to all races. The MFDP aimed to attend the upcoming National Democratic Party Convention and demand recognition as the legitimate Democratic Party organisation in Mississippi that actually represented all people of Mississippi. Finally, the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project sought to provide education for African American children at 'Freedom Schools'.

To achieve these aims, COFO not only relied on local activists but recruited students from all over the United States, who travelled into Mississippi to take part in the project. Of the approximately 1000 volunteers, the majority were white Northern college students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. They undertook training to prepare them for registering voters, teaching literacy classes and undertaking nonviolent direct action at the Western College for Women, in Oxford, Ohio, before travelling to Mississippi. The involvement of the white students was a deliberate policy designed to diminish the potential for KKK violence. In addition, the white students would draw the attention of the media, which furthered the civil rights cause and showed white Americans that civil rights was a moral issue. However, the involvement of self-confident, educated white students would lead to tensions within the civil rights movement and some activists believed that it undermined the emergence of new leadership among young Black civil rights workers.

In addition, the issue of nonviolence proved a sticking point. While the civil rights movement had always stuck to nonviolence in the traditions of Jesus and Gandhi, the experiences of SNCC fieldworkers had led them to start questioning this policy. They felt that being armed would give them a chance to defend themselves against the Klan and the police, especially in isolated rural areas with no witnesses. However, being African American and carrying a firearm heightened the chance of being shot by police who could then claim 'self-defence'. Ultimately, SNCC refused to endorse the arming of civil rights workers, but for some activists, the issue of nonviolence was a difficult one.

As COFO made its preparations, the Southern media declared that an 'invasion' was imminent. The Mississippi government rushed to introduce new laws that expanded police powers and prohibited people from distributing boycott literature, holding protests near public buildings, establishing 'freedom schools', and belonging to a 'subversive' group. Meanwhile, the largest Klan rally in Mississippi state history was held, calling for the recruitment of every white man to its cause. In response, President Johnson did nothing. In spite of calls from civil rights leaders for federal intervention, Johnson refused to make any statements condemning the KKK or the illegality of Mississippi legislation that outlawed freedom schools. Nor did he make any threats of federal intervention in response to Mississippi's continued efforts to thwart voter registration.

Arming civil rights workers

The issue of armaments for civil rights workers was not a new one. Drawing on his own experiences as a member of the NAACP in Monroe, North Carolina, Robert F Williams had advocated that civil rights workers should 'meet violence with violence' to defend themselves. His book *Negros with Guns* (1962) detailed the efforts of the African American community in North Carolina to arm itself in self-defence against the KKK and other violent racist groups.

The projects

The Mississippi Freedom Summer established a range of projects in communities that were willing to accept the presence of the civil rights workers and would provide housing for volunteers and other buildings for COFO's use. Voter registration was a key project. Civil rights volunteers went door-to-door in an effort to mobilise African Americans to register for the vote by presenting themselves at the local county courthouse to fill out the voter registration form and take the so-called literacy test. Building support for the MFDP was a second project, where volunteers taught African Americans about democracy and convinced them to become involved with the MFDP. The establishment of 'Freedom Schools' was another important project. The freedom schools were taught by COFO volunteers and were designed to counteract the limited education available to African Americans through segregated schooling. In addition to regular school subjects such as mathematics and grammar, the schools taught students about African American history, democracy, politics and journalism.



FIGURE 4.26 Martin Luther King Jr with the FBI poster of the missing civil rights workers, issued 29 June 1964

The murders of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman

Extremist violence began as soon as the volunteers arrived in Mississippi. Volunteers suffered intimidation and harassment in the form of arrests and beatings. But for African American residents, especially those who were hosting the white volunteers in their homes, the terrorisation was even more intense and included bombings, drive-by shootings, evictions, firing people from jobs, assaults and arson attacks. In the 10 weeks of the Freedom Summer, more than 1000 people were arrested, 80 activists were assaulted, 37 churches were bombed and 30 homes or businesses owned by African Americans were bombed or burned. Three African American Mississippians were murdered and four civil rights workers were killed. Three of the dead civil rights workers were James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman.

Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman were reported missing on 21 June, just one week after the first group of volunteers arrived in Mississippi. Chaney was an African American CORE activist from Mississippi, while Schwerner and Goodman were both white Northerners. Schwerner was a CORE organiser, while Goodman was a volunteer. The three had disappeared while visiting Philadelphia, Mississippi, to investigate a church burning by the KKK. The abduction

of the three civil rights workers frightened the activists, but they resolved to move ahead with the campaign. At Moses' invitation, Martin Luther King Jr visited Greenwood, Mississippi, to show the support of the SCLC and to encourage Black Mississippians to register to vote despite the continuing acts of violence and intimidation.

The media and the federal government immediately responded to the disappearance of the three men. A massive federal search was launched, and the incident became headline news as reporters from across the United States descended on Mississippi. However, this did not lead to any further support from the federal government for African American voter registration or civil rights workers in Mississippi.

The discovery of the bodies

On 4 August 1964, less than three weeks after King's visit, the bodies of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman were found. By the end of November, the **FBI** had arrested 19 suspects, including the Neshoba County Sheriff Lawrence A Rainey, Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price and the Grand Imperial Wizard of the Klan, Sam Bowers. Mississippi officials then refused to prosecute the men for murder, but the federal government charged the accused under federal law for conspiring to deprive the three activists of their civil rights (by murdering them).

At the federal trial held in October 1967, the all-white jury found seven men guilty. Those acquitted included Sheriff Rainey and one of the Klan's key organisers, Edgar Ray Killen. However, Bowers, the Klan's Grand Wizard, was convicted. The men were sentenced to between three and 10 years for their crimes, but none of them served more than six years.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

US federal intelligence and security service led by J Edgar Hoover 1924–72

Social and political changes resulting from the Mississippi Freedom Summer

The social and political changes that followed the Mississippi Freedom Summer were mixed. In some respects, the outcomes of COFO's efforts had been fairly limited. While some projects had been successful, such as the foundation of the MFDP, this success was short-lived. Perhaps most significantly, the outcomes of the Freedom Summer led SNCC activists to reconsider their commitment to nonviolence and the interracial nature of their organisation.

Voter registration

Although approximately 17 000 Black residents of Mississippi attempted to register to vote in the summer of 1964, only 1600 of the completed applications were accepted by local registrars. These disappointing results reflected continued obstruction by white registrars, but also the impact of white violence and economic retaliation against Black applicants. Support for the Ku Klux Klan rose in both Mississippi and Louisiana in 1963 and 1964, and the two states' Klans, which were closely linked, carried out joint campaigns of violence and intimidation against the Freedom Summer Project.

The Freedom Schools

The Summer Project's Freedom Schools were modelled on the Freedom Schools that had been set up by the civil rights movement in Virginia in 1963, following the state's decision to close all public schools rather than comply with integration. In an effort to address Mississippi's separate and unequal public education system, the Freedom Summer project planned to establish 20 Freedom Schools and teach 1000 students. But the Freedom Schools exceeded expectations and proved highly successful, eventually numbering 41 schools with 3000 students. Teachers were mainly white college students and schools were held in churches, in people's homes and outdoors. However, the efforts to create a grassroots education system was not realised, despite the Freedom Schools proving popular. Although some Freedom Schools continued to operate after Freedom Summer, led by senior African American students, most closed down by the end of the year.

Impact of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964)

A few weeks after the beginning of Freedom Summer, the Johnson administration had passed the *Civil Rights Act*. The passage of the Act promised the realisation of the civil rights movements' hard-fought goal of desegregation. In Mississippi, young African Americans felt empowered and decided to test the new law by desegregating 'whites only' theatres, cinemas

and general stores using nonviolent direct action. COFO leaders were not entirely supportive of this plan. Bob Moses maintained that the African American activists should concentrate on voter registration and the MFDP, rather than become distracted by desegregation. However, it was hard to contain the determination and enthusiasm of the young activists. In spite of the new laws, there were numerous arrests and assaults in response to their efforts to desegregate cinemas and milk bars. SNCC staff and summer volunteers then had to shift some of their time and money from voter registration to raising bail money.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP)

Efforts to build the MFDP were very successful. By August 1964 the MFDP had 80 000 members. In spite of the unrelenting opposition from the WCC, among others, the MFDP held local caucuses, assemblies and a state-wide convention, where they elected 68 delegates to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. The 1964 Democratic Party's National Convention was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Fannie Lou Hamer, Aaron Henry, Bob Moses and other MFDP delegates challenged the Democratic Party to allow the MFDP's delegation to participate in the convention, arguing that the delegates of the Mississippi branch of the Democratic Party had been illegally elected in a segregated process that violated both party regulations and federal law. In a live televised speech to the **Credentials Committee**, Hamer outlined how her efforts to register to vote in Mississippi had been met with violence and oppression. She concluded with a plea for the Democratic Party to uphold its own laws and the laws of the United States:

All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?

Her speech was cut short by President Johnson himself, who held an impromptu press conference to divert attention from the MFDP's just cause. Later that afternoon, with members of the regular Democratic Party threatening to walk out of the Convention, President Johnson attempted a compromise. He refused to unseat the Democratic delegates from Mississippi and instead offered the MFDP two 'at-large' seats. This would enable two MFDP delegates to watch the proceedings of the National Convention, but not actually take part. The MFDP refused this offer, arguing it was undemocratic.

Hamer's speech had nonetheless inspired many Americans. It was broadcast again in its entirety later that night, provoking outrage from across the country and demands for justice for African Americans in the South.

The direction of SNCC and CORE

SNCC activists were deeply shocked by the Democratic Party's refusal to engage with the MFDP and to replace the all-white Mississippi delegation to the 1964 Convention, all of whom had been illegally elected, with the MFDP's democratic, integrated delegation. The realisation that the president was unwilling to uphold US law led to the belief among SNCC activists that there was no point trying to encourage African Americans to embrace American democracy. Indeed, Fannie Lou Hamer herself confessed that she had 'lost hope in American society'.

Moreover, the media's focus on the white volunteers during Freedom Summer led to resentment among Black activists. When white activists were assaulted, the FBI responded. But neither the media nor the government showed any interest in attacks on Black activists or on the Black residents of Mississippi who took part in voter registration drives or billeted white volunteers in their homes. Black activists, too, were dismayed that the white volunteers had taken over many of the organisational roles in SNCC during Freedom Summer, pushing Black workers aside. Some even started to question the concept of an interracial civil rights group.

Credentials Committee

committee of the Democratic Party that examines whether delegates are qualified to represent the Party



FIGURE 4.27 Fannie Lou Hamer before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention, 22 August 1964

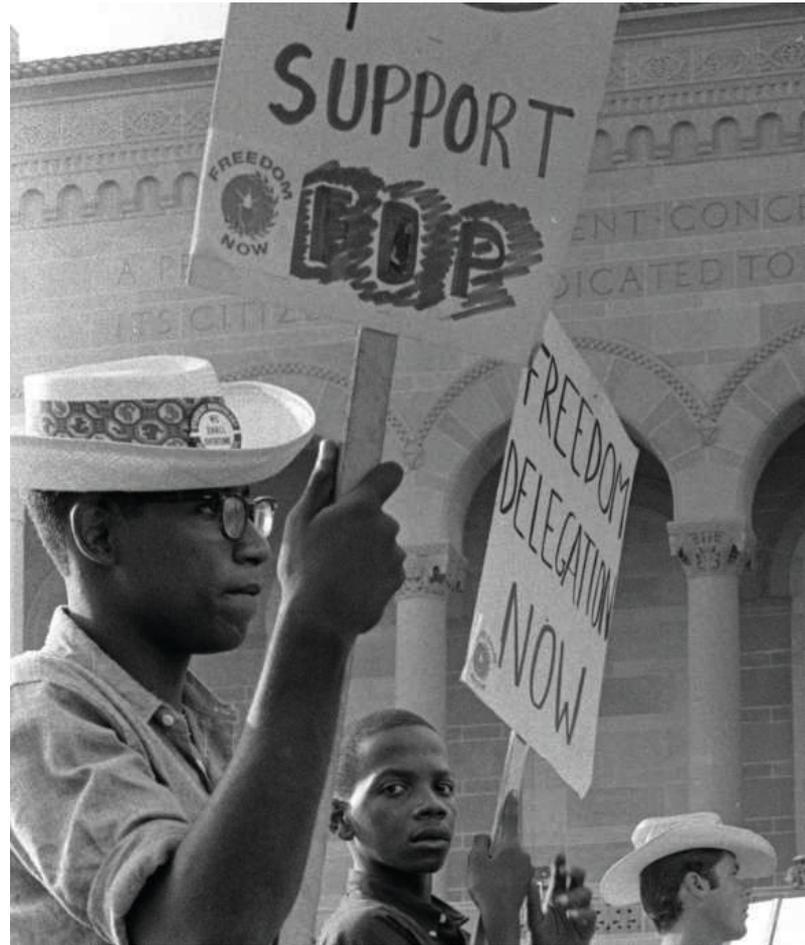


FIGURE 4.28 MFDP supporters demonstrating outside the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Most significantly, SNCC activists were reeling from the violence in Mississippi, which the presence of white activists had failed to prevent. The reality of ongoing violence and the failure of federal and state officials to stop it led many SNCC and CORE activists in Mississippi and Louisiana to accept armed protection from local people and carry guns themselves. In March 1965, African Americans in Jonesboro, Louisiana (some of them war veterans), formed an armed organisation called the **Deacons for Defense and Justice**, to protect CORE workers conducting a voter registration drive from KKK violence. Patrols made by the Deacons for Defense and Justice led to a decrease in Klan activity throughout Louisiana, further convincing SNCC and CORE of the value of self-defence.

Deacons for Defense and Justice

an armed African American organisation formed by war veterans in 1964 to protect civil rights workers from KKK violence



FIGURE 4.29 The significance of the Mississippi Freedom Summer

Source Study 4.3 The Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964)

Source A: Interview with Julia Holmes, 26 May 2000

Holmes was an African American woman born in Mississippi. She was 14 years old during Freedom Summer.

I loved Freedom Summer. I loved the people. And it's the only time I can remember just not really helping my mother to the fullest capacity because I just loved every minute; I jumped the fence and just lived over at the freedom school. And I was very disappointed that it only lasted for two months. I can remember them canvassing black neighborhoods, trying to get people to vote. I can remember them at night, they would have mass meetings trying to plan the next day and that they'd sing. And I can remember that their meetings would consist mainly of high school [students] to people about twenty-five years old. There were very few people who were older than that ...

I just would go to the freedom school a whole lot because I just loved listening to their stories and just meeting somebody different. They were just really interesting, because I had never been out of Mississippi ... And they taught us freedom songs and showed us films, and we knew that there was – they showed us that there were better places than Mississippi.

Julia Holmes, interview by Stephanie Scull Millet. 26 May 2000. Cited in HN McDaniel, 'Growing Up Civil Rights: Youth Voices from Mississippi's Freedom Summer', *The Southern Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Winter 2016), p 101–102.

Source B: Extract from John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*

As far as I'm concerned, [the refusal of the Democratic Party to recognise the MFDP delegates] was the turning point of the civil rights movement. I'm absolutely convinced of that. Until then, despite every setback and disappointment and obstacle we had faced over the years, the belief still prevailed that the system would work, the system would listen, the system would respond. Now, for the first time, we had made our way to the very center of the system. We had played by the rules, done everything we were supposed to do, had played the game exactly as required, had arrived at the doorstep and found the door slammed in our face ...

J Lewis and M D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, Simon and Schuster, 2015, p 291.

Questions

1. Explain the value and limitations of Source A for a historian studying the impact of the Mississippi Freedom Summer.
2. Using Source B and your knowledge, explain the significance of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, write a description of each of the following: 'COFO', 'Freedom School' and 'MFDP'.
2. Identify the main civil rights groups involved in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.
3. Describe the aims and methods used in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.
4. Recount the methods employed by opposition groups to oppose the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.

5. Using Figures 4.24 and 4.25, outline the key arguments used by COFO to persuade African Americans to register to vote.
6. Outline the role of President Johnson in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.
7. Why was the MFDP significant?
8. Using Figure 4.29, describe the outcomes of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.
9. Identify the social and political changes resulting from the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.

The Selma to Montgomery March (1965)

SNCC field workers also organised voter registration drives in Selma, Alabama. They were supported by several local groups, including the **Dallas County Voters League (DCVL)**. Limited progress led the DCVL to call for the support of King and the SCLC to join the campaign.

Dallas County Voters League (DCVL)

an African American civil rights organisation in Dallas County, Alabama, which worked to register African Americans for the vote

Timeline 4.4: The Selma to Montgomery March (1965)

- 1963**
 - 14 May: SNCC led a Voter Registration Meeting at the Tabernacle Baptist Church
 - 7 October: SNCC held the 'Freedom Day' voter registration campaign in Selma
- 1965**
 - 2 January: SCLC launched the Selma Voting Rights Campaign
 - 4 February: Malcolm X spoke to SNCC and SCLC activists at Brown Chapel AME Church
 - 26 February: Jimmie Lee Jackson died after being shot by police
 - 7 March: Bloody Sunday
 - 9 March: Prayer on the Edmund Pettus Bridge
 - 17 March: Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Bill to Congress
 - 21–25 March: The March from Selma to Montgomery completed
 - 30 March: US Congress launched an official investigation into the KKK

Voter registration campaigns in Selma

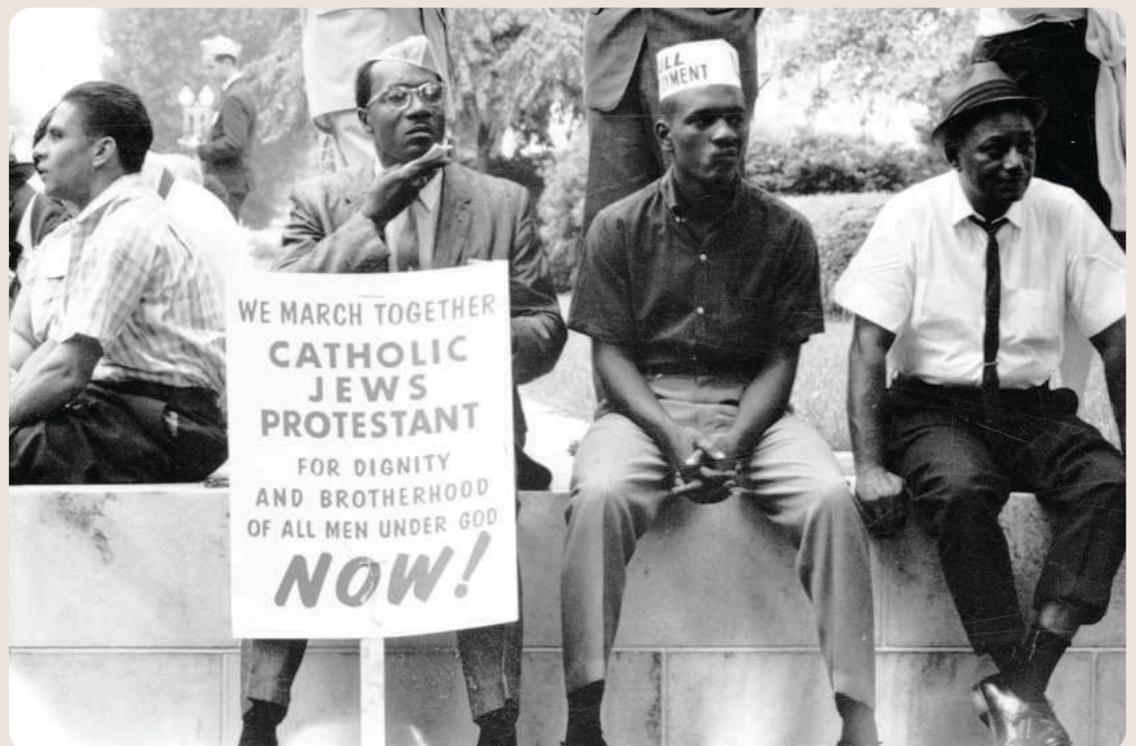
The Selma Voting Rights Campaign, launched in 1965, had some significant successes, including the passage of the *Voting Rights Act* (1965), which secured the right to vote for African Americans. In the short term, this vindicated the nonviolent direct-action approach, showing that steadfast commitment, even in the face of violence and abuse, swayed public opinion and eventually pressured the federal government to effect change. However, King's fame was beginning to worry some members of SNCC, who preferred a more grassroots style of activism. In addition, the ever-present police and KKK violence led to the growing sense of disillusion among younger civil rights activists.

SNCC activism in Selma

Selma, in Dallas County, Alabama, was another city characterised by segregation, discrimination and terror. While the residents of Selma were mostly African Americans, fewer than 3 per cent were registered to vote in 1964. Working with local civil rights organisations such as the DCVL, SNCC had conducted an intensive voter registration drive since the beginning of 1963. On 14 May 1963, SNCC held a meeting at the Tabernacle Baptist Church, where 350 African Americans learned about SNCC's plans to increase voter

SELMA, 1965

Selma started as a voter registration campaign. It culminated in a display of police brutality and violence. This would change the outlook of many of the younger campaigners of the civil rights movement.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT FIGURE 4.29 CORE activists lead a march in Harlem, New York, to support the Selma Campaign, 13 March 1965; **TOP RIGHT** FIGURE 4.30 Child in New York with a sign calling on President Johnson to go to Selma, 13 March 1965; **LOWER RIGHT** FIGURE 4.31 Martin Luther King Jr and Coretta Scott King lead the third Selma March with Ralph Abernethy's children Donzaleigh, Ralph Jr and Juandalynn; **LOWER LEFT** FIGURE 4.32 Demonstrators listening to SNCC and SCLC speakers at the end of the third march in Montgomery, 25 March 1965.



registration. Outside the church, a mob of armed white extremists had assembled. SNCC leaders kept the people in the church until 1 am, by which time the mob had dispersed. Following this meeting, the local WCC began conducting an extensive membership drive in Dallas County to boost support for maintaining segregation.

On 7 October 1963, SNCC and the DCVL organised a 'Freedom Day' where more than 300 African Americans attended the voter registration office. However, only a few were allowed into the office to fill out the voter application form after waiting almost all day. Those trying to register were arrested, fired from their jobs by white employers or were subject to vicious assaults by the KKK.

The passage of the *Civil Rights Act* did little to amend this situation. While the Act had outlawed the unequal application of literacy tests, it did not prohibit most forms of voting discrimination, and states such as Alabama were still able to prevent African Americans from registering to vote using literacy tests that were beyond the education levels of most African American citizens at the time.

The SCLC arrives in Selma

With voter registration and desegregation going nowhere, the DCVL opted to call on King and the SCLC for help. They hoped that King's high profile would attract media attention to the situation in Selma. King agreed to help SNCC and the DCVL, anticipating that the presence of the SCLC would lead to an outpouring of brutality from the notoriously racist local sheriff, Jim Clark, which would feed media interest. In addition, King hoped that by putting their bodies on the front line of Clark's extremist response, it would create a crisis and President Johnson would be pressured to enact a voting rights bill that guaranteed full enfranchisement to African Americans.

SNCC activists were not pleased about King's presence. They had been committed to a long-term grassroots voter registration program in Selma and saw King as an outsider who would arrive, generate a lot of publicity and then leave. Moreover, SNCC's model of leadership was democratic and focused on local involvement in civil rights; they saw King's 'messianic' leadership as problematic. They were also beginning to question the value of nonviolent direct action, which often resulted in young activists being seriously injured.

Nonetheless, on 2 January 1965, King and the SCLC arrived in Selma and began conducting voter registration campaigns in Selma and the nearby town of Marion, facing arrests and beatings. On 1 February, King led more than 250 activists to the Dallas County Courthouse to register to vote. All of them, including King, were arrested during the peaceful demonstration and charged with 'parading without a permit'. More than 3400 activists were arrested between 1 January and 7 February, but fewer than 100 African Americans were able to register as voters.

Malcolm X in Alabama

Malcolm X was in Alabama at the same time, speaking at the Tuskegee Institute, a tertiary education institution for African Americans. SNCC leaders invited him to address the activists on 4 February at Selma's Brown Chapel AME Church. The SCLC were initially unhappy about the presence of Malcolm X, but in a meeting with King's wife, Coretta Scott King, Malcolm X assured her that his presence was not an attempt to undermine the work of the SCLC.

