

# THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1945-1968

by Ken Webb

Here it is: the factual detail, the historiography, revision exercises and advice on how to write responses on The American Civil Rights Movement 1945-1968.



**eBook**

*“Everything you wanted to know about The American Civil Rights Movement 1945-1968, but were afraid to ask.”*

# THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1945-1968

by Ken Webb M.A. (Oxon), C.Ed

*“Everything you wanted to know about ‘Civil Rights in the USA  
1945-1968’, but were afraid to ask.”*

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## About the author

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## Author's note

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The purpose of this book – as with all titles in the “Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask” series – is to make life easy for students and teachers working their way through the ‘Change in the Modern World’ topic: Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968. It is not intended to be the final word on Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968; nothing beats wide-reading and going back to the primary sources!

However, neither teachers nor students always have the time for such luxuries. Teachers have several other classes to worry about, not to mention a growing multitude of administrative and bureaucratic tasks to fulfill! Students have other subjects to study, and may also be burdened with a series of major works. Thus, “Everything you want to know...” steps in to make life easy.

The principal aims of this book are to:

- provide the essential factual detail needed to understand the topic;
- provide references to written and visual sources;
- provide an introduction to the essence of historiographical debate;
- provide ideas for approaching the types of questions that might appear when examined on Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968.

## Rationale for the structure of this book

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“Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968” is one of six topics in the ‘Change in the Modern World’ section of the Modern History syllabus, introduced in 2018 and examined for the first time in 2019. The syllabus divides the topic as follows:

- Survey: The position of African Americans at the start of the period
- Focus of study:
- Struggle for Civil Rights
  - Key events of the civil rights movement
  - Achievements of the civil rights movement

These broad headings have been used to structure the book and have been broken down into sections closely based on the structure of the syllabus to make the topic more accessible to students. The two bullet points in the syllabus on Martin Luther King have been combined to comprise one chapter. Malcolm X has been separated from Martin Luther King and comprises a separate chapter. The nature of the syllabus structure means that there is some overlap between chapters and that some points will be mentioned more than once. An additional section has been included on approaching the types of questions that could be set on this topic in the HSC examination.

## Think as historians

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Key problems historians have in explaining Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968 – or indeed any major historical issue – are that we know what happened and attitudes we share today were not always accepted. Hindsight allows us to look back and isolate those developments which we can now see, from our current perspective, as the key issues. We can isolate the mistakes, criticise the leaders of the time and ask in incredulous tones:

- How could white Americans have supported such segregation and prejudice?
- How could the various levels of American government have accepted, indeed on occasions even have participated in such violence towards African Americans?

However, when one is living in the middle of events there is no hindsight.

## **Chapter 1:**

# **Impact of World War II on African Americans**

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### **Background <sup>1</sup>**

The history of the United States has always been bedevilled by an almost unsolvable contradiction. The Declaration of Independence, penned by Thomas Jefferson, later to be the country's third president (1801-1809), stated:

*"...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..."*

In November 1863, President Abraham Lincoln (1861-65) opened his famous "Gettysburg Address" with this line:

*"...Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal..."*

Throughout the twentieth century, US presidents from Woodrow Wilson (1913-21) onwards have extolled American virtues and expressed their belief in freedom, democracy and equality. These values were especially promoted during the years of the Cold War as a way of demonstrating the superiority of the American/ western way of life to that Soviet/ Russian Communism.

However, against such noble sentiments is the reality of deep-seated racism. The American Constitution referred to African American slaves as "three fifths other persons". Most US presidents before the Civil War owned slaves.

- The causes of the American Civil War are complex but it would not have happened without the existence of black slavery.
- Though the Civil War brought slavery to an end, the former southern Confederate states did their best to ensure that African Americans would not gain equality.
  - Individual states passing discriminatory laws to 'keep them in their place'.
  - These were the 'Jim Crow laws'. (see below)
- The Ku Klux Klan arose after the Civil War to terrorise African Americans into accepting their inferior position in society.
- Between 1882 and 1968, 3446 African Americans were lynched (hanged) by white vigilante groups, mostly in the American south.

On numerous occasions, American presidents have been quoted expressing their racist feelings, and using the "n" (ni---r) word. Unfortunately, even in the twenty first century, the issue

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<sup>1</sup> The comments that follow are not meant to suggest that the United States is the only racist nation. Contradictions between what a nation says it believes and how it treats its non-white or indigenous peoples can be found in many societies including Britain, Canada and Australia.

of racism seems alive and well, seen most clearly in the examples of police violence against black people and the need for the “Black Lives Matter” movement. <sup>2</sup>

### The Ku Klux Klan

*The Ku Klux Klan had been formed shortly after the Civil War in the mid-1860s. It started off as a friendly club for ex-Confederate soldiers who were seeking to maintain some of the comradeship of their wartime years. It soon developed into a large-scale organisation of violence aimed at the local black population.*

- *The Klan’s name derives from the Greek word “kuklos” which means circle. This was deemed appropriate given the closed nature of the Klan and its barring of outsiders.*
- *The Klan’s original aims were to maintain white supremacy, protect the ideals of pure Americanism and to protect southern womanhood.*
- *In essence it was a southern white reaction to their defeat in the Civil War. It aimed to keep the freed black slaves ‘in their place’.*
- *The Klan carried out thousands of acts of violence against the black population and their sympathisers. Congress had to introduced the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871 to bring the organisation under control and stamp out the violence.*
- *By 1900, Klan influence had lessened and the organisation seemed to have died out. It would reappear during World War I.*

### The issue of race: From World War I to World War II

The 1920s in the United States was a period characterised by conservatism, nationalism and intolerance leading to bigotry. President Harding (1921-23) had been elected under the slogan a “return to normalcy”. A conservative tide of intolerance dominated the country in the 1920s. The belief was strong that there had been a cleaner, purer America in the nineteenth century to which the country should return. This America was white, Anglo-Saxon and protestant.

This conservatism and intolerance manifested itself in a variety of ways:

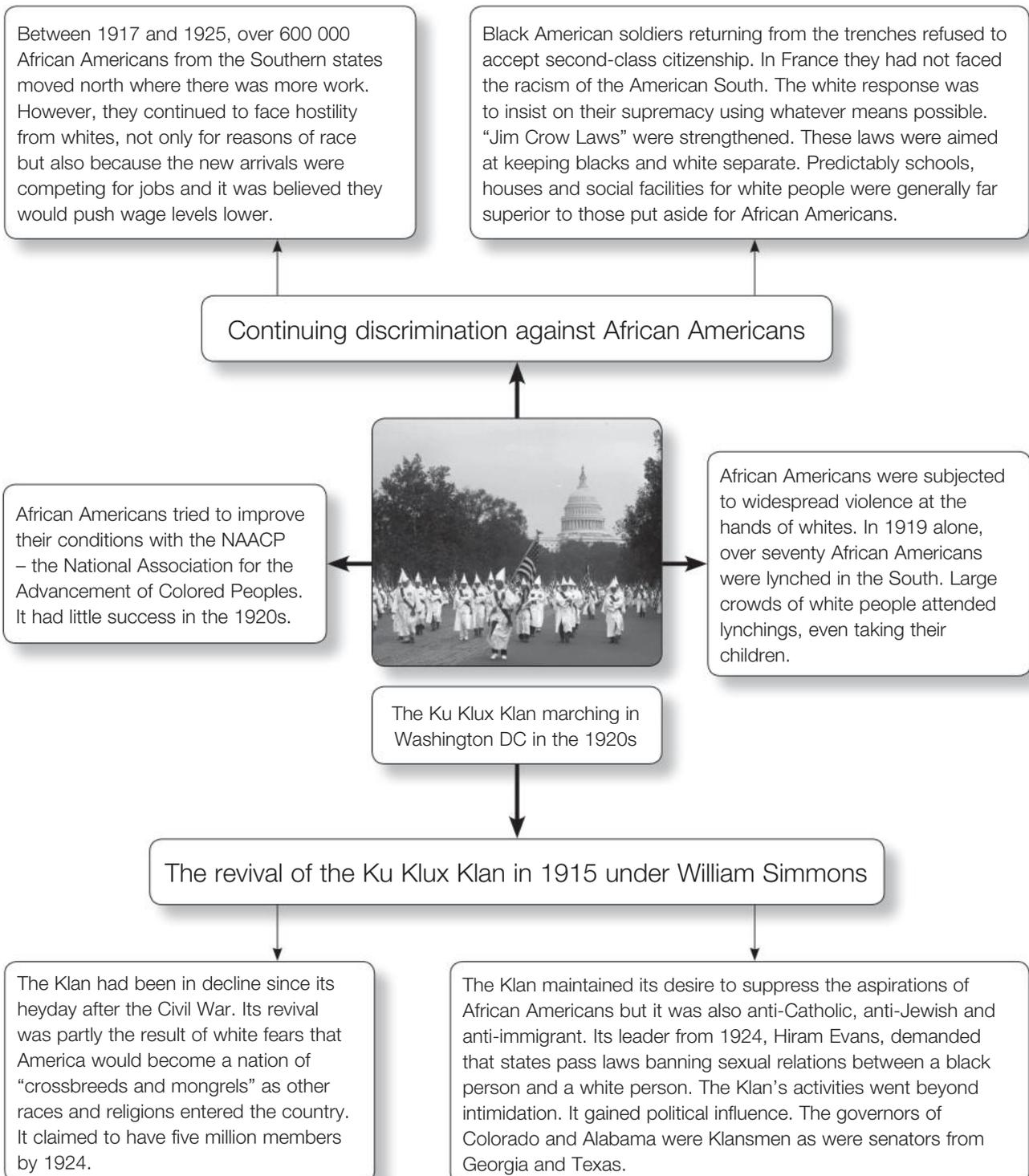
- There were attacks on left-wing groups as a hysterical “red scare” arose as a response to the fear of communism.
- Prohibition was introduced after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in January 1920. This banned the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquor.
- The US became more isolationist and sought to limit possible involvement in international entanglements. The United States refused to join the newly-established League of Nations even though this had been the brainchild of President Wilson.
- This isolationist feeling combined with growing intolerance to affect immigration policy. There was a fear that the USA would be invaded by a flood of aliens from war-ravaged Europe. This led to a series of restrictive immigration acts:
  - The Immigration Act of 1921 introduced a quota system. Intake was limited to 3% of a country’s nationals resident in the US in 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Racism in the United States has not been restricted to the treatment of African Americans. At different stages of American history, other groups have had to face racial discrimination and attacks. Such groups include indigenous Americans, Chinese and Japanese, Jews and Latinos. However, this book will be focussing only on the issue of African Americans.

- The 1924 Johnson Act lowered this quota to 2% resident in 1890 and banned all Asian immigration.
- The Immigration Act of 1929 reduced total immigration to a maximum of 150 000.

The intolerance and conservatism of 1920s America was to have a major impact on the lives of African Americans and race relations in general. The situation of African Americans in the 1920s is summarised in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1 The position of African Americans in the 1920s**



**Exercise 1.1 Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.**

1	What does the US Declaration of Independence have to say about the issue of equality?	
2	In what way does the US Constitution refer to African American slaves?	
3	What became the main purpose of the Ku Klux Klan? How did it try to achieve this purpose?	
4	What was the purpose of the “Jim Crow” laws enacted in the Southern states?	
5	How many African Americans were lynched between 1882 and 1968?	
6	Why did many African Americans find the return to the US from the war so difficult?	
7	Where had many African Americans moved to by the mid-1920s? Why?	
8	What was the NAACP?	
9	Who were the targets of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s?	
10	How powerful had the Ku Klux Klan become by the late 1920s?	

**African Americans and the depression**

Millions of Americans were left destitute by the Great Depression which gripped the country following the Wall St Crash of 1929. Unemployment reached 15 million by 1933, with millions more under-employed. Children were forced to leave school early, people lost their homes. Many mid-west farmers had to leave their dust-ravaged farms and move west to California. However, the plight of African Americans was always worse. African Americans were invariably the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Their unemployment rates were always higher than they were for other groups.

During the 1920s, living standards for African Americans were nearly always lower than for white Americans. During the stressful times of the depression, many unemployed whites competed for the sort of menial jobs which had previously been the preserve of African Americans. This further worsened black unemployment.

Injustice continued, particularly in the South. (see Chapter Two for more detail)

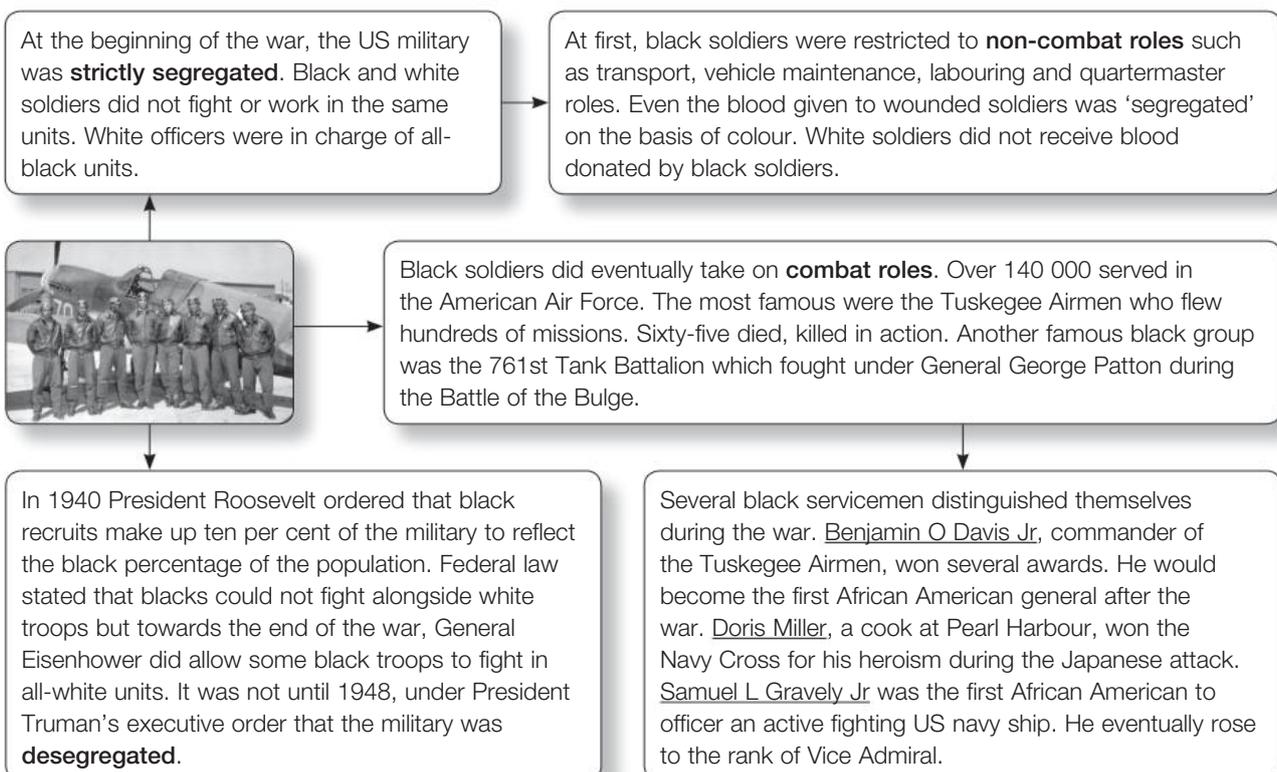
- Between 1933 and 1935, there were sixty-three lynchings of African Americans.
  - President Roosevelt took no action for fear of losing white southern votes in Congress for his New Deal legislation.
- One of the more well-known instances of injustice concerned the “Scottsboro Boys Incident” of 1931.
  - A group of young African American men was accused of raping two white girls and they were sentenced to long prison terms despite clear evidence in the trial that they had been framed.
  - The last of them was finally released in 1950.

## World War II and African Americans

World War II was to have a significant impact on the lives of African Americans though it would take another generation of often violent struggle before they were able to make any real progress towards equality. The war affected African Americans in the following ways:

- they were to play a significant role in the military;
- there was migration of African Americans across the country;
- demands were made and sometimes achieved for better working conditions;
- there were some major instances of continuing violence;
- African American organisations were becoming more influential;
- there was a growing feeling of “black consciousness”.

**Figure 1.2 African Americans and the military in World War II**



Other aspects of African American activity during World War II

- There was a significant movement across the country of African Americans during the war, both from the South to the North and the West, and from rural areas to urban areas.
  - This was done primarily to seek work, often in defence-related industries which expanded during the war.
  - Four million left southern farms.
  - Chicago's black population grew from 270 000 in 1940 to almost half a million by 1950.
- African Americans demanded an end to prejudice and discrimination in defence-related work. Demands were made for black workers to be allowed to do skilled work.
  - One black trade union leader, A Philip Randolph, threatened to lead a march on Washington of 10 000 black workers.
  - This persuaded President Roosevelt to sign an executive order ending discrimination in defence work.
  - By the end of the war, there were over two million black workers doing defence work.
- Despite making some gains, African Americans continued to face violent opposition in their quest for equal treatment.
  - Ku Klux Klan elements stirred up white workers to oppose having to work with black workers.
  - White workers often went on strike when forced to work alongside black workers.
  - In June 1943, there were major race riots in Detroit over this issue.
- The war years saw African Americans becoming more organised in their quest for equality.
  - The efforts of trade union leaders like A Philip Randolph was mentioned above.
  - The NAACP was becoming more influential and its membership increased from 50 000 in 1940 to 450 000 by 1945.
  - Other African American groups appeared such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and the Urban League.
- The war saw a growth in the idea of "black consciousness".
  - This was the result of African American participation during the war, black proximity to whites, and growing official awareness of black demands for equality.
  - Southern white supremacy was very slowly being challenged.
  - A movement for civil rights was gaining growing support from a majority of blacks and also from a significant number of whites too.
- The war years also saw some legal decisions work out in favour of African Americans.
  - A Fair Employment Practices Committee was set up during the war to deal with cases of alleged discrimination against African American workers. Of the 8000 cases brought to the Committee, over two thirds were dismissed. Southern Congressmen managed to reduce funding for the Committee in 1943.
  - However, the Justice Department established a Civil Rights Section which tried to decrease lynching and police brutality against blacks in the South.