By 1965, Malcolm X had risen to become a highly controversial figure, seen by many in the white community as an aggressive advocate of racial violence. Malcolm X did not actually condone violence, but did support the idea of self-defence against groups such as the KKK and called on African Americans to fight for their rights by 'any means necessary'. This stance was duly exploited by the media, who continued to paint him as a dangerous individual.

Malcolm X's arrival in Selma had the immediate effect that King's had failed to evoke. On that same day, President Johnson made a public statement in support of the Selma Campaign. He also had Alabama's literacy test suspended for voter registrations and

ordered the Selma voter registration office to process 100 applications for voter registration per day. The SCLC decided to continue with their protests and King bailed himself out of jail to lead them. Two days later, on 6 February, Johnson announced that he would ask the Congress to consider enacting a Voting Rights Bill. He then met with King on 9 January, promising that the Voting Rights Bill would be presented to Congress ‘very soon’.

Jimmie Lee Jackson’s death

On 18 February, 500 people gathered at the Zion United Methodist Church, Marion, to prepare for an SCLC-led protest at the Perry County Jail where SCLC worker James Orange was incarcerated. They planned to march to the jail, sing hymns outside and then return to the church. On their way, they were intercepted by police and state troopers who began to beat them. One protester, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was pursued and shot by police. Jackson had been trying to stop a police officer from beating his mother with a night-stick. He died eight days later, on 26 February.

As a tribute to Jackson and an appeal for voting rights, SCLC leader James Bevel proposed a march from Selma to Montgomery. The march was scheduled to start on Sunday 7 March 1965. SNCC had decided it would not officially take part in the march, because they feared that it would achieve little and result in violence. However, they agreed that any individual members of SNCC who wanted to participate could do so.

Bloody Sunday

The first Selma to Montgomery March comprised around 550 activists and was led by John Lewis of SNCC and Hosea Williams of the SCLC. The marchers made their way through Selma and onto the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where they faced a blockade of state troopers and local lawmen. Cheered on by white onlookers, the troopers attacked the crowd with clubs and tear gas. Mounted police chased retreating marchers and continued to beat them.

Television coverage of ‘Bloody Sunday,’ as the event became known, triggered national outrage and roused support for the Selma Voting Rights Campaign. Photographs of marchers who had been beaten unconscious appeared in newspapers around the world. Among the 67 marchers who were injured were Amelia Boynton, a leader of the DCVL and John Lewis, who suffered a fractured skull.



FIGURE 4.33 SNCC leader John Lewis is beaten by Alabama state troops during the Selma to Montgomery March, 7 March 1965.



FIGURE 4.34 Martin Luther King Jr and Coretta Scott King leading the third Selma to Montgomery March, 25 March 1965.

Responses to Bloody Sunday

King and Bevel made plans to continue the march to Montgomery. King issued a public call for 'religious leaders from all over the nation to join us on Tuesday in our peaceful, nonviolent march for freedom.' To ensure that the marchers would not be assaulted again, the SCLC tried to gain a court order to prohibit the police from interfering with the march. However, Federal District Court Judge Frank M Johnson notified the SCLC that he intended to issue a restraining order prohibiting the march until at least 11 March. Hundreds of marchers were about to descend on Selma and King did not want to turn them back, but he did not want to disobey the pending court order either. He struck a secret deal with LeRoy Collins (then Director of the Johnson administration's Community Relations Service) that he would make a 'symbolic witness' at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, then turn around and lead the marchers back to Selma.

Prayer on the Edmund Pettus Bridge (Turnaround Tuesday)

On 9 March, King led more than 2000 marchers to the site of the Bloody Sunday attack on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The marchers then stopped and prayed, after which they rose and turned around, heading back to Selma. King's restraint gained support from President Johnson, who issued a public statement on the same day: 'Americans everywhere join in deploring the brutality with which a number of Negro citizens of Alabama were treated when they sought to dramatize their deep and sincere interest in attaining the precious right to vote.' Johnson then promised to introduce a voting rights bill to Congress within a few days.

While the prayer on the Edmund Pettus Bridge had led to a positive outcome, King's secret deal had upset SNCC members. They decided to conduct their own march on the Alabama State Capitol and deliver a petition to Governor George Wallace that opposed police brutality and called for voting rights. When the SNCC protesters reached the Capitol Building, Montgomery troopers on horseback attacked them with whips and Wallace refused to receive their petition.

The Voting Rights Bill

On 15 March, President Johnson made a televised address in which he declared his strong support for the Selma Campaign: 'Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just

Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome.' Johnson's voting rights bill was formally introduced to Congress two days later.

The international press responded favourably, seeing Johnson's statement as evidence of leadership. Where newspapers had roundly condemned the president and the United States in general for the violence committed against African American protesters at Little Rock Central High, in Birmingham and in Mississippi, they now referred to the perpetrators of this violence as a 'radical fringe group'. The press continued to express outrage at the treatment of African Americans, but no longer saw this as a reflection on the President.

The Third March

The SCLC had meanwhile submitted a detailed march plan to Judge Johnson, who approved the demonstration and called on Governor Wallace to withdraw his state troopers. On Sunday 21 March, around 8000 people congregated at Brown Chapel AME Church to commence the federally sanctioned 87-kilometre march to Montgomery. As the march proceeded, more people joined. On the morning of 24 March, the march crossed into Montgomery County and on the next day, 25 000 people rallied at the steps of the State Capitol Building where SNCC and SCLC leaders spoke about the new voting rights legislation and the ongoing struggle for access to economic opportunities.

That evening, civil rights activist, Viola Liuzzo, had volunteered to drive demonstrators home from Montgomery back to Selma. Having dropped off one group, she was returning to Montgomery to collect more marchers to bring back to Selma, when four KKK members shot and killed her from a pursuing car. The following day, President Johnson announced that Congress would embark on an investigation into the KKK to bring their activities 'under effective control of the law'.



FIGURE 4.35 Marchers with US flags on the Selma to Montgomery March, 25 March 1965



FIGURE 4.36 In 1968 Shirley Chisholm was the first Black woman to run for and be elected to the US Congress. In 1972 she became the first Black person to run for nomination of a major political party in the United States.

The Voting Rights Act (1965)

The *Voting Rights Act* was signed into law on 6 August 1965. It contained measures that enforced the right to vote, as enshrined by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution. Specifically, the law prohibited the use of literacy tests or other means to deny the right to vote. The Act also stipulated that the Justice Department could send examiners to any state or county where a literacy test or a similar deterrent to African American voter registration had been used since the 1964 presidential election and where voter registration for that election had fallen below 50 per cent of the voting-age population.

Political changes from the *Voting Rights Act*

The *Voting Rights Act* proved hugely successful and significantly increased voter registration. For example, in Mississippi, the percentage of African American voters increased from 6.7 per cent in 1964 to 67 per cent by 1969. The rising influence of the African American vote led to the provision of better amenities for African American communities, with more funding for schools, roads, sanitation and hospitals. Several African American politicians rose to prominence too. In 1966, Barbara Jordan was elected to the Texas Senate, the first African American senator in Texas since 1883. In 1970, George Collins became the first African American in the 20th century elected to a district that was not majority African American. In Los Angeles, Tom Bradley became the city's first African American mayor in 1973. Other people of colour also benefited from the changes, with Shirley Chisholm, of Barbadian heritage, becoming the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968.

Source Study 4.4 The Selma to Montgomery March

Source A: White Citizens' Council article, 'Ask Yourself This Important Question: What Have I Personally Done to Maintain Segregation?'

Is it worth four dollars to prevent a Birmingham here? That's what it costs to be a member of your Citizens' Council, whose efforts are not thwarted by courts which give sit-in demonstrators legal immunity, prevent school boards from expelling students who participate in mob activities and would place federal referees at the board of voter registers.

Law enforcement can be called only after these things occur, but your Citizens' Council prevents them from happening. Why else did only 350 Negroes attend a so-called mass voter registration meeting that outside agitators worked 60 days to organise in Selma?

White Citizens' Council, 'Ask Yourself This Important Question: What Have I Personally Done to Maintain Segregation?', *The Selma Times Journal*, 9 June 1963, p 3.

Source B: Janet E Wolfe, 'Civil Rights: My Participation in the Last Day of the Selma-Montgomery March', 25 March 1965

Wolfe was a white college student from Colorado who joined the third Selma to Montgomery March on the last day and wrote this account shortly afterwards.

After wading in a mixture of mud, rain, and old orange peels for 5 hours, we began marching through the Negro section [of Montgomery]. The spectators were jubilant. There were many old people and mothers with small children. One woman in a wheelchair was vigorously waving with both hands. Then the iceberg descended! We entered the white community. Most people made no response at all ...

Local dignitaries sat stony-faced in a balcony at the Jefferson Davis Hotel. We waved. There was no response ... When we arrived at the capitol, we were seated on the pavement that extended solidly beyond the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, a long block from the capitol. This church was where Martin Luther King began the bus boycott in 1955. Among the galling things we saw were the confederate flags sewn on the federalized National Guardsmen's uniforms. A Montgomery policeman not far from me tightly gripped his billy club and glared all afternoon ...

Many people ask why 'outside agitators' go to Alabama. We are not outside agitators, we are citizens of the United States, and Alabama was not being run according to the principles of democratic government. The unconcerned people of Nazi Germany minded their own business while Hitler rose and murdered six million Jews. The right to vote is basic and non-negotiable. It is not a right that has to be earned, but a right that has existed since the founding of the nation.

Janet E. Wolfe, 'Civil Rights: My Participation in the Last Day of the Selma-Montgomery March', 25 March 1965, www.crmvet.org/lets/m2mwolfe.htm,

Questions

1. Explain the context of Source A.
2. What does Source A indicate about the methods used by the White Citizens' Council to impede the civil rights movement?
3. Account for the perspective of Source B.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify the main civil rights groups involved in the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
2. Describe the aims and methods used in the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
3. Evaluate the roles of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr during the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
4. Describe the role of President Johnson in the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
5. Construct a mindmap to show the outcomes of the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.
6. Explain King's role in the Selma Voting Rights Campaign.

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Outline the key events of the March on Washington.
2. Outline the key events of the Mississippi Freedom Summer.
3. Describe the role of opposition groups during the Mississippi Freedom Summer.
4. Describe the roles of civil rights leaders in the March on Washington.
5. Outline the aims and methods of SNCC during the Mississippi Freedom Summer.
6. Outline the role of President Johnson in the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964).
7. Describe the social and political changes that resulted from the *Civil Rights Act*.

Explain

1. Explain the significance of the March on Washington.
2. Explain the outcomes of the Mississippi Freedom Summer.
3. Explain the role of President Kennedy in the development of the Civil Rights Bill.
4. Explain the significance of the *Civil Rights Act*.
5. Explain how the roles played by President Kennedy and President Johnson affected the success of the civil rights movement.
6. Account for the successes and failures of Mississippi Freedom Summer.

Evaluate

1. How significant was legislative change to the success of the civil rights movement?
2. To what extent did opposition groups impede the success of the civil rights movement?
3. Assess the impact of leadership on the achievements of the civil rights movement.
4. Assess King's role in the events of the civil rights movement.
5. Evaluate the social and political changes that resulted from the civil rights movement.

Integrate sources

1. Explain the aims of the March on Washington. In your response, refer directly to Source A.

Source A: William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*.

King delivered the finale at the Lincoln Memorial, but the tone for the day was set in an opening address by A. Phillip Randolph, the seventy-four-year-old trade unionist who was the official leader of the March on Washington. Randolph agreed with King on the need for integration and racial equality in the South, but he linked those objectives to a broader national and interracial struggle for economic and social justice. 'We are the advance guard of a massive moral revolution for jobs and freedom,' he told the crowd that stretched out for more than a mile before him... It was critical to end segregation in southern states and restaurants, the union leader insisted, but those accommodations will mean little to those who cannot afford them.'

WP Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, Norton, New York, 2014, pp x–xi.

2. Evaluate the significance of the *Civil Rights Act*. In your response, refer directly to Source B.

Source B: Bernard Grofman (ed.), *Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act*

In conjunction with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 totally transformed the shape of American race relations. Supporters of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 sought, at minimum, the elimination of segregation of the races in publicly supported schools, hospitals, public transportation, and other public spaces, and an end to open and blatant racial discrimination in employment practices. Judged in those terms, the act is a remarkable success story. If ever any piece of legislation showed the power of the central government to change deeply entrenched patterns of behaviour, it is the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

B Grofman (ed.), *Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act*, University of Virginia, 2000, p 1.

Going further

Create

1. Create an integrated and annotated timeline of the civil rights movement between 1963 and 1965, referring to the events that occurred during the March on Washington, Mississippi Freedom Summer and the Selma to Montgomery March.

Examine primary sources for yourself

2. In groups of two or three, prepare a presentation that responds to one of the following:
 - a. Investigate the Freedom Songs and explain why these songs were important to the success of the civil rights movement. Make specific use of three songs to support your argument.
 - b. Compile a range of at least five images from one of the events of the civil rights movement between 1963 and 1965, noting where they were published. Explain how these images affected the success of civil rights movement.
 - c. Create a biography of an African American woman who was involved in the civil rights campaigns of 1957–65. Your biography needs to include details about her role and three primary sources to illustrate.

Watch

1. Watch *Eyes on the Prize* (1987) episodes 4–6. Hold a class debate to evaluate the success of the civil rights movement up to 1965.

Prepare revision notes

1. Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the key events of each campaign and the significance of each campaign, noting the campaign's impact on the civil rights movement, leaders, the media, opposition groups and social and political change (as applicable).

Campaign	Key events	Significance

Endnotes

- 1 DJ Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, Quill/William Morrow, New York, 1999, p 295.

Chapter

5

Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X

FIGURE 5.1 Martin Luther King and Malcolm X met only once, in the halls of the US Capitol Building after watching the filibuster in the Senate during its hearing on the *Civil Rights Act*, 26 March 1964.

Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X were not the only leaders of the civil rights era, but they were two of the most prominent. Their beliefs and aims profoundly shaped the nature of the movement, as did their advocacy of specific methods to achieve those aims. At first glance, King and Malcolm X seem to represent opposite ends of the civil rights movement, with King the embodiment of nonviolence and integration, and Malcolm X representing self-defence and Black separatism. Yet the beliefs, aims and methods of both leaders changed as they responded to events in the United States and the world, and to key experiences in their own lives. Significantly, these influences brought their beliefs, aims and methods closer together, as Malcolm X came to understand the importance of African American engagement in politics, and King began to grapple with the slow pace of change and to question the impact of US militarism on African American lives.

This chapter will explain the significance of:

- the beliefs, aims and methods of Martin Luther King 1955–65
- the beliefs, aims and methods of Malcolm X 1952–63
- the beliefs, aims and methods of Malcolm X 1964–65
- the beliefs, aims and methods of Martin Luther King 1965–68
- King's assassination (1968)

Martin Luther King Jr, 1955–65

Martin Luther King Jr's commitment to civil rights was underpinned by strong, lifelong Christian beliefs. He saw his faith as a source of great strength, which enabled him to endure the threat of violence and death on a daily basis. He called on civil rights activists to love their enemies, secure in the knowledge that God was with them in their struggles.

King sought full equality for African Americans so that all might participate in the promise of the 'American Dream', a belief that all US citizens should enjoy freedom, equality and democratic rights, and have the opportunity to improve their lives through hard work. To this end, he campaigned to end segregation and to secure voting rights. His lived experience in the South informed his understanding that segregation did not ensure equality, but perpetuated social, political and economic disadvantage for African Americans. Using nonviolent direct action, he aimed to convince the US government to provide leadership and create legislation that supported the cause of desegregation. His commitment to nonviolent direct action was unwavering, along with his firm leadership as a speaker and negotiator for the movement.

Timeline 5.1: Beliefs, aims and methods of Martin Luther King Jr, 1955–65

- 1955** ▪ 5 December: King chosen to lead the MIA
- 1957** ▪ 10 January: King co-founded the SCLC
- 1960** ▪ 19 October: King participated in a sit-in at Rich's Department Store and was arrested.
- 1961** ▪ 15 December: King joined SNCC's Albany Campaign
- 1963** ▪ 3 April: SCLC launched the Birmingham Campaign
 - 28 August: King led the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
- 1964** ▪ September: SCLC participated in the St Augustine Movement in Florida
- 1965** ▪ 21 March: King led the Selma to Montgomery March

King's beliefs

Martin Luther King Jr was born into a middle-class Southern family that was deeply involved in the Southern Black church. His grandfather and father both served as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. King's father, Martin Luther King Sr, a civil rights activist and executive officer of the Atlanta branch of the NAACP, was a major influence in King Jr's life.

As a teenager, King had rejected the literalist interpretation of the Christian gospel, which emphasised miracles, the resurrection of Jesus and the Virgin birth. He had been impressed with Henry David Thoreau's essay 'Civil Disobedience' (1874), in which Thoreau argued that individuals had a duty to oppose laws that were unjust. He decided to become a Christian minister so that he could serve humanity and pursue Thoreau's call to fight injustice from the pulpit.

King enrolled in Crozer Theological Seminary at the age of 18 to study for the ministry. While at Crozer, King read Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907). Rauschenbusch was a theologian who had developed a Christian critique of capitalism. King concluded that religion should not simply concern itself with saving people's souls. He also believed that religion should address 'the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them'.¹

Perhaps the most important influence on King's beliefs was the life and writings of the Indian independence leader Gandhi. King was deeply impressed by Gandhi's use of nonviolent protest to challenge the control of the British over India. He noted the similarities between Gandhi's philosophy and the teachings of Jesus Christ to 'love your enemies'. King resolved to apply Gandhi's nonviolent approach to the civil rights struggle in the United States.

King's aims

For much of his time as a civil rights leader, King aimed to achieve social equality between Black and white Americans. He believed this could be best accomplished through the integration of African Americans into white American society, so that African Americans could access the same facilities and the same opportunities as white Americans, thereby realising the promise of the 'American Dream'. As a well-educated member of the Black middle-class, King felt the humiliations of segregation keenly. In spite of his education and his social class, he still suffered racial abuse in the South. For King, the policy of 'separate but equal' had failed – true equality could only be achieved by desegregation.

Methods of nonviolent direct action

King used a range of nonviolent methods in his campaigns for desegregation. In 1956, he delivered a sermon in Montgomery's Holt Street Baptist Church in which he declared that 'the strong man is the man who will not hit back' and that activists must resist the temptation to use violence, warning that the legacy of violence would be 'an endless reign of meaningless chaos' for future generations.

Boycotts

Boycotts were a highly successful nonviolent method advocated by King. The sustained economic boycott used against private bus companies during the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56) contributed to the success of that campaign and inspired other civil rights groups to employ similar methods such as the NAACP's Christmas shopping boycott in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1961 and SNCC's boycott of Washington merchants in 1966. King also used boycotts in the Birmingham Campaign in 1963 targeting businesses that refused to hire African Americans or had segregated facilities.

Speeches

Having grown up in the Black Protestant church where long and passionate sermons were the norm, King had developed a masterful command of language, rhetoric and allusion. He was a highly accomplished speaker and used this skill to great effect. Between his early days as leader of the MIA and his assassination in 1968, he travelled over 9 million kilometres and spoke more than 2500 times at rallies, meetings and conferences across the country. His frequent biblical references and allusions to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, patriotic American anthems and much-loved hymns successfully penetrated the psyche of his audiences. King aimed to inspire African Americans to persist with their just cause. He also wanted to convince white Americans that support for civil rights was a Christian and American response. In addition to his 'I Have a Dream' (1963) speech, King's most significant speeches in this period included the Montgomery Bus Boycott speech (1955), his acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony (1964) and 'Our God is Marching On' (1965).

Marches

Marching for civil rights was another of King's key methods of nonviolent direct action. He led several marches, such as those during the Birmingham Campaign, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. Marches served to spread awareness of civil rights campaigns *and* to provoke racist authorities to react. This was intended to demonstrate to white Americans how a peaceful march for freedom and basic rights was being met with violence and suppression, in the hope that this would convince them of the righteousness of the civil rights cause.

Prison

King was arrested more than 20 times during protests. Rather than being ashamed of himself, King's arrests were used to shame his jailers for their unjust laws. King occasionally broke the law to provoke white authorities to arrest him, attracting media attention, and thereby publicising his cause. King's unwavering commitment in the face of arrest and his calls for the Christian forgiveness of his jailers earned him widespread respect in the white community. His frequent arrests tapped into the veneration of martyred Christian saints who had faced arrest and persecution for their beliefs in the time of the Roman Empire. Gandhi had also encouraged nonviolent protesters to submit to arrest as a demonstration of their commitment to nonviolence and to their cause. As King wrote during one of his incarcerations in Birmingham in 1967: 'Our purpose when practising civil disobedience is to call attention to the injustice or to an unjust law which we seek to change.'

Negotiation

King believed that once nonviolent direct action had 'created a crisis', negotiation with white officials could follow. His prominence in the civil rights movement and worldwide recognition meant that US presidents were willing to make use of his expertise to advise their civil rights policy, to both ward off further civil rights 'crises' and boost their own civil rights credentials.

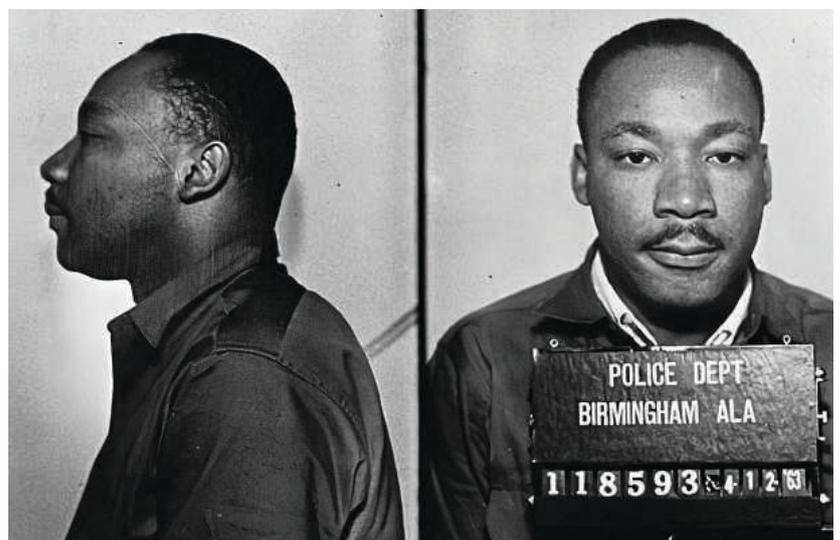


FIGURE 5.2 Martin Luther King Jr arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, on a charge of 'loitering', after attempting to attend a court hearing for a man accused of assaulting Ralph Abernathy, 4 September 1958

As well as his negotiations with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, King entered discussions with white officials to find a solution to the problem of segregation. While negotiation with Montgomery leaders had failed during the bus boycott, his negotiations during the Birmingham Campaign were hailed as a significant breakthrough by civil rights activists who saw it as vindication of the nonviolent approach. His willingness to negotiate with white civic leaders in Selma also won him concessions and popular support.

Leadership

King's prominence led other civil rights groups to call on his support to help publicise their protests. King actively supported CORE and SNCC activists during sit-ins, the Freedom Rides and the Mississippi Freedom Summer. He also helped lead campaigns in conjunction with local civil rights groups such as the Birmingham Campaign and the Selma Voting Rights Campaign. In addition, King played an important leadership role within the MIA and SCLC.

Source Study 5.1 Beliefs, aims and methods of Martin Luther King Jr, 1955–65

Source A: Extract from Martin Luther King Jr, *Strive Towards Freedom*, 1958

The threats continued. Almost every day someone warned me that he had overheard white men making plans to get rid of me ... One night towards the end of January I settled into bed late, after a strenuous day. Coretta had already fallen asleep and just as I was about to doze off the telephone rang. An angry voice said, 'Listen, n-----, we've taken all we want from you: before next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.' I hung up but I couldn't sleep. It seemed that all my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached saturation point ... In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. 'I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.' At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: 'Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.'

Martin Luther King Jr, cited in C West (ed.), *The Radical King*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2015, pp 7–8.

Source B: Martin Luther King, 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail', 1963

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation ...

We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: 'Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?' 'Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?' We decided to schedule our direct action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year.

Martin Luther King Jr, 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail', 1963, billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/martin-luther-king-jr-letter-from-birmingham-jail-1963

Questions

1. What does Source A reveal about the importance of King's beliefs?
2. What were the steps of King's nonviolent campaigns as outlined in Source B?
3. How were the steps outlined in Source B applied to the Birmingham campaign?
4. Choose one of King's speeches or sermons from the period 1955–65 and explain how it demonstrates King's beliefs and aims.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Outline Martin Luther King Jr's beliefs with regards to civil rights.
2. Identify the reasons for King's beliefs.
3. Describe King's aims for the civil rights movement up to 1965.
4. Construct a mindmap to show the methods used by King to achieve civil rights up to 1965.

Malcolm X, 1952–63

Unlike King, Malcolm X's early life was marked by poverty, violence and misfortune in the north of the United States. Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. His father, Earl, was a lay preacher in the Baptist church and along with Malcolm's mother, Louise, was a committed supporter of Marcus Garvey, a civil rights activist of the 1910s and 1920s who advocated **Black nationalism** and **Black self-sufficiency**. The Little family was driven out of Omaha by the KKK when Malcolm was still a baby. His family house in Lansing, Michigan, was then burnt down by another white supremacist group known as the Black Legion. It was rumoured that the Black Legion had thrown Malcolm's father under a streetcar in 1931, causing his death. With his mother unable to cope alone with eight children during the Great Depression, Malcolm was made a ward of the state and started a life of delinquency. By the age of 21, he was in prison for burglary.

While in prison, Malcolm Little changed his name to Malcolm X to replace the surname 'Little', which was the surname of the slave master who had once enslaved his ancestors. The 'X' signified his unknown name that had been stolen from him by slave traders. Malcolm X also became a follower of Elijah Muhammad, the leader of a sect known as the Nation of Islam (NOI). While the NOI appropriated some Islamic ideas and traditions, it was not truly Islamic. Following his release from prison, Malcolm X's beliefs centred on those of the NOI. His aims grew out of the teachings of NOI, which argued for **Black separatism** on the basis that white people were 'devils'. To achieve these aims, Malcolm X worked tirelessly to build up the NOI through evangelism and engagement with the mass media.

Black nationalism

the belief that African Americans are members of a distinct Black nation and should strive for economic, political and social empowerment and Black pride

Black self-sufficiency

the idea that African Americans should aim to become economically independent and should only support African American businesses

Black separatism

the belief that African Americans should not integrate, but should live separately from white Americans, on the basis that white Americans were 'devils' and black people were racially superior

Timeline 5.2: Beliefs, aims and methods of Malcolm X, 1952-63

1952	7 August: Malcolm X released from prison
1953	June: Malcolm X began working full-time for the NOI
1959	13-17 July: <i>The Hate that Hate Produced</i> screened
1960	Launch of the NOI newspaper <i>Mr Muhammad Speaks</i> (renamed <i>Muhammad Speaks</i>)
1963	29 September: Malcolm X appointed National Minister of the NOI

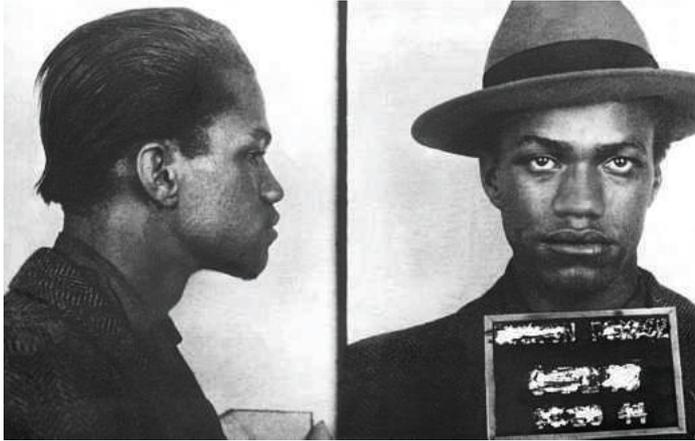


FIGURE 5.3 Mugshot of Malcolm X, aged 18, charged with larceny, Boston, 1944. He received a one-year probation for this offence, but was arrested against in 1946 and received an eight-year jail sentence.



FIGURE 5.4 Elijah Muhammad, 1964

Malcolm X's beliefs

Shortly after his release from prison in August 1952, Malcolm X became a minister in the NOI. He was based in Harlem in New York, where he told his African American NOI audiences, 'We are black first and everything else second.' Until 1964, Malcolm X embraced the beliefs of the NOI, advocating the God-ordained role of Elijah Muhammad and Black supremacy.

Elijah Muhammad as God's Messenger

Elijah Muhammad became the leader of the NOI in 1934 after its founder, Wallace Fard Muhammad, mysteriously disappeared. Malcolm X accepted the NOI teachings that Wallace Fard Muhammad had been God in person and that Elijah Muhammad, Fard's successor, was a messenger sent by God.

He frequently quoted Elijah Muhammad's teachings in his speeches to demonstrate this belief.

Black supremacy

Malcolm X also believed in the NOI teaching that African people were the Original Humans at the time of creation and that the white race had been created as a race of 'devils' who had oppressed black people for 6000 years. To counter the impact of white oppression, African Americans needed to recover their history, culture and self-esteem, and refuse to engage in the 'white' vices of alcohol, drugs, crime and gambling. Although the NOI did adopt some Biblical teachings, Christianity itself was rejected as the 'white man's religion'.

Malcolm X's aims

Malcolm X's key aim was the expansion of the NOI, so that its call for Black separatism, Black nationalism and Black self-sufficiency could be realised.

Black separatism

Malcolm X and the NOI promoted Black separatism by encouraging African Americans to adopt high moral standards and set themselves apart from the white races. As such, the NOI forbade its members from participating in white society, including voting in elections. Malcolm X strongly opposed the civil rights movement's advocacy of integration and derided its efforts to secure the right to vote. He banned members of the NOI from participating in civil rights marches and sit-ins.

Black nationalism

Malcolm X encouraged Black pride in African American history and culture. To this end he called on African Americans to create their own cultural institutions and celebrate their African heritage. He also echoed the NOI's call for the creation of a separate African American nation-state in the United States, arguing that this would be just compensation for the years of unpaid labour provided by African American slaves.

Another key aspect of Black nationalism was the right to resist white violence. Where King had urged civil rights advocates not to resist against white extremist violence, Malcolm X argued that African Americans had a right to self-defence and a moral obligation to defend other African Americans from police or extremist violence 'by any means necessary'. The NOI had its own self-defence unit, the Fruit of Islam, to protect NOI members.

Black self-sufficiency

A further aim of Malcolm X and the NOI was Black self-sufficiency. The NOI established its own restaurants, clothing, housing and food stores, and purchased thousands of acres of land for food production in Michigan, Alabama and Georgia. This provided housing and employment for NOI members. Given his own impoverished childhood, Malcolm X had a deep understanding of the poor economic and social conditions faced by many African Americans, especially in the ghettos of the northern cities. Seeing economic prosperity and independence as crucial, Malcolm X called on the members of the NOI to support NOI restaurants and stores.

Malcolm X's methods

The methods employed by Malcolm X at this time were centred on the expansion of the NOI and the promotion of Elijah Muhammad's leadership. Malcolm X established new NOI temples (later renamed mosques) and spread NOI ideas through speeches and interviews. He also openly opposed the civil rights movement, calling on African Americans to join the NOI instead. At an NOI rally in Philadelphia on 29 September 1963, Elijah Muhammad appointed Malcolm X the National Minister of the Nation of Islam. 'This is my most faithful, hardworking minister,' Muhammad declared. 'He will follow me until he dies.'

Evangelism for the NOI

Malcolm X was an energetic and charismatic figure who attracted many people to Elijah Muhammad's message. Malcolm X worked hard to expand the number of NOI temples. Starting in Detroit, Malcolm X recruited converts in bars and nightclubs in Black slums. His efforts tripled the number of adherents to NOI Temple No. 1 in Detroit. Malcolm X then travelled to Boston, Philadelphia and New York, where he recruited enough converts to establish a new temple, Temple No. 11, in Boston. In May 1954, Malcolm X became the leader of Temple No. 7 in Harlem, a Black neighbourhood in New York City, and greatly expanded its membership. By 1955, he had established another three temples, Temple No. 13 in Springfield, Massachusetts, No. 14 in Hartford, Connecticut, and No. 15 in Atlanta, Georgia. Between 1953 and 1955 the number of NOI members jumped from 1200 to 6000.

Promotion of NOI ideas

In addition to evangelism and the establishment of NOI temples, Malcolm X wanted to spread the ideas of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI beyond the African American ghettos. In 1958 he was contacted by an African American journalist, Louis Lomax, who worked for WNTA, a television station based in Newark, New Jersey. Lomax was interested in the NOI's promotion of Black self-sufficiency and Black nationalism. Lomax and a white journalist, Mike Wallace, were given permission by Elijah Mohammad to film an NOI rally and interview Elijah Mohammad and Malcolm X.

Lomax and Wallace's documentary, *The Hate that Hate Produced* (1959) was a highly sensationalised program that demonised the NOI as an organisation of white-hating, violent 'black fascists'. White audiences were shocked, while many in the civil rights movement distanced themselves from Malcolm X, appalled at the impact the program could have on their own goals. In the long term, the program provoked an ongoing association between the NOI and violence. However, the documentary also provided the NOI with extensive publicity. By 1961, NOI membership had soared to an estimated 60 000 people and included African American middle-class professionals and tradespeople.

Malcolm X, meanwhile, had risen to national attention. His speaking style and forthright views on Black separatism, Black nationalism and the right to self defence made him a popular speaker at university campuses, including Howard University (a historically Black university), Cornell University and Michigan State University, where he addressed Black and white middle-class audiences. He also engaged in debates with civil rights leaders, such as Bayard Rustin and James Farmer, over the issue of integration. Malcolm X's insightful but blunt statements on racism and violence were eagerly sought by the press, radio and television for their shock value. The media's exploitation of Malcolm X certainly swelled their own profits, but it also enabled him to reach a much wider audience.

Journalists were particularly interested in sensationalising Malcolm X's attitude to violence. They frequently characterised his promotion of self-defence as evidence that he was in favour of violence, contrasting him with the 'Christian' and 'nonviolent' King. In an effort to counter the negative publicity about the NOI in the mainstream mass media, Malcolm X launched the newspaper *Mr Muhammad Speaks* in 1960 (renamed *Muhammad Speaks* in 1961) which printed the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and featured NOI-friendly articles.

Opposition to the civil rights movement

Malcolm X was openly scathing of the mainstream civil rights movement and its aim of integration, and he counselled African Americans to join the NOI instead and support its call for separatism. He argued that efforts of the civil rights movement to enact laws to enforce integration were misguided. Whenever African Americans demonstrated for integration, Malcolm X observed, 'instead of arresting the discriminators, the law arrests the demonstrators.' On this basis, he denigrated the nonviolent methods of King and other civil rights leaders, arguing that King's advocacy of nonviolence 'played into the hands of white oppressors' and made African Americans into defenceless 'docile slaves' rather than freedom fighters. He had no faith that American institutions would allow integration, and therefore argued for Black separatism as the only real option.

Yet Malcolm X could not ignore the growing influence of the civil movement and was beginning to realign his thinking in light of its prominence and successes. On 5 May 1960 he delivered a lecture at an NAACP-sponsored event at Queen's College, New York. Later that month he organised the Harlem Freedom Rally on behalf of the NOI. But instead of promoting the NOI, he spoke about the need for all Black people to unite in the cause of freedom, equality and justice. At the Harlem Unity Rally on 10 August 1963, Malcolm X continued to advocate Black separatism, but he also saw the importance of Black unity across all organisations in the fight for freedom.

Malcolm X was also growing impatient with the NOI's lack of action. While the NOI preached 'self-defence' and defence of fellow African Americans, it did very little to act on this creed. As an NOI minister, Malcolm X had organised a range of low-key civil rights protests, such as a march in Harlem protesting the arrest and assault by police of NOI member Johnson Hinton in 1957. He had also gone to Los Angeles following the shooting of NOI member Ronald T Stokes by the police in April 1962. Malcolm X had wanted to take retaliatory action, but Elijah Muhammad refused to allow it. Malcolm X instead held a rally at Temple No. 7 to protest police brutality.



FIGURE 5.5 Malcolm X speaking at the Harlem Unity Rally, 10 August 1963

Malcolm X's suspension from the NOI

The assassination of President Kennedy sent shockwaves across the United States. Given that Malcolm X had frequently criticised Kennedy, Elijah Muhammad gave strict instructions that he was not to make any negative comments on Kennedy's death. On 1 December 1963, however, Malcolm X gave a speech titled 'God's Judgement of White America' at the Manhattan Center in New York. While the speech made no reference to Kennedy at all, in the question-and-answer session that followed, he alleged that Kennedy's promotion of violence, as evidenced by the US involvement in the **Vietnam War**, had turned on the President himself. He called this situation a case of 'the chickens coming home to roost', adding that this made him glad. This statement was interpreted by the press to mean that Malcolm X was happy about the President's death. Malcolm X tried to explain that he had never meant to imply that he was happy about the President's death, but the press continued to print their own more scandalous interpretation. In response, Elijah Muhammad suspended Malcolm X from the NOI for 90 days.

Vietnam War

a Cold War conflict fought between North Vietnam (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and South Vietnam (supported by the United States and its allies) from 1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975

Source Study 5.2 Beliefs, aims and methods of Malcolm X, 1952–63

Source A: Malcolm X, interviewed by Eleanor Fischer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1961

Fischer: Well, how can the black man develop himself as a separate society?

Malcolm X: Well, it's easy, he's separate already. The fact that you have Harlem. The fact that you have the Negro ghetto and the so-called slum. He's already separate. The fact that he's a second-class citizen is a political separation. The fact that he's the last hired and the first fired is an

economic separation. Only in this form of separation, the black man is exploited. The honorable Elijah Muhammad says we should be separate all right, but in this separate state, or separate existence, the black man should be given the opportunity and the incentive to do for himself what the white man has done for himself ...

Fischer: Well in other words then, you think that the Negro has first to raise himself to a status of equality with the white community? ...

Malcolm X: When you are equal with another person the problem of integration doesn't even arise. It doesn't come up. I mean, Chinese in this country aren't asking for integration. The Japanese aren't asking for integration. The only minority in America that's asking for integration is the so-called Negro. Primarily because he is inferior, not inherently inferior, but economically, socially [and] politically inferior.

Interview with Malcolm X by Eleanor Fischer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1961
malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2013/05/eleanor-fischer-interviews-malcolm-x1961.html

Source B: Malcolm X, interviewed by Alex Haley, *Playboy*, May 1963

Alex Haley was an African American author. He co-authored *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and was the author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976).

Haley: You refer to whites as 'the guilty' and 'the enemy'; you predict divine retribution against them; and you preach absolute separation from the white community. Do not these views substantiate the fact that your movement is predicated on race hatred?

Malcolm X: Sir, it's from Mr. Muhammad that the black masses are learning for the first time in 400 years the real truth of how the white man brainwashed the black man, kept him ignorant of his true history, robbed him of his self-confidence. The black masses for the first time are understanding that it's not a case of being anti-white or anti-Christian, but it's a case of seeing the true nature of the white man. We're anti-evil, anti-oppression, anti-lynching. You can't be 'anti' those things unless you're also anti-the oppressor and the lyncher. You can't be anti-slavery and pro-slavemaster; you can't be anti-crime and pro-criminal. In fact, Mr. Muhammad teaches that if the present generation of whites would study their own race in the light of their true history, they would be anti-white themselves.

Alex Haley, *Playboy*, May, 1963; alexhaley.com/2020/07/24/alex-haley-interviews-malcolm-x/

Source C: Malcolm X, interviewed by John Leggett and Herman Blake, University of California, Berkeley, 11 October 1963

Malcolm X: The Muslims who have accepted the religion of Islam and follow the religious guidance of the honourable Elijah Muhammad have never bombed any churches, have never murdered any little girls as was done in Birmingham, have never lynched anybody, have never at any time been guilty of initiating any aggressive acts of violence during the entire thirty-three years or more that the honourable Elijah Muhammad has been teaching us. The charge of violence against us actually stems from the guilt complex that exists in the conscious and subconscious minds of most white people in this country. They know that they've been violent in their brutality against Negroes and they fear that someday the Negro is going to wake up and ... do unto the whites as the whites have done unto us.

We are not a violent group. We are taught by the honourable Elijah Muhammad to obey the law, to respect everyone who respects us. We're taught to display courtesy, to be polite. But we're also taught that at any time, anyone in any way inflicts or seeks to inflict violence upon us we are within our religious rights to retaliate in self-defence to the maximum degree of our ability. We never initiate any violence upon anyone, but if anyone attacks us we reserve the right to defend ourselves. So to accuse us of being violent is like accusing a man who is being lynched, who is being hung on a tree, simply because he struggles vigorously against his lyncher. The victim is accused of violence, but the lyncher is never accused of violence.

Author transcription; Malcolm X, interviewed by Professor John Leggett and Herman Blake (graduate student) (Dept. of Sociology) at the University of California, Berkeley on 11 October 1963, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZMrti8QcPA&t=491s&ab_channel=reelblack;

Questions

1. Compare the value of Sources A and B for a historian investigating the beliefs and aims of Malcolm X.
2. How does Malcolm X defend the accusation that the NOI was a violent organisation in Source C?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define the following terms: 'NOI', 'Black nationalism', 'Black separatism' and 'Black self-sufficiency'.
2. Outline Malcolm X's beliefs.
3. Construct a mindmap to show Malcolm X's aims up to 1963.
4. Describe Malcolm X's methods.
5. How did the media portray Malcolm X? Why?
6. Identify the key differences between the aims of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.

Malcolm X, 1964–65

From 1964, Malcolm X's beliefs, aims and methods underwent a major shift due to his decision to break with the NOI and adopt Sunni Islam. His embrace of orthodox Islamic teachings led him to profess a love for all people, including white people. The break with the NOI meant that he was free from the constraints of Elijah Muhammad and could respond more directly to the issues confronting African Americans. Furthermore, he could now interact with the civil rights movement.

In light of the developments in his beliefs, Malcolm X revised and redirected his aims. While he was no longer focused on expanding the NOI, he still pursued the causes of Black nationalism and Black self-sufficiency. His aim to promote Black nationalism, however, now involved a much greater focus on connecting with Africa, where several states had overthrown their imperial rulers and achieved independence. At the same time, he changed his attitude to the political system, recognising the potential power of the African American vote and the importance of voter registration.

Malcolm X's methods necessarily underwent a transformation too. He established his own civil rights organisation and began to work more closely with the mainstream civil rights movement.

Timeline 5.3: Beliefs, aims and methods of Malcolm X, 1964–65

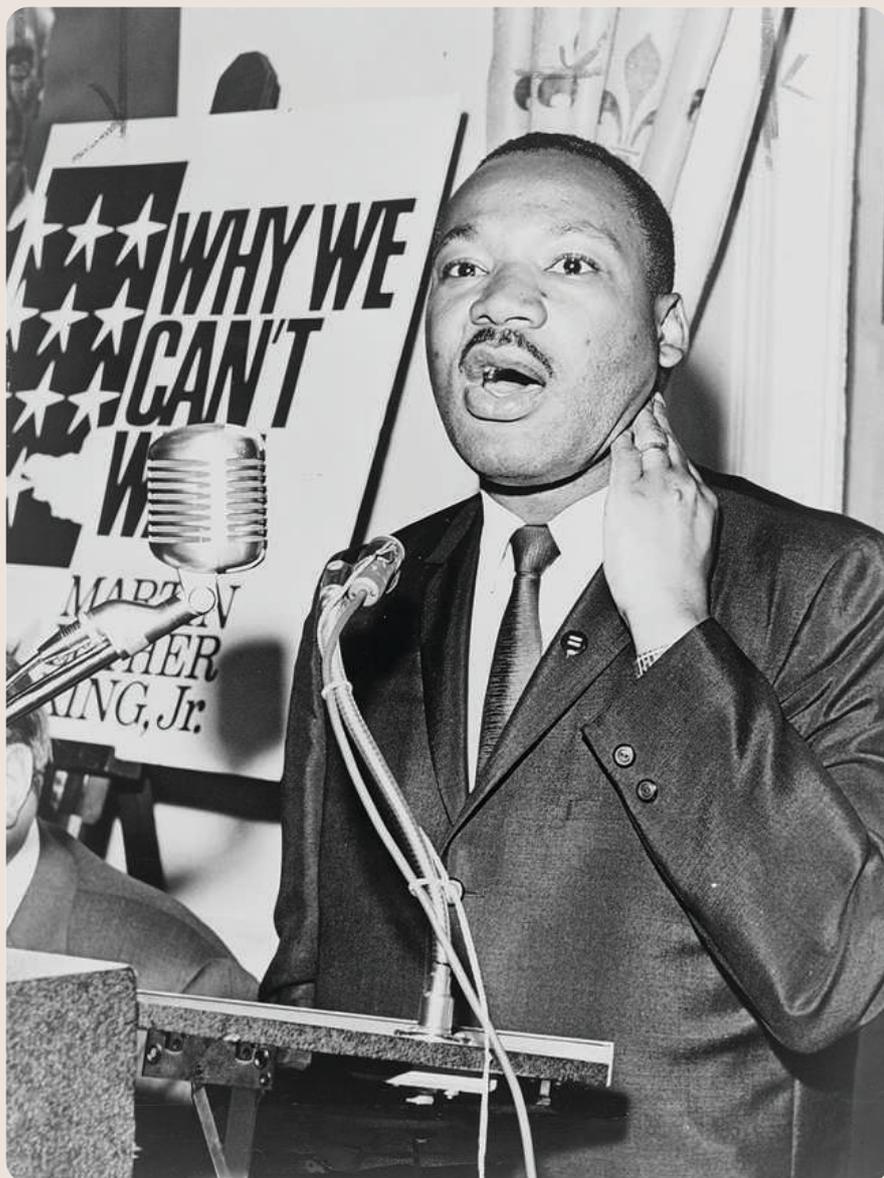
- 1964**
 - 8 March: Malcolm X broke with the NOI
- 1964**
 - 12 March: Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI) established
 - 13 April: Malcolm X began his travels to the Middle East and Africa and undertook a pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca
 - 28 June: Organization of Afro American Unity (OAAU) established
- 1965**
 - 21 February: Malcolm X assassinated

Events that influenced Malcolm X's beliefs, aims and methods

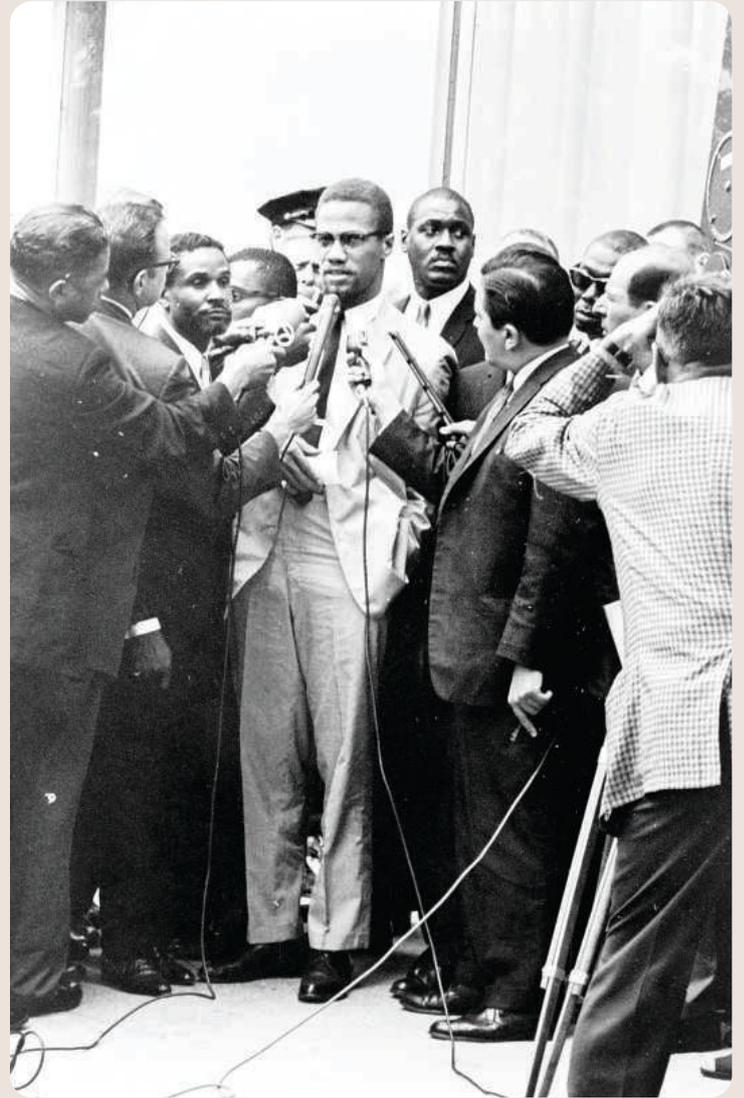
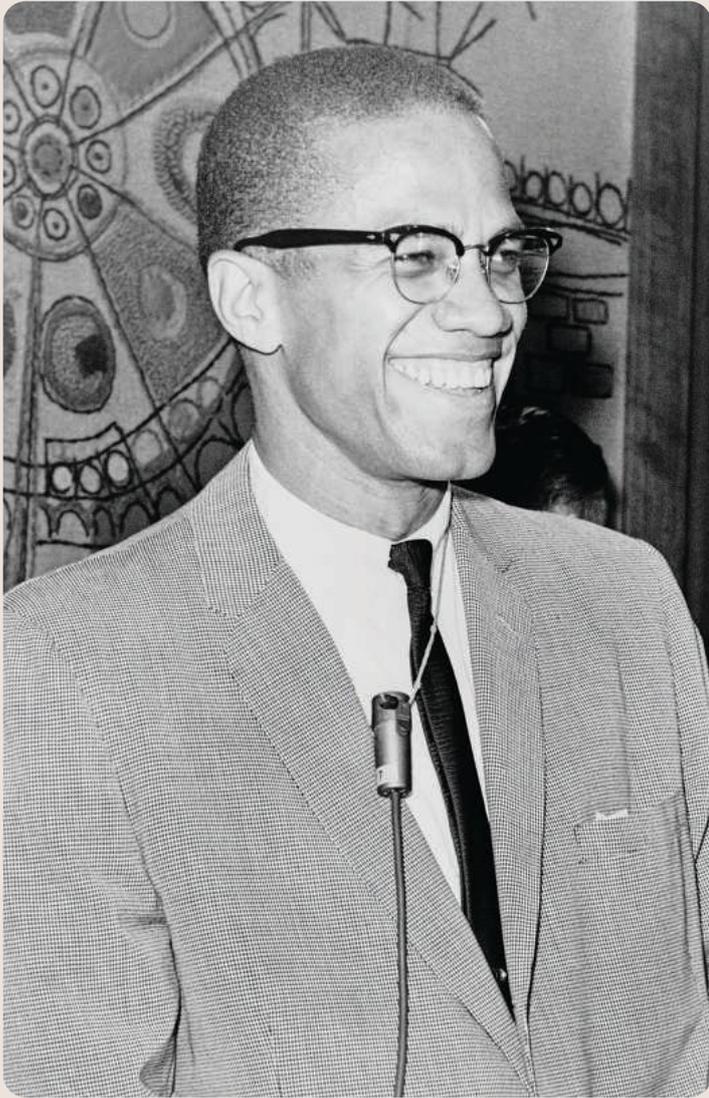
Important events in Malcolm X's personal life led to a shift in his beliefs, aims and methods from 1964 until the end of his life. These events led to a new understanding of Islam, a belief in the potential of politics to change African American lives and the development of closer ties between African Americans and Africa.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR AND MALCOLM X

Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X were not the only leaders of the civil rights era, but they were two of the most prominent.