- A Supreme Court decision of 1944, in the case of *Smith v Allwright*, declared that the exclusion of black voters from primary elections was unconstitutional under the Fifteenth Amendment.<sup>3</sup> Whites in the South still tried to prevent blacks voting but between 1940 and 1947, the number of registered black voters in the South increased from 3% to 12%.

Exercise 1.2 Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1	African Americans suffered no more than other Americans during the Great Depression.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	President Roosevelt was keen to push for action against white violence towards African Americans in the 1930s.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	The US armed forces were strictly segregated at the beginning of the war.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	The Tuskegee airmen comprised African Americans who flew hundreds of missions during the war.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	Generals Patton and Eisenhower always refused to allow black soldiers to see military action during the war.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	US military forces were eventually desegregated by President Truman in 1948.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	African Americans preferred to remain in the South during the war despite the prejudice they faced.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	Black workers were never successful in gaining jobs in defence-related industries during the war.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	Though America was at war, violence aimed against African Americans continued.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	As a result of the war, there was a growing feeling of 'black consciousness' amongst African Americans.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

<sup>3</sup> The Fifteenth Amendment of 1869 made it illegal to deny a person the right to vote on the basis of colour.

## What do the historians have to say about the “Impact of World War II on African Americans”?

### 1. D Shannon: *Between the Wars – America 1919-1941*

Most supporters of the Ku Klux Klan were rural, small town whites of limited education though many well-educated and influential whites used it for political advancement. Shannon comments on the attitudes of most members of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, values which often persisted to 1945. Though there were regional variations in attitudes, in certain matters members were consistent:

*“..everywhere it was strongly anti-immigrant, prohibitionist, and disapproving of sexual immorality.. fundamentalists constituted the backbone of the Ku Klux Klan..”* <sup>4</sup>

### 2. Vivienne Sanders: *Race Relations in the USA since 1900*

Sanders acknowledges that African Americans had a long way to go in 1945 before they could possibly achieve anything approaching equality with whites. However, it was undeniable that the war had brought about change. Some legal decisions were slowly eroding Southern white supremacy. There were more significant black leaders than a generation earlier. Returning black servicemen who had experienced front-line service would begin to demand change. Sanders concludes:

*“...By 1945 there had been a clear and dramatic increase in black consciousness and activism... Now black organisations used a combination of cooperation, coercion and confrontation when dealing with whites...”* <sup>5</sup>

4 Shannon, D, *Between the Wars: America 1919-1941*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1979, p 89

5 Sanders, V, *Race Relations in the USA since 1900*, Hodder and Stoughton, Abingdon, 2000, p 49

# Chapter 2:

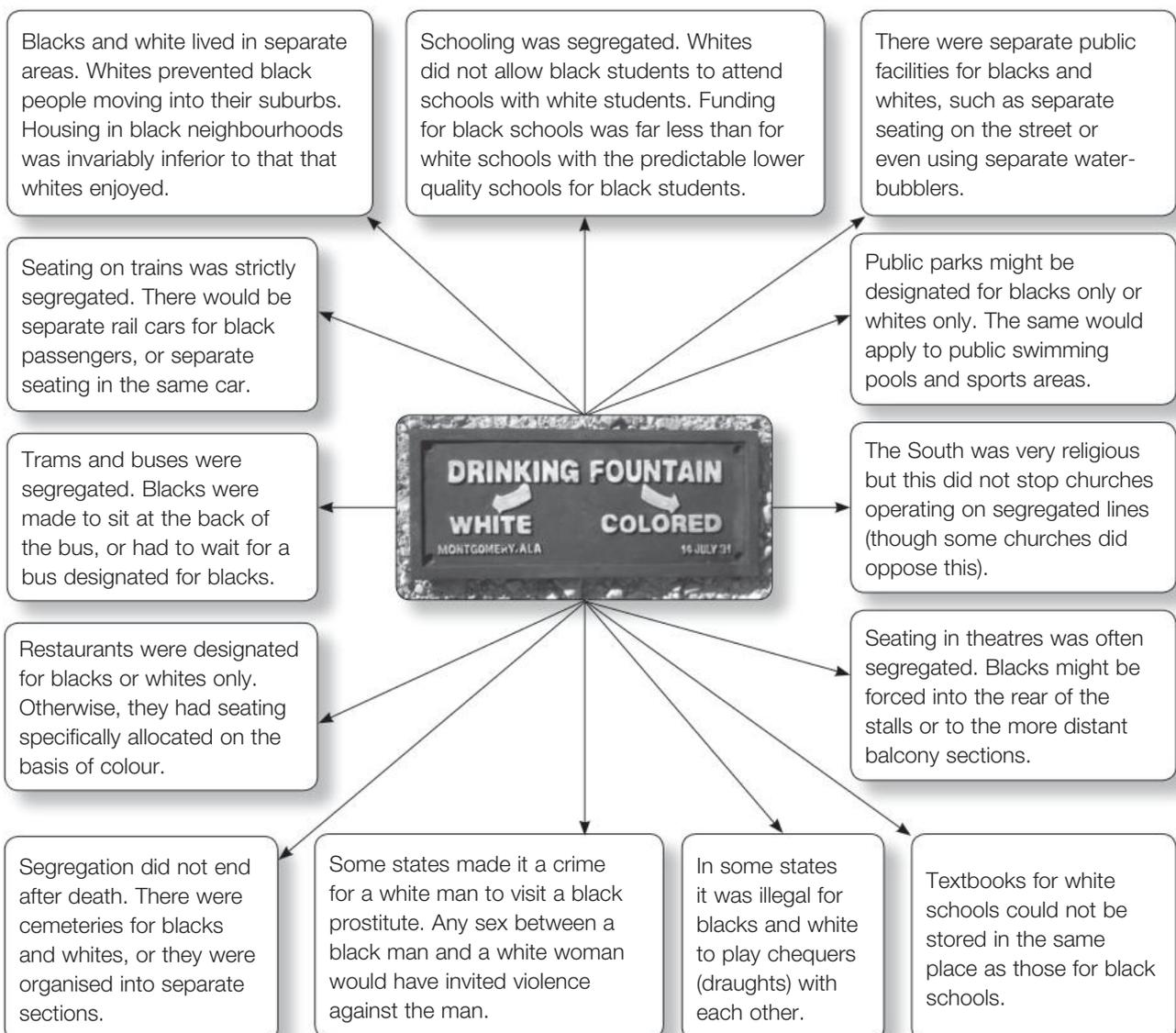
## Extent of racial segregation and discrimination

By the mid-1940s, the American South had become an almost totally segregated society. For African Americans living in places like Alabama and Mississippi, discrimination, prejudice and segregation were a way of life. The situation was little different in parts of the North for African Americans.

Segregation is the practice of separating people on the basis of race. This separation affected everything from housing to schooling to which water bubbler might be used in a public park. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: firstly, to outline broadly how segregation affected African Americans; and secondly, explain how this situation had come about by the end of World War II.

Figure 2.1 provides some examples of segregation in the South. They range from the very serious to the utterly absurd.

**Figure 2.1 Segregation in the American South by the mid-1940s**



## The post-Civil War South

The American Civil War came to an end after four years of bloody conflict in April 1865. What followed was the era of “Reconstruction”, 1865-77. Many high-minded northerners moved into the defeated Southern states to assist the newly freed black population in their post-slavery lives. However, even more unscrupulous northerners headed south with the intention of making money from Federal government largesse and at the expense of the defeated southerners.

- Southern whites were bitter and resentful at their defeat in the war.
  - The presence of these northern “carpetbaggers”, as they became known, only served to increase their bitterness and resentment.
- However, southern white anger was aimed most strongly at the newly freed black population.
- Deep feelings of a belief in the racial inferiority of blacks fuelled southern white efforts to keep the former slaves “in their place”.

One white Georgian commented shortly after the war:

*“...There is absolutely no place in this land for the arrogant, aggressive, school-spoilt African American who wants to live without manual labour. Yes Sir! We know Sambo, and we like him first rate, in his place. And he must stay there too...”*

- One of the clearest signs of southern white efforts to achieve this aim was the growth of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1877 is not one of the highlights of American history. A highly disputed presidential election saw Rutherford B Hayes come into office. Reconstruction came to an end and federal troops departed the South. The former Confederate states were now left to their own devices on the future treatment of the former African American slaves. What gains they had made during the Reconstruction period were gradually whittled away by the various Southern state governments.

By 1900, a whole range of laws had been introduced into the southern states which were aimed at separating blacks and whites, and more importantly keeping African Americans “in their place”. These laws became known as “**Jim Crow**” laws. A formalised system of segregation became the norm in the southern states. The practical implications of this segregation would be the reality of life for African Americans well into the post-World War II period. They are outlined in Figure 2.1.

Was there anything positive to see for African Americans in the South? They received little help from the Federal government or the Supreme Court (see below). The Jim Crow laws limited any gains from Reconstruction and ensured continuing inequality and humiliation. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution were ignored, but at least they existed (see below). A common black saying of the time was: “*We ain’t what we ought to be, we ain’t what we going to be. But thank god we ain’t what we used to be.*”

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One.

## “Jim Crow” and the Supreme Court

In the American system, it is the Congress (House of Representatives and the Senate) which makes the laws. The president’s signature then makes Congress’ laws ‘the law of the land’. However, if it is considered that a law is against the letter of the American Constitution, an appeal can be made to the Supreme Court to have a law overturned.

In the years before the end of World War II, the Supreme Court did not decide kindly for African Americans.

- In Civil Rights cases in 1883, the Supreme Court decided that the Federal Government could not interfere in the law-making of southern states.
- The most celebrated case which worked against African Americans in the South, was the 1896 Supreme Court Case of “Plessy versus Ferguson”.
  - By the 1890s, segregation had become a way of life in the South (see Figure 2.1). An appeal was launched in the Supreme Court that this contravened the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.
  - The court decided that the provision of “separate” but “equal” facilities for blacks and white was not against the 14th Amendment.
  - This meant that there was now no legal impediment in the South for segregating black and white people.
  - The absurdity of the decision was lost on nobody. Even the casual observer could not fail to see that facilities for whites were always superior to those for blacks.
  - In some southern states, state expenditure on white schools was ten times or more greater than that on black schools.

## African Americans and the right to vote

Two constitutional amendments introduced shortly after the end of the Civil War were meant to ensure the vote for African Americans.

- The 14th Amendment was adopted in July 1868. In essence it gave African Americans citizenship and equality under the law. It states:  
*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.*
- The 15th Amendment was adopted in February 1870. In essence it stated that the “...right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude...”

There were worthy attempts to enfranchise African Americans. However, in reality it would be a century before proper voting rights were accorded African Americans.<sup>2</sup> The southern states introduced provisions which neutralised the impact of the 14th and 15th Amendments.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even at the time of writing (2019), several southern states have provisions which have the effect of denying the ability of some citizens to vote. Such citizens are invariably African American.

- Literacy tests were introduced. A person had to be literate and be able to interpret part of the state constitution to be allowed to vote.
  - This restriction was not based on race, but of course it was more likely that at the time an African American would be illiterate than a white person.
- When literacy tests denied the vote to some poor whites, “grandfather clauses” were introduced.
  - A person could vote if they were a descendant of a person who had been eligible to vote before 1867.
  - This clearly excluded African Americans who were descendants of slaves.
- Poll taxes and other means were also used to disenfranchise African Americans.

### African Americans outside of the South

The position of African Americans in the northern and western states was not as bad as it was in the South. However, it would be wrong to assume that they did not face discrimination and attempts at segregation there. They had legal and political equality but as millions had moved to the north and west by 1945, they faced other issues. Those African Americans who made it to the north were:

*“...herded into ghettos, segregated in most public places, fobbed off with inferior schooling, cold-shouldered by labor unions and consigned to the most menial and ill-paid jobs...”*<sup>3</sup>

- There was great competition for jobs in the northern and mid-western industrial cities. African Americans often found themselves the last to be hired and the first to be fired if times got tough.
- White workers often resented the presence of black workers as they feared that this would depress wages.
- Employers sometimes used black workers as strike breakers in some of the more serious industrial disputes.
- As the demand for housing increased, African Americans found it more difficult to obtain decent housing. By 1900, several black ghettos had appeared in some of the larger cities.
- African Americans also experienced hardship in the capital, Washington DC. During World War II, when land was needed for the construction of the Defence Department complex, The Pentagon, and for the extension of the Arlington National Cemetery, hundreds of black Americans’ homes were demolished.

### Exercise 2.1 Using the terms in the box below, complete this paragraph.

After the Civil War, African American slaves gained their \_\_\_\_\_. The 14th Amendment gave them \_\_\_\_\_ and the 15th Amendment ensured them the right to \_\_\_\_\_. However, southern states introduced \_\_\_\_\_ tests and \_\_\_\_\_ clauses in attempts at restricting black voting rights. After the period of \_\_\_\_\_, southern state governments introduced a series of \_\_\_\_\_ laws which aimed at \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> Morsion, SE, Commager HS, and Leuchtenburg, WE, The Growth of the American Public, Volume Two, OUP, 1969, p 275

between blacks and white. In 1896, the \_\_\_\_\_ allowed these laws to stand on the basis of that \_\_\_\_\_ but equal was in the spirit of the constitution. Many African Americans moved to the \_\_\_\_\_ states. Even there they faced \_\_\_\_\_ especially in their quest for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. By 1900, several black \_\_\_\_\_ had grown up in some of the industrial cities.

northern – segregation – grandfather – ghettos – vote – literacy – freedom – work  
reconstruction – citizenship – discrimination – separate – housing – Jim Crow –  
Supreme Court

## What do the historians have to say about the “Extent of racial segregation and discrimination”?

### 1. Morison, Commager and Leuchtenburg

Morison et al argue that the 1896 Supreme Court decision in Plessy versus Ferguson gave segregation a ‘spurious respectability’. As a result of the decision:

“... ‘Jim Crow’ became almost universal, and segregation took on the character of a cosmic law... racial violence became the order of the day; in the fifteen years after 1885 almost 2500 African Americans were lynched...”<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Steven F Lawson: *Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey*

Lawson states that the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine of ‘Plessy versus Ferguson’ never worked out in practice as funding was never equal. The effective neutralisation of the 14th and 15th Amendments meant that African Americans could not take any action against this inequality. Lawson states that for another half a century:

“... racial segregation prevailed, reinforced by disfranchisement, official coercion, and vigilante terror. In addition, starting in 1913 with the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, who had close ties to the South, the federal government imposed racial segregation in government offices in Washington, D.C...”

### 3. Kathryn Stockett: *The Help*<sup>5</sup>

Kathryn Stockett’s debut novel, “The Help”, appeared in 2009. It is set in Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1960s. The story is told from the perspective of three different women. Two of the women are African Americans, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, who work as maids for white families. The third voice is ‘Skeeter’ Phelan, daughter of a well-to-do white family. Skeeter has ambitions to be a writer and decides to write about what it is like to be an African American maid in 1960s, segregationist Mississippi. This is a work of fiction, though the author, Kathryn Stockett, based much of her writing on

<sup>4</sup> Morison, SE, Commager HS, and Leuchtenburg, WE, *The Growth of the American Public, Volume Two, OUP, 1969, pp 274-5*

<sup>5</sup> Extension students might find the idea of using fiction in the study and construction of history of interest. It could provide the basis of an Extension essay.

her own experiences growing up with an African American maid. However, it can be of great value to students studying the impact of segregation for African Americans as the novel highlights both the brutal and the trivial ways in which segregation operated. One small example refers to Miss Leefolt's (a southern white woman who employs an African American maid) decision to install a second bathroom for use by the 'colored help'. Aibileen makes a comment which brings out the paradox (and humiliation) of segregation. Aibileen can clean up after the white family, and is trusted to look after the white children but she is not allowed to use the same bathroom as the white family. She says in the novel: "...I use my colored bathroom from now on. And then I go on and Clorox the white bathroom again real good..."<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. "Green Book"

The 2018 film, "Green Book"<sup>7</sup>, tells the story of the journey through the southern states in 1962 shared by the skilled pianist, Dr Don Shirley (played by Mahershala Ali) and his New York Italian driver, Tony Vallelonga, known in the film as 'TonyLip' (played by Viggo Mortensen). It is directed by Peter Farrelly and one of the writing credits goes to Nick Vallelonga, TonyLip's real life son.

- The title of the film refers to a travel guide published from 1936 to 1967 that was published for African Americans who might be travelling through the south.
- The book was called *The Negro Motorist Green Book* and it promised "vacation without aggravation".
- It listed facilities and motels that an African American could use in the strongly segregated southern states.

The film is an absolute delight in its own right. However, for students studying civil rights in the south of the early 1960s, it provides some insightful observations on how segregation would have operated.