TOP LEFT FIGURE 5.6 Martin Luther King Jr being arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, on a charge of 'loitering', after attempting to attend a court hearing for a man accused of assaulting Ralph Abernathy, 4 September 1958. **TOP RIGHT FIGURE 5.7** Martin Luther King and Malcolm X at the US Capitol Building, 26 March 1964; **LEFT FIGURE 5.8** Martin Luther King Jr speaking at the launch of his book *Why We Can't Wait*, 8 June 1964; **ABOVE RIGHT FIGURE 5.9** Martin Luther King Jr speaking at a press conference following the Senate debate on the Civil Rights Bill, 26 March 1964.



TOP LEFT FIGURE 5.10 Malcolm X at a press conference at the Hotel Park Sheraton, New York where he announced his break with the NOI, 12 March 1964; **TOP RIGHT FIGURE 5.11** Malcolm X interviewed by reporters, 1964; **LOWER LEFT FIGURE 5.12** Malcolm X at Queen's County Court, 16 June 1964; **LOWER RIGHT FIGURE 5.13** Malcolm X meeting with Crown Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz, Jeddah, April 1964.

Malcolm X leaves the NOI

On 5 March 1964, Elijah Muhammad advised Malcolm X that his suspension was indefinite. Three days later, Malcolm X announced his decision to split with the NOI. He founded his own organisation, Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI), and announced that he would seek to cooperate with the civil rights movement. He also declared that he would establish a Black political party that would encourage African Americans to employ self-defence when necessary.

On 26 March 1964, Malcolm X attended the US Capitol to listen to the debates in the Senate over the Civil Rights Bill. His sole meeting with Martin Luther King Jr, who was also in attendance, occurred on this day. For Malcolm X, interest in the Civil Rights Bill was an indication of his new belief that engagement in the political system could transform living conditions for African Americans. Three days later he gave a speech at the Audubon Ballroom titled 'The Ballot or the Bullet' wherein he gave his support to securing voting rights and called for the development of a united African American voting bloc. Voting rights for African Americans (the ballot) he opined, would avoid the descent into further violence (the bullet).

Malcolm X gave the speech again on 3 April at the Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Illinois. His speech was sponsored by CORE, members of which, along with SNCC members, made up the majority of the audience. In addition to his call for voting rights, Malcolm X stressed how CORE, SNCC and the NAACP shared the goal of Black nationalism with his own MMI. He urged African Americans to 'join any organisation that has a gospel that's for the uplift of the black man.'

Pilgrimage to Mecca

On 13 April Malcolm X embarked on a tour of the Middle East and Africa. He also undertook a pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca, a sacred duty for all Muslims. While on pilgrimage, Malcolm X noted how the pilgrims represented many different racial groups, including white people, and how everyone was united in their purpose. His earlier beliefs about 'white devils' were transformed. He now believed that all people, regardless of skin colour, were potential allies in the fight for justice.

Tour of Africa

Malcolm X also travelled to Egypt, Nigeria and Ghana. Both Ghana and Nigeria were newly independent; Ghana had gained independence from Britain in 1957 and Nigeria in 1960. While in Ghana, Malcolm X gave a speech that called on African nations to petition the UN to recognise the plight of African Americans and build unity between Africans in the United States and Africa. Malcolm X's experiences in Africa strengthened his commitment to **Pan-Africanism**. In the past as a member of the NOI, Malcolm X had certainly noted the potential that African solidarity could have on influencing the US government to reform its treatment of African Americans, but the NOI's opposition to political involvement had prevented the pursuit of a stronger connection with Africa. Now free of the NOI, Malcolm X was able to rethink his earlier beliefs and see how Pan-Africanism could support his goals of Black nationalism.

Pan-Africanism

the belief that all peoples of African descent have common interests and should work together for these interests

The change in Malcolm X's beliefs and aims

On leaving the NOI, Malcolm X had adopted Sunni Islam, the form of Islam practised by the majority of Muslims. Although he now rejected the core beliefs of the NOI, he continued to promote Black nationalism and Black self-sufficiency as key aims. While he remained an advocate of Black separatism, his interpretation had softened to allow political engagement. Malcolm X hoped that African Americans' participation in the democratic process would encourage the adoption of policies that supported their independent

economic development and control over their own communities. He also aimed to develop Pan-Africanism to foster support for the Black freedom struggle in the United States. Malcolm X had been impressed with the African independence movements that had overthrown European colonialism and felt that African nations could help and inspire African Americans in the United States achieve independence from white oppression.

The change in Malcolm X's methods

Malcolm X continued to make speeches to a wide variety of audiences. But he also adopted new methods in the 1964–65 period, including the establishment of a new Islamic organisation, the foundation of his own civil rights group and a commitment to work with the mainstream civil rights movement.

Muslim Mosque Inc. (MMI)

MMI was founded on 12 March 1964 as a religious organisation for former NOI members who had followed Malcolm X out of the NOI. Based in Harlem, in New York City, it espoused Black nationalism and Sunni Islam.

The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU)

On 28 June 1964, Malcolm X formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Through this organisation, he aimed to unite everyone in North and South America who was of African descent into one united force, and then to unite African Americans with Africans living on the African continent. As a racial bloc, all Africans could then work together to further their rights, freedoms and economic prosperity.

Through the OAAU, Malcolm X planned to establish a Black nationalist political party to further the needs of African Americans, and educate them about the importance of voting as a racial bloc. He also wanted African Americans to exercise their right to bear arms to protect themselves against racist violence. He called for African American control over schools that mainly served African Americans, with Black teachers, Black principals, Black board members and texts written by Black educators. Economic self-sufficiency was another cause championed by the OAAU, with calls for African Americans to support Black businesses. Finally, he called on African Americans to solve the moral and social problems within their own communities, given that the police seemed unable to eliminate drugs, gambling and prostitution.

The OAAU used a range of methods to further civil rights, including rallies against police brutality, establishing a 'Liberation School' for local African American children, teaching self-defence classes and launching voter registration programs. It also published its own magazine, *Blacklash*, which would help spread the OAAU to Boston, Massachusetts, and Oakland, California.

Working with the mainstream civil rights movement

Malcolm X believed that militancy was needed to take the civil rights movement forward. He hoped to position the OAAU as an organisation that could provide this strategy and believed that he could attract the support of many CORE and SNCC members. The murders of Medgar Evers, the four African American girls at the 16th Street Baptist Church, the three civil rights workers during Mississippi Freedom Summer and the countless acts of police violence against civil rights activists had taken their toll, leaving young CORE and SNCC workers increasingly disillusioned with nonviolent direct action.

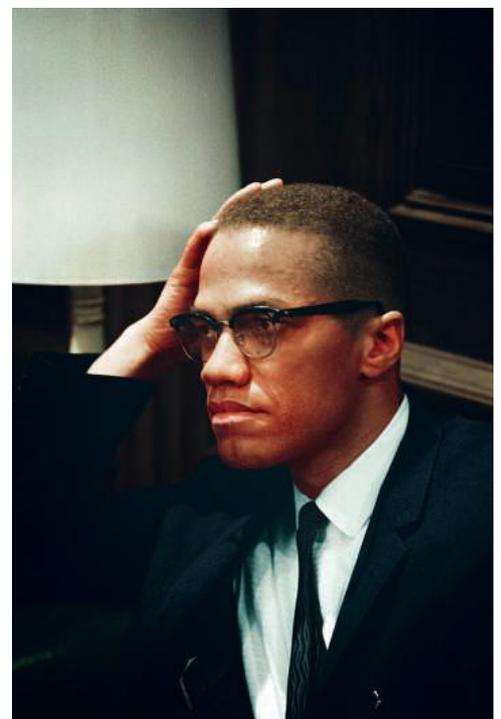


FIGURE 5.14 Malcolm X in attendance at the US Capitol during the debates on the Civil Rights Bill, 26 March 1964, just two weeks after he announced his break with the NOI in March 1964

Speaking at an MFDP rally in Harlem on 20 December 1964, Malcolm X urged the activists to pursue more militant strategies, noting that the people of Nigeria and Ghana had achieved their freedom through ‘anger’ rather than passivity. He contended that sitting around singing ‘We Shall Overcome’ had failed and that a more assertive approach was needed. ‘If they don’t want to deal with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party,’ he reasoned, ‘then we’ll give them something else to deal with. If they don’t want to deal with the Student Nonviolent Committee, then we have to give them an alternative.’

After the disappointing outcome of their efforts to gain recognition of the MFDP, SNCC members had to agree, and began to strengthen their ties with Malcolm X. SNCC leaders invited him to Selma during the Selma Voting Rights Campaign, where he gave an address at the Brown Chapel AME Church on 4 February 1965. The following day, he was interviewed by the press where he stated that he was ‘100 per cent’ for African American ‘access to the ballot’. He also noted that Southerners had best ‘listen to Dr Martin Luther King and give him what he’s asking for, and to give it to him fast, before some other factions come along and try to do it another way.’

Malcolm X’s assassination (1965)

Relations between Malcolm X and the NOI had become increasingly volatile. During 1964 Malcolm X’s car had been bombed and he and his family had received death threats. On 14 February 1965, his house was burned down.

On 21 February 1965, Malcolm X was giving an address for the OAAU at the Audubon Ballroom in Washington Heights, New York. He was fatally shot at close range by three individuals. The autopsy identified 21 gunshot wounds to the chest, left shoulder, arms and legs. Initially, NOI members Talmadge Hayer, Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson were charged with the murder and sentenced to life in prison. Following the Netflix documentary *Who Killed Malcolm X?* (2020), the case was reopened, and on 18 November 2021, Butler and Johnson (having been paroled in 1985 and 1987 respectively) were exonerated. Hayer remained convicted of the crime. He was paroled in 2010.



FIGURE 5.15 Malcolm X is carried on a stretcher by New York police officers following his assassination.

Impact on the civil rights movement

The death of Malcolm X shocked many in the civil rights movement and hardened the divisions among younger civil rights activists. At its convention held on 3 January 1966, CORE replaced James Farmer with Floyd McKissick, a supporter of Black Power, as their new director. McKissick asserted that CORE would now support the right to self-defence and endorse Black Power, which was defined in terms of Black control of economic, political and educational institutions and resources. By the end of the year, most white supporters had left the group. CORE's loss of white financial support ensured the organisation's rapid decline.

Source Study 5.3 Malcolm X, 1964–65

Source A: Malcolm X, 'The Ballot or the Bullet' speech, 1964

This speech was delivered at the King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit on 12 April and is considered the definitive version.

The political philosophy of black nationalism only means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community. The time when white people can come in our community and get us to vote for them so that they can be our political leaders and tell us what to do and what not to do is long gone ...

The economic philosophy of black nationalism only means that we should own and operate and control the economy of our community. You would never have found – you can't open up a black store in a white community. White man won't even patronize you. And he's not wrong. He got sense enough to look out for himself. It's you who don't have sense enough to look out for yourself ...

When we look at other parts of this Earth upon which we live, we find that black, brown, red and yellow people in Africa and Asia are getting their independence. They're not getting it by singing, 'We Shall Overcome.' No, they're getting it through nationalism. It is nationalism that brought about the independence of the people in Asia ... Every nation on the African continent that has gotten its independence brought it about through the philosophy of nationalism. And it will take black nationalism to bring about the freedom of 22 million Afro-Americans, here in this country, where we have suffered colonialism for the past 400 years.

Malcolm X, 'The Ballot or the Bullet', 1964, americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mx.html

Source B: Malcolm X, 'Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro American Unity', 28 June 1964

We want freedom by any means necessary. We want justice by any means necessary. We want equality by any means necessary. We don't feel that in 1964, living in a country that is supposedly based upon freedom, and supposedly the leader of the free world, we don't think that we should have to sit around and wait for some segregationist congressmen and senators and a President from Texas in Washington DC, to make up their minds that our people are now due some degree of civil rights.

Malcolm X, 'Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro American Unity', 28 June 1964, www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1964-malcolm-x-s-speech-founding-rally-organization-afro-american-unity/

Questions

1. Account for the perspective of Source A.
2. Compare the value of Source A and Source B for a historian studying the aims of Malcolm X.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, define 'MMI' and 'OAAU'.
 2. Outline Malcolm X's new beliefs.
 3. Describe how Malcolm X's aims changed as a result of his new beliefs.
 4. Describe how Malcolm X adapted his methods from 1964.
 5. Why did Malcolm X's views appeal to some members of the mainstream civil rights movement?
-

Martin Luther King Jr, 1965–68

King's beliefs remained fixed in their Christian foundations. He maintained throughout his career that to undertake civil rights activism was to do the work of God. However, his aims for the civil rights movement shifted. The unrelenting poverty of the urban ghettos and the riots in African American communities during the 1960s led King to adjust his aims towards a greater focus on economic justice.

While King may have altered his aims for the civil rights movement, he maintained his belief in nonviolent direct action, despite the ongoing violence that met his peaceful protests. For others in the civil rights movement, however, the outbreak of urban riots and the slow pace of change led to frustration, impatience and mistrust in American society. They increasingly rejected King and his methods of nonviolence, contending that a more militant response to racism would achieve the desired results.

Timeline 5.4: Beliefs, aims and methods of Martin Luther King Jr, 1965–68

- 1964** ▪ 8 January: The War on Poverty launched
 - 1965** ▪ 11 August: Start of the Watts Riots
 - 1966** ▪ January: Start of the Chicago Campaign
 - 1967** ▪ 7 June: The March Against Fear
 - 25 March: 'Beyond Vietnam' speech
 - Publication of *Where Do We Go From Here?*
-

Events that influenced King's aims

Several key events in 1965, 1966 and 1967 sharpened King's ideas about the direction of the civil rights movement. While King had long been aware of the economic issues affecting African Americans, the ongoing urban deprivation, the persistence of racist attitudes, the slow pace of change and the outbreak of the Vietnam War shifted his aims towards economic justice. King began to argue more forcefully that there would only be true freedom for African Americans when they had the freedom to wholly participate in the American Dream.

The Watts Riots (1965)

The Los Angeles suburb of Watts was a poor area inhabited by African Americans. Housing and sanitation were substandard, schools were poorly funded and there were few employment opportunities. The area had a long history of urban unrest, coupled with a heavy-handed police response. Between January 1962 and July 1965, a total of 65 Watts residents had been shot and killed by police.

On 11 August 1965, 21-year old Marquette Frye was arrested for drink driving in Watts. When Mrs Frye saw her son being forcibly arrested, she fought with the arresting officers, tearing one officer's shirt. An officer then struck Marquette's head with his nightstick. Meanwhile, hundreds of onlookers were drawn to the scene and began to stone police cars. The melee erupted into violence that lasted six days, resulting in 34 deaths, more than 1000 injuries, nearly 4000 arrests and the destruction of property valued at US\$40 million.

King arrived in Los Angeles in the aftermath of the riots on 17 August 1965. While deploring the riots, he was quick to point out that the problems that led to the violence were 'economic deprivation, social isolation, inadequate housing and general despair'.² During his discussions with local people, King met African American residents who claimed that 'the only way we can ever get anybody to listen to us is to start a riot'.³ This greatly concerned him, because he feared that violence would only result in more African American deaths. His experiences in Watts made him decide to move the SCLC's operations to the North and lead a movement to address the economic problems facing Black people in the nation's urban areas.

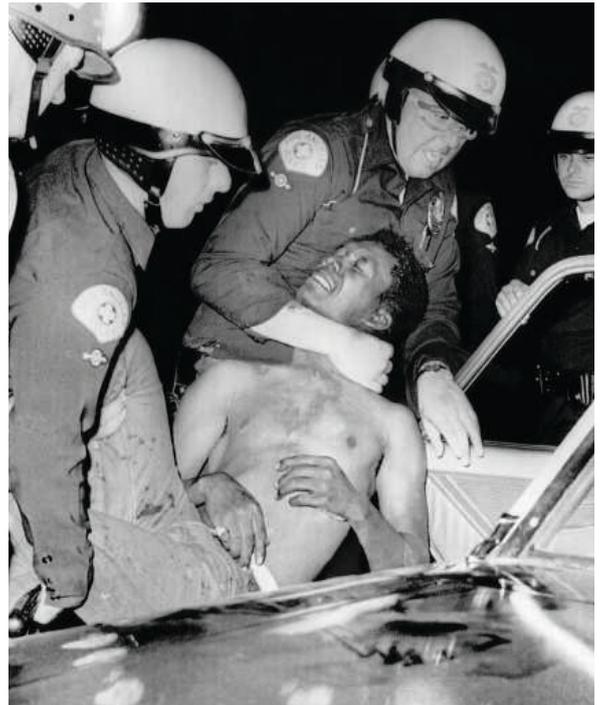


FIGURE 5.16 Police pin down a man during the Watts Riots, 12 August 1965

The Chicago Campaign (1966)

In January 1966, the SCLC initiated its Chicago Campaign. Chicago was chosen as the site for the SCLC's new northern campaign because it was an area where African Americans lived in severe deprivation. Moreover, Chicago already had a strong network of civil rights activists, thanks to the work of the **Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO)**. The CCCO was a civil rights collective that included the Chicago branches of CORE and SNCC, which worked to end discrimination in schools.

The Chicago Campaign marked the expansion of the SCLC's civil rights activities from the South to cities in the North, and was seen as a crucial nonviolent intervention to address economic injustice. King and his family moved to North Lawndale, a Chicago slum, at the end of January 1966 so that he could be closer to the movement. This radical move made national headlines and exposed the poor living conditions of urban African Americans. In an interview on 18 March 1966, King explained that 'the moral force of SCLC's nonviolent philosophy was needed to help eradicate a vicious system which seeks to further colonize thousands of Negroes within a slum environment'.

The Chicago Campaign targeted discriminatory employment and housing policies, poor educational opportunities and limited public transport in African American ghettos. The SCLC also launched Operation Breadbasket, a project to encourage African American consumers to boycott stores with racist hiring practices. Operation Breadbasket in Chicago was based on the program that the SCLC had adopted in Atlanta in 1962.

The methods employed during the Chicago Campaign included demonstrations, rallies outside real estate offices and marches that called for fair housing and economic opportunity. During a march through an all-white neighbourhood on 5 August 1966, the demonstrators were met with racist hostility. Bottles and bricks were thrown at them, and

**Coordinating Council of
Community Organizations
(CCCO)**

a Chicago-based civil rights
organisation

King was struck by a rock. Afterward in a press interview, he noted: 'I have been in many demonstrations all across the South but I can say that have never seen – even in Mississippi and Alabama – mobs as hostile and hate-filled as I've seen in Chicago.' Worse still was the cynicism King faced from members of SNCC, CORE and other young people who had despaired of King's nonviolent approach. At a mass meeting in Chicago, King urged them to have faith in white society, but they responded with booing.

By late August, Chicago's mayor, Richard Daley, was eager to find a way to end the demonstrations. After negotiating with King and various housing boards, a Summit Agreement was announced in which the Chicago Housing Authority promised to build public housing with limited height requirements, and the Mortgage Bankers' Association agreed to make mortgages available regardless of race. King called the agreement 'the most significant program ever conceived to make open housing a reality.' However, after King left Chicago, the city ignored the agreement. In a press conference held on 24 March 1967, King would deplore the mayor's inaction, stating that Daley's failure to act on the Summit Agreement had provided fuel for the detractors of nonviolent direct action.

The March Against Fear (1966)

On 7 June 1966, a young black activist named James Meredith decided to make a solo 'March Against Fear' from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi (354 kilometres), to highlight continuing racial oppression in the Mississippi region. On the second day of the march, a white sniper, later identified as KKK member James Norvell, shot Meredith three times with a 16-gauge shotgun. Meredith was wounded and fell to the road, but fortunately was not severely injured.

When they learned of the shooting, King and other civil rights leaders, including the new leader of SNCC, Stokely Carmichael, and the new leader of CORE, Floyd McKissick, decided to continue the march in Meredith's name. But Carmichael wanted to limit white participation and include the Deacons for Defense and Justice to protect the marchers. While King remained committed to nonviolence and the involvement of white people in the civil rights movement, he agreed to the Deacons' participation, reasoning that while he was willing to risk his own life in the cause of nonviolence, he could not insist that others do the same. The NAACP, however, decided not to be involved. Although the march was still conducted as a nonviolent protest action, the public endorsement of the Deacons by SNCC, SCLC and CORE indicated that the movement had started to shift its attitude on the question of self-defence.



FIGURE 5.17 James Meredith on the ground after being shot by James Norvell, who can be seen in the bushes on the left, 6 June 1966. This photograph, by Jack R Thornell, won the 1967 Pulitzer Prize.

When they reached Greenwood, Mississippi, Carmichael rallied a crowd with the cry, ‘We want Black Power!’ This was not the first time the phrase ‘Black Power’ had been referenced, but it was the first time it was used as a public slogan. Carmichael declared that nonviolence may have worked in the past, but after being beaten and tortured in Mississippi State Penitentiary, he now considered nonviolence useless against vicious racists. ‘The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin’ us,’ he declared, ‘is to take over. We been saying ‘freedom’ for six years and we ain’t got nuthin.’

From the perspective of Carmichael, while the *Civil Rights Act* and *Voting Rights Act* had improved some social and political outcomes for African Americans, the legislation had not stopped racial violence and discrimination. The urban ghettos had continued to seethe with poverty and disadvantage. In the following weeks, SNCC joined CORE in rejecting nonviolent direct action and embraced armed self-defence against extremist violence. They also adopted Black nationalism, urging African Americans to seek self-determination and control of their community institutions. In addition, SNCC Black Power advocates rejected the involvement of whites in their organisation. Carmichael argued that whites should work against racism in their own communities. This led to a significant decline in SNCC’s funding and membership, leaving the organisation facing bankruptcy by 1967.



FIGURE 5.18 Stokely Carmichael at a press conference in Mississippi in 1966. Carmichael, along with others, represented a generational shift in the civil rights movements as activists become frustrated with the slow pace of change and persistent violence.

The Long Hot Summer (1967)

Urban riots continued to erupt regularly across northern America. The Long Hot Summer was a series of 159 riots that occurred over June and July in Atlanta, Boston, Cincinnati, Buffalo, Tampa, Newark, Detroit, Birmingham, Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Rochester, Plainfield, New Britain and Toledo. President Johnson mobilised the US Army to suppress the riots in Detroit; the National Guard was also mobilised on 29 separate occasions. The following year, new legislation was passed to outlaw riots under US federal law, as Title 18, Section 2102 in the *Civil Rights Act* (1968).

The media's role

The media's role was critical after 1965 in shaping mainstream American attitudes to the civil rights movement. Until 1965, African Americans had been predominantly portrayed as nonviolent victims of Southern racism, brutalised in the pursuit of their rights. From the time of the Watts Riots, however, the media provided images of 'dangerous African American men' rampaging through cities, looting, burning and causing chaos.

The media also seized on fractures in the civil rights movement. Carmichael's declaration of 'Black Power' was splashed across the national media as evidence of Black disunity, aggression and menace. Newspapers and magazines across the United States depicted Black Power as a sinister threat and even as a new form of racism. The media also noted the 'frightening' presence of the Deacons for Defense and Justice. A survey in Detroit in 1967 revealed that 57.8 per cent of whites associated Black Power with Black supremacy, rioting and disorder.

An incident during the March Against Fear illustrated this shift in the media. On their way to Jackson, marchers had tried to pitch their tents on the playground of a Black primary school in Canton, Mississippi. State troopers and police descended with tear gas and nightsticks, kicking women and children in order to stop the marchers staying overnight in the school grounds. Unlike the brutality on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the violence at Canton was barely reported and provoked no outrage. The drama provided by urban riots and 'Black Power' had replaced the drama of Southern racists' violence against peaceful protesters.

Martin Luther King Jr's new aims

King and Black Power

While King agreed with some of the objectives of Black Power, he disliked the term, seeing the slogan as 'a cry of pain'. He argued that Black Power's rejection of interracial cooperation and calls for 'retaliatory violence' were unsustainable in the long term. Condemning the advocacy of Black separatism, King maintained that there would be no genuine progress for African Americans 'unless the whole of American society takes a new turn toward greater economic justice'.

However, King agreed with Carmichael that African Americans needed to develop group strength and thereby achieve bargaining power. Programs such as the SCLC's Operation Breadbasket had encouraged boycotting racist stores, and King now began to persuade African Americans to adopt Black self-sufficiency. His 'I've Been to the Mountaintop' (1968) speech urged African Americans to shop at African American-owned stores, buy insurance from African American companies and deposit their money in African American-owned banks as a targeted method to achieve civil rights. King also recognised that elements of Black Power's advocacy of Black nationalism were worthwhile, in that they addressed a psychological need for African Americans to develop a full sense of their history, dignity and worth, after centuries of disparagement by white culture.

A new economic structure

With the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) and the *Voting Rights Act* (1965), the integrationist phase of the civil rights revolution came to an end. King believed that the civil rights movement needed to enter a new phase. In 1964 King had presented an 'Economic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged' to the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey (the same convention that had rejected the MFDP). This document proposed a guaranteed provision of employment and a basic income for all. It also called for improvements to housing, schools and community facilities. King estimated that an investment of US\$50 billion over a decade would be required to eradicate poverty in the United States. The document proclaimed that living free of poverty was a fundamental human right.

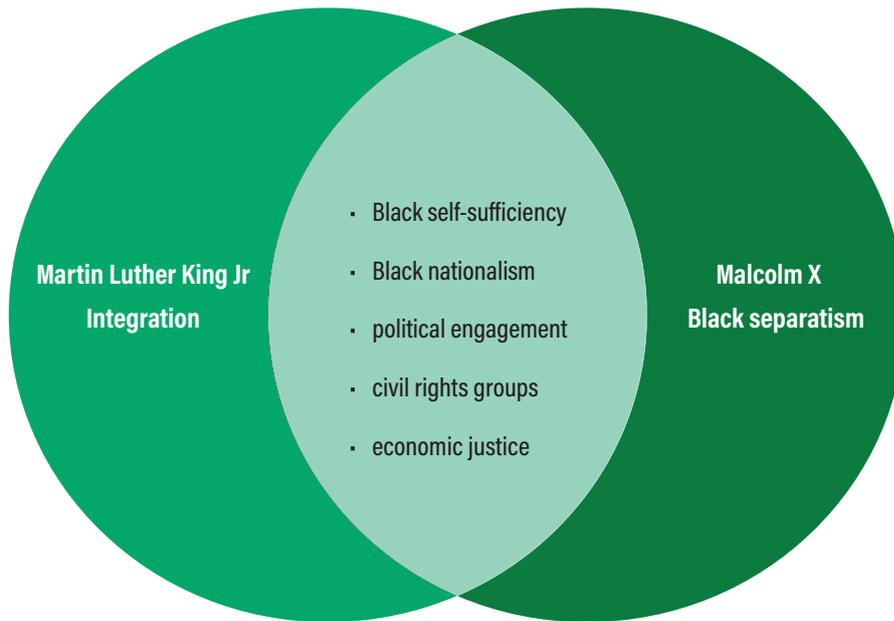


FIGURE 5.19 Similarity in the aims of Martin Luther King Jr (1966-68) and Malcolm X (1964-65)

A few months after King's presentation of the 'Economic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged', President Johnson launched his own program, called the **War on Poverty**. But while this established a range of useful interventions to provide medical care, support for single mothers and food stamps for the poor, it was plagued by bureaucracy and inexperienced staff, proving to be ineffective overall in ending poverty. Conservative politicians and their constituents also did not like their taxes being spent on poor African Americans and called for the money to be channelled into fighting the Vietnam War instead. From King's perspective, Johnson's War on Poverty was a failure, not only because it was underfunded, but because it did not address the root cause of poverty: capitalism, which rewarded competition rather than ensured the provision of basic needs.

While King championed preferential treatment for African Americans so that they could attain a more equal economic position in American society, he still recognised that the problem of poverty was not simply racial, but structural. In his speech 'Our God is Marching On' delivered at the end of the Selma to Montgomery March, he explained how the Jim Crow system had been implemented to keep poor whites focused on demeaning black people, rather than joining with them to demand fair wages, in turn leading to the impoverishment of many Southern whites. King's contribution to *A Freedom Budget for All Americans*, published in 1967, made similar points, explaining that the elimination of slums, unemployment and poor educational opportunities for African Americans could only be achieved when new cities, fair employment and modern education systems were demanded for all Americans, Black and white.

The urban riots of 1964-67 and King's experiences in the Chicago Campaign had confirmed the importance of realigning his aims. While the riots had prompted the federal government to respond with a variety of short-term interventionist programs to alleviate poverty and unemployment, King argued that these responses were inadequate. He said they amounted to 'a little anti-poverty money allotted by frightened government officials'. In an interview for *Harper's Magazine* in August 1967, he stated that he no longer saw value in reforming America's existing institutions, but now believed that there needed to be 'a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values'. The Chicago Campaign had also shown King that the most significant barrier to this was middle-class white resistance to economic structural change. Indeed, former white liberal supporters of King now questioned his aims, seeing his calls for economic justice as 'pro-communist'.

War on Poverty

an initiative launched by President Johnson that provided funding to programs designed to alleviate poverty

Opposition to the Vietnam War

King had tentatively expressed his opposition to the Vietnam War from the middle of 1965, but on 25 March 1967 he led his first anti-war march. Less than two weeks later, King made his 'Beyond Vietnam' speech at Riverside Church in New York City, in which he argued that the war was 'taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in South-East Asia, which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem'. He deplored the money being spent on warfare in South-East Asia, maintaining that while the government was spending US\$500 000 to kill each enemy soldier, only \$53 was spent through War on Poverty programs for each person classified as poor. He also stated that the United States had become 'the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today' and suggested that leftist revolutionary movements in the developing world were legitimate responses to Western colonialism. Just over a week after delivering this speech, King spoke at a massive anti-war demonstration in New York City.

King's ongoing criticism of the war infuriated Johnson and led to a fallout in their relationship. The NAACP also voiced its opposition to King's stance, arguing that the goals of the civil rights movement were separate from those of the peace movement. The press also weighed in: the *New York Times* featured an article titled, 'Dr. King's Error' and the *Washington Post* called King's stance 'a tragedy'. The SCLC suffered a large drop in donations, which had cost the organisation a third of its staff by the end of May 1967.

Source Study 5.4 Martin Luther King Jr's changing views

Source A: Martin Luther King Jr, 'The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement', address to the American Psychological Association Convention, 1 September 1967

When we ask Negroes to abide by the law, let us also demand that the white man abide by law in the ghettos. Day-in and day-out he violates welfare laws to deprive the poor of their meager allotments; he flagrantly violates building codes and regulations; his police make a mockery of law; and he violates laws on equal employment and education and the provisions for civic services. The slums are the handiwork of a vicious system of the white society; Negroes live in them but do not make them any more than a prisoner makes a prison. Let us say boldly that if the violations of law by the white man in the slums over the years were calculated and compared with the law-breaking of a few days of riots, the hardened criminal would be the white man.

ML King Jr, 'The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement' (Invited Distinguished Address to the American Psychological Association convention, September 1, 1967), reprinted in *Journal of Social Issues* 24, no. 1, 1968, www.apa.org/monitor/features/king-challenge.

Source B: An extract from *Where Do We Go From Here?: Chaos or Community?*, by Martin Luther King Jr

The white liberal must see that the Negro needs not only love but also justice. It is not enough to say, 'We love Negroes, we have many Negro friends.' They must demand justice for Negroes ... The white liberal must affirm that absolute justice for the Negro simply means ... that the Negro must have 'his due.' There is nothing abstract about this. It is as concrete as having a good job, a good education, a decent house and a share of power. It is, however, important to understand that giving a man his due may often mean giving him special treatment. I am aware of the fact that this has been a troublesome concept for many liberals, since it conflicts with their traditional

meager

small, insufficient (US spelling)

ideal of equal opportunity and equal treatment of people according to their individual merits. But this is a day which demands new thinking and the re-evaluation of old concepts. A society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years must now do something special for him, in order to equip him to compete on a just and equal basis.

ML King Jr, *Where Do We Go From Here?: Chaos or Community?*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1967, pp 95–96.

Questions

1. What is the context of Source A?
2. How is King's argument in Source A similar to arguments posed by Malcolm X?
3. How does Source B provide evidence for the shift in King's aims?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Outline King's new aims for the civil rights movement.
2. How did King view Black Power? Was this an accurate viewpoint?
3. Describe how King adapted his methods to obtain civil rights in light of his new aims.
4. Identify what King saw as the main problem for the civil rights movement in implementing stage two of the civil rights movement.
5. How did King reconcile his opposition to the Vietnam War with his campaign for civil rights?
6. Describe the outcomes of King's new aims for the civil rights movement.
7. Identify the similarities between the aims of Malcolm X and those of King after 1965.

The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr

Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated at a time when his popularity was at its lowest point. King was widely seen as 'out of touch' by young civil rights workers and as 'pro-communist' by mainstream America and even some members of NAACP, and his efforts to improve the lives of African Americans no longer attracted the recognition that had won him the Nobel Prize just four years earlier.

In the final years of his life, King grappled with the decline in support for nonviolent direct action, increased FBI surveillance and growing death threats. He came to the conclusion that he should nonetheless remain committed to his vision, explaining in a telephone call to SCLC supporter Stanley Levison just days before his assassination that, while his calls for economic justice and his opposition to the Vietnam War may have been 'politically unwise', they were 'morally wise'.

Timeline 5.5: The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr

- 1967**
 - 4 December: Launch of SCLC's Poor People's Campaign
- 1968**
 - 12 February: The start of the Sanitation Workers' Strike, Memphis, Tennessee.
 - 4 April: Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated
 - 4-5 April: The Holy Week uprising
 - 8 April: Silent march led by Coretta Scott King
 - 10 April: Passage of the Fair Housing Act
 - 14 May: The start of the Poor People's Campaign, Washington DC

Declining support for King

While King enjoyed popular support following his 'I Have a Dream' speech and his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he encountered opposition rapidly after his ideas changed during 1965. A year before King's death, a Harris poll found that 72 per cent of whites and 55 per cent of African Americans disapproved of his opposition to the Vietnam War. In February 1968, the Harris poll indicated that 75 per cent of white Americans disapproved of King's work.

The media played a key role in encouraging the growing opposition to King. He was regularly reviled by newspaper editorials who saw his calls for economic equality as communist and his opposition to the Vietnam War as 'a script for Radio Hanoi'. In the Cold War context, King's growing calls for economic justice for African Americans and demands for fair access to housing, employment and opportunity made it easy for the press to portray him as a communist sympathiser.

King's book *Where Do We Go from Here* (1967) also received mixed reviews. While one critic called the book 'incisive' and another hailed it for its ability to speak in a 'moderate, judicious, constructive, pragmatic tone', more scathing reviews also appeared. On 24 August 1967, an article by Andrew Kopkind in *The New York Review of Books* declared that 'Martin Luther King once had the ability to talk to people, the power to change them by evoking images of revolution' but that King had now been 'outstripped by his times'.

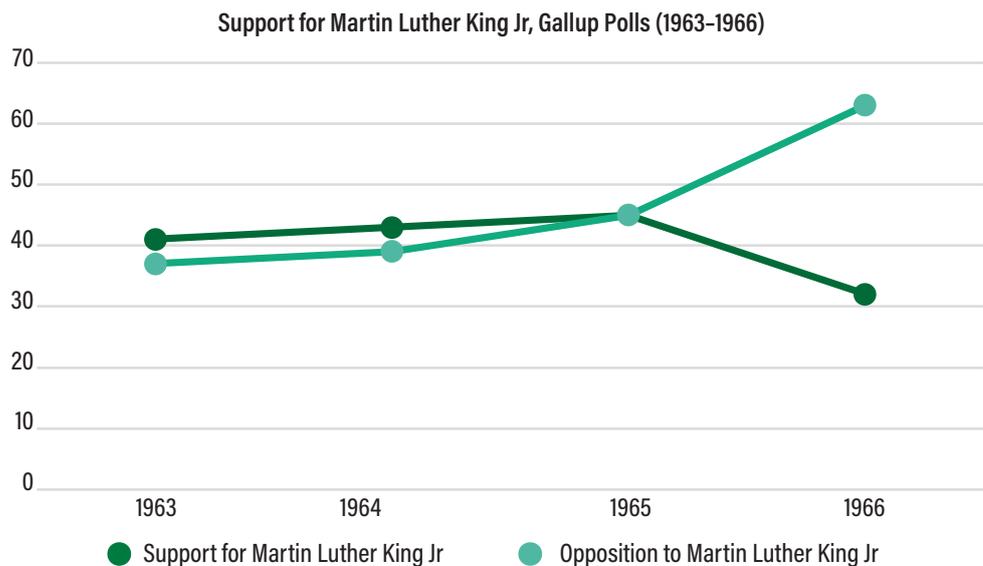


FIGURE 5.20 Popular support for Martin Luther King Jr (Gallup polls, 1963-66)

FBI surveillance and death threats

King had been under FBI surveillance since 1955, during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The FBI used wiretaps, bugging and paid informants to spy on King. FBI Director J Edgar Hoover ensured that any information characterising King as immoral or a communist was circulated throughout the government, to journalists and church leaders. The FBI also sent King anonymous letters, detailing the information they held on him and suggesting he commit suicide. In 1967, Hoover listed the SCLC as a 'black nationalist hate group' and instructed his agents to exploit the organisational and personal conflicts among the civil rights movement in order to discredit their cause. In addition to FBI harassment, King had faced near constant death threats since 1955. By 1968, these threats had escalated and King's life was in constant danger.

The Poor People's Campaign (1967-8)

In a speech delivered at the Victory Baptist Church in Los Angeles on 25 June 1967, King explained that the civil rights movement was no longer 'struggling to integrate a lunch counter' but to 'get some money to be able to buy a hamburger or a steak when we get to the counter.' The poverty rate across the United States was 12 per cent in 1967, but for African Americans alone it was 25 per cent. Disillusioned with Johnson's War on Poverty, King announced the inauguration of an SCLC-led Poor People's Campaign on 4 December 1967. In an attempt to force a solution to the conditions causing urban riots, King planned to lead a march of 2000 poor people on Washington to demand jobs, fair wages and access to a decent education.



FIGURE 5.21 Campaign badges promoting the Poor People's Campaign, 1968

The Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike

Events in Memphis, Tennessee, provided King with the opportunity to kickstart his campaign and build momentum for the Poor People's March on Washington. On 12 February 1968, 1300 Black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, went on strike after a malfunctioning truck caused the deaths of two workers. As the garbage began to pile up, the mayor of Memphis, Henry Loeb, hired strike-breakers to collect the garbage, but they were attacked by the sanitation workers.

The sanitation workers then embarked on daily marches from Clayborn Temple Church to the City Hall where they held sit-ins. On the invitation of James Lawson, a local minister and long-time member of CORE, King arrived in Memphis on 18 March where he addressed a crowd of 25 000 people. He urged the sanitation workers to continue their strike and promised to lead them himself in a protest march on City Hall.

Meanwhile, the police had stepped up their opposition to the marches, using mace, tear gas and clubs. By the time King arrived to lead a march on 28 March, the atmosphere was highly charged. The marchers left Clayborn Temple Church and headed towards City Hall. As they approached, a group of African American youths began breaking nearby shopfront windows. Soon there were lines of police in riot gear. Lawson counselled King to leave the march and told the marchers to turn back to the church, but it was too late. Police began to attack the marchers with clubs and tear gas, following the demonstrators back to the church where they released more tear gas and continued to club people. Martial law was declared and 4000 National Guard troops brought into Tennessee.

King was heavily criticised for leaving the march and was questioned by reporters about his ability to maintain nonviolence. He replied that SCLC had the experience and the ability to control marchers. Many in the press disagreed, portraying King himself as the reason for the violence. On 31 March, an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* declared, 'We think the time has arrived when the country must ask itself how much more it is going to put up with from this incendiary.'

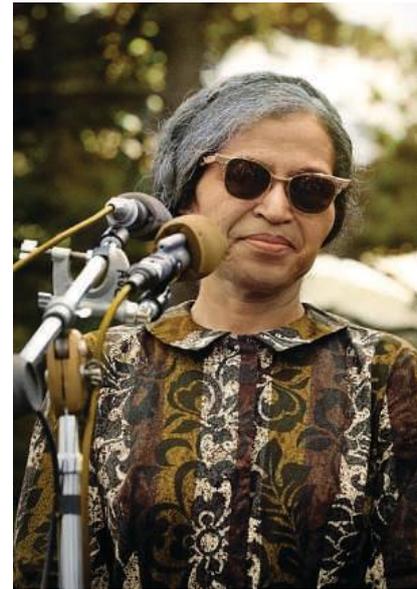


FIGURE 5.22 Rosa Parks speaks at a rally for the Poor People's Campaign, 19 June 1968

'I've Been to the Mountaintop'

Concerned that the nonviolent struggle for economic justice would fail if he gave up, King determined to return to Memphis on 3 April to lead another march. However, his plans to lead a second march were thwarted when Memphis city officials obtained a court injunction to stop the march from proceeding.

A mass meeting had been organised at Mason Temple Church that evening to rally support for the march. At the meeting, King declared that the march would go ahead and that they would fight the injunction. He then addressed the meeting with what would be his final speech, 'I've Been to the Mountaintop'. During the speech, he referred to the threats that had been made against his life since arriving in Memphis and the fate that might befall him at the hands of 'some of our sick white brothers.' He also stated that while he wanted to 'live a long life,' he was 'not concerned about that now' because he had looked over and 'seen the Promised Land'.

King's assassination

At 6:05 pm on 4 April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr was shot dead while standing on a balcony outside his second-floor room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. An ambulance rushed King to St Joseph's Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead at 7:05 pm. King was 39 years old. His funeral service was held the following day in Atlanta at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. More than 100 000 mourners followed two mules pulling King's coffin through the streets of Atlanta.



FIGURE 5.23 Mourners escort the body of King at his funeral

Outcomes of King's assassination

Riots

King's assassination sparked riots in 110 cities across the United States between 4 and 5 April 1968. The King Assassination Riots, also known as the Holy Week Uprising, was believed to be the greatest wave of social unrest the United States had experienced since the Civil War. Some of the biggest riots took place in Washington DC, Chicago and Kansas City.

Although the media called these events 'race riots' and the rioters were mainly African Americans, there were few confirmed acts of violence between Black and white people. White businesses tended to be targeted, but public and community buildings such as schools and churches were largely spared. Dozens of people were killed and thousands were injured, but compared to the riots of the Long Hot Summer, the number of fatalities was lower.

Passage of the *Fair Housing Act* (1968)

King had campaigned for a federal fair housing law in 1966, but it had been blocked and delayed by most Northern and Southern senators. But on 5 April, Lyndon B Johnson wrote a letter to the US House of Representatives urging passage of an updated *Civil Rights Act* (1968) which included a *Fair Housing Act* (in addition to the anti-riot legislation). Shaken by the repeated civil disturbances virtually outside its door, the House of Representatives passed the Fair Housing Bill by a wide margin on 10 April. For many white liberals, however, the riots of 1965–68 had led them to flee America's cities for the suburbs, strengthening racial barriers that had looked as though they might weaken.



FIGURE 5.24 Garment workers at the Abe Schrader Shop in New York listen to King's funeral service on the radio, 9 April 1968



FIGURE 5.25 US soldier stands guard in Washington DC following the riots that erupted there on the death of Martin Luther King Jr

Impact on the civil rights movement

King's assassination convinced even more Black people that the nonviolent approach that was the cornerstone of King's method had failed. Stokely Carmichael proclaimed that the assassination meant that 'there no longer needs to be intellectual discussions, black people know that they have to get guns.'

But others in the movement affirmed the need to carry on King's work. On 8 March, King's widow, Coretta Scott King, led a silent march in honour of her husband to raise money for the striking Memphis Sanitation Workers. The workers ended their strike on 16 April, reaching a settlement with city officials that included wage increases. SCLC also upheld their commitment to the Poor People's Campaign. On 14 May, more than 3000 SCLC activists and poor people set up a camp in Washington DC, which they named 'Resurrection City'. But their protest was largely ignored by the media and the government. After six weeks it was abandoned.

James Earl Ray's arrest

James Earl Ray, a white criminal who had escaped from a Missouri prison in April 1967, was arrested for King's murder. He was found guilty and sentenced to 99 years in prison. During the years following King's assassination, doubts about the adequacy of the case against Ray were fuelled by revelations of the extensive surveillance of King by the FBI and other government agencies. Ray continued to maintain his innocence until his death in 1998.

Memorialisation of King

President Johnson called for a national day of mourning to be observed on 7 April.

In the following days, public libraries, museums, schools and businesses were closed, and the Academy Awards ceremony and numerous sporting events were postponed. King's assassination also established him as a martyr for human rights. In the years following his death, several cities and states established annual holidays to honour King. A federal holiday, 20 January, was inaugurated in 1983. The American public's rampant opposition to King in the later years of his life and his stance against economic injustice, militarism and police brutality were largely forgotten.