- Don Shirley is the guest of honour in an old-style southern mansion where he is about to perform to a well-heeled, white audience. Before the performance, he needs to go to the toilet. However, he is not allowed to use the 'white' facilities inside the house. Instead he is directed to a beaten-down shed in the garden. He refuses to use it and instead demands his driver take him back to his motel to use the facilities there.
- Later in the film, their car is stopped by southern highway patrol police. Don Shirley is arrested for breaking 'sundowner' laws which prohibit blacks to be on the street after dark.
- Towards the end of the film, The Don Shirley Trio is again to perform at a very posh restaurant in Montgomery. He wishes to join the other two members of the trio for dinner. However, even though he is to be the star performer that evening, he is not allowed to dine in the segregated restaurant with his fellow musicians.
- The film also highlights other examples of violence and routine police harassment of African Americans at that time.

<sup>6</sup> The novel was turned into the movie of the same name in 2011, starring Viola Davis, Emma Stone and Octavia Spencer. Octavia Spencer won the Oscar that year for Best Supporting Actress.

<sup>7</sup> Green Book won three Academy Awards in 2019, including Best Film

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## Section Two – Focus of Study (1) ■ Struggles for Civil Rights

This section of the syllabus separates “groups supporting civil rights and their ideas for change”, “methods employed by civil rights movements”, “Martin Luther King”, “Malcolm X” and “opposition to Civil Rights”. Teachers would probably cover these elements together, and there is obviously a logic to that approach. However, in keeping with the spirit of the “Everything you wanted to know...” series, an attempt will be made to separate them and follow the outline of the HSC syllabus for the topic “Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1969”.

# Chapter 3: Groups supporting civil rights and their ideas for change

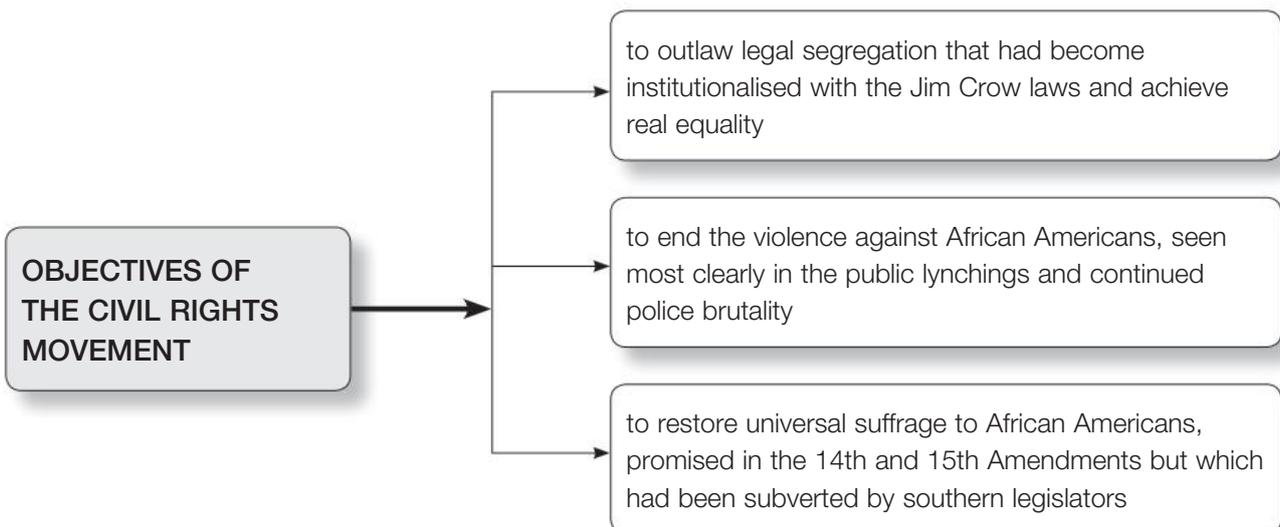
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## Introduction

Slavery in the United States came to a formal end at the end of the Civil War in 1865. In the immediate aftermath of the war, there were genuine attempts to afford African Americans the same rights as white Americans. However, the failure of Reconstruction, the reassertion of white control in the southern states combined with deep-seated racism (not restricted to the United States in the 19th century) ensured that the gains of African Americans would not last.

The struggle for Civil Rights in the United States is a complex story. However, its aims can possibly be narrowed to three fundamental objectives. These are outlined in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 The objectives of the Civil Rights Movement**



Groups supporting civil rights ranged from large, long-established organisations to local ad hoc groups. Civil rights campaigners came from a variety of social classes, a variety of backgrounds and even from different geographical regions of the nation. Their strategies and

tactics (see Chapter 4) varied greatly. However, they all shared the three key fundamental ideas for change: <sup>1</sup>

- end Jim Crow segregation
- end white violence
- end black disenfranchisement.

Much of what people remember about the Civil Rights Movement comprise television images. The explosion of television broadcasting in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in the United States meant that civil rights actions were often captured on film and replayed again and again. Even the most cursory search on YouTube can bring up film clips of ‘bus boycotts’, ‘civil rights marches’, ‘the speeches of Martin Luther King’. However, there was a civil rights struggle long before television. What follows is a brief consideration of the struggle for civil rights before 1945.

## Early “Civil Rights” movements

The kidnapping and enslavement of African Americans stretched back four hundred years. In the late 16th and 17th century, slavery was generally accepted by most European nations. The slave trade was certainly lucrative. However, this does mean that there were no groups or individuals against ‘the peculiar institution’. <sup>2</sup>

- Some of the ‘peace’ churches had opposed slavery.
  - These included Quakers, Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren.
  - In the decades before the Civil War, Quakers had assisted black slaves to escape to the north by means of what became known as ‘the underground railway’.
- Opponents of slavery had waged publicity campaigns before the Civil War.
  - The abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 and published a weekly paper called ‘The Liberator’.
  - The freed slave, Frederick Douglass, published his ‘Abolitionist North Star’ from 1847.
- More militant anti-slavery campaigners attempted violent means to end slavery.
  - Notable amongst these was John Brown’s attempt at Harper’s Ferry in 1859. He was hanged for his efforts.

Over 200 000 black soldiers fought in the Civil War; 38 000 were killed in action. The war ended slavery but as has been explained any gains that African Americans made in the immediate post-Civil War period were soon extinguished. However, an estimated 30 000 African American teachers had been trained by the turn of the century. Literacy amongst black communities spread. A whole range of black community organisations and churches were established.

However, despite this progress and the efforts of African Americans, they still faced the triple scourge of segregation, violence and disenfranchisement. It would be many decades before these issues were dealt with.

<sup>1</sup> The aims and methods of the more radical groups often went beyond these aims (see Chapter 4).

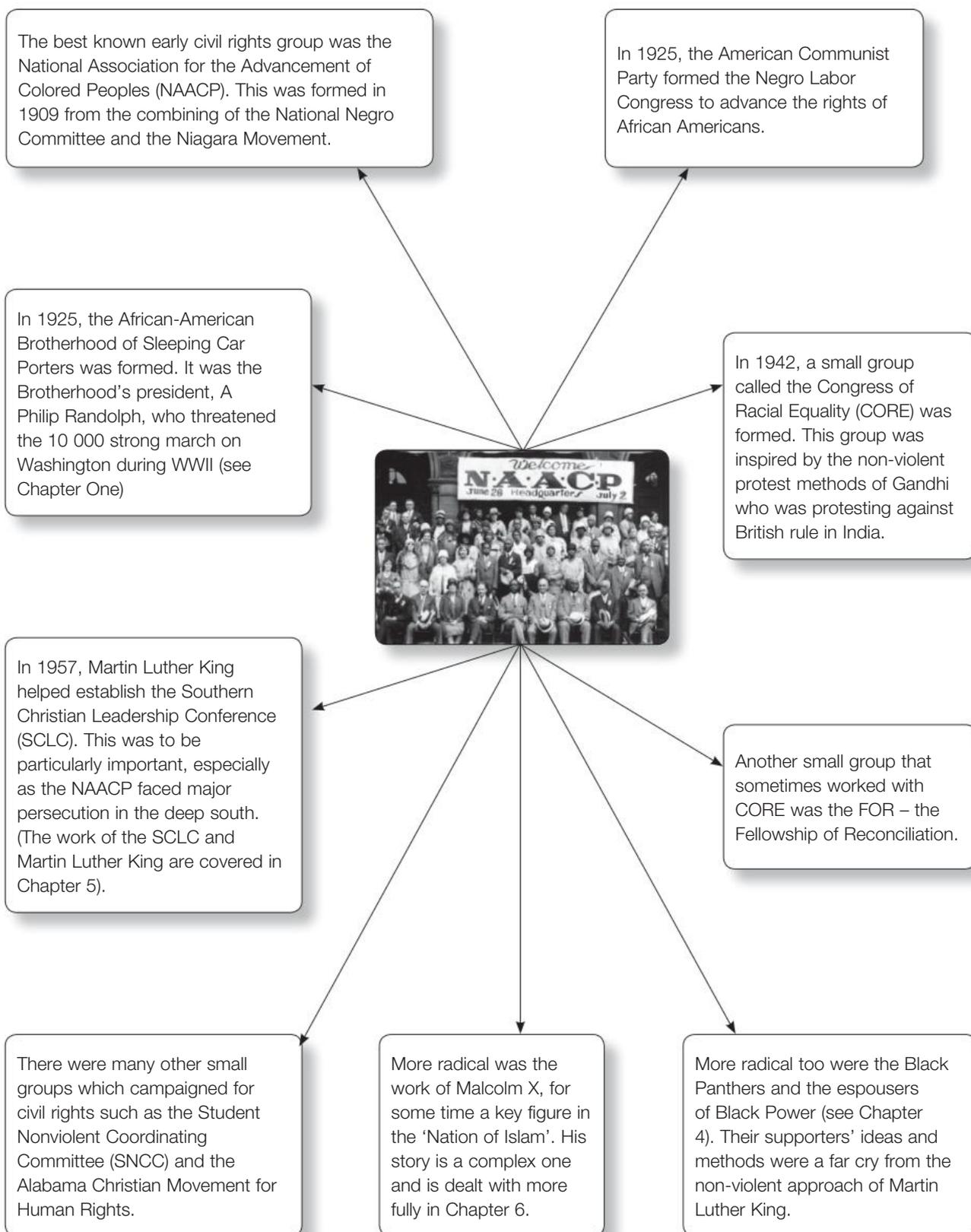
<sup>2</sup> The phrase ‘the peculiar institution’ was a term used by many Americans in the 19th century to describe slavery to people from other countries.

## Civil Rights groups in the 20th century

From the early years of the 20th century, African Americans began to organise.

Figure 3.2 outlines some of the main groups who were involved.

Figure 3.2



(The methods employed of the various civil rights movements outlined in Figure 3.2 will be dealt with in more detail in Chapters 4,5, and 6).

**Exercise 3.1 Match the description on the left with the groups listed on the right.**

1	Formed in 1942, inspired by the non-violent methods of Indian leader Gandhi.		African-American Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
2	Radical group whose ideas differed greatly to those of Martin Luther King		Negro Labor Congress
3	Malcolm X had been a key in this group.		Black Panthers
4	Best known of the early civil rights groups, formed in 1909.		The NAACP
5	This religious group assisted black slaves to escape via the 'underground railway'.		Southern Christian Leadership Conference
6	Formed in 1925 and led by A Philip Randolph who threatened the 10 000-man march on Washington DC.		American Anti-Slavery Society
7	Martin Luther King helped establish this group in 1957.		CORE
8	A smaller group which at times worked with the Congress of Racial Equality.		Fellowship of Reconciliation
9	Formed in 1925, this was a branch of the American Communist Party		The Quakers
10	William Garrison had formed this organisation in the 1830s.		Nation of Islam

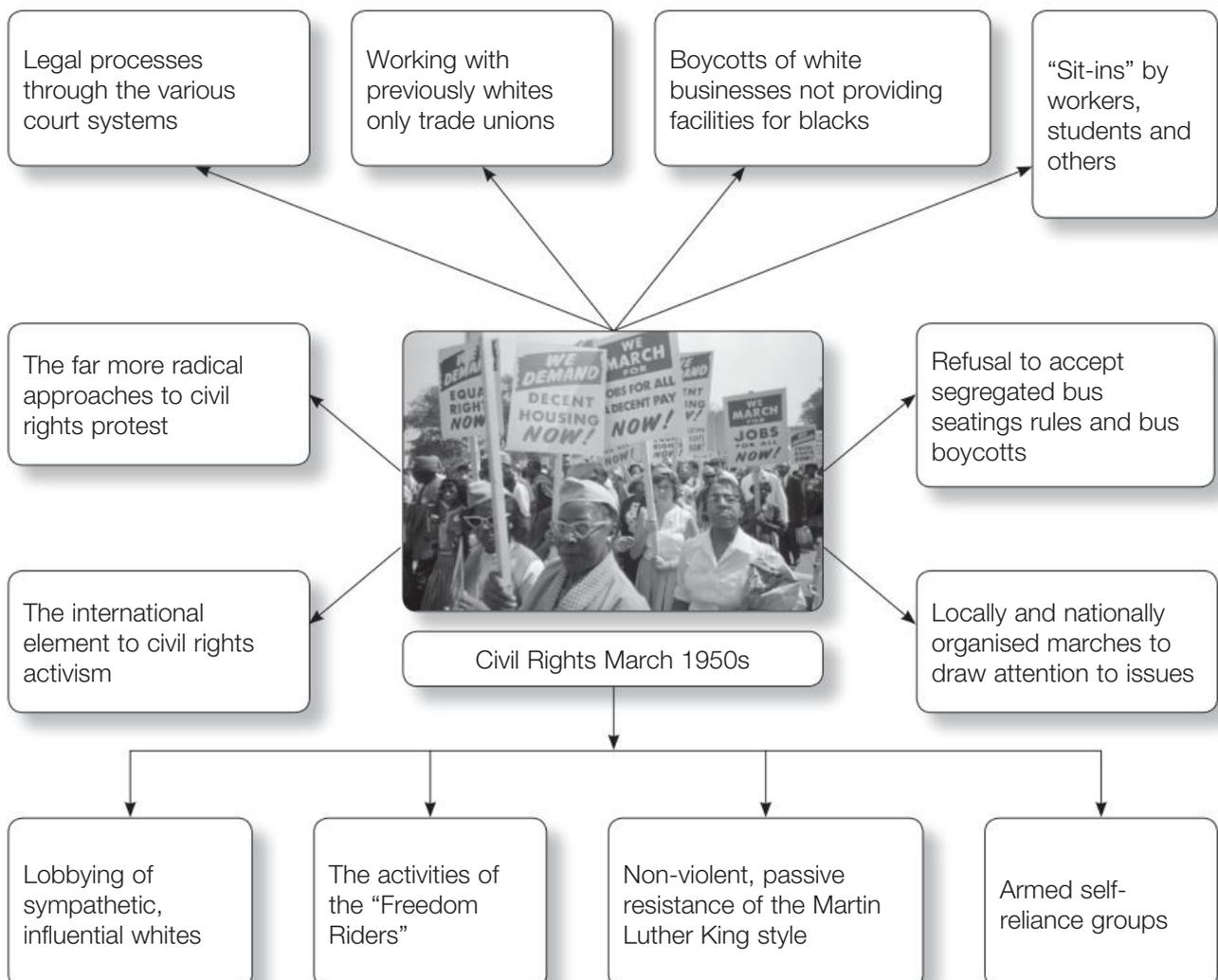
# Chapter 4:

## Methods employed by civil rights movements

This chapter will commence with an overview of “methods employed by civil rights movements”. The work of Martin Luther King will be covered in Chapter 5. Malcolm X will be examined in Chapter 6. Very brief mention will be made of specific episodes such as the “Montgomery Bus Boycott”, “Little Rock High School”, “Freedom Rides”, March on Washington” and the “Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964”. These episodes will be examined more fully in later chapters.

The images of the civil rights campaigns that usually come to mind often comprise a mixture of peaceful African Americans marching behind Martin Luther King, brave individuals breaking a segregation barrier on a bus or in a restaurant, or of violent and often vicious opposition from southern white police, southern governors and ordinary southerners. However, the civil rights movement involved far more than these well-known images. Figure 4.1 outlines the various methods employed by civil rights movements.

**Figure 4.1 Methods employed by civil rights movements**



The 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy versus Ferguson*<sup>1</sup>, established the principle of “separate but equal”. However, not all civil rights groups sought to remove the “separate”; some sought to enforce the equal. One such group was the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL), formed in 1951 by TRM Howard. It promoted civil rights and black voting rights but did not campaign against Jim Crow. It demanded that blacks receive equal treatment to whites. One campaign it organised was a boycott of petrol stations which did not provide washroom facilities for blacks but only for whites.

One of the first major attacks on the Jim Crow segregation system of the south came in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision in the *Brown versus Board of Education* decision (see below). However, attempts to achieve civil rights through the courts were not a new thing. Due to the violence of the depression years and the country’s pre-occupation with World War II, many civil rights activists thought it better to seek gradual change via the courts rather than with mass direct action.

- One such activist was the NAACP’s Charles Hamilton Houston.
- In the 1930s and 1940s, Houston ran legal suits that sought to gradually dismantle segregation in education. His strategy was to build on the precedent of each earlier case.
- It was not until the late 1940s that the NAACP considered the feasibility of challenging the “separate but equal” doctrine that had been enshrined in the 1896 Supreme Court decision in the “*Plessy versus Ferguson*” case.

### **Brown versus Board of Education (1954)**

President Eisenhower (1953-61) did not seek and did not want to get involved in black problems. At best he hoped that race relations might improve of their own accord.<sup>2</sup> However, he did inadvertently help the civil rights cause with several appointments to the Supreme Court of liberal southern Republicans, such as Justice Earl Warren.<sup>3</sup> It was Warren’s Supreme Court that struck a major blow to segregation in the case of *Brown versus the Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas, in 1954.