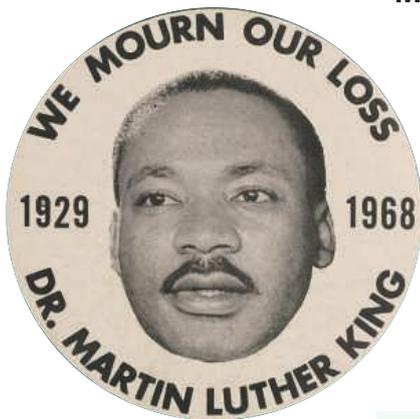


FIGURE 5.26 A commemorative badge of Martin Luther King Jr

Source Study 5.5 Martin Luther King Jr, 1965–68

Source A: Extract from Cornell West (ed.), *The Radical King: Martin Luther King Jr*

King indeed had a dream ... King's dream was rooted in the American Dream – it was what the quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness looked like for people enslaved and Jim Crowed, terrorised, traumatized, and stigmatized by American laws and American citizens. The litmus test for realizing King's dream was neither a black face in the White House nor a black presence on Wall Street. Rather, the fulfillment of his dream was for all poor and working people to live lives of decency and dignity. King's dream of a more free and democratic America and world had morphed into, in his words, 'a nightmare', owing to the persistence of 'racism, poverty, militarism and materialism'.

C West, 'Introduction' in C West (ed.), *The Radical King: Martin Luther King Jr*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2015, p xi.

Source B: Extract from Jeanne Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*

Political leaders, pundits and citizens came to see and tell the story of the modern civil rights movement as one of progress and national redemption. Jim Crow was framed as a horrible Southern relic, and the movement to unseat it became a powerful tale of courageous Americans defeating a long-ago evil. Activists from Paul Robeson to Malcolm X – who had once been deemed national security threats – showed up on postage stamps. A movement that had challenged the very fabric of US politics and society was turned into one that demonstrated how great and expansive the country was – a story of individual bravery, natural evolution, and the long march to ‘a more perfect union.’

A story that should have reflected the immense injustices at the nation’s core and the enormous lengths people had gone to attack them had become a flattering mirror. The popular history of the civil rights movement now served as testament to the power of American democracy. This framing was appealing – simultaneously sober about the history of racism, lionizing of Black courage, celebratory of American progress and strategic in masking (and at times justifying) current inequalities.

J Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2018, pp x–xi.

Questions

1. Using Source A and your knowledge, make a list of arguments that could be used to assess the extent to which King’s ‘dream’ was realised.
2. What does Source B suggest about how the history of the civil rights movement has been used by contemporary American politicians?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify the reasons for King’s declining popularity.
2. Why did the FBI have King under surveillance?
3. Outline how the Poor People’s Campaign demonstrates King’s aims and methods.
4. Construct a mindmap to show the key outcomes of King’s assassination.

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Outline the beliefs and aims of Martin Luther King Jr.
2. Outline the beliefs and aims of Malcolm X.
3. Compare the aims of King and Malcolm X.
4. Compare the methods of King and Malcolm X.

Explain

1. Account for the methods used by King to achieve civil rights.
2. Explain how King's aims for the civil rights movement changed.
3. Account for the change in Malcolm X's beliefs and aims.
4. Explain the outcomes of King's assassination.
5. Account for the differences in the methods used by King and Malcolm X.

Judgement

1. How successful was Martin Luther King Jr's leadership to the civil rights movement?
2. To what extent did Malcolm X's beliefs, aims and methods impact the success of the civil rights movement?
3. Assess the role played by Malcolm X in the civil rights movement.

Integrate sources

1. To what extent were the beliefs, aims and methods of King similar to those of Malcolm X? In your response, refer directly to Source A.

Source A: John Lewis, interviewed by James A. DeVinney, 5 December 1988 for *Eyes on the Prize* (1988).

This interview was not included in the final program. Lewis was the director of SNCC (1963–66).

Well, I will never forget the death of Malcolm ... I really felt at that time, that some of the possibilities died, some of the hope, some of the coming together, the building between the sort of 'Malcolm wing' of the movement if you want to call it that and the 'Martin Luther King wing' of the movement died ... if Malcolm had lived I think you would have witnessed a greater marriage between the Martin Luther King wing of the movement and the Malcolm wing of the movement.

John Lewis, interviewed by James A. DeVinney, 5 December 1988 for *Eyes on the Prize* (1988); repository.wustl.edu/concern/videos/3r074z85c

2. Explain the beliefs of Malcolm X. In your response, refer directly to Source B.

Source B: Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*

Malcolm's journey of reinvention was in many ways centred on his lifelong quest to discern the meaning and substance of faith. As a prisoner he embraced an antiwhite, quasi Islamic sect that nevertheless validated his fragmented sense of humanity and ethnic identity. But as he travelled across the world, Malcolm learned that orthodox Islam was in many ways at odds with the racial stigmatization and intolerance at the center of the Nation of Islam's creed.

M Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Penguin Books, New York, 2011, p 12.

3. Evaluate the success of the civil rights movement to 1968. In your response, refer directly to Source C.

Source C: Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*

The national civil rights coalition fractured in the mid-1960s. Their experiences in the Deep South and the failure of white liberals to support the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) at the Democratic Party's national convention in 1964 led SNCC and CORE to reject integration, interracialism and nonviolence, and SNCC, the more radical of the two groups, to also lose all faith in working with the federal government. Influenced by the New York-based Black Muslim Malcolm X, who advocated black nationalism, SNCC and CORE called for Black Power. Just as the civil rights movement overturned legalised racial discrimination in the South, a series of urban riots in the North and West drew attention to the depth of racism and poverty across the nation.

M Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2004, p 101.

Going further

Create

1. Create an integrated and annotated timeline of the lives of Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X.

Examine primary sources for yourself

1. In groups of two or three, prepare a presentation that contrasts two speeches. Choose either:
 - a. speeches given by Martin Luther King Jr, one from 1955–65 and one from 1966–68, and explain the similarities and differences in his aims; OR
 - b. speeches given by Malcolm X, one from 1952–63 and one from 1964–65, and explain the similarities and differences in his aims.
2. Using the speeches and writings of King and Malcolm X, create and perform a dialogue between King and Malcolm X over the aims and methods of the civil rights movement. You can set your dialogue in the early or mid-1960s.
3. Compile a range of four images of King and Malcolm X, noting when and where they were published. Explain how these images portrayed the leadership of King and Malcolm X.

Debate

1. Hold a class debate to discuss whether Black Power undermined the success of Martin Luther King Jr's aims and methods.

Prepare revision notes

1. Copy and complete the tables below to show the similarities and differences in Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X's beliefs, aims and methods.

	Martin Luther King Jr (1955–65)	Malcolm X (1952–63)
Beliefs		
Aims		
Methods		

	Martin Luther King Jr (1966–68)	Malcolm X (1964–65)
Beliefs		
Aims		
Methods		

Endnotes

- 1 Clayborne Carson (ed.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr: Threshold of a New Decade*, January 1959–December 1960, vol 5, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, p 200.
- 2 ML King Jr, 'Statement on Riots in Watts, California', 17 August 1965. Cited in S Laurent, *King and the Other America: The Poor People's Campaign and the Quest for Economic Equality*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2018, p 137.
- 3 ML King Jr, 'Statement to the People of Watts', Los Angeles, 19 August 1965.

Chapter

6

Attitudes of presidents and influence beyond the United States

FIGURE 6.1 US President Barack Obama (2009–17), the first Black American to hold the office of president, sitting on the 'Rosa Parks bus', Henry Ford Museum, Detroit, 1 December 2013. He posted this photo on Twitter to commemorate the 58th anniversary of Rosa Parks' protest.

While presidents such as Harry S Truman (1945–53) and Lyndon B Johnson (1963–68) were largely positive towards civil rights, Presidents Dwight D Eisenhower (1954–60) and John F Kennedy (1961–63) were much more ambivalent. But these personal views were secondary to other factors that shaped the attitudes of the presidents towards civil rights.

Of greater importance in shaping the attitudes of presidents was the need to keep Southern voters onside. Too much sympathy for the civil rights movement could undermine the Southern voter support on which they depended. At the same time, the presidents also had to respond to the realities of the Cold War. Soviet propaganda used the instances of civil rights abuses to make a mockery of the United States' claim to be the leader of the 'free world.' In the midst stood the media, which used its evolving power to provide shocking images of racist brutality to sell newspapers, photo-magazines and television footage.

The genius of the civil rights movement was to use this situation to achieve some of their aims. Through their efforts to 'create a crisis,' the civil rights movement was able to use the media to expose the viciousness of Southern racism and eradicate any notions of 'Southern gentility' from the realities of segregation. This provoked national and international sympathy for the civil rights movement, and calls for the US to show leadership. The presidents' attitudes to civil rights, therefore, was that the Cold War context meant that they needed to uphold civil rights, regardless of what they personally believed, to show the world that the United States was a land of freedom and democracy.

This chapter will explain the achievements of the civil rights movement, noting:

- the significance of the attitudes of US presidents, including Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson
- the influence of the US civil rights movement beyond the United States.

The significance of Truman's and Eisenhower's attitudes

While the civil rights movement was the main driver of social and political change, the attitudes of the presidents to civil rights also played a key role in the outcomes. During the 1940s and 50s, the main civil rights issues that presidents addressed were fair employment and segregation. Truman was supportive of fair employment and undertook a number of anti-discrimination initiatives to further African American access to jobs. While these were largely ineffective, his attitude nonetheless set a tone for future progress.

For his part, Eisenhower was not enthusiastic about civil rights, including desegregation. He did, however, believe it was his duty as president to uphold the Constitution. So when NAACP lawyers successfully challenged racist laws in the US Supreme Court and the laws were found to be unconstitutional, Eisenhower acted to support the Supreme Court's rulings. Although Eisenhower's attitude to civil rights was not positive, his attitude towards

the importance of the Constitution and the rulings of the Supreme Court, which protected civil rights, indirectly helped the cause of the civil rights movement.

Truman and Eisenhower in this period also had to contend with growing Cold War tensions and negative Soviet propaganda which pounced on the awful scenes of racist violence. The presidents' eagerness to show the United States in the best possible light as a leader of the free world was the most important factor shaping their attitudes to civil rights. This meant that regardless of whether they truly believed that 'all men were created equal', they believed that action on civil rights was necessary to demonstrate the superiority of the American way.

Timeline 6.1: The attitudes of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower

- 1945** ▪ 12 April: Truman became president after Roosevelt's death
 - 1946** ▪ 5 December: Truman issued Executive Order 9808
 - 1947** ▪ 29 June: Truman addressed the NAACP Conference
 - 23 October: The NAACP petitioned the UN – An Appeal to the World
 - December: President's Committee on Civil Rights report, *To Secure These Rights* released
 - 1948** ▪ 2 February: Truman called on Congress to support civil rights
 - 26 July: Truman issued Executive Orders 9980 and 9981
 - 1953** ▪ 20 January: Eisenhower became president
 - Eisenhower began desegregation of Washington DC
 - 23 June: Eisenhower met with civil rights leaders
 - 1957** ▪ 9 September: Passage of the *Civil Rights Act*
 - 23 September: Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock, Arkansas
-



FIGURE 6.2 President Truman recognised that desegregation and economic opportunity were keys to improving civil rights.

President Truman's attitude to civil rights

Harry S Truman became president on the death of President Franklin D Roosevelt on 12 April 1945. Truman oversaw the end stages of World War II and sanctioned the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. As the Cold War era began, Truman strove to solidify the United States as a global superpower and leader of the 'free world'.

Truman's attitude towards civil rights was that change was certainly needed to improve the lives of African Americans and that this could be achieved through fair employment opportunities, ending racial violence and desegregating some institutions. Moreover, Truman was also interested in protecting the international image of the United States. He felt that the United States had to correct its civil rights abuses if it was to succeed as the leader of the free world during the Cold War era. However, he did not want to alienate voters. In order to implement his civil rights agenda, Truman walked a tightrope, trying to show African Americans and international critics that he supported civil rights without alarming his party or white Americans. To this end, Truman pursued changes that would promote economic opportunities and some desegregation.

Truman's attitude to economic opportunity and racial violence

The upsurge of mob violence against returning African American servicemen included the brutal lynching of four African Americans in Georgia on 25 July 1946, one of whom was a veteran. Outraged, the National Negro Congress (NNC) organised a 15 000-strong protest march to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, demanding that the president enact anti-lynching legislation. On 19 September, the president met

with the National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence, a coalition of civil rights groups that included the NAACP, NNC, religious groups and trade unionists, to discuss the racial violence.

As a result of these discussions, Truman issued Executive Order 9808 on 5 December 1946, which established a multiracial President's Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR). He also sent a presidential message of support to the 1946 NAACP conference, which called on employers to provide jobs for veterans at fair wages without racial discrimination. The following year, on 29 June 1947, Truman addressed the NAACP Conference in person. No US president had ever addressed the NAACP in person before. His address, broadcast over national radio and in movie theatres nationwide, called for a change in the very concept of civil rights, noting that civil rights was not merely about protecting the rights of people from government control, but was also about ensuring that the government upheld the rights of the people. Truman also called civil rights a crisis that required immediate action. After the speech, NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White told Truman that his civil rights message was the most forthright pronouncement any US president had made on this issue yet.

The PCCR released its report entitled *To Secure These Rights* in December 1947. The report documented nationwide discrimination in areas such as education, housing, public accommodations and voting rights. Truman presented these findings to a joint session of Congress on 2 February 1948 and called on them to support a civil rights package that included federal protection against lynching, protection of voting rights and a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission. Truman also issued Executive Order 9980, which established a Fair Employment Board to eliminate discrimination in federal government departments.

Truman's attitude to segregation

Truman was not convinced of the need to entirely dismantle segregation. On 23 January 1947, Truman crossed a picket line maintained by the NAACP, who were protesting the refusal of the National Theater in Washington DC to admit African Americans to performances. This attitude persisted beyond Truman's presidency. In 1960, Truman publicly stated that he was opposed to sit-in demonstrations, arguing that 'the Negro should behave himself and show he's a good citizen.' Truman was also known to use racial slurs when talking about African Americans and told racist jokes.

However, he still made some efforts to desegregate selected US institutions. In 1948, Truman implemented Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the US armed forces. Then in December 1952, Truman's government played a role in initiating the Justice Department's involvement in the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) to overcome segregation in schools, whereby the Justice Department made a point of informing the Supreme Court of the importance of the case, noting the international implications of segregation on the US image abroad.



FIGURE 6.3 Harry S Truman addresses the 38th Annual Conference of the NAACP, 29 June 1947

Truman's international context

Truman's key motivation for his civil rights agenda was to counter the Soviet Union's use of racial discrimination in the US for propaganda purposes. Not only was the Soviet press repeatedly reporting incidents of racial violence, they were using these reports to influence Latin America, Germany, Africa, South-East Asia, China and India, suggesting that the United States was not worthy of leadership in the post-war world.

Civil rights groups were quick to realise the importance of bringing the civil rights cause to international attention. They began to call for the UN to intervene in incidents of racial violence, a tactic that proved highly embarrassing for the United States. On 17 December 1951, a civil rights group known as the **Civil Rights Congress**, which included WEB Du Bois and singer Paul Robeson among its members, produced a report for the UN entitled *We Charge Genocide!* The report detailed hundreds of cases of wrongful execution and lynching, and mentioned around 10 000 undocumented cases of violence against African Americans. The report argued that this violence amounted to genocide under the UN's own definition of the word: intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, racial, ethnic or religious group.

US embassies struggled to counter this negative image of the United States. The State Department even went so far as to confiscate the passports of prominent critics of US racism, thereby actually overriding their civil rights. But the image of the US race relations remained negative. Truman's repeated emphasis on the importance of civil rights therefore, needs to be seen in the context that his promotion of civil rights was designed to strengthen the image of the US abroad.

The significance of Truman's attitude to the civil rights movement

In the short term, Truman's attitude towards civil rights achieved little. While Truman had heralded the PCCR report as an American charter of human freedom, he avoided making any commitment to actually implement its recommendations. To be fair, Truman faced a hostile Congress opposed to civil rights for African American. In addition, a 1948 Gallup poll showed that 82 per cent of the 1500 Americans surveyed were opposed to his civil rights program. Moreover Truman had no means of enforcing his Executive Orders, which meant that the extent to which they could create change was relatively small. By 1951, only 18 per cent of African Americans serving in the Army during the **Korean War** (1950–53) were in integrated or partially-integrated units. For supporters of the civil rights movement, Truman's speeches and Executive Orders made it look like he was doing 'something', but at the same time, his attitude did not translate into much action, which placated hostile white American voters and politicians.

In the long term, however, the impact of this attitude was constructive overall, even though it was driven by the desire to defend America's international image. By speaking out against racial discrimination in employment, Truman did more than any previous president to put the cause of civil rights on the national agenda. This helped initiate momentum for the civil rights movement and kickstarted public discussion. In addition, Truman's attitude towards segregation had positive outcomes for civil rights in the long term. His efforts to desegregate the army set an important precedent, which eventually furthered the cause of desegregation. Similarly, the involvement of Truman's Justice Department in the US Supreme Court at the beginning of the *Brown v Board of Education* case contributed to the overturning of segregation in schools.

President Eisenhower's attitude to civil rights

The attitude of President Dwight D Eisenhower to civil rights was one of disengagement. He was reluctant to associate himself with civil rights and had doubts that legislation could bring about equality. In response to the issue of segregation, Eisenhower stated that desegregation was something that must be executed gradually since 'you cannot change a man's heart merely by laws'.

Civil Rights Congress

a civil rights organisation founded in 1946 to fight for African Americans who had been wrongfully sentenced to death

Korean War

Cold War conflict fought between North Korea (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and South Korea (supported by UN forces led by the United States), from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953

Eisenhower's role in the civil rights movement, therefore, was not motivated by an attitude that was supportive of civil rights. Rather, his attitude was governed by his commitment to his obligation as president to uphold the law. He took the United States' commitment to the UN seriously and felt bound to affirm its Charter. He also wanted to stymie the efforts of Soviet propagandists, who used reports of racial discrimination in the United States to undermine democracy.

Eisenhower's attitude to segregation

Personally, Eisenhower did not support integration and believed that keeping the races apart was in the best interests of the nation. In 1948 when he was Army Chief of Staff, Eisenhower had told the Senate Armed Services Committee that segregation in the US Army was necessary. Since society separated the races, he argued, the army should also keep Black and white soldiers apart to avoid racial disturbances that could detract from its fighting abilities. Similarly, while the **Republican National Committee** had lauded the outcome of *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954 as 'a successful attack on global communism in which human equality at home is a weapon of freedom', Eisenhower himself was less enthusiastic, and refused to make any public endorsement of the desegregation of public schools.

Nevertheless, as president, Eisenhower determined to make use of his federal authority and uphold the spirit of the Constitution, which called for fairness and equality for all. He used his superior military rank to command military subordinates to comply with Truman's Executive Order 9981 and by 1954, had successfully desegregated the US Armed Forces. In addition, he appointed E Frederic Morrow as Administrative Officer for Special Projects in 1955. Morrow was the first African American to hold an executive position at the White House.

Eisenhower's attitude to racial violence

Eisenhower appeared not to care about the violence meted out to African Americans in the South. When Emmett Till's mother, Mamie, had written to Eisenhower asking him to ensure that justice was done following the lynching of her 14-year-old son, Eisenhower did not reply. Martin Luther King Jr had also called on Eisenhower to intervene in the prosecution of white extremists who had attacked children in Tennessee, bombed houses and churches in Alabama and beaten women, but Eisenhower declined to involve himself in what he saw as state legal matters. He told the press that he was very busy, that he needed time to play golf and that he didn't see what another speech from him would change.

The Civil Rights Act (1957)

Following the passage of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) and *Browder v Gayle* (1956), Eisenhower was concerned that he might have to send in the army to enforce the Supreme Court rulings. While he may not have agreed with desegregation, he believed that it was his duty as president to uphold the federal laws.

To avoid this situation, Eisenhower proposed 'moderate' civil rights legislation that would ensure that the ruling of the Supreme Court was observed in due course and that civil rights proceeded no faster and no further than that. In his 1957 State of the Union address, Eisenhower set forth a *Civil Rights Act* that would establish a Civil Rights Commission, establish a Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department, allow the US Attorney General to file civil rights suits against states to ensure federal legislation was upheld, and enable Black voters to register for the vote. The Act that was eventually ratified on 9 September 1957 was greatly watered down: the role for the Attorney General was not included and the provisions for voter registration were weakened, rendering it largely ineffective. However, the *Civil Rights Act* (1957) was the first civil rights legislation since 1875 and gave further momentum to the civil rights movement.



FIGURE 6.4 President Eisenhower's response to the civil rights movement was in part framed by the obligation of the president to uphold the law.

Republican National Committee

committee that promotes the Republican Party and its values, coordinates fundraising and devises election strategies

The desegregation of Little Rock Central High School

Eisenhower did not want to intervene in the states' adoption of segregation unless he had to. When segregationists tried to stop African American children from entering schools in Clinton, Tennessee, and Mansfield, Texas, in 1956, Eisenhower did nothing and noted that 'extremists on both sides were preventing reasonable progress'.

The Little Rock Central High crisis, however, had attracted significant negative international media attention. Henry Cabot Lodge, the US ambassador to the United Nations, had written to the president to inform him that the riots in Little Rock were doing immense harm to US foreign relations. Eisenhower had initially tried to negotiate with Governor Faubus (even though Faubus was directly defying the Constitution), but international pressure made him send the US 101st Airborne into Arkansas on 23 September 1957 to protect the Little Rock Nine and ensure that Central High was integrated. In addition to the international context, Eisenhower's attitude to civil rights was also guided by his desire to assert his authority as president and upholder of federal law over a state governor who was clearly undermining both. He later explained that the reason he had sent in federal troops was largely to enforce the Supreme Court ruling. In this instance, the cause of desegregation itself was of less importance.

Eisenhower's international context

Like Truman, Eisenhower wanted to assert US moral leadership during the Cold War period. In 1952 he had pledged to desegregate the capital, Washington DC, because it presented international visitors with the poorest possible example of American values. In 1957, Eisenhower reminded Americans that segregation was a blight on the international image of the United States. He said, 'We are portrayed as a violator of those standards of conduct which the peoples of the world united to proclaim in the Charter of the United



FIGURE 6.5 Left to right: Lester Granger (African American labour leader), Martin Luther King Jr, E Frederic Morrow (back), Dwight D Eisenhower, A Phillip Randolph, William P Rogers, Rocco Siciliano (White House aide) and Roy Wilkins, photographed following the meeting on 23 June 1958

Nations.' Eisenhower's actions in Little Rock had upheld the Constitution, which he was bound to protect as president, and also warded off the efforts of 'Soviet propagandists' to exploit incidences of racial violence in the United States.

Eisenhower met with civil rights leaders on 23 June 1958, including Martin Luther King Jr, Roy Wilkins and A Phillip Randolph. The civil rights leaders praised Eisenhower's actions in Little Rock, but wanted him to develop a planned approach to school desegregation and address the continued violence against African Americans. While civil rights leaders spoke positively to the press about the meeting, a White House memorandum showed that Attorney-General William P Rogers had counselled them to limit the number of court actions, arguing that to bring about a court action for every individual complaint was unwise. The memorandum also noted that Eisenhower had stated that he was disappointed that his 'five-and-a-half years of effort and action' had not been appreciated by civil rights leaders. He worried that further action on his part would only result in 'more bitterness'.



FIGURE 6.6 Factors influencing the attitudes of presidents towards civil rights

The significance of Eisenhower's attitude to the civil rights movement

In spite of Eisenhower's unenthusiastic attitude towards civil rights, his commitment to upholding federal law and advancing US foreign policy ensured that some civil rights progress was made. The *Civil Rights Act* (1957) may have resulted in only small changes to national African American voter registration from 20 per cent in 1957 to 23 per cent in 1960, but it had established a Civil Rights Commission and the Civil Rights Division, and also set a precedent for further civil rights legislation. Combined with the president's actions in the Little Rock crisis, the Act encouraged African Americans to believe that President Eisenhower was a supporter of freedom and equality.

At the same time, Eisenhower's inaction on the issue of racial violence and failure to implement a wider desegregation policy meant that change was slow. Consequently, the outcomes of civil rights campaigns such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56) and the desegregation of Little Rock Central High (1957) were marred by ongoing violence and discrimination. Moreover, while Attorney-General Rogers had advised civil rights leaders not to undertake a court action for every individual complaint, experience had shown that Eisenhower only acted to support civil rights if there was a federal law to enforce or if there was widespread international disapproval. The president's attitude therefore gave civil rights activists little option but to undertake further court cases and protest actions in their efforts to secure civil rights.

Source Study 6.1 Truman's and Eisenhower's attitudes

Source A: Harry S Truman, Speech to the NAACP Convention, 29 June 1947

We must make the Federal Government a friendly, vigilant defender of the rights and equalities of all Americans. And again I mean all Americans. As Americans, we believe that every man should be free to live his life as he wishes. He should be limited only by his responsibility to his fellow countrymen. If this freedom is to be more than a dream, each man must be guaranteed equality of opportunity. The only limit to an American's achievement should be his ability, his industry and his character. The rewards for his effort should be determined only by these truly relevant qualities.

Our immediate task is to remove the last remnants of the barriers, which stand between millions of our citizens and their birthright. There is no justifiable reason for discrimination because of ancestry, or religion. Or race, or color. We must not tolerate such limitations on the freedom of any of our people and on their enjoyment of the basic rights, which every citizen in a truly democratic society must possess.

Harry S Truman, Speech to the NAACP Convention, 29 June 1947,
www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/historic-speeches-naACP/

Source B: Dwight D Eisenhower, Address to the Nation on Desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, 24 September 1957

At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that Communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety, of our nation and the world.

Our enemies are gloating over this incident and using it everywhere to misrepresent our whole nation. We are portrayed as a violator of those standards of conduct which the peoples of the world united to proclaim in the Charter of the United Nations. There, they affirmed 'faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person' and did so 'without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.'

And so, with deep confidence, I call upon the citizens of the State of Arkansas to assist in bringing to an immediate end all interference with the law and its processes. If resistance to the Federal Court order ceases at once, the further presence of Federal troops will be unnecessary and the City of Little Rock will return to its normal habits of peace and order; and a blot upon the fair name and high honor of our nation in the world will be removed. Thus will be restored the image of America and of all its parts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Dwight D Eisenhower, Address to the Nation on Desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, 24 September 1957, Washington DC; www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwighteisenhowerlittlerock.htm

Questions

1. How is Source A useful to a historian studying Truman's attitude to civil rights?
2. Using Source B and your knowledge, explain Eisenhower's attitude to civil rights.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Using Figure 6.6, describe Truman's attitude to civil rights.
 2. Provide examples of actions that demonstrate Truman's attitude to civil rights.
 3. Describe how the Cold War influenced Truman's attitude to civil rights.
 4. Outline the ways in which Truman's attitude helped progress civil rights.
 5. Using Figure 6.6, outline the key motivations for Eisenhower's contribution to civil rights.
 6. Draw a mindmap to show examples of actions that demonstrate Eisenhower's attitude to civil rights.
 7. Outline the ways Eisenhower's attitude helped progress civil rights.
-

The significance of Kennedy's and Johnson's attitudes

By the 1960s, the civil rights movement's aim of desegregation had been joined with voter registration, political rights and economic justice. The attitudes of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to these issues would profoundly affect the achievements of the civil rights movement, and shape the nature of the civil rights movement itself. Kennedy was not particularly interested in any civil rights issues, but he was concerned about the image of the US, and on this basis saw that it was important to enact civil rights legislation.

Johnson had a more positive attitude to civil rights and worked closely with Martin Luther King Jr to evolve his own thinking. However, his attitude towards civil rights mainly encompassed desegregation and voter registration. Once he had passed legislation to address these issues, Johnson's attitude was that civil rights had been dealt with. He did not see the need to further address political rights and economic justice. The press largely echoed this belief. The growing incidence of urban unrest in African American neighbourhoods, combined with Johnson's decision to commit American combat troops to the war in Vietnam in 1965, moved civil rights from the front pages of international newspapers and indeed from Johnson's own political agenda.

Timeline 6.2: The attitudes of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson

- 1961** ▪ 20 January: John F Kennedy's presidency began
 - 1962** ▪ 1 April: Kennedy established the Voter Education Project
 - 30 September: Kennedy sent US marshals and the US Army to desegregate the University of Mississippi
 - 1963** ▪ 11 June: Kennedy made a televised address, Report to the American People on Civil Rights, and promised a Civil Rights Bill
 - 22 November: Kennedy assassinated and Lyndon B Johnson's presidency began
 - 1964** ▪ 8 January: War on Poverty launched
 - 2 July: *Civil Rights Act* passed
 - 1965** ▪ 8 March: War on Crime launched
 - 8 March: US combat troops deployed to the Vietnam War
 - 6 August: *Voting Rights Act* passed
 - 22 September: *Law Enforcement Assistance Act* passed
 - 1966** ▪ 1-2 June: White House Civil Rights Conference
 - 1968** ▪ 11 April: *Fair Housing Act* passed
-



FIGURE 6.7 President Kennedy's attitude towards the civil rights movement ranged from ambivalence to opportunism.

President Kennedy's attitude to civil rights

John F Kennedy won the Democratic nomination for president in 1960. During his campaign he deliberately tried to appeal to African American voters. He brought an African American aide with him on the campaign trail and bailed King out of jail. By the time of the elections in November 1960, these actions had encouraged enough African Americans to vote for him to secure his presidency. At the same time, Kennedy also maintained his appeal to Southern voters, appointing Lyndon B Johnson to be his running mate. Johnson, a native Texan, had been active in watering down Eisenhower's *Civil Rights Act* (1957). Kennedy also assured Southern leaders that he would never send federal troops into the South to enforce school desegregation.

For his first two years in office, Kennedy's attitude towards civil rights was ambivalent. He ignored calls from civil rights leaders to introduce civil rights legislation and instead focused his efforts elsewhere. He saw the civil rights movement as an unwelcome distraction that embarrassed his government. Kennedy regularly tried to shut down civil rights protests and divert the movement from its focus on segregation towards voter registration, on the basis that this would create less negative international media attention.

In late 1962, however, Kennedy did intervene and sent federal troops to Alabama to force the desegregation of the University of Mississippi. He also went on national television in June 1963 to promise civil rights legislation following the Birmingham riots. However, these responses, like those of his predecessors, were mainly prompted by his need to preserve the United States' international image during the Cold War.

Kennedy's attitude to the Freedom Rides (1961)

When the KKK attacked CORE and SNCC activists during the Freedom Rides, Kennedy urged the activists to abandon the Ride. Kennedy's concern was not that the segregation of public transport was in violation of the Constitution or that American citizens were suffering terrible violence at the hands of extremists, but that the images of that violence were being used by the Soviet Union to make the United States look bad around the world. He felt that the Freedom Rides were embarrassing him and the country at a time when he was preparing for an upcoming meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev on 6 June 1961. On 20 May, following the violence against Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Kennedy issued a public statement that called for any persons, whether a citizen of Alabama or a visitor there, to refrain from any action that would provoke further outbreaks. This action effectively blamed the Freedom Riders for the violence of the KKK.

In another statement released on 24 May, Attorney-General Robert Kennedy claimed that the Freedom Riders' campaign was attracting curiosity seekers and publicity seekers who could potentially be injured in any violent confrontations. While the opportunity to watch a violent encounter unfold may have drawn some members of the public to the bus terminals that Freedom Riders visited, members of the press were the main people that Kennedy was really trying to keep away. The press had published a range of photographs that exposed the racism and inequality of post-war America. These had been published in newspapers around the world, proving deeply embarrassing for the Kennedy administration. As the international pressure mounted, Robert Kennedy called on the Freedom Riders to delay continuing the Ride for a while, so that there could be a cooling-off period. CORE leader James Farmer publicly rebuked Robert Kennedy for his statement, proclaiming, 'We've been cooling off for 350 years.'

Kennedy's attitude to voting rights

Campaigns such as the Freedom Rides were awkward for the Kennedy administration. In an effort to divert the civil rights movement away from confrontational direct action over segregation towards what Kennedy believed would be a more low-key civil rights pursuit, the Kennedy administration established the Voter Education Project on 1 April 1962. Through the project, Kennedy provided funding to civil rights groups for voter education campaigns.

Kennedy's attitude to the integration of the University of Mississippi

In 1961, James Meredith (who would later inaugurate the March Against Fear) had applied to the University of Mississippi. His application was rejected because of his race. With the support of the NAACP, Meredith had sued the state of Mississippi for discrimination. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Meredith's exclusion was unconstitutional.

However, Mississippi's governor, Ross Barnett, refused to comply with the law. Fearing another barrage of international condemnation, Kennedy decided to send 30 000 federal troops, including US Marshals and Army soldiers, into Mississippi on 30 September 1962 to force the desegregation of the university. When violence erupted between the federal troops, demonstrators, segregationists and Mississippi state troopers, the international media watched with interest. However, this time feelings were positive towards Kennedy and supported his intervention. This demonstrated to him that strong federal action had a positive effect on the nation's image.

The Civil Rights Bill (1963)

The violence of the Birmingham Campaign had again led to international outrage, fuelled by horrific media images. While civil rights leaders had repeatedly asked Kennedy for help against Bull Conner's brutality, Kennedy had resisted, concerned about upsetting Southern voters. Instead, Kennedy sent Assistant Attorney-General Burke Marshall to negotiate a truce in an effort to shut down the protests. When riots erupted in Birmingham, Kennedy was terrified at the prospect of racial violence exploding across the country and again sent in federal troops. In a televised address, Kennedy declared that he was prepared to do whatever needed to be done to preserve order.

Kennedy decided that legislation would provide a legal means to shut down segregation, and it would also make him appear a more decisive leader, both at home and abroad. Kennedy's televised address to the nation, the 'Report to the American People on Civil Rights', was a key moment in Kennedy's presidency. Civil rights leaders were inspired by his speech and felt that real change was now at hand.

In truth, political expediency was probably more important to Kennedy than a genuine belief in the importance of civil rights. When presenting the Civil Rights Bill to Congress, Kennedy asked Secretary of State Dean Rusk to explain that it was needed in the interests of national security.

Kennedy's attitude to the March on Washington (1963)

Kennedy's ongoing ambivalence towards civil rights was demonstrated by his attitude to the March on Washington. He tried to have the march called off fearing that violence might erupt. Attorney-General Robert Kennedy agreed, claiming that the march would likely be very badly organised and vulnerable to communist infiltration. A compromise was reached with civil rights leaders, who agreed to limit the march to a one-day event (it was originally planned to run for two days). Furthermore, it was agreed that marchers would traverse the mall between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, rather than past the White House, and that no speeches given during the event would say anything negative about the government. Kennedy nonetheless advised the Justice Department to be prepared to declare martial law in case riots broke out. As a precaution, 17 000 troops were put on stand-by, and 150 FBI agents were also in attendance. In addition, Kennedy ordered White House officials to rig the microphone so it could be turned off if it was deemed 'necessary'.



FIGURE 6.8 Civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr (third, left), John Lewis (fourth, left), A Phillip Randolph (fifth, right) and Roy Wilkins (first, right) meet with President John F Kennedy (fourth, right) at the White House following the March on Washington, 28 August 1963

Kennedy's attitude to Martin Luther King Jr

Kennedy met with King and other civil rights leaders following the march, but King's eloquent and inspiring speech and his growing popularity had alarmed the Kennedy administration. The FBI were worried about King's growing fame and his calls for economic justice (which Kennedy equated with communism), so they expanded their surveillance of King after the march, and Robert Kennedy authorised the use of wiretaps on 10 October 1963. The FBI described King as most 'dangerous to the nation' from the perspective of national security.

Kennedy's international context

In 1960, the year of Kennedy's election, 17 African nations had achieved independence. Eight more would become independent while he was in office. The continued and extensive racial violence accompanying the shift to independence was of enormous propaganda value to the Soviet Union and provided them with the means to influence the newly independent African states of the desirable nature of communism and the inferiority of liberal democracy. Much of Kennedy's attitude to civil rights reflected his desire to shore up the United States' image and promote democracy in independent African nations against the menace of the Eastern Bloc.

The significance of Kennedy's attitude to the civil rights movement

Kennedy's unenthusiastic attitude to civil rights prompted him to respond only when absolutely necessary, motivated by the desire to ward off negative international publicity rather than to protect US citizens. His unwillingness to protect activists from white extremist violence, as seen during the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham Campaign, and in his brother's 'deal' with Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, had various outcomes. On the one hand it helped 'create the crisis' that drew media attention to the civil rights movement, while on the other hand, it had also resulted in the arrests of citizens, many of whom suffered serious injuries for exercising their right to free speech and peacefully protesting for their civil rights.

Nevertheless, Kennedy's belief that action for civil rights was necessary in light of the Cold War did result in some gains for the civil rights movement, such as the desegregation of the University of Mississippi and a Civil Rights Bill. While civil rights leaders were unhappy that the Bill did not respond to their calls for protection from police brutality and greater protections of voting rights, it did at least provide a platform for later reforms and encouraged the members of the mainstream civil rights movement that their peaceful protests and endurance of jail and violence had been worthwhile.

President Johnson's attitude to civil rights

The attitude of President Lyndon B Johnson (1963–68) to civil rights changed drastically over the time of his political career. When Johnson ran for the US Senate in 1948, he ran as a Southerner and was a vocal segregationist. He denounced President Truman's civil rights proposals and played a key role in rendering Eisenhower's 1957 *Civil Rights Act* virtually ineffective.

When Kennedy was elected, Johnson became Vice President. Kennedy appointed Johnson to head the **President's Committee on Equal Opportunity (PCEEO)**. Through this role, Johnson made his first positive contact with civil rights leaders, such as Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, who stated that that he saw the first real change in Johnson when he was Vice President. Through Johnson's efforts, federal jobs held by African Americans increased by 17 per cent in 1962 and another 22 per cent in 1963. Johnson was increasingly consulted by the Kennedy administration on civil rights issues and became an active member of the White House civil rights team.

When Johnson became president, his attitude to desegregation was positive. Indeed, his first televised address called for passage of the Civil Rights Bill that would end segregation throughout the United States. The strength of his overall commitment to civil rights varied, however. While Johnson was supportive of the civil rights movement's goal of desegregation, his support for ending racial violence and for furthering political and economic rights was more moderate.

Johnson's attitude to segregation

In the wake of Kennedy's assassination, Johnson declared that no eulogy could more eloquently honour President Kennedy's memory than the passage of his civil rights legislation. In this he was presenting Kennedy as a decidedly pro-civil rights president, when in reality, Kennedy had only been lukewarm at best.

Johnson had worked tirelessly to secure passage of the *Civil Rights Act*. When Southern Senators had used the filibuster in an attempt to block the legislation, Johnson had rallied unprecedented bipartisan support to overcome the filibuster. The Civil Rights Bill became a means of healing a shocked nation. It also served to inspire confidence in Johnson's presidency, both in the United States and around the world. Johnson's *Civil Rights Act* was widely interpreted by the international press as a strong stance for racial equality. From this point onward, press reports of racist brutality in the United States were cast as a 'regional' problem, rather than a problem at the heart of the nation.

Johnson's attitude to racial violence

President Johnson had strongly condemned the KKK after the murders of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman on 21 June 1964, and of Viola Liuzzo, a white civil rights worker, on 25 March 1965. He instructed the **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)** to investigate the KKK on 30 March 1965. This was the first time HUAC had undertaken an investigation that was not related to Communist sympathisers or the infiltration of American society. The hearings resulted in seven KKK officials being charged with

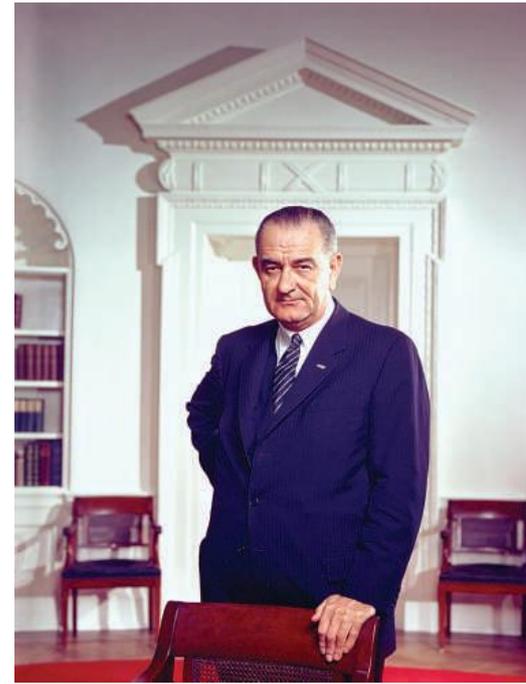


FIGURE 6.9 President Johnson's attitude towards civil rights issues evolved over his time in public life.

President's Committee on Equal Opportunity (PCEEO)

a program run by the Kennedy administration that sought to ensure that government contractors provided equal employment opportunities to African Americans

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

a special committee of the US House of Representatives appointed to investigate the 'subversive' activities of individuals and left-wing organisations to see if they were promoting communism or were part of a communist spy network

contempt for failing to produce documents when requested. A bill was also presented to Congress which made it a federal crime to commit violence under the cover of a secret organisation such as the Klan, but the Bill never became a law

However, while Johnson harshly denounced the KKK, he was less forthcoming when it came to violent acts committed by the police. On 30 June 1964, when learning that a police officer had shot a 16-year-old boy in Philadelphia, Johnson had surmised that perhaps the police officer had just lost his head. As time went on, Johnson became more convinced that violence was only committed by a few officers and that a 'law and order' response was needed to deal with unrest in African American communities.



FIGURE 6.10 President Lyndon B Johnson (centre, back to camera) meets with civil rights activists to discuss the Civil Rights Bill. Left to right: Whitney Young (National Urban League), James Farmer (CORE), Lee C White (civil rights advisor), Roy Wilkins (NAACP) and Martin Luther King Jr (SCLC), 18 January 1964.

Johnson's attitude to political rights

On 6 August 1965, Johnson also signed the *Voting Rights Act*, in response to the escalating violence in Selma, Alabama, during the Selma to Montgomery March. Johnson had told his Attorney-General Nicholas Katzenbach to 'write the god-damnedest, toughest voting rights bill that you can devise'¹ to prevent Southern states from implementing new ways to stop African American citizens from registering to vote. The *Voting Rights Act* would effectively strike down restrictions used by Southern states to deny African Americans the right to vote and ensure that properly registered individuals were not prohibited from voting. Johnson would later say that the *Voting Rights Act* was his greatest accomplishment as president.

However, just one year earlier, Johnson's actions demonstrated the limits of his commitment to political rights for African Americans. He had ignored calls from civil rights leaders to protect activists during the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, even after the murders of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman. Moreover, Johnson intervened in the efforts of the MFDP to gain seats to the Democratic National Convention. Johnson saw the challenge posed by the MFDP as an 'ingratitude' and was worried that he might lose Southern support if he allowed the MFDP to be seated.

Johnson had also launched a **War on Crime** in response to the urban riots in Watts, Harlem, Brooklyn, Rochester, Chicago and Philadelphia in 1965. The riots had led politicians and law enforcement agencies to associate crime with African American urban youth, concluding that a greater police presence in African American neighbourhoods was needed to curb unrest in urban areas. One of the key pieces of legislation for the War on Crime was Johnson's *Law Enforcement Assistance Act* (1965), which gave the federal government a role in state police operations, court systems and prisons.

War on Crime

a series of powers and practices that enabled a greater police presence in African American neighbourhoods

Johnson's attitude to economic justice

Johnson had launched his War on Poverty program on 8 January 1964. He asked Congress for bold proposals to build more homes, schools, libraries and hospitals than any single session of Congress in history. At the signing of the *Voting Rights Act*, Johnson had also announced a Civil Rights Conference to investigate and resolve the economic problems plaguing African Americans – poor education, family breakdown and endemic poverty.

However, the War on Poverty, regardless of its noble intentions, failed to address the structural and historical problems of poverty. Meanwhile, the Civil Rights Conference took longer than a year to organise. By the time the Conference was held in June 1966, the policy concerns of the Johnson administration had changed significantly. The Watts Riot and other urban uprisings had unnerved white liberals and conservatives alike. There were widespread calls for 'law and order' and perceptions that Johnson's War on Poverty was 'rewarding' African American rioters with handouts. In addition, white opposition to the 'forced' integration of schools in the South had intensified, with Democrats in the South switching their votes to the Republican Party. An attempt to update the *Civil Rights Act* with new provisions for fair housing in 1966 was stopped by a filibuster in the Senate.

With the advent of the Long Hot Summer of 1967, the War on Crime assumed a far greater importance than the War on Poverty. The Johnson administration had launched a federal investigation into the causes of the Long Hot Summer, known as the **Kerner Commission**. The Kerner Commission had concluded that poor housing, poor employment opportunities, a failed education system, lack of social services, and police violence had caused the riots. However, Johnson ignored the report's recommendations, and instead increased federal funding for local police forces. The War on Poverty was wound back and the money was instead channelled into policing and fighting the Vietnam War. By this stage, the Johnson Administration had determined that poverty programs would never be able to reach 'hard core' militant African American youths anyway, because they were 'inherently criminal' and needed closer monitoring by police.

Kerner Commission

National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (or Kerner Commission); a federal investigation launched by President Johnson on 28 July 1967 into the causes of the Long Hot Summer of 1967

The significance of Johnson's attitude to the civil rights movement

Johnson's attitude towards ending segregation and his belief in the need to ensure African American voting rights had led to significant civil rights legislation. While these laws took some time to take effect and did not stop all instances of discrimination, they were still important steps forward. Martin Luther King Jr had been so inspired by Johnson's efforts he pledged his support for Johnson's presidential campaign in 1964. King's support helped Johnson win the largest share of the popular vote since 1820.

However, Johnson's general attitude towards segregation and political rights was that his legislation had 'done enough' and effectively solved the civil rights issue. He did not see the need to recognise the legitimacy of the MFDP's claims, or the importance of revising US economic systems. Like most liberals in the United States, Johnson thought that the race question had been largely resolved and that he should now refocus his priorities towards enforcing 'law and order' and defeating communism in Vietnam. This attitude contributed to the loss of trust in American institutions by many in the civil rights movement, who now pursued the Black Power agenda. Johnson, in turn, felt personally betrayed by King's 'Beyond Vietnam' speech and refused to meet with him thereafter. He also had the FBI step up its surveillance of King.

Johnson dropped out of the 1968 presidential campaign a week before King's assassination. On the day King was murdered, Johnson said that he had rarely felt as powerless as he did on that day. In spite of their falling out, Johnson still respected King and passed the *Fair Housing Act* (1968) as a tribute to the slain civil rights leader.



FIGURE 6.11 Lyndon B Johnson with Martin Luther King Jr, 18 March 1966

Source Study 6.2 Kennedy's and Johnson's attitudes

Source A: John F Kennedy, excerpt from televised speech on civil rights, 11 June 1963

Today we are committed to a worldwide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free. And when Americans are sent to Viet-Nam or West Berlin, we do not ask for whites only. It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops. It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores, without being forced to resort to demonstrations in the street, and it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register to vote in a free election without interference or fear of reprisal. It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. But this is not the case ...

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; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes? Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. 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.

John F. Kennedy, Televised speech on civil rights, 11 June 1963, www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/televised-address-to-the-nation-on-civil-rights

Source B: Lyndon B Johnson, Remarks in the Capitol Rotunda at the Signing of the *Voting Rights Act*, 6 August 1965

Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that has ever been won on any battlefield ... The Members of the Congress, and the many private citizens, who worked to shape and pass this bill will share a place of honor in our history for this one act alone. There were those who said this is an old injustice, and there is no need to hurry. But 95 years have passed since the Fifteenth Amendment gave all Negroes the right to vote. And the time for waiting is gone ...

Thus, this is a victory for the freedom of the American Negro. But it is also a victory for the freedom of the American Nation. And every family across this great, entire, searching land will live stronger in liberty, will live more splendid in expectation, and will be prouder to be American because of the act that you have passed that I will sign today.

Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks in the Capitol Rotunda at the Signing of the *Voting Rights Act*, 6 August 1965; www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-capitol-rotunda-the-signing-the-voting-rights-act

Questions

1. How is Source A useful to a historian studying Kennedy's attitude to civil rights?
2. Account for the perspective of Source B.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify Kennedy's attitude to civil rights.
2. Draw a mindmap to show examples of actions that demonstrate Kennedy's attitude to civil rights.
3. Describe how the Cold War influenced Kennedy's attitude to civil rights.
4. Outline the ways in which Kennedy's attitude helped progress civil rights.
5. Identify the key factors in Johnson's attitude to civil rights.
6. Outline the ways in which Johnson's attitude helped progress civil rights.