- Charles Brown wanted to send his daughter to a whites-only school close to his home rather than having to send her twenty blocks away to a blacks-only school.
- The NAACP decided to support Brown. It had backed similar cases in lower courts but now decided to push this one. It thought it had a reasonable chance of success as Kansas was not a southern state.
- The NAACP lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, argued that segregation was against the 14th Amendment. Chief Justice Warren argued that even if facilities between schools were “equal”, “separation” harmed black children psychologically. The Supreme Court agreed.
- This 1954 decision was significant:
  - it proved the success of the NAACP’s gradual legal approach;
  - it seemed to destroy the constitutionality for segregation as it clearly overruled the 1896 “*Plessy versus Ferguson*” decision.
- However, even with this decision, it was too early for black celebrations:

1 See Chapter 2.

2 The attitude to civil rights of the various US presidents will be examined in Chapter 15.

3 It was Earl Warren who ran the commission that investigated the assassination of President Kennedy.

- no date was given when segregation had to be achieved;
- white citizen councils soon appeared to fight the decision - by 1956 these councils had over a quarter of a million members;
- there was massive white resistance – several schools in Virginia closed down.
- Progress was reluctantly made on the periphery of the south and in urban areas but in the heart of the old Confederacy such as Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana, resistance was strong.
  - Many southern white politicians signed a ‘Southern Manifesto’ to fight the Brown decision.
  - The Governor of Texas used state troops to stop school segregation. President Eisenhower did nothing to stop him.

In the late 1940s, civil rights organisations began to work with organised labour in an attempt to redress the power balance between employers and workers.

- In the 1930s, the National Negro Congress brought blacks into the United Steel Workers. From now on, the union began to pay attention to the concerns of African Americans.
- The NAACP assisted the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.
- In the 1940s, the NAACP made attempts to get the United Auto Workers to draw in black workers.

Civil Rights movements also understood the interdependence between domestic and foreign issues:

- the NAACP was against the US military occupation of Haiti;
- the NAACP offered support to colonised blacks in the Caribbean and Africa, and after 1945 it supported decolonisation across the world.
- In the 1960s, Malcolm X launched attacks on world-wide white supremacy and talked of internationalising the struggle to link the black American freedom struggle to liberation struggles in Asia, African and Latin America. <sup>4</sup>

Other methods employed by civil rights movements included:

- refusal to obey segregationist bus seating rules, resulting in lengthy bus boycotts by African Americans, eg in Montgomery Alabama in 1956 (see Chapter 8).
- sit-ins in segregated restaurants – the 1960 Atlanta sit-ins made clear that their demands went beyond restaurant seating to demands for change to health, policing and the criminal justice system;
- mass marches and demonstration, eg the 1957 Prayer March of 25 000 to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, Martin Luther King’s March on Washington in 1963 (see Chapter 11), the Selma March in 1965 (see Chapter 5), James Meredith’s solo march in June 1966 (see below).
- Martin Luther King’s program of non-violence and passive resistance;
- “freedom rides” where groups of blacks and white would travel together across the south to test Supreme Court rulings on segregated transport.

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm X will be covered in more detail in Chapter 6.

During the first half of the 20th century, Walter White of the NAACP bravely investigated the lynchings of blacks and riots. He tried to persuade and lobby significant figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt, senators and Supreme Court Justices to seek action for African Americans. During the Truman Administration he sought to have anti-lynching legislation enacted. In contrast to such gradualist and peaceful efforts was the tactic of 'armed self-reliance'. Black soldiers returning from World War I had fought white mobs in the 1919 "Red Summer". In 1946, black veterans returning from World War II protected black communities, eg in the 1946 race riot in Columbia Tennessee. Army veteran Robert F Williams was a strong supporter of armed self-reliance. He later headed a major NAACP branch in Monroe, North Carolina in the 1950s.

**Exercise 4.1 Place the events listed on the right in correct chronological order.**

1st event		March on Washington
2nd event		Brown versus Board of Education
3rd event		The Red Summer violence
4th event		Selma March
5th event		Charles H Houston's early legal cases
6th event		Prayer March to the Lincoln Memorial
7th event		Plessy versus Ferguson
8th event		Montgomery bus boycott
9th event		Columbia Tennessee race riot
10th event		Appointment of Earl Warren to the Supreme Court

**Black Power**

The civil rights movement was far from united. Divisions became apparent following James Meredith's attempted 'solo freedom march'. In June 1966, James Meredith planned to march from Memphis Tennessee to Jackson Mississippi. His aim was to encourage African Americans to register to vote and to exercise that right. Early on during his march he was shot.

Different groups then agreed to come together and continue his march.

- These included King's SCLC, CORE and the SNCC.
- The latter believed that the marchers needed protection and called upon a black Louisiana self-defence group called the Deacons of Defence.

- Divisions soon appeared between the non-violent approach of the SCLC and the more militant SNCC.

In May 1966, a young militant African American called Stokely Carmichael became the leader of the SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee). During the march, Carmichael was briefly arrested in the town of Greenwood. On his release he called for “Black Power”, a term which alarmed southern whites and was disliked by Martin Luther King. The beliefs of Black Power supporters included:

- a pride in being black and having an African heritage;
- self-determination;
- self-defence.

A radical form of black power was espoused by the Black Panthers (see below).

The idea of “Black Power” came to international attention at the Mexico Olympic Games in 1968 after the running of the men’s 200 metres final. During the playing of the US national anthem, the two US black athletes who had won medals in the race – Tommy Smith (gold) and Jon Carlos (bronze) – stood bare-footed (to denote black poverty), with a fist raised in the air clad in a black leather glove: a Black Power symbol. The silver medallist was the Australian, Peter Norman. All three wore Olympic Project for Human Rights Badges. <sup>5</sup>

### **The Black Panthers**

*In 1966, two black students from Oakland California, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, formed a radical black group called the Black Panthers. Members went around armed, dressed in leather, and white authorities considered them a major threat to law and order. Their demands included full employment, the freeing of all black prisoners, all black juries and exemption from military service. The Panthers set up community projects such as medical clinics and breakfast programs. Stokely Carmichael joined them in 1968. (He left for Africa in 1969). Hunted by police and the FBI, the Black Panthers had faded by the early 1970s.*

<sup>5</sup> Peter Norman was castigated by Australian Olympic officials and he was not allowed to compete again for Australia in the Olympics. Norman’s courageous support for Smith and Carlos is now generally admired. He died in 2006 and both Smith and Carlos were pall-bearers at his funeral.

## What do the historians have to say about “Methods employed by civil rights movements”?

### 1. Kenneth R Janken

Kenneth R Janken is the author of several books on civil rights and the struggles of African Americans.<sup>6</sup> He is Professor of African Studies and Afro-American at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Janken makes the point that the civil rights movement and its struggles were not concerned merely with being allowed to sit at the front of the bus or being able to eat in restaurants. He shows how people like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were also concerned with economic matters, the Vietnam War and international issues.

*“...Thus, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was not concerned exclusively with interracial cooperation or segregation and discrimination as a character issue. Rather, as in earlier decades, the prize was a redefinition of American society and a redistribution of social and economic power...”*

### 2. Stokely Carmichael on Black Power

Carmichael’s basic argument was that black Americans had two basic problems: *“...they are poor and they are black”*. Any actions on behalf of black Americans had to accept this dual reality. Black Americans, he argued, were propertyless in a land where property ownership mattered, and which made possible political power. This made the struggle for civil rights doubly difficult because blacks had to gain political power to affect their inequality, but needed to end inequality in order to gain political power. *“...For racism to die, a totally different America must be born”*. He further argued that well-meaning whites talked about integration. But integration dealt only with ‘blackness’, and not ‘poverty’. It means a black person moving into a white neighbourhood and black children moving into a white school. *“...This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that white is automatically better and “black” is by definition inferior”*.

*“...This is why integration is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy. It allows the nation to focus on a handful of Southern children who get into white schools, at great price and to ignore the 94% who are left behind in impoverished all-black schools...”*<sup>7</sup>

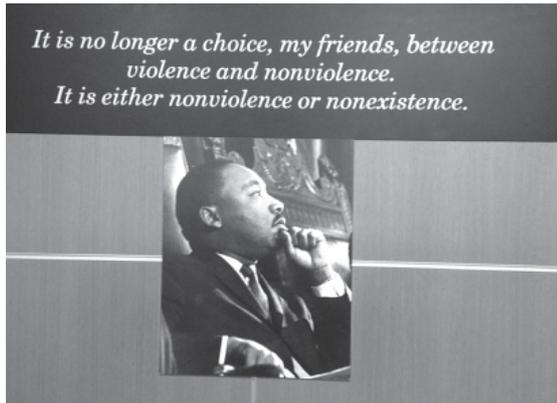
6 His books include: *White: The Biography of Walter White, Mr NAACP, and Rayford W Logan and the Dilemma of the African American Intellectual*.

7 *Stokely Carmichael on Black Power*, from *Great Issues in American History*, ed Richard Hofstadter, Vintage Books, New York, 1969, pp 499-500

# Chapter 5:

## Martin Luther King: beliefs, aims, methods

Arguably no person is more associated with the struggle for the civil rights of African Americans than Martin Luther King Jr. His stature has continued to grow since his assassination in April 1968. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Carter in 1977. In 1986, President Reagan signed a law declaring the third Monday in January a national holiday – Martin Luther King Jr Day. In 2004, he was posthumously awarded a Congressional Gold Medal.



However, lauded and revered though Martin Luther King is across the world, his career and his efforts in championing the cause of civil rights, have not been free of criticism. This debate about the role and impact of Martin Luther King will be considered briefly below.

*Inside the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta*

### The life of Martin Luther King

1929	Martin Luther King is born 'Michael' Luther on 15 January. His father is Michael Luther King Sr, a Baptist minister, and his mother is Alberta, a school teacher. His father later changed both their names to 'Martin' to honour the 16th century German protestant leader. He had an elder sister called Willie Christine (born 1927) and a younger brother, Alfred Daniel (born 1930).
1932-1943	In 1932, King begins nursery school. In 1935, he attends Yonge Street Elementary School. His later school education continues at David T Howard Elementary School and the Atlanta University Laboratory School. He then goes to Booker T Washington High School but leaves before graduation as he gains an advance placement at Atlanta Morehouse College.
1944	King begins his studies at Atlanta Morehouse College, aged 15.
1947	King decides to become a minister and delivers his first sermon at his father's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.
1948	He becomes the assistant pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. Aged 19, he graduates from Morehouse College with a BA in sociology. Soon after, he commences three years of study at Crozer Theological Seminary.

1951	King graduates from Crozer with a degree in divinity and soon commences post-graduate divinity studies at Boston University.
1953	Coretta Scott and Martin Luther King marry in June. They will have four children: Yoland Denise (born 1955), Martin Luther King III (born 1957), Dexter Scott (born 1961) and Bernice Albertine (born 1963).
1955	King completes his PhD in Systematic Theology.
1955-1956	King becomes President of the Montgomery Improvement Association. This was set up to protest against what happened to Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott begins. (See Chapter 8) In January 1956, the King home is bombed.
1957	In January, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is formed and Martin Luther King is elected its president. In May, King gives his first national address at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington called "Give us the ballot". King meets President Eisenhower. His book about the Montgomery Bus Boycott, <i>Stride Toward Freedom</i> , is published. In September, he is stabbed by a woman at a book signing in Harlem, New York.
1960	Martin Luther King becomes co-pastor with his father at the Atlanta Ebenezer Baptist Church. Later in the year, he is arrested in Greensboro for breaking Georgia state segregation laws.



*The Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia*

1961	King meets President Kennedy. Later in the year, he and other protestors are arrested in Albany Georgia.
1963	King is arrested in Birmingham, Alabama. Whilst in prison, he writes his <i>Letter from Birmingham Jail</i> .  King leads 130 000 marchers in a Freedom Walk in Detroit.  In August the March on Washington takes place (see Chapter 11). In front of 250 000 people outside the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King delivers his <i>I have a dream</i> speech.
1964	<i>Time Magazine</i> declares Martin Luther King “Man of the Year”.  King meets President Johnson, and later in the year will be with him when the president signs the <i>Public Accommodation and Fair Employment</i> sections to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.  King receives the Nobel Peace Prize.
1965	King and others march from Selma to Montgomery demanding voting rights.
1966	King begins to focus on wider social issues. He continues James Meredith’s <i>March Against Fear</i> from Memphis Tennessee to Jackson Mississippi, following the shooting of Meredith (see Chapter 4).  He begins to speak out against the War in Vietnam and in August marches for ‘Open Housing’ in Chicago.
1968	28 March: King leads a march of striking sanitation workers in Memphis. The march ends in violence.  3 April: King delivers his (last) <i>I’ve been to the Mountaintop Speech</i> , at the Church of God in Christ in Memphis  4 April: Martin Luther is fatally shot on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis Tennessee. <sup>1</sup> (see Chapter 13)  9 April: 300 000 people march through Atlanta behind his coffin following his funeral.

<sup>1</sup> James Earl Ray was arrested at London Airport. He was extradited to the US, charged and tried for the murder of Martin Luther King. He was sentenced to 99 years in prison. He died in prison of liver failure in April 1998.

## Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights struggle

Martin Luther King was sometimes attacked for grandstanding and claiming prominence in certain actions when his involvement was less important. A brief “for” and “against” debate follows this section. However, whether one is a supporter or a critic of Martin Luther King, the importance of his career is undeniable.

- The role of Rosa Parks and the story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott are examined in Chapter 8.
  - King was criticised by some of his colleagues for hogging the limelight in Montgomery. However, he himself had said that the movement in Montgomery would have happened “*if M L King had never been born*”.
- The civil rights movements disagreed on strategy. The NAACP argued for litigation; King preferred mass action. They both had a case.
  - The Supreme Court ended segregation on Montgomery buses (November 1957) but court action then failed in Birmingham, Alabama.
  - Mass action was successful in Montgomery but failed later in Rock Hill, South Carolina.
- King became leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in January 1957.
  - King used the SCLC to organise mass marches and was able to conclude such events with a stirring speech. Such events were easy to organise and gained publicity.
  - However, some civil rights leaders believed that the SCLC unnecessarily divided the movement. Even in the south, many black leaders were not keen on the organisation and it was renowned for its poor organisation.
- In 1960, a campaign of student “sit-ins” in segregated restaurants began in Greensboro, North Carolina.
  - These were led locally by students.
  - King encouraged the students but also made it plain that he recognised that these efforts were “*initiated, fed and sustained by students*”.
  - Black students set up the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). There was now not only NAACP/ SCLC rivalry but also rivalry between the SCLC and the SNCC.
- Another civil rights tactic was the use of “Freedom Rides” (see Chapter 10).
  - King was attacked for not joining one in Alabama in 1961 but that was possibly unfair as he could have been arrested as he was on probation.
  - King did become involved in action in Albany, Georgia following bus station protests by local students. However, he emphasised these actions would have occurred with or without him. The Albany action failed as when King left the city, the authorities went back on agreements they had promised.
- Some of the worst racial violence seen on American TV screens in came in May 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama.
  - King had chosen Birmingham for protests as it was one of the worst cases of segregation in the south and the SCLC had a presence there.

- King disobeyed official demands not to march and led the marchers through the city. Birmingham mayor “Bull” Connor set the dogs on black demonstrators and used high-powered water hoses that ripped the clothes off young demonstrators.
- The violence of the Birmingham police shocked the nation and spurred the Kennedy administration into pursuing civil rights legislation.
- The actions here were carefully planned and King was clearly leading this protest rather than being led. King was arrested and spent some time in solitary confinement where he penned his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*.
- King had shown the value of the mass demonstration but as one SCLC official suggested at the time, the ‘success’ of Birmingham was as much due to Bull Connor’s stupidity as King’s organisation and leadership.
- The greatest civil rights moment of 1963 was the March on Washington.
  - King was keen to maintain non-violent protest, fearing the possibility of violence as the African American was “*shedding himself of his fear*”.
  - The March on Washington was a dramatic moment in the civil rights struggle, culminating in King’s *I have a dream speech*. (see Chapter 11)
- In 1965, King turned his attention to Selma, Alabama, one of the most segregated cities in the south.
  - He led blacks to the Selma County Court House to register to vote. No registrations took place but there was white violence, that even included throwing venomous snakes into a black crowd.
  - However, Selma did not erupt as King had expected. King then led a march from Selma to the Alabama state capital, Montgomery. State troopers attacked the marchers in what became known as ‘bloody Sunday’.
  - Sympathy marches followed across the country. The march arguably spurred the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. (see Chapter 15).
- By 1966, King was turning his attention to the north. Here his focus was more on social and economic problems and a desire to prevent a turn to violence. He focussed the attention of the SCLC on Chicago.
  - He and his family moved into a Chicago ghetto. He organised walks through the ghettos to highlight poor conditions.
  - Marches were staged in white suburbs but sometimes these turned violent. On one occasion, King was hit by a rock.
  - In the autumn of 1966, King left Chicago. The results of his efforts had been at best mixed. There were several factors that weakened the Chicago campaign – divisions amongst the black community, Mayor Richard Daley’s antipathy towards King and the growing attention on Vietnam away from civil rights.
- In the final years of his life, King struggled to regain the initiative. Vietnam was sapping the energies of many and some African Americans were becoming attracted to more radical elements, such as Stokely Carmichael. King sought to broaden the civil rights movement and bring in Hispanics and poor groups into a civil disobedience campaign but with little success. King’s ‘value’ was still recognised. In March 1968 he was asked to support striking

sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee but his peaceful march ended in violent incidents. In despair, Martin Luther King conceded to some of his followers that perhaps “the day of violence is here”.<sup>2</sup>

**Exercise 5.1**

Place the following events in the life of Martin Luther King Jr in the correct chronological order

1st event		Delivers his I have a dream speech
2nd event		Campaigns in Chicago
3rd event		Involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott
4th event		Assassinated in Memphis
5th event		The Birmingham protests
6th event		The Selma to Montgomery march
7th event		Completion of his PhD
8th event		Meets President Kennedy
9th event		Receives the Nobel Peace prize
10th event		Elected as President of the SCLC

<sup>2</sup> The Memphis campaign is discussed in Chapter 13.

## The debate over the career of Martin Luther Jr

The case “for”	The case “against”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ to his supporters King was admired as an inspirational and almost saintly figure</li> <li>■ to some historians King was the pivotal figure in the civil rights struggle</li> <li>■ King’s ability to inspire was unmatched and his work did lead to some changes</li> <li>■ rather than being a glory seeker as some opponents suggested, King said that he craved the quiet life ‘but the God had called him to leadership’</li> <li>■ King admitted that sometimes it was necessary to commit lesser evils to end the greater evil of racial inequality such as when he sought prison time instead of paying a minor fine, or when he encouraged high school students to demonstrate in Birmingham (1963) even though they might get hurt</li> <li>■ he did not lack courage and often put himself in danger of violent attack</li> <li>■ King was indifferent to material gain; he willingly gave his Nobel Peace Prize money to the civil rights movement</li> <li>■ King’s opposition to the Vietnam War cost him much support but he believed he was morally correct to oppose what was happening in Vietnam</li> <li>■ King might be criticised for neglecting his wife and children. On the other hand, he might be admired for such a sacrifice for the good of the civil rights struggle</li> <li>■ there can be no doubt that King had the ability to publicise the civil rights cause with his fearless activism and his inspiring speeches. Few people in modern history have been able to match the passion and the eloquence of his 1963 <i>I have a dream</i> speech.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ to white opponents he was a “commie”, a trouble-maker, who was responsible for much of the violence in US cities</li> <li>■ to some blacks he was looked on as an ineffective “Uncle Tom” <sup>3</sup></li> <li>■ Some historians argue that King was not necessary to the civil rights struggle and that protests and progress would have occurred anyway</li> <li>■ opponents accused him of being a glory seeker and of exaggerating his role in civil rights events, eg the Montgomery Bus Boycott</li> <li>■ he was accused of sometimes being intolerant towards other civil rights leaders such as Congressman Clayton Powell and Jesse Jackson</li> <li>■ King preached monogamy but was well-known to some in the civil rights movement and the FBI for his infidelity and his womanising <sup>4</sup></li> <li>■ some opponents accused him of having a Messiah complex and of having a desire to be a martyr</li> <li>■ there were some in the SCLC who were not happy with King’s desire to try and bring in non-black disadvantaged groups into the civil rights struggle</li> <li>■ his opponents objected to his widening the movement to deal with general social inequality</li> <li>■ he drew the ire of many for his strong stance against the US involvement in Vietnam</li> </ul>

3 Uncle Tom is the eponymous character from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”. If a black person calls another black person an “Uncle Tom”, it is meant as an insult, accusing that person of being very subservient and accepting a lower status based on race

4 FBI director, J Edgar Hoover, regularly monitored his phone calls and bugged his hotel rooms. Hoover believed King was a security threat and was delighted to discover King’s sexual affairs.

**Exercise 5.2**

Match the description on the left with the person listed on the right.

1	Married King in 1953		“BULL” CONNOR
2	Key figure in the Montgomery Bus Boycott		CLAYTON POWELL
3	Led the March against fear		ROSA PARKS
4	Black Power leader		RICHARD DALEY
5	Mayor of Birmingham, Alabama		ALBERTA KING
6	Mayor of Chicago		JAMES MEREDITH
7	Director of the FBI		CORETTA SCOTT
8	Congressional opponent of King		J EDGAR HOOVER
9	Martin Luther King’s assassin		STOKELY CARMICHAEL
10	Mother of Martin Luther King		JAMES EARL RAY

## What do the historians have to say about “Martin Luther King: beliefs, aims, methods?”

### 1. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V Hamilton: Black Power

Stokely Carmichael had his differences with Martin Luther King. King was averse to violent opposition and decried the calls for “Black Power” and the potential for violence that this might generate. However, Carmichael was in agreement with King when commenting on the ‘white backlash’ to black demands.

*“...this backlash... was, in fact, racism defending itself. In the black community, this is called ‘white folks showing their color’. It is ludicrous to blame black people for what is simply an overt manifestation of white racism. Dr Martin Luther King stated clearly that the protest marches were not the cause of racism but merely exposed a long-term cancerous condition in the society...”*<sup>5</sup>

### 2. Vivienne Sanders: Race relations in the USA since 1900

No leader of any cause, no matter how worthy and justified, is perfect. This would certainly apply to Martin Luther King Jr. Sanders concedes as much in her assessment of his efforts. However, Sanders makes the point that King’s work must be considered in the context of the time. The issues facing African Americans were long-standing and enormous. King’s refusal to countenance violence made sense as he was well aware that ‘white power’ could always overcome ‘black power’. Despite any flaws, Sanders is led to conclude that Martin Luther King’s actions:

*“...always gained national attention and sometimes provided the impetus for some reform... his ability to inspire was peerless... He was a relatively moderate leader who made a massive contribution to the black cause...”*<sup>6</sup>

### 3. The Washington Post: 20 January 2019

In an opinion piece just before the Martin Luther King Jr national holiday, a few days after the 90th anniversary of the man’s birth, David von Drehle provided an opinion piece for the Washington Post. Drehle concedes that at the time of his death, King had seemed to have “lost his grip on the American imagination”. He was criticised by other black civil rights leaders, and Malcolm X even went so far as to call him “an Uncle Tom”. However, Drehle suggests that Kings deserves our continuing admiration and suggests the following:

*“... it is good to remember that the life we revere and celebrate this week was shadowed by doubt, stalked by division, haunted by fear and plagued by a sense of failure. We honor Martin Luther King Jr. not for his victories, which remain incomplete at best. We honor him for his vision, and for his sacrificial commitment to that vision...”*<sup>7</sup>

See the final section of Chapter 13 for further comments regarding the debate on the career of Martin Luther King Jr.

5 Carmichael, S, and Hamilton C V, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p 70

6 Sanders, V, Race Relations in the USA since 1900, Hodder and Stoughton, Abingdon, 2000, p 103

7 The Washington Post, 20 January 2019



... It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying:  
"Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness.  
Stand up for justice.  
Stand up for truth.  
And lo, I will be with you.  
Even till the end of the world."  
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*



**THE ETERNAL FLAME**  
The Eternal Flame symbolizes the continuing effort to realize Dr. King's ideals for the "Beloved Community" which requires lasting personal commitment that cannot be shaken when faced with obstacles.  
Sponsored by Atlanta Gas Light

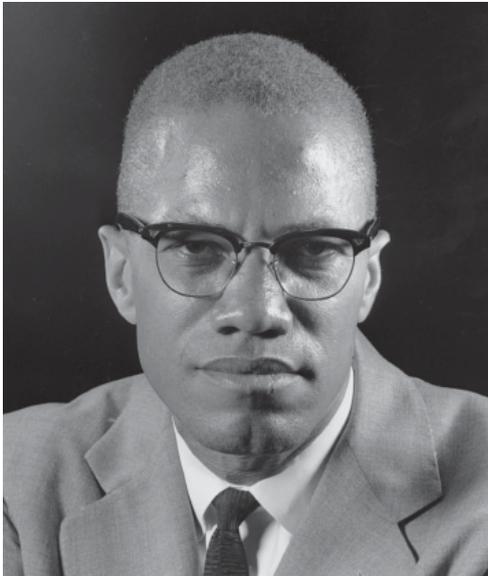
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## Chapter 6:

# Malcolm X: beliefs, aims, methods

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Like Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X is man about who opinions differ widely.



To some he was an African American hero:

- a black man who stood up to the white man when so many backed down;
- a man who was willing to die for what he believed in;
- he was uncompromising, dedicated and committed to 'his' people.
- However, to others he was something quite different:
- he openly supported the use of violence to achieve what he believed in;
- he was a racist who promoted hatred of whites;
- a man who promoted black supremacy and anti-Semitic views.

### The life of Malcolm X

1925-1929	<p>Malcolm Little was born on 19 May in Nebraska to Louise and Earl Little. He was one of eight children. Earl Little was a preacher and was active in the local civil rights movement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Earl Little's activism drew the ire of extremist white groups, including the Ku Klux Klan.</li> <li>■ As a result, the family was forced to move several times during Malcolm's early years from Omaha to Milwaukee to Lansing in Michigan.</li> <li>■ When the family home was burned down in 1928, Earl Little moved his family to the east of Lansing.</li> </ul>
1931	<p>Earl Little was found dead, lying on streetcar tracks. The family was sure he had been murdered by white extremists but the police maintained he had been knocked down by a streetcar.</p>
1938	<p>Louise Little was committed to a mental institution where she remained till some of her children secured her release in 1962. The Little children were separated and placed into various foster homes.</p>
1939	<p>Malcolm Little was a bright student. However, when told that his aspiration for the law was unrealistic for a black boy, he left school and for a while lived with his half-sister in Boston.</p>

1943-1945	<p>He moved to Harlem in New York and for a while became involved in crimes such as drug-dealing and robbery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Little was called up for military service but managed to avoid the draft on ‘mental medical’ grounds.</li> <li>■ In 1945, he returned to Boston and became involved in crime again.</li> </ul>
1946-1952	<p>Little was arrested for larceny and sentenced to ten years in prison. In prison he became a keen reader in an attempt to achieve the education he had failed to gain years before.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ While in prison, he developed a keen interest in “the Nation of Islam”.<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Little eventually renounced his former ways and became a member of the Nation of Islam.</li> <li>■ He began to corresponded regularly with the movement’s leader, Elijah Muhammad.</li> <li>■ While in prison he adopted the name ‘Malcolm X’.</li> <li>■ He was released from prison in 1952.</li> </ul>
1952-1955	<p>During the early 1950s, Malcolm X became a key figure in the Nation of Islam.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ He was instrumental in establishing several Nation of Islam “temples” from Boston to Atlanta.</li> <li>■ From 1953, the FBI placed him under surveillance because of his Nation of Islam activities.</li> <li>■ Malcolm X proved to be an inspiring speaker. He was arguably the key reason for the Nation of Islam’s growth from 400 to about 40 000 members between 1952 and 1960.</li> </ul>
1958	<p>Malcolm X married Betty Sanders. They went on to have six daughters; twins were born after his death in 1965.</p>
1960	<p>By 1960, Malcolm X was becoming a national and an international figure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ He drew large crowds, was frequently mentioned in the media.</li> <li>■ In 1960, he was invited to speak at the United Nations and met Third World leaders, including Cuba’s Fidel Castro.</li> </ul>
1960-1964	<p>Malcolm X was beginning to move away from the Nation of Islam, a move finalised in 1964.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Elijah Muhammad began to resent Malcolm X’s growing influence in the Nation of Islam while the latter was angered by his leader’s hypocrisy, mainly his frequent extra-marital affairs.</li> <li>■ Some in the movement had been angered by Malcolm X’s insensitive remarks after President Kennedy’s assassination. Of Kennedy’s death, he had said it was a case of <i>chickens coming home to roost</i>.</li> </ul>

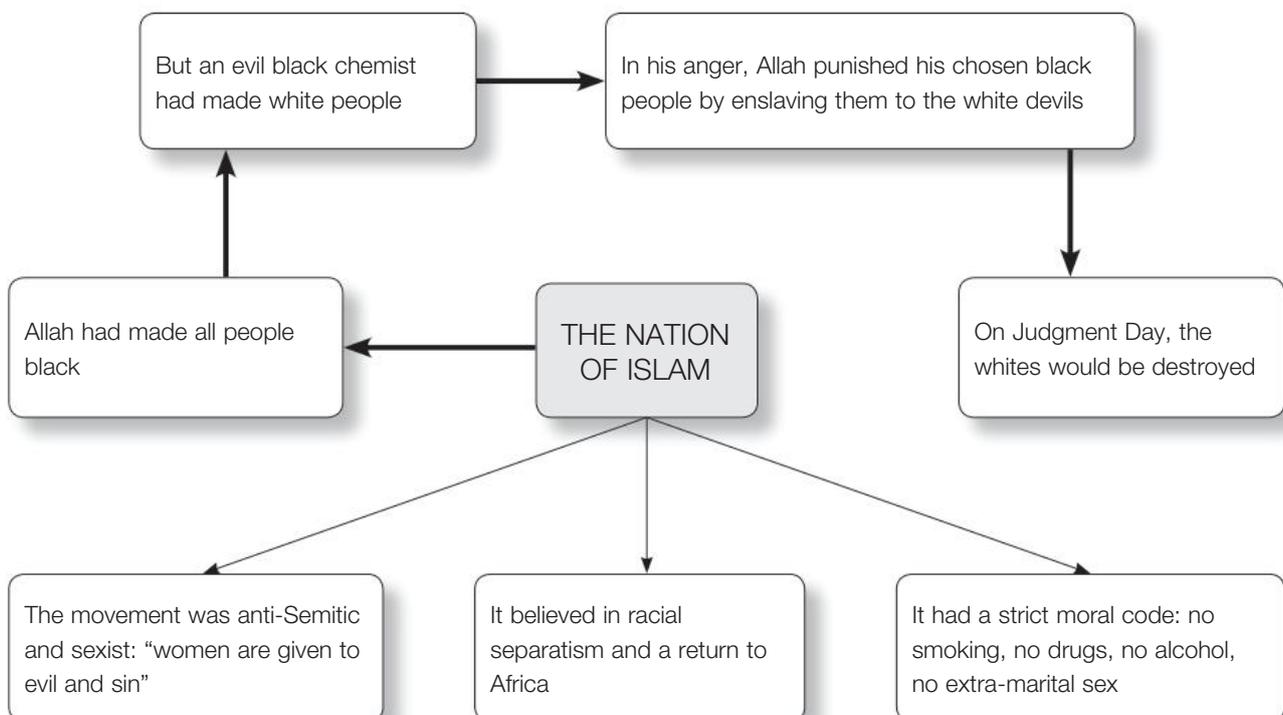
<sup>1</sup> See below for the key beliefs of the Nation of Islam which Malcolm X would later fully embrace.

1964	<p>Malcolm X converted to Sunni Islam. He undertook a tour of North Africa. He began to see the struggle of American blacks as part of a global anti-colonial struggle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ He made the Hajj, the traditional Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.</li> <li>■ His trip to Mecca had a profound effect on him. He returned to the US less angry, and began to believe that a peaceful resolution to the country’s racial problems was possible.</li> <li>■ He had not completely renounced black nationalism or the need for violence if necessary, but he now apologised for his earlier verbal attacks against Martin Luther King.</li> <li>■ Malcolm X’s views and opposition to Elijah Muhammad brought him into conflict with many in the Nation of Islam. He began receiving frequent death threats.</li> </ul>
1965	<p>In February 1965, Malcolm X was preparing to speak to a crowd in New York. Following a disturbance, Malcolm X was shot dead, almost certainly by Nation of Islam members who opposed his changing stance.</p>

### The Nation of Islam and Malcolm X

The Nation of Islam was formed in Detroit in 1930 and it spread across the North through the 1950s, due in large part to Malcolm X’s efforts and popularity. From 1933, the movement’s leader was Elijah Muhammad.

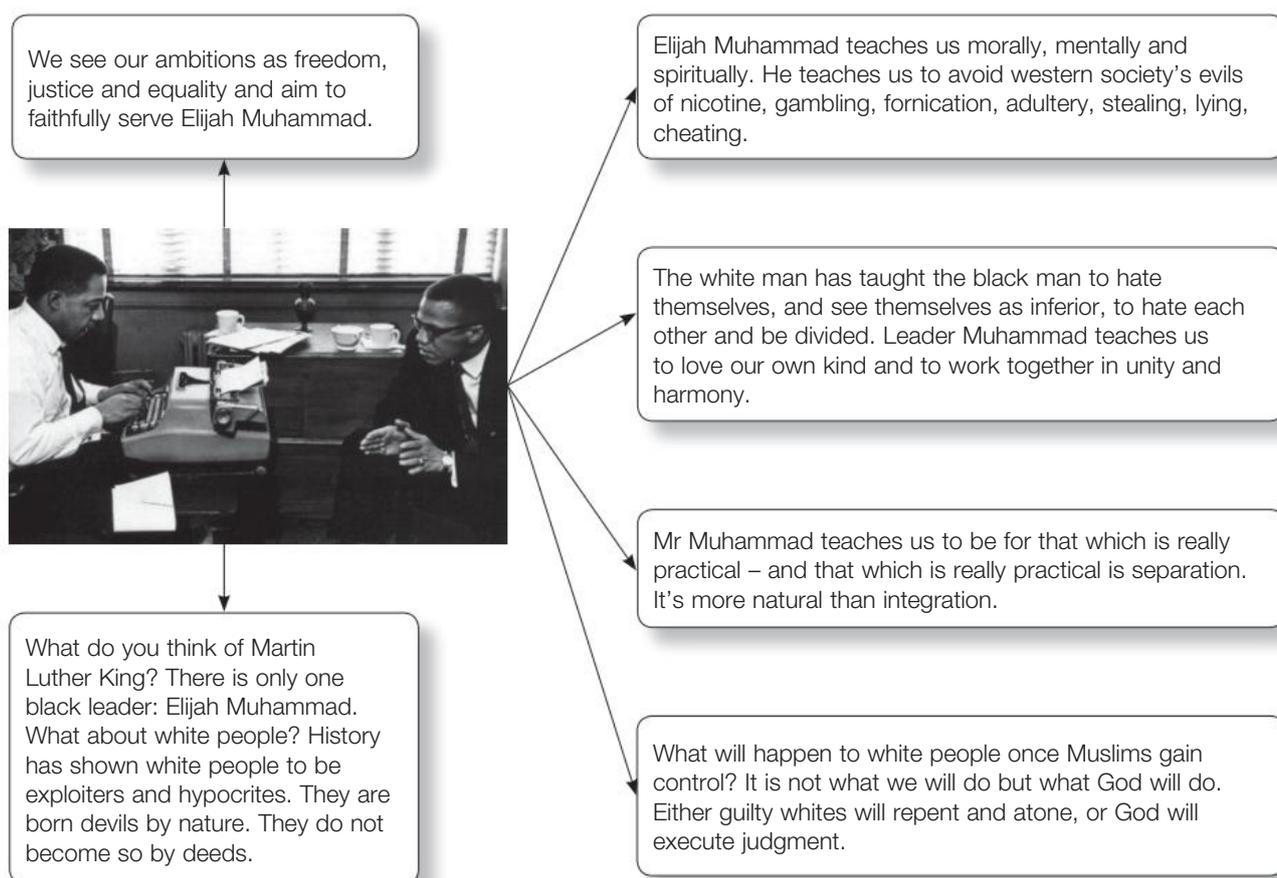
**Figure 6.1 The varied beliefs of The Nation of Islam:**



## The thinking of Malcolm X and the Alex Haley interview <sup>2</sup>

In 1963, Malcolm X was a dedicated member of the Nation of Islam. In May 1963, Playboy Magazine published a lengthy interview between the writer Alex Haley and Malcolm X. Figure 6.2 presents some of Malcolm X's thoughts as were outlined to Alex Haley in the interview. These ideas are presented in the first person as if Malcolm X is speaking. In the interview Malcolm X comes over as a loyal disciple of Nation of Islam leader, Elijah Muhammad.