The influence of the civil rights movement beyond the United States

The civil rights movement played a pivotal role in encouraging the emergence of other social movements in the United States and abroad, including the women's movement, gay rights campaigns, Indigenous movements, the environmental movement and the disability rights movement. The idea that collective action could generate change was not new, but the prominence of the civil rights movement made a new wave of activism possible. In this respect, the importance of the mass media to the achievement of rights and freedoms was key. Media images of activists being beaten, attacked by dogs and jailed for peaceful protest had not only created national and international support for the US civil rights movement, they had also taken the power of the movement far beyond its local context.

The methods used by the US civil rights movement were adapted by groups across the world. Nonviolent direct action inspired Aboriginal Australians, feminists in Western Europe and the United States, and pro-democracy demonstrators in East Germany, Burma and China to engage in collective action. At the same time, Malcolm X's advocacy of self-

defence also found traction among anti-apartheid groups in South Africa and Intifada activists in Palestine. Campaigns that demonstrate the influence of the US civil rights movement include the Bristol Bus Boycott (1963), the Aboriginal Freedom Ride (1965), the Aboriginal Black Power Movement (from 1967) and the Peaceful Revolution in East Germany (1989).

Timeline 6.3: The influence of the civil rights movement beyond the United States

- 1963**
 - 29 April: West Indian Development Council announced the Bristol Bus Boycott
 - 28 August: Bristol Bus Company ended racial discrimination in its hiring practices
 - 1965**
 - 12 February: Charles Perkins and Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) started the Freedom Ride
 - 15–16 February: SAFA demonstrated outside Walgett RSL
 - 16–17 February: SAFA took a group of Aboriginal children to the segregated Moree Baths
 - 1967**
 - 27 May: 1967 referendum (Australia)
 - 1972**
 - 27 January: Establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy
 - 1989**
 - 9 October: Leipzig peace march
 - 24 October: 300 000 people demand an end to the German Democratic Republic (DDR, known as East Germany)
 - 9 November: Fall of the Berlin Wall
-

The Bristol Bus Boycott

At the end of World War II, Britain faced a labour shortage. It looked to its colonies in the West Indies to fill this shortage, inviting immigrants from Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados to settle in Britain. By 1962, approximately 3000 West Indian people had settled in Bristol, in the south-west of England. Like in many other British cities in the 1960s, there was widespread racial discrimination towards West Indians and other non-white races. Immigrants struggled with poor housing, low paid jobs and racially-motivated violence. In 1963 a group of West Indian activists undertook the Bristol Bus Boycott to protest against the racist hiring practices of the Bristol Omnibus Company.

The Bristol Omnibus Company had employed many West Indian workers in low-paid workshop and canteen jobs, but refused to employ them as bus drivers or conductors. While the **Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU)** had denied that there were any discriminatory employment practices at the company, in 1955 the TGWU had actually passed a resolution specifically barring the employment of 'coloured' workers as bus drivers on the basis that this would lead to lower wages for bus drivers.

The West Indian Development Council

On 29 April 1963, a group called the **West Indian Development Council (WIDC)** announced that they would be undertaking a bus boycott in Bristol. Led by Roy Hackett and Paul Stephenson, the WIDC declared that no West Indians in Bristol would use the buses and the buses would be prevented from travelling into areas of Bristol where many West Indians lived. Members of the WIDC had been inspired by the nonviolent direct-action protest of the MIA in the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56) and believed this approach would work in Bristol. During the boycott, members of the WIDC blockaded the buses coming through West Indian areas of the city. They were joined by women, students and labour leaders, both Black and white.

Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU)

a large British trade union comprising transport workers, dock workers, ships clerks and engineering workers

West Indian Development Council (WIDC)

an action group founded in Bristol, UK, to fight the racist employment practices of the TGWU



FIGURE 6.12 A mural in Bristol celebrates Lorel 'Roy' Hackett, one of the leaders of the West Indian Development Council and a key figure in the campaign.

Support for the boycott

Many people in Bristol's white community came out in support of the WIDC. On 1 May 1963, university students from Bristol University held a march to the headquarters of the TGWU. This protest was covered by the local press and television journalists.

The boycott attracted national and international attention. Labour politicians, including local members Tony Benn (Labour MP for Bristol South East), Fenner Brockway (Labour MP for Eton and Slough) and Opposition leader Harold Wilson, all declared their support for the West Indian Development Council. West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine also lent his support to the campaign. His fame as a popular sporting celebrity drew media attention to the campaign, while his role as High Commissioner of Trinidad allowed him to encourage the Jamaican High Commissioner, Lawrence Lindo, to put pressure on the Bristol Omnibus Company.

The Bristol Bus Boycott outcome

After months of negotiation and protest, agreement was reached on 28 August 1963 (the same day as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom) that the Bristol Bus Company would end discrimination and allow the hiring of workers of any racial background. A few weeks later on 17 September, Raghbir Singh became Bristol's first non-white bus conductor.

In 1965, the British parliament passed the *Race Relations Act*, which outlawed racial discrimination in public places. In 1968 the Act was updated to include the banning of housing and employment discrimination on the basis of race.

Aboriginal rights and freedoms in Australia

Following World War II, Aboriginal people in Australia began to increase their activism for equality and civil rights. In 1958, Aboriginal civil rights groups in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia united to form the **Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA)**. Over the next 15 years, this council campaigned for constitutional change, equal wages, access to social service benefits and land rights. Meanwhile, several grassroots Aboriginal organisations were also established to fight against discrimination.

Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA)

an organisation formed in 1958 to fight for legislative changes in Australia to advance Aboriginal civil rights

Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA)

a civil rights organisation formed at the University of Sydney in 1964 to undertake the Freedom Ride in outback NSW

Student Action for Aborigines

In 1964, students at the University of Sydney formed **Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA)**, a group led by Charles Perkins, a third-year student and an Arrernte and Kalkadoon man. Perkins had been inspired by Martin Luther King Jr's leadership and by his methods of nonviolent direct action. He recognised the importance of 'creating a crisis' to evoke change, or as he called it, 'constructive conflict'. He also advocated the pattern set by King of passive nonviolent action. Perkins planned to lead SAFA on a tour of western and coastal NSW to expose the discrimination suffered by Aboriginal people. While the aims of SAFA's tour did not mirror the objectives of the 1961 Freedom Rides in the United States, it was nonetheless known as a 'Freedom Ride' by virtue of the fact that it involved a bus and civil rights action.

The Freedom Ride (1965)

The Freedom Ride left Sydney on 12 February 1965 and travelled west towards Dubbo before heading north to Walgett and Moree and then towards the east coast, arriving back in Sydney on 26 February. As they travelled, the students sang freedom songs, such as 'We Shall Overcome'. In addition to their aim to expose the living conditions endured by Aboriginal people in outback NSW, the Freedom Riders also wanted to encourage Aboriginal people to demand better treatment. During the 1950s and 1960s, Aboriginal people were forced to live in shanty towns on the outskirts of towns, because no one would rent a house to them; they were not allowed to use town swimming pools or restaurants; they were refused service in shops and hotels; and they were forced to sit separately from everyone else in cinemas. Even ex-servicemen were barred from the Returned and Services League clubs (RSL) if they were Aboriginal.

To this end, SAFA conducted a range of demonstrations against discrimination. Some of the main demonstrations were held at the Walgett RSL, the Moree Baths and the Bowraville cinema. When SAFA activists challenged the white townspeople to allow Aboriginal people access to these facilities, they were pelted with stones and food, spat on and subject to racist abuse. Outside Walgett, the SAFA bus was almost run off the road by an unidentified truck.



FIGURE 6.13 SAFA Freedom Riders at Bowraville, NSW, 21 February 1965; Charlie Perkins stands fourth from the left

The media's role

The importance of the media to the US civil rights movement had also been noticed by SAFA. One of SAFA's members, Jim Spigelman, had brought his 8 mm home movie camera along to film the events as they unfolded. Part-time student and ABC journalist Darce Cassidy was also travelling with the group. The images and recordings captured by Spigelman and Cassidy were made available to the Australian media, who also sent their own journalists to report on the students' efforts. *The Bulletin* magazine made the Freedom Ride its cover story in February 1965. The ABC, however, refused to play Cassidy's audio recordings until 1978.

The media reports and images of racist behaviour shocked viewers in Australia, most of whom had little knowledge of the conditions endured by Aboriginal Australians. This in turn led to heightened calls for government action to address discrimination against Aboriginal Australians, and increased support for the passage of the 1967 referendum to count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the population in the Australian Constitution.

The Aboriginal Black Power movement

The 1967 referendum was touted as a landmark event that ensured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were included in the national census and were subject to federal laws like other Australians. It led to new freedoms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so that they were no longer subject to the whims of different state laws, such as those of Queensland and Western Australia, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had not been allowed to marry or travel without permission, or hold rights over their own children.

While the passage of the 1967 referendum had supposedly demonstrated wide Australian support for equality, it had little impact on the racial abuse and discrimination in employment and housing that Aboriginal people suffered. During the late 1960s, hundreds of Aboriginal people moved to the cities. Redfern in Sydney, which was then a run-down inner-city suburb, became a haven for Aboriginal people looking for work, affordable accommodation and a sense of community. Yet even here they encountered significant racism and police harassment. As in the United States, young Aboriginal activists began to lose hope in the objectives of FCAA and its efforts to achieve change through legislation. They looked for an alternative means to fulfil their desires for civil rights.

The presence of US servicemen on leave in Sydney and Brisbane during the Vietnam War proved a turning point for Aboriginal rights and freedoms. The African American soldiers brought with them ideas and literature from the Black Power movement in the United States and the writings of Malcolm X. Many Aboriginal people in Redfern were inspired by Malcolm X's autobiography and saw that much of his philosophy made sense in their own context. They particularly identified with his call for self-defence, Black self-sufficiency and Black nationalism. In 1967 they formed the **Redfern Black Power Caucus** as a new approach to working for civil rights for Aboriginal people.

The Redfern Black Power Caucus established a range of community service programs including health clinics, food drives, a theatre group and a housing cooperative in Redfern. They also established the Aboriginal Legal Service in 1970, the first free legal aid centre in Australia. Another initiative was police patrols, where members of the Redfern Black Power Caucus followed police in the area, recording instances of unjust police behaviour towards Aboriginal people. This strategy was inspired by the Black Panther Party in the United States, a Black Power political party based in San Francisco, California.

Perhaps one of the most significant acts of the Redfern Black Power Caucus was the founding of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra. In response to the federal government's decision to grant a mining lease on Aboriginal land in 1971, the Redfern Black Power Caucus demanded title to their land, so that Aboriginal people could further Black self-sufficiency and Black nationalism. When Prime Minister Billy McMahon refused

Redfern Black Power Caucus

an Aboriginal civil rights organisation formed in Redfern in 1967; based on the ideology of Black Power

to grant them title or any profits from the mining lease, the Redfern Black Power Caucus travelled to Canberra where, on 27 January 1972, they erected a beach umbrella surrounded by placards outside Parliament House, proclaiming it an Aboriginal Embassy. The protesters argued that because they had no rights over their own land, they were therefore 'aliens' and in need of their own embassy. Over the next few weeks, more protesters joined and a series of tents were set up. Despite efforts to outlaw the Tent Embassy, the federal government was unable to have it legally removed and it remains Australia's longest-standing protest site.



FIGURE 6.14 Day one of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra in 1972. Left to right: Billy Craigie, Bert Williams, Michael Anderson and Tony Coore. Note that Billie Craigie and Bert Williams' fists are raised in the Black Power salute.

The peaceful revolution in East Germany

At the end of World War II, Germany was divided into two states: West Germany (the German Federal Republic, or BRD, a democratic state allied with the United States) and East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or DDR, a communist state allied with the Soviet Union). Berlin was located in the DDR, but the western half of the city was administered by the United States, Britain and France, while the eastern half was under the control of the Soviet Union. Even after Germany was divided, West Berlin remained aligned with the Western democracies.

This made it easy for East Germans wanting to leave the DDR to defect through Berlin. Many did want to leave. The DDR was a communist state which forbade freedom of speech or individuals holding private property and was effectively controlled by the **Stasi**, a secret police organisation. By 1961, 3.5 million East Germans had left the DDR for the West. In the Cold War era, this proved embarrassing to the Soviet government, which constructed a 3.6-metre-high concrete barrier around West Berlin (known as the Berlin Wall) in 1961 to stop emigration out of the DDR.

Stasi
the secret police of the East German state (DDR)

Martin Luther King Jr's visit to East Berlin

In September 1964, King travelled to West Berlin at the invitation of the West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt. After speaking to a huge crowd of 20 000 people at the Waldbühne Amphitheatre, King requested permission to travel to East Berlin and address Christians there. Even though religion was outlawed in the Soviet Union, the churches were allowed to stay open in East Germany. Fearing unfavourable press reportage, the US government refused to allow him to travel to East Berlin and confiscated his passport, but King entered the eastern half of the city anyway, presenting his American Express card at Checkpoint Charlie at the border instead. He gave a sermon at the historic Marienkirche (St Mary's Church) in East Berlin, where he preached to 2000 people about freedom and civil disobedience. He spoke of the nonviolent struggle against racial segregation in the United States and of the divided Berlin, which he saw as a symbol of a divided humanity.

King's visit was an enormous encouragement for the church leaders of East Berlin. The pastor of Marienkirche, Werner Arnold, had recently been imprisoned for helping East Berliners across the Berlin Wall. King inspired them to hope for change and to put faith in nonviolent protest.



FIGURE 6.15 Martin Luther King overlooking the Berlin Wall in 1964.

Prayers for Peace

In 1980, a Christian minister named Christian Führer arrived in Leipzig to lead the St Nicholas Lutheran Church. Christian Führer believed that the role of the church was to help its society to follow the teachings of Jesus. He began holding prayer meetings called 'Prayers for Peace' on Monday evenings at the church. The Monday night meetings quickly became a place where people who were interested in freedom, nuclear disarmament and environmental protection could meet and discuss ideas. By 1988 around 600 people were attending the Prayers for Peace meetings. They would end their meetings by marching together through the streets of Leipzig, thereby echoing one of the main tactics used by the civil rights movement in the United States. These marches were known as **Monday Demonstrations** (*Die Montagsdemonstrationen*).

Monday Demonstrations (*Die Montagsdemonstrationen*)

a series of peaceful protests undertaken every Monday during the East German Peaceful Revolution

From the start of 1989, the Stasi began to step up their surveillance of St Nicholas Church. They also patrolled the surrounding streets, arrested 'random' parishioners and beat people who were gathering around the church waiting to march. By September 1989 the number of people attending the prayer meetings and the Monday Demonstrations at St Nicholas had swelled to 6000. On 9 October, the Stasi and the police arrived at the front of the church while the regular attendees of St Nicholas held their prayer meeting. When the meeting was over and the church goers were ready to march, they were joined by 65 000 other Leipzig residents, carrying rocks and other makeshift weapons. To avoid what he feared would be a terrible outbreak of violence, Pastor Führer called on the crowds to put down their rocks and sing 'We Shall Overcome'. Singing, carrying candles and holding banners that proclaimed 'We are the People' and 'No Violence', they then undertook the largest anti-communist demonstration to date. Stunned by this turn of events, the Stasi did nothing.

The crowds became larger and larger, numbering 120 000 demonstrators by 16 October. On 18 October, the leader of the DDR, Erich Honecker, resigned. By 24 October there were 300 000 people on the streets of Leipzig, calling for an end to the DDR. The Leipzig movement directly contributed to the groundswell of protest that led to the resignation of the entire East German **politburo** on 8 November and the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November. The nonviolent Monday Demonstrations led by the Protestant churches of East Germany had allowed for a peaceful transition from communism, avoiding the bloodshed that occurred in other parts of Eastern Europe in the lead up to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

politburo

the executive committee of the Communist Party in East Germany, responsible for making national policy

Source Study 6.3 The influence of the civil rights movement beyond the United States

Source A: Charles Perkins, interview for *Australian Biography*, 1998

The whole Freedom Ride was not so much for the white people ... my deeper objective was for Aboriginal people to realise, hey listen, second class is not good enough, you know ... And you don't have to live on river banks and in shanty huts and at the end of a road where there's rubbish tips ... You don't have to cop these white men sneaking around pinching Aboriginal women, or sitting down the front of picture theatres [instead of where you liked], not being able to sit in a restaurant, because nobody will allow you as an Aborigine to sit in a restaurant. That's not on.

Charles Perkins, interview for *Australian Biography*, Film Australia, 1998; author transcript; www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zSHHX9tPUg&ab_channel=NFSAFilms

Source B: Interview with Christian Führer, *Religion and Ethics News Weekly*, 5 November 2009

In East Germany, the church provided the only free space in connection with the groups [of] people who wanted to discuss topics that were taboo, such as the refusal to serve in the army, military education. Everything that could not be discussed in public could be discussed in church, and in this way the church represented a unique spiritual and physical space in East Germany in which people were free ...

The fact that they accepted Jesus' message of the Sermon on the Mount, that they summarized it in two words – no violence – and the fact that they did not only think and say it, but also practiced it consistently in the street was an incredible development, an unprecedented development in German history. If any event ever merited the description of miracle that was it: a revolution that succeeded, a revolution that grew out of the church, remained nonviolent, no broken windows, no people beaten, no people killed – an unprecedented development in German history. A peaceful revolution, a revolution that came out of the church ... Martin Luther King prepared and executed this idea of nonviolence, peaceful resistance, in a wonderful way.

Interview with Christian Führer, *Religion and Ethics News Weekly*, 5 November 2009; www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2009/11/06/november-6-2009-the-rev-christian-fuhrer-extended-interview/4843/

Questions

1. How is the perspective of Source A useful for a historian studying the aims of the Freedom Ride in Australia?
2. Explain how Source B is valuable for a historian studying the influence of the US civil rights movement on the East German Peaceful Revolution.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Outline the reasons for the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1963.
 2. Identify the key outcomes of the Bristol Bus Boycott.
 3. Summarise the ways in which the US civil rights movement influenced the Bristol Bus Boycott.
 4. Outline how the US civil rights movement influenced Charles Perkins' methods of civil rights action.
 5. Outline the ways in which the Black Power movement influenced Aboriginal civil rights.
 6. Summarise the methods used by the Peaceful Revolution.
 7. Identify the outcomes of the Peaceful Revolution.
-

Exam-style questions

Recount

1. Outline the attitude of one US president to civil rights.
2. Compare the attitudes of two US presidents to civil rights.
3. Outline the aims of two civil rights organisations outside the United States.
4. Outline the methods used by two international civil rights movements that demonstrate the influence of the US civil rights movement.

Explain

1. Explain how the actions of one US president to civil rights reflected his attitude to civil rights.
2. Account for the attitudes of two US presidents towards civil rights.
3. Explain how the attitudes of US presidents limited the success of the civil rights movement.
4. Explain how the US civil rights movement influenced civil rights groups outside the United States.

Evaluate

1. How important were the attitudes of US presidents to the success of the civil rights movement?
2. Assess the impact of the leadership of the US presidents on the success of the civil rights movement.
3. Assess the international impact of the US civil rights movement.

Integration of sources

1. Using Source A and your knowledge, assess the impact of the attitudes of the presidents on the success of the civil rights movement.

Source A: Extract from *King and the Other America* by Sylvie Laurent

The common argument claims that the years 1964–1965 were a critical juncture in the history of the civil rights movement, for they marked the end of a consensual period and the dawning of protestors' radicalization. But the initial shift, to which activists responded, was President Johnson's fading sense of commitment to racial equality. Rendering African Americans free was a leap of unprecedented proportions and Johnson reasoned that he had done enough. Genuine equality would have to fall on someone else's shoulders.

S Laurent, *King and the Other America: The Poor People's Campaign and the Quest for Economic Equality*, University of California Press, 2018, pp 240–241.

2. Using Source B and your knowledge, explain the similarities between the aims of the US civil rights movement and the aims of one international civil rights movement.

Source B: Extract from 'From Colored Cosmopolitanism to Human Rights' by Nico Slate

[In] the aftermath of the Second World War, a cohesive human rights agenda developed in close relationship with the rising power of the United States and the creation of the United Nations. At the heart of that agenda was a liberal notion of individual rights coupled with a belief in the power of nation-states to enforce those rights.

N Slate, 'From Colored Cosmopolitanism to Human Rights: A Historical Overview of the Transnational Black Freedom Struggle', *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, Spring/Summer 2015, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp 3–4.

Going further

Create

- Design a poster to persuade people to join a protest for one of the international campaigns you have studied. Your poster should contain reference to the methods to be used in the protest and make mention of the influence of the US civil rights movement.
- Write a diary account for Charlie Perkins, Paul Stephenson or Christian Führer outlining their experiences during the campaigns they led for rights and freedoms.

Examine primary sources for yourself

- In groups of two or three, prepare a presentation that analyses a speech by two of the presidents and use each speech to explain:
 - the persuasive techniques used in the speech
 - the attitude of the president to civil rights.

Harry S Truman Presidential Library

Miller Centre: Dwight D. Eisenhower

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library

Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library

Prepare revision notes

- Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the attitudes of the presidents.

President	Attitude to civil rights	Positive outcomes for the civil rights movement	Negative outcomes for the civil rights movement
Truman			
Eisenhower			
Kennedy			
Johnson			

- Copy and complete the summary table below to outline the international impact of the US civil rights movement.

International movement	Methods used by the movement	Example of influence of the US civil rights movement	Achievements of the movement
Bristol Bus Boycott			
Freedom Ride			
Black Power Caucus			
East German Peaceful Revolution			

Endnotes

- H Ball, *A Defiant Life: Thurgood Marshall and the Persistence of Racism in America*, Crown, 1998, New York, p 187.

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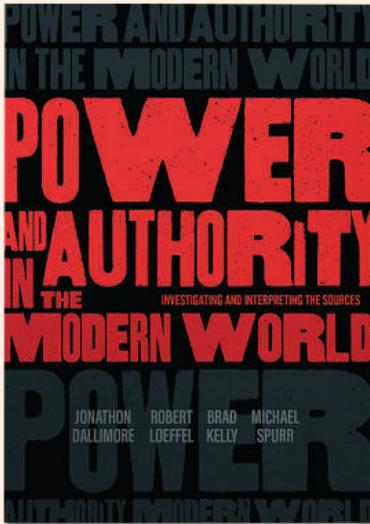
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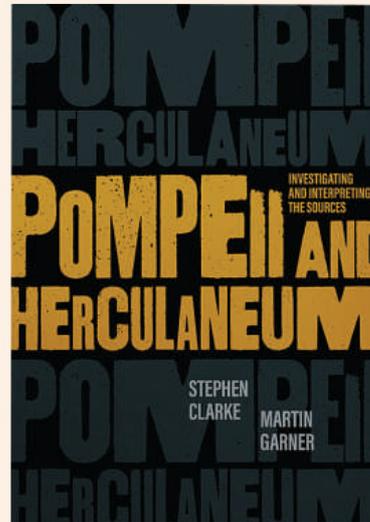
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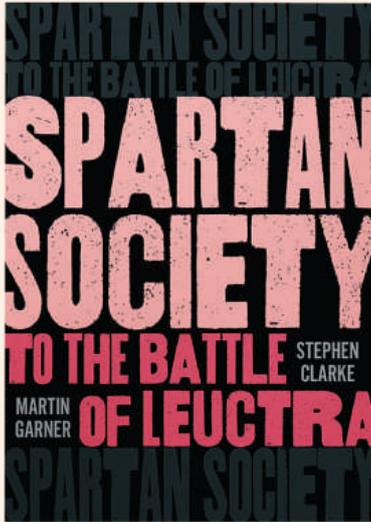
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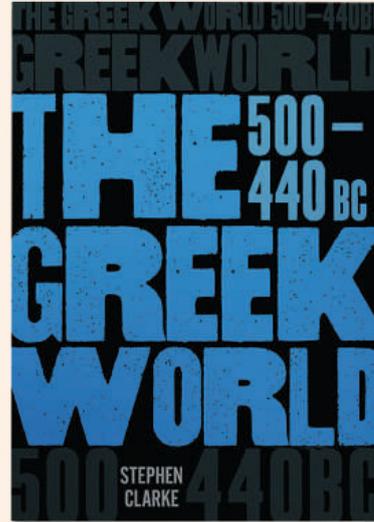
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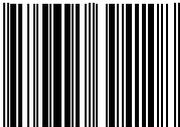
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