Figure 6.2 Malcolm X's ideas taken from the Haley interview



By 1964, Malcolm X had turned against Elijah Muhammad and others within the Nation of Islam. He was beginning to turn away from the violent, revolutionary thinking of the movement. He argued that violence was necessary for self-defence but not for revolution. Following his visit to Mecca, he took the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. He stated at the time after his time in Mecca, *"The true brotherhood that I had seen influenced me to recognise that anger can blind human vision... America is the first country... that can actually have a bloodless transformation.."*

<sup>2</sup> Alex Haley (1921-1992) is a Pulitzer Prize winning writer. His first major work was his biography of Malcolm X (1967). Haley's book became a best seller, with over six million copies sold within a decade. In 1992, the director Spike Lee produced his film 'Malcolm X', starring Denzel Washington. Haley's most famous work was his saga "Roots" which was turned into a massively successful TV mini-series.

## The assassination of Malcolm X

Malcolm X had raised the ire of members of the Nation of Islam.

- In mid-February 1965, his house was fire-bombed, and he and his family only narrowly escaped the burning building.
- He accused the Nation of Islam of being a criminal organisation.
- Alas, just as Malcolm X was moving into a different ideological direction, he was to be assassinated in February 1965.
- On 21 February, 1965, as he was about to speak at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan three men from Nation of Islam rushed the stage and shot him.

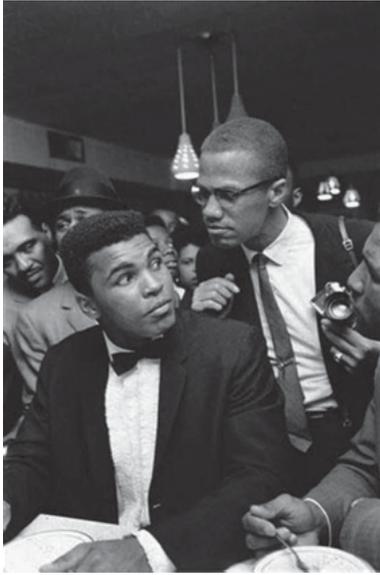
It is difficult to assess the legacy of Malcolm X; such is the case with all historical figures who die young.

- In later years, young blacks identified with his ideas on black pride and African American identity.
- Would he have become ‘the’ major civil rights leader, perhaps eclipsing Martin Luther King?
- His death, King’s death and the traumas that the United States experienced over the Vietnam War all intervened to make it impossible to answer that question.

### Exercise 6.1 Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1	Malcolm X was born, raised and educated in the deep South.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	The Little family had little exposure to civil rights work and white extremism.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	As a young man, Malcolm X was involved in various types of crime.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	Whilst in prison in the 1940s, Malcolm X became close to Elijah Muhammad.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	By the early 1960s, Malcolm X still had a low profile and was of minor importance.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	For many years, Malcolm X openly supported the use of violence.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	Officially, the Nation of Islam had strict moral views on society’s various vices.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	Malcolm X’s trip to Mecca and participation in the Hajj had little effect on him.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	By 1965, Malcolm X was facing violent opposition from some members of the Nation of Islam.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	In February 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated by southern, white extremists.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

## Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X



*One of the highest profile members of the Nation of Islam was Muhammad Ali (1942-2016). Ali was born Cassius Clay. He won a boxing gold medal at the 1960 Rome Olympics, turned professional and became Heavyweight Champion in 1964. On 27 February 1964, he announced he joined the Nation of Islam. Ali refused to accept conscription due to his opposition to the Vietnam War. He was stripped of his title and could not fight for three and a half years. He went on to win the Heavyweight title on three separate occasions. However, he was admired not only for his sporting prowess but also for standing up for his principles and racial equality.*

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# Chapter 7:

## Opposition to Civil Rights

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### Introduction

Opposition of the achievement of civil rights for African Americans was deep, profound and often violent. From our standpoint in 21st century Australia, it can sometimes be difficult to understand the ferocity of white opposition to civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s. Australia today is certainly not perfect, and can point to its own history of racism, most notably in regards to Indigenous Australians.

However, by the mid-1960s, while Australia was preparing to vote yes in the 1967 Referendum and was gradually bringing an end to the White Australia Policy, and doing so in a peaceful manner, the United States was being torn apart. Police had been setting the dogs on black protestors, some of its politicians had been openly defying the Federal Government and race riots had become common.

This clearly begs the question: why was opposition to black civil rights so strong? Such a complex question has no simple answer. What follows are some thoughts that might perhaps explain this opposition.

1. Racism is a concept which is present in every country on earth. In the United States it had deep roots, going back to the early days of slavery.
  - a. The first black slaves arrived in North America in the 16th century. Slavery was not outlawed until 300 years later.
  - b. The notion that black people were racially inferior thus became embedded in the American, and particularly the southern psyche.
  - c. Didn't slavery by its mere existence prove black inferiority?
  - d. Pseudo-scientific theories in the 19th century only acted to reinforce such notions.
  - e. The irrational depth of racism persisted into the 20th century as whites fought to remain separate from blacks.
2. The institution of slavery became enmeshed with the southern identity.
  - a. When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, the southern states did not fear just the end of slavery, or the destruction of the southern economy. They saw Lincoln's election as an attack on the southern way of life.
  - b. The desire to maintain the white, southern way of life did not end with the civil war. It was alive and well in the mid-twentieth century.
3. The majority of southerners never owned slaves and never had any prospect of doing so. So why might they defend the institution of slavery?
  - a. Perhaps it was because the institution of slavery ensured that there always a class below even the poorest whites.

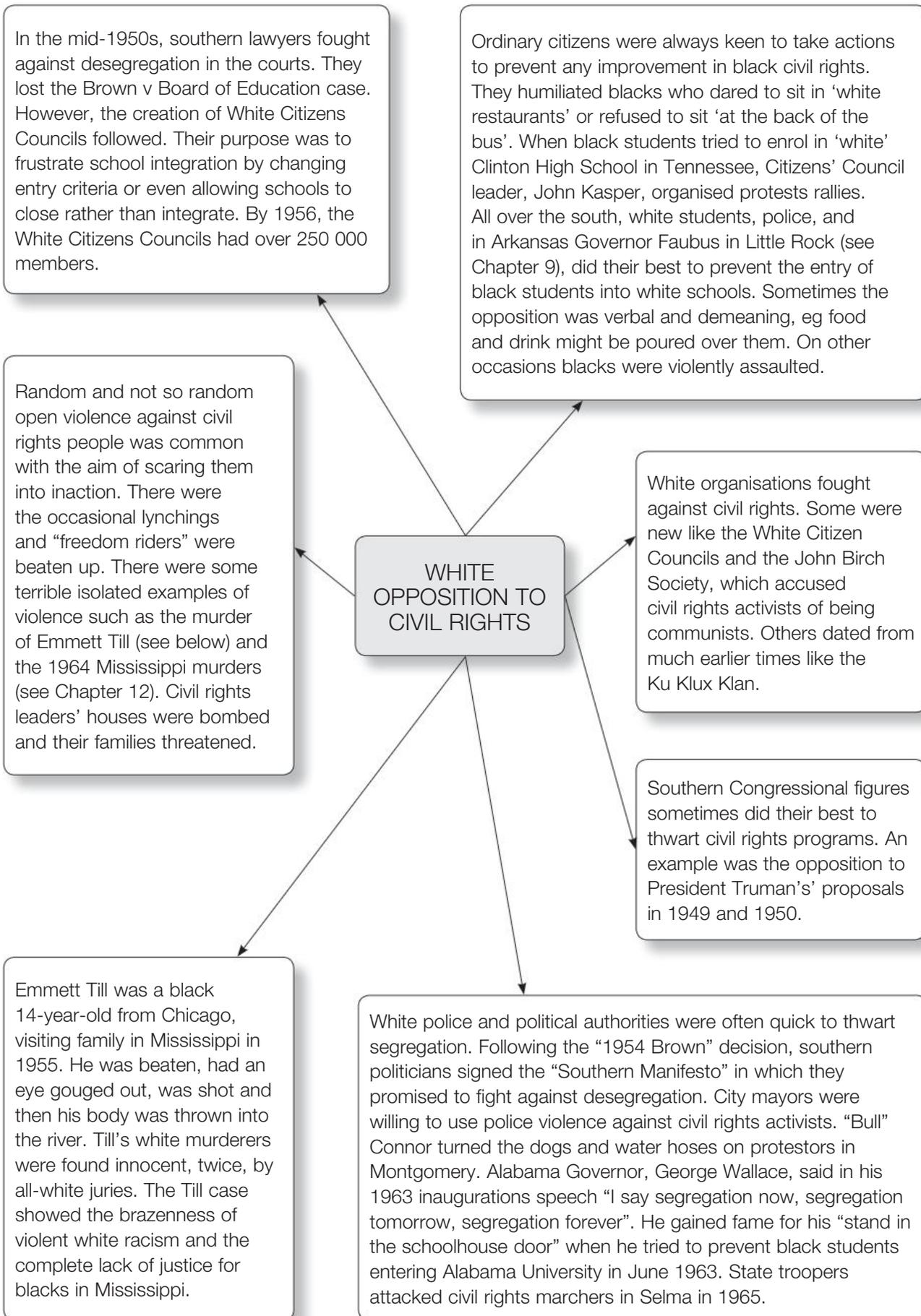
- b. The lowest class of whites were often disparagingly known in the nineteenth century as ‘poor white trash’, a phrase still bandied around in more recent times.
  - c. If blacks gained equal rights, an education, the right to vote and with it possible political power, the relative position of many whites in society would be threatened. The fear of falling to the bottom of the social pyramid beneath those deemed racially inferior was strongly felt by many in southern society.
  - d. The achievement of black civil rights could affect white political and economic power as well as social status.
4. Of course, racism was not restricted to the south. As hundreds of thousands of blacks moved from the south to the northern industrial cities, they faced racist opposition there too.
- a. Blacks found themselves restricted to poor urban ghettos, their children often found themselves in blacks only schools while decent jobs and housing were always difficult to obtain.
  - b. For many whites in the industrial north, blacks were seen as economic competitors. Labour unions feared that the presence of large numbers of black workers could depress wages which helps explain their opposition to a black presence in labour unions for so long.
5. For those in politics, opposition to civil rights was often simply a matter of power.
- a. All presidents were aware that if they pushed too hard for the achievement of black civil rights, they faced the prospect of strong opposition from white southerners in the House of Representatives and the Senate.
  - b. Such opposition could prevent the achievement of a president’s legislative program.
  - c. Strong southern opposition within the main political parties could affect who might be chosen as a party’s presidential candidate.
  - d. Such thinking was not conducive for enthusiastic support for black civil rights.

### **The nature of opposition to civil rights**

White opposition to civil rights took many forms in the period from 1945 to 1968. Sometimes it occurred in the courts; sometimes it could be seen on the streets in the full glare of publicity, in the form of peaceful protest or violent action; sometimes it occurred viciously in secret. Sometimes opposition took on an openly political stance, seen in the actions of various southern politicians.

Figure 7.1 outlines some of the ways that opposition to civil rights was manifested.

Figure 7.1 Opposition to civil rights



**Exercise 7.1**

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	Why might some 19th century southern whites have believed in the racist notion of black inferiority?	
2	Why might the “poor white trash” have supported slavery and in later times opposed civil rights?	
3	Why were even some well-meaning presidents reluctant to push civil rights issues in Congress?	
4	Why were White Citizens Councils established in the mid-1950s?	
5	Who was George Wallace?	
6	What was George Wallace’s stand on ending segregation?	
7	What happened to Emmett Till during a visit to Mississippi in 1954?	
8	Why was the Emmett Till case so significant?	
9	What was the Southern Manifesto?	
10	What was the ultimate form of white opposition to civil rights actions?	

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## Section Three – Focus of Study (2) ■ Key events of the Civil Rights Movement

This section of the syllabus isolates six specific events of the Civil Rights Movement. Each has been referred to at some time already in this book. However, in keeping with the “*Everything you wanted to know...*” style, each will now be dealt with separately as per the syllabus. As a result, some points raised earlier will be repeated.

# Chapter 8: Montgomery Bus Boycott and Rosa Parks

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## Background

Black Americans had been involved in transport boycotts before the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1956. As early as 1900-1906, there had been boycotts against segregated streetcars across the south but these were unsuccessful. In March 1955, blacks had boycotted buses in Baton Rouge (Louisiana). This action had gained blacks there a ‘first come, first served’ access to buses.

Jim Crow laws obviously predated the introduction of bus transport in the south. However, the segregationist nature of these laws was soon extended into public transport. The restrictions on the use of buses by Blacks in Montgomery echoed the kind of regulations which existed in the 1950s across the south:

- buses had black and white sections;
- Blacks had to pay at the front but board at the back;
- Blacks could be removed from a bus at the whim of a (white) driver;
- Montgomery had a city ordinance that stated a black person could not be sat parallel to a white person and that a black person had to surrender their seat to a white person who might be standing.

The NAACP had wanted to challenge these regulations in a test case. In May 1955, a case involving a lady called Claudette Colvin had been considered but was dropped because she was pregnant, and she had been in trouble earlier. Rosa Parks’ case of December 1955 seemed a much stronger one to pursue.

Thus, the Rosa Parks – Montgomery Bus Boycott story did not come out of nowhere. It had its origins in the long history of Jim Crow legislation, and from the local activism of well-established organisations such as churches and the NAACP.

## The events

- On 1 December 1955, a black seamstress, Rosa Parks, was returning home from work on the bus. She and three other black people were ordered to move because a white person was standing. She refused.
- Rosa Parks was then arrested and charged under Chapter 6, Section 11 of the Montgomery City Code with breaking a city regulation.
- The NAACP and Alabama State College acted to help her. Working with local church leaders, they printed leaflets and began a publicity campaign.

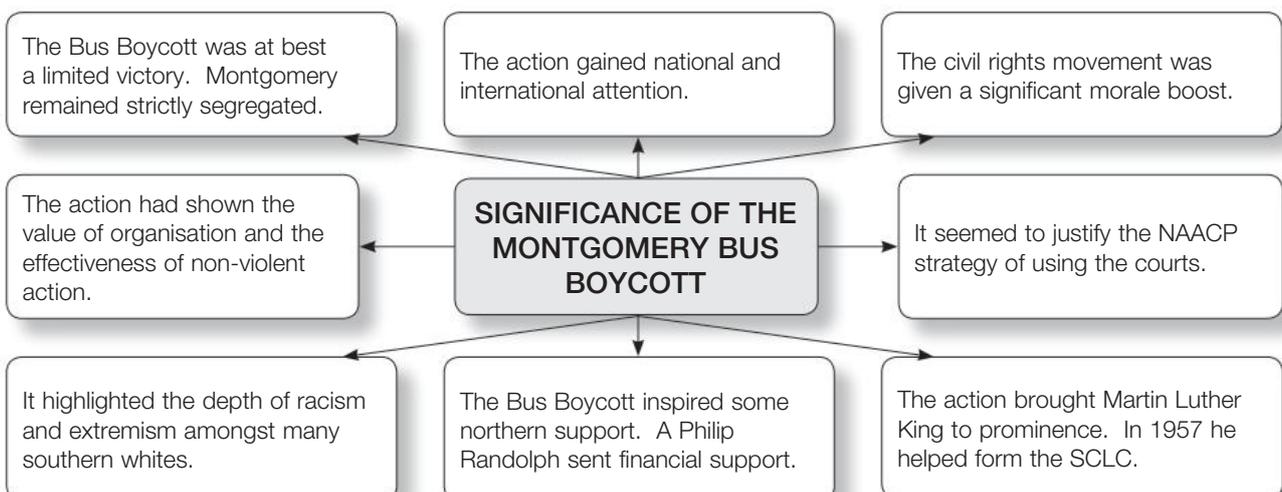
- MARTIN LUTHER KING was asked to become involved and his church was used for the planning and organisation of the bus boycott.
- On the day of Rosa Parks’ trial, a one-day bus boycott was called and proved to be very effective. Rosa Parks was fined \$10 plus \$4 court fees.

At this point, the black activists were not demanding an end to segregation but rather what had been gained in Baton Rouge the previous year. However, the Montgomery city authorities said no.

- A longer boycott was now planned. Martin Luther King became the head of an umbrella organisation called the Montgomery Improvement Association.
- White opposition quickly crystallised:
  - King was arrested for speeding (30 mph in a 25-mph zone);
  - local police began harassing Blacks who car-pooled rather than use the bus;
  - some activists were arrested;
  - the membership of White Citizens Councils doubled in early 1956 from 6000 to 12 000;
  - the homes of Martin Luther King and local NAACP leader, ED Nixon, were fire-bombed.
  - Towards the end of the year, 40 carloads of Ku Klux Klan members drove through black neighbourhoods but they failed to intimidate those living there who simply waved them through.
- The NAACP now pursued the path of litigation:
  - in the case of Browder versus Gayle, a Federal District Court declared that segregation on buses was ‘unconstitutional’; the Court used the 1954 case of Brown versus the Board of Education as a precedent;
  - white opponents appealed but the Supreme Court upheld the Federal District Court’s decision.

The bus boycott lasted 381 days. It finally came to an end in December 1956 and Montgomery’s buses were no longer segregated.

## Significance



## Rosa Parks



President Obama and the Rosa Parks statue, Washington DC

*The popular view of Rosa Parks is that she was simply a tired old lady coming home from work on a Montgomery bus. This rather underplays the strength of this lady. Rosa Parks was born in 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her grandparents had been former slaves. In 1932, she met and soon married Raymond Parks, a NAACP activist. In 1943, Rosa Parks joined the NAACP and later became the Montgomery Branch Secretary of the NAACP. Rosa Parks later said of her actions:*

People always said that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired but that isn't true. I was not tired physically. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.

*After the Bus Boycott, life was difficult for the Parks, and both Rosa and Raymond lost their job. They moved to Detroit. There Rosa Parks became the secretary/ receptionist in the office of US Representative John Conyer. Rosa Parks died in 2005 at the age of 92.*

### Exercise 8.1 Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event	One-day Montgomery bus boycott
2nd event	End of Montgomery bus segregation
3rd event	Rosa Parks joins the NAACP
4th event	Case of Browder versus Gayle
5th event	Baton Rouge bus boycott
6th event	Martin Luther King helps form the SCLC
7th event	Formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association
8th event	Rosa Parks is arrested

Rather than consider “What do the historians have to say about the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Rosa Parks, let us consider what former US President Barack Obama has had to say.

*On 1 December, 2015, President Obama remembered the actions of Rosa Parks.*

*...Rosa Parks held no elected office. She was not born into wealth or power. Yet sixty years ago today, Rosa Parks changed America. Refusing to give up a seat on a segregated bus was the simplest of gestures, but her grace, dignity, and refusal to tolerate injustice helped spark a Civil Rights Movement that spread across America. Just a few days after Rosa Parks’ arrest in Montgomery, Alabama, a little-known, 26 year-old pastor named Martin Luther King Jr. stood by her side, along with thousands of her fellow citizens. Together, they began a boycott. Three-hundred and eighty-five days later, the Montgomery buses were desegregated, and the entire foundation of Jim Crow began to crumble.*

*Like so many giants of her age, Rosa Parks is no longer with us. But her lifetime of activism – and her singular moment of courage – continue to inspire us today. Rosa Parks reminds us that there is always something we can do. It is always within our power to make America better. Because Rosa Parks kept her seat, thousands of ordinary commuters walked instead of rode. Because they walked, countless other quiet heroes marched. Because they marched, our union is more perfect. Today, we remember their heroism. Most of all, we recommit ourselves to continuing their march...*

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# Chapter 9:

## Little Rock High School

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### Background

In September 1957, the nation's attention was drawn to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Few outside of the state would even have been aware of the school and its 1900 'white' students before nine black students attempted to enrol.

Three sets of factors were behind the events that were to briefly transfix the nation.

1. In 1954, the Supreme Court had declared, in the case of *Brown versus Board of Education*, that segregation in the nation's schools was unconstitutional. The pace of integration in the schools of the south was moving at a snail's pace but the decision had been made.<sup>1</sup>
2. The NAACP wanted to test the decision. Melba Pattillo and other students were asked to be 'guinea pigs'.
3. The governor of Arkansas, Orville Faubus, was in political difficulties and expected to lose an upcoming election. Creating a storm over school integration, he believed, could improve his chances with white voters. Faubus was confident that he could oppose integration as President Eisenhower had stated that he would not use federal troops to enforce court rulings.

### The events

In September 1957, nine black students turned up to enrol at the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.<sup>2</sup> Governor Faubus said that he feared that disorder would break out around the school and so he called in the National Guard and stopped the nine students' entry.

- The students faced a barrage of abuse and hostility from the white crowd around the school. White students yelled out things such as "*Go back to the jungle*", and "*Lynch the niggers*".
- Some students were physically attacked. One white student later hung a black effigy from a tree, simulating a 'lynching'.
- President Eisenhower eventually persuaded Governor Faubus to remove the National Guardsmen but the white abuse and harassment continued.
- The situation became so out of hand that President Eisenhower was forced to send in federal troops – 101st Airborne Division – to restore order.
- The federal troops managed to force the crowds back and allowed the student to get into the school. White southerners screamed "invasion". The federal troops remained in Little Rock for the rest of the year.
- President Eisenhower went on national television to explain his actions. He stated that he sent troops in to avoid further violence. He never mentioned the issue of integration, and pointedly said that southerners were good people.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4.

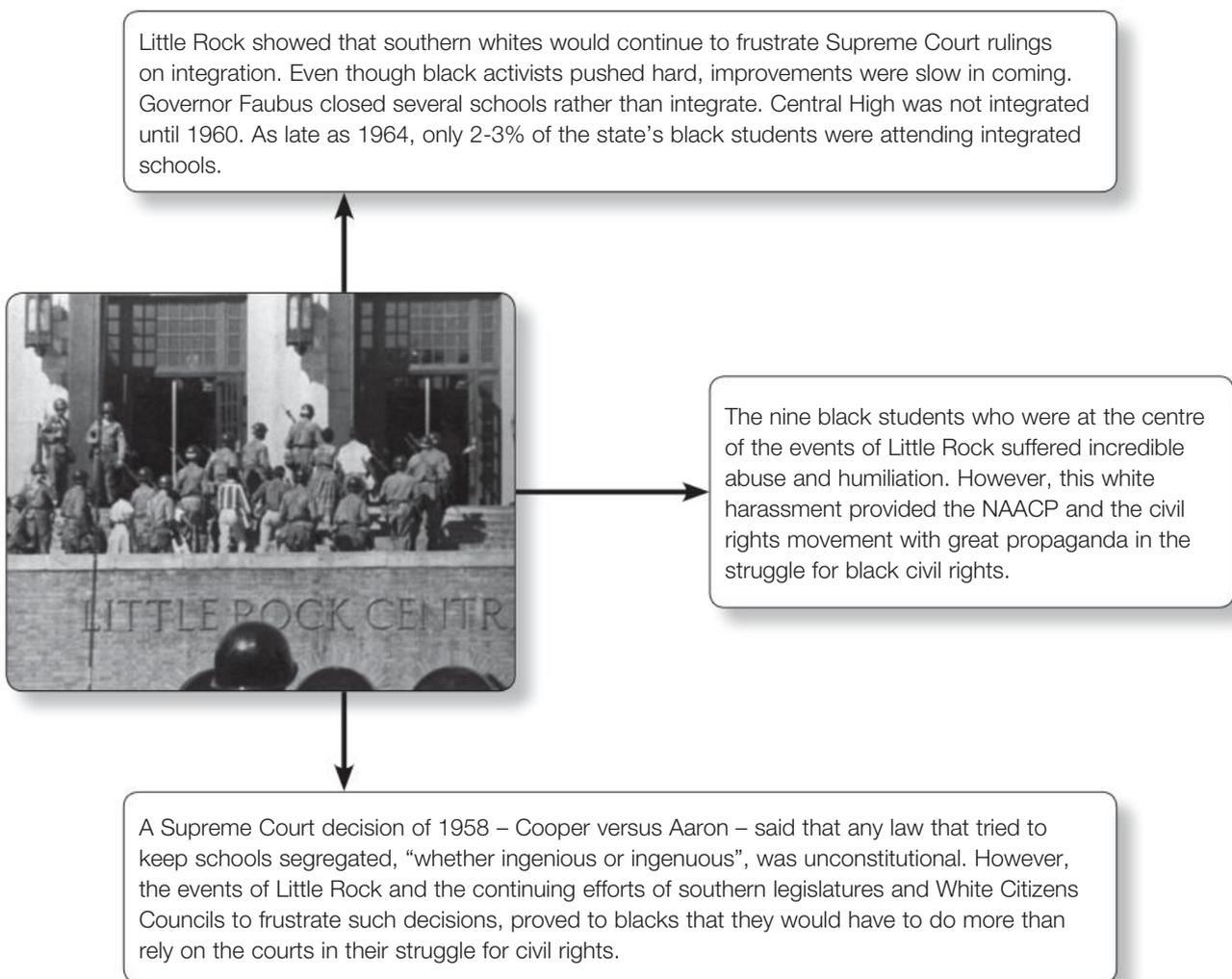
<sup>2</sup> They were: Thelma Mothershed Wair, Minnijean Brown Trickey, Jefferson Thomas, Terence Roberts, Carlotta Walls LaNair, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford and Melba Pattilo Beals.

- Although 25 September is the date in the memory of Little Rock, the ‘Little Rock Nine’ ran the gauntlet of white jeers, abuse and hatred every day.

## Significance

The events of Little Rock were dramatic and attracted national and international attention. Even the Soviet Union publicised the events in an attempt to prove the fundamental inequities of American society. However, it could be argued that despite the drama, Little Rock was not an event that was to have major long-term significance. Figure 9.1 summarises the significance of the events of Little Rock.

**Figure 9.1 The significance of Little Rock**



**Exercise 9.1** Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1	Central High School in Little Rock was one of the few fully integrated schools in the south in the 1950s.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	Governor Faubus was keen to make an issue of the Little Rock Nine to enhance his political chances.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	President Eisenhower was very keen to enforce the Supreme Court decision of Brown versus Board of Education.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	When the Little Rock nine attempted to enrol in classes in September 1957, the white students were largely indifferent.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	President Eisenhower decided to send federal troops into Little Rock in order to restore order.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	The events of Little Rock brought the issue of black civil rights to both national and international attention.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	Realising his error over Little Rock, Governor Faubus moved quickly to integrate all of Arkansas' schools.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	Stressful though Little Rock was for the nine students, it did provide great propaganda for the civil rights struggle.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	In 1958, the Supreme Court reversed its 1954 decision regarding school integration.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	Little Rock proved to civil rights activists that they could not rely solely on the courts to achieve their aims.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

## What have people had to say about the events of Little Rock 1957?

### 1. Minniejean Brown Trickey

Minniejean Brown Trickey was one of the Little Rock Nine. When she was interviewed many years after the event, she commented that she was not intending to make a political statement. She said she was only fifteen, and it was her first day in high school.

*“...I mean, part of growing up in a segregated society is that it’s a little sort of enclave and you know everybody. So, I was thinking: Wow! I can meet some other kids... The black school was kind of far away and there was no bus. We went to get new shoes and we were really trying to decide what to wear. So, we were very teenage-esque about it, just totally naïve...”*

### 2. President Bill Clinton

Minniejean Brown Trickey might have seen Little Rock as just a teenager’s first day of school, but President Bill Clinton saw it differently. In 1997, on the 40th anniversary of Little Rock, President Clinton spoke in a more sombre way:

*“...Segregation is no longer the law, but too often separation is still the rule. Today, children of every race walk through the same door, but then they often walk down different halls. Not only in this school, but across America, they sit in different classrooms, they eat at different tables. They even sit in different parts of the bleachers at the football game...”*

### 3. Justin Reid

Justin Reid is the director of the African American programmes at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. He makes the point that Little Rock certainly inspired black activists but it also galvanised white opponents. They did not want to gain the attention of another Little Rock so they sought to frustrate integration ‘more subtly’. Reid provides a note of pessimism regarding Little Rock.

*“...I think the Little Rock Nine would have to be disappointed. We’re regressing. The peak time for integration was the 70s and 80s. We now live in a society where there is more segregation than ever before...”*

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# Chapter 10:

## Freedom Rides

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### Background

By early 1961, the civil rights movement seemed to be at a momentary loss about what action to take next. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, Little Rock and student sit-ins had come and gone, and progress towards achieving meaningful change was occurring at a snail's pace.

In addition, divisions were apparent within the civil rights movements. There was rivalry between the NAACP and the SCLC, and also between the SCLC and the SNCC. In addition, relations between the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and Martin Luther King were strained.

It was decided to take the struggle into the area of interstate travel. The CORE decided to pursue the tactic of the "Freedom Ride" to test the strength of Supreme Court rulings in this area and to hopefully pressure the federal government into taking action.

- The idea of the Freedom Ride was not new. In 1947, the "Journey of Reconciliation" freedom ride had been tried as sixteen blacks and whites travelled through Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky.
  - This 'freedom ride' made little impact.
  - Its purpose had been to test the 1946 Supreme Court ruling in the case of Morgan versus Virginia which ruled on banning segregated interstate transport.
- The 1960 Supreme Court ruling, in the case of Boynton versus Virginia, made a similar ruling to the 1946, regarding interstate bus facilities.
- CORE's stated aim was to create a crisis, arouse the ire of extremist southerners and so force the federal government to act.

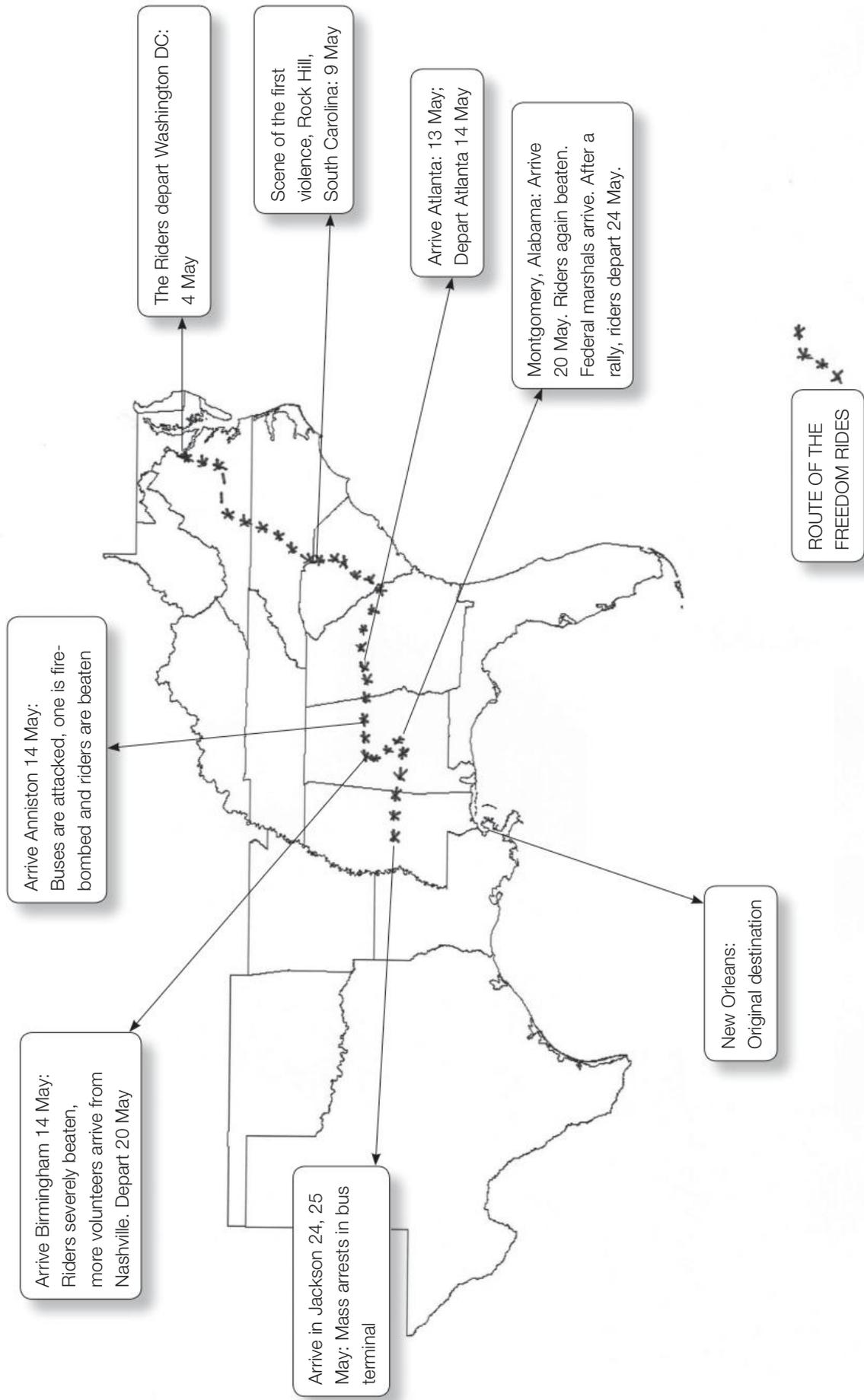
The Kennedy administration was lukewarm at this stage to civil rights. Attorney-General Robert Kennedy wanted to help the cause but he feared alienating southern Democrats in Congress, and thus hindering the administration's wider legislative aims. An opinion of the time also suggested that over 60% of people opposed the whole idea of the Freedom Rides.

### The events

Throughout 1961, up to 400 volunteers, both black and white, from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and from various parts of the United States, participated in the Freedom Rides.

- In May 1961, a group of eighteen blacks and whites travelled together across the south.
  - Before setting off on their 'ride', they were given intensive training on how to handle the abuse, both verbal and physical, that they were almost certain to experience.
  - The 'ride' took them from Washington DC through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and into Alabama.

Figure 10.1 The route of the May 1961 Freedom Ride



- The predicted violence was not long in coming. In Alabama, their buses were attacked and fire-bombed. Rioters were beaten up in Montgomery.
- On 14 May – Mother’s Day – dozens of angry whites attacked the Greyhound bus carrying the ‘riders’ as it made its way through rural Alabama.
  - Rocks were thrown, windows smashed and tyres were slashed.
  - People in the white mob apparently yelled out “*Burn them alive*” and “*Fry the goddamn niggers*”.<sup>1</sup>  
A fuel tank exploded and only the arrival of state troopers prevented the occupants of the bus from being burned alive.
  - Eventually, the federal Justice Department had them flown to New Orleans as no bus would take them.
- More riders arrived in Montgomery but they too were attacked.
  - Federal marshals were flown in to guard the riders and escorted some of them to Jackson Mississippi.
  - Other riders continued to come. However, on arrival in Jackson, they were arrested on the spurious grounds of ‘trespass’.
  - So many of them were arrested, state authorities had the riders placed in the Mississippi state penitentiary. Conditions in the prison were severe and beatings from guards were common.
- In November 1961, the SNCC organised students from the black Albany state college in Georgia, to challenge segregation at the Albany bus station. Hundreds of riders were arrested there.

The route of the May 1961 Freedom Ride is shown in Figure 10.1.

## Significance

The significance of the Freedom Rides is summarised in Figure 10.2.



<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-freedom-riders>

**Exercise 10.1 Complete the following paragraph using the terms in the box below.**

A 1960 Supreme Court ruling, \_\_\_\_\_, banned segregated interstate bus facilities, a similar ruling to the 1946 \_\_\_\_\_ ruling. The \_\_\_\_\_ decided to test the ruling by organising \_\_\_\_\_ into the \_\_\_\_\_ states. The \_\_\_\_\_ 1961 ride began in \_\_\_\_\_ and ended in \_\_\_\_\_ where riders were subject to severe \_\_\_\_\_ and their buses were attacked and even \_\_\_\_\_. Later on, riders who made it to Jackson \_\_\_\_\_, experienced mass arrests and mistreatment in the state \_\_\_\_\_. In \_\_\_\_\_ 1961, the \_\_\_\_\_ organised similar protests in Albany, \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ on interstate travel was ended by the end of the year but it was clear that resistance in the south to civil rights demands remained strong and often \_\_\_\_\_.

MAY – NOVEMBER – BOYNTON v VIRGINIA – GEORGIA – VIOLENT – CORE  
FIREBOMBED – SOUTHERN – MISSISSIPPI – SEGREGATION – ALABAMA –  
MORGAN v VIRGINIA – FREEDOM RIDES – BEATINGS – WASHINGTON DC –  
PENITENTIARY – SNCC

**What have people had to say about the civil rights struggle by the early 1960s?**

**1. Martin Luther King Jr**

The violence and savagery meted out to civil rights activists seemed unrelenting. Eventually, some city blacks, some in SNCC, followers of Malcolm X and later Stokely Carmichael were certainly not for 'turning the other cheek.' However, as early as February 1956, this had been the response of Martin Luther King:

*"...If we are arrested every day, if we are exploited every day, if we are trampled over every day, don't let anyone pull you so low as to hate them. We must use the weapon of love. We must have compassion and understanding for those who hate us..."*

**2. Morison, Commager and Leuchtenburg**

Morison et al describe the range of protests that civil rights activists took part in following the Greensboro Woolworths lunch counter "sit-in" of February 1961:

*"...Within a few weeks the sit-in movement had swept the south and soon took such forms as 'wade-ins' in motel and municipal swimming pools and 'kneel-ins' in churches that discriminated... Other negroes joined in 'freedom rides' to end segregated facilities in interstate transportation..."*<sup>2</sup>

2 Morison, SE, Commager HS, and Leuchtenburg, WE, The Growth of the American Public, Volume Two, OUP, 1969, p 690

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# Chapter 11:

## March on Washington

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### Background

The March on Washington in August 1963 is one of the most dramatic events of the Civil Rights struggle. <sup>1</sup> The speech Martin Luther King Jr delivered on that occasion resonated across the world. It is still studied in high schools across the world more than half a century later.

Two sets of factors combined to bring about the March on Washington: the efforts of the Kennedy administration to bring in civil rights laws, and the deteriorating situation in Alabama.

- In early 1963, President Kennedy was trying to push laws through the Congress to strengthen voting rights for blacks in the south and to bring about school desegregation. <sup>2</sup>
  - The administration knew that it had its work cut out because southern representatives and senators were most likely to oppose such laws.
  - The administration always had to be careful about alienating these people otherwise it would not get its wider programs through.
  - Following the violence in Alabama, Kennedy spoke on national television saying that all persons' rights are diminished when one single person's are.
  - It seemed that Kennedy's words fell on deaf ears as that same evening, the NAACP director, Medgar Evers, was murdered in Jackson, Mississippi.
  - In June, Kennedy sent equal rights proposals to the Congress.
- Alabama had a history of violent white opposition to black civil rights. This had been in evidence in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956 and during the Freedom Rides of 1961. In mid-1963, the violence was etched up a notch.
  - Events in Birmingham Alabama were beamed into the lounge rooms of ordinary Americans as television was able to bring home the savagery of the violence taking place there.
  - Sit-ins and street protests faced massive white opposition, backed by the Birmingham authorities. Mayor "Bull" Connor had hundreds of protestors arrested, brought in German shepherd dogs to attack demonstrators and used high power hoses that hit people off their feet.
  - A temporary truce brought some calm but then Alabama governor, George Wallace, raised the temperature again by personally stopping black students from entering the University of Alabama.
  - In response, Kennedy federalised the Alabama national guard. Wallace stayed away when black students made a second attempt to register at the campus at Tuscaloosa.

It was against this background of violence and legislative deadlock that civil rights leaders sought to bring pressure on the Congress to back Kennedy. They hit upon the idea of a giant

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<sup>1</sup> The official title of the march was "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom".

<sup>2</sup> In the US system of government, the executive (President) can suggest laws but it is the legislature (Congress, comprising the House of Representatives and the Senate) that actually passes the laws.

march on Washington DC. By this time, Martin Luther King was concerned at maintaining black unity. He was also worried about maintaining the effectiveness of non-violent protest. As he put it at the time, “*The negro is shedding himself of his fear*”.

## The events

The March on Washington was an incredible feat of organisation.<sup>3</sup> It required organisers providing rest spots, medical facilities – August in Washington DC can be very hot – toilets, transport, thousands of pamphlets to be printed giving advice and instructions and so on.<sup>4</sup> Joining King on the March on Washington were other major civil rights leaders including Roy Wilkins (NAACP), Whitney Young (National Urban League), James Farmer (CORE) and John Lewis (SNCC).

**Figure 11.1 Marches: 28 August, 1963**



- The March on Washington took place on 28 August 1963.
  - There were between 200 000 and 250 000 marchers.
  - They started at the Washington Memorial and made their way, peacefully, to the Lincoln Memorial.
  - There were 5000 law enforcement officers present but no arrests were reported at the time.
- The crowd was entertained by some of the leading protest singers of the time, including Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary.
  - Mahalia Jackson sang gospel songs.
- The highlight of the day was the immortal speech delivered by Martin Luther King – the *I have a dream* speech.
- As well as the 200 000 plus people in Washington that day, millions saw Martin Luther King on television, or heard him on the radio, both in the United States and overseas.

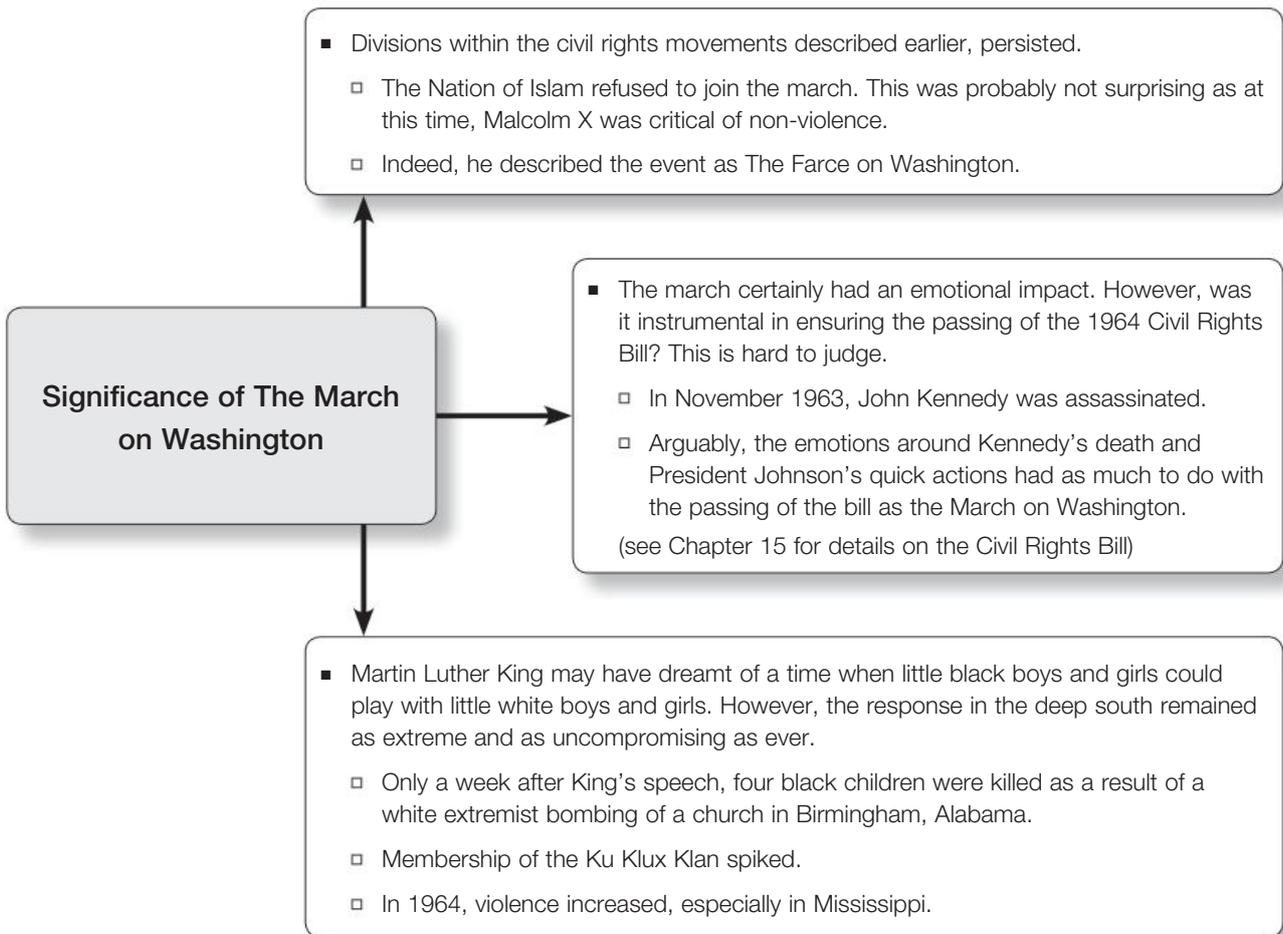
## Significance

The March on Washington and Martin Luther King’s speech were high drama. When the 1960s are remembered, this event and King’s speech invariably feature. However, stirring as these events were, did they have any real long-term significance? Figure 11.2 addresses some of these issues.

<sup>3</sup> Today we have the internet, various forms of social media, digital technology and the ubiquitous mobile phone. Students might consider how such a massive event would be organised with none of these things available to them.

<sup>4</sup> See historian 1 re-organisation.

Figure 11.2 Significance of The March on Washington



## What do the historians have to say about The March on Washington?

### 1. Charles Euchner: *A People’s History of the 1963 March on Washington*

Euchner’s account of the March on Washington is taken very much from the perspective of the people who actually participated in it. Euchner relates that the man who was responsible for organising the event was Bayard Rustin. Euchner describes how Rustin juggled all the various logistical aspects of the march from transportation, toilet facilities to the massaging of the egos of the celebrity guests. Euchner states that \$146 917 had been raised in fund-raising; the total march expenses came to \$133 229. Euchner comments on Rustin’s planning style. He said the first rule of management was to list every possible task. He said if something could go wrong, find a solution and list it. Two senators, Paul Douglas and Hubert Humphrey (later Vice-President) wrote long letters about the need for toilets.

*“...Douglas warned in an August 8 letter, “some horrible things will inevitably happen which will bring discredit on the march and marchers . . . I cannot exaggerate the need for a big supply of these.” Everyone laughed about the “latrine letters.” But Rustin added a line to his to-do list: Chemical toilets -- How many?...”*<sup>5</sup>

5 Euchner, C, *Nobody Turn Me Around: A People’s History of the 1963 March on Washington*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2010

**2. Martin Luther King Jr’s immortal words**

*“...I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice...”*

**Exercise 11.1 Place the following events in the correct chronological order.**

1st event		March on Washington
2nd event		“Bull” Connor’s police actions
3rd event		The 1964 Civil Rights Act
4th event		George Wallace bars black students registering at university
5th event		Increased violence in Mississippi
6th event		Murder of Medgar Evers
7th event		Freedom Rides
8th event		Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama
9th event		Assassination of President Kennedy
10th event		Montgomery Bus Boycott

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## Chapter 12:

# Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964

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Section Five is entitled “A Hollywood take on the Civil Rights Struggle”. Chapter seventeen in this section contains a detailed study guide of the film “*Mississippi Burning*”. This film is a fictionalised account of the events that took place in Mississippi in the summer of 1964. It is an outstanding film which would be well-worth watching once this topic in the syllabus has been covered.

### Background

The ‘Freedom Summer’ was also known as the ‘Mississippi Summer Project’. It was a 1964 voter registration drive aimed at encouraging black citizens in the state of Mississippi to register in order to be able to vote. At the start of 1964, only 7% of Mississippi blacks were registered to vote.

Mississippi was arguably the worst state in which to live in early 1960s America if one was an African American. Not only did it have the lowest rate of black electoral registration, but it was the most segregated state in the union and violence against blacks by whites was frequent, often brutal and nearly always went unpunished.

It was against this background that the ‘*Mississippi Summer Project*’ unfolded.

- The voter drive was sponsored by several civil rights groups including the CORE and the SNCC.
- As well as local black Mississippians, more than 700 civil rights activists, both black and white, came from inter-state to take part.
- The Mississippi project was run by a local organisation called the ‘Council of Federated Organisations (COFO)’ under the guidance of Bob Moses; the SNCC was the most active member of this group.
  - In November 1963, over 100 white college students had worked with COFO to register black voters.
  - In the summer of 1964, a much bigger drive was planned.
- Moses was keen on the participation of white students from the north as their presence would certainly increase media attention, and hopefully reduce the expected violent backlash from Mississippi whites.
  - Violence was inevitable as state police numbers were increased and the Ku Klux Klan grew to about 10 000.

Mississippi’s elected officials from senators and the governor to local mayors were totally opposed to the project. They had consistently attempted to ignore federal government integration laws. New state laws were introduced banning leafleting and picketing; police forces were expanded and they were given new weapons.

## The events

So it was that in the summer of 1964, hundreds of black and white activists ventured into Mississippi. They had been given training before they came and were well aware of the violent reaction they would likely encounter. The 'Freedom Summer' actually had two elements:

1. There was an ambitious voter registration drive. If one was not properly registered in the state, then one was not allowed to vote.
2. In addition to the voter drive, there was an attempt to establish black-led 'freedom schools'. These schools aimed to provide free classes on African American history, politics and arts.

Bob Moses' desire to have white students involved in the project was based on cold, hard media reality. As Dave Dennis, the local CORE organiser put it: *The death of a white college student would bring on more attention to what was going on than for a black college student getting it.*

The events of the Freedom Summer' came to the nation's attention when three activists went missing. They had travelled to Meridian, east of the state capital, Jackson. When their burnt-out blue station wagon was discovered, it was generally believed that they had been murdered. The three men were: Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James E Chaney; Schwerner and Goodman were white and as Dennis had predicted, this caught the nation's attention.

- The local Mississippi police were not that bothered about investigating their disappearance as they believed they were not missing but simply involved in a publicity stunt.
- The Justice Department and the Johnson <sup>1</sup> administration did not take any immediate action.
- The FBI director, J Edgar Hoover believed that civil rights activists were simply trouble-makers. He had had Martin Luther King under surveillance for some time, believing him to be a communist.

However, as media pressure mounted, President Johnson pushed the FBI into action. Their investigations soon brought out what had happened.

- Various searches were carried out, including the scouring of lakes. Several bodies of civil rights workers were discovered but they were all black.
- On 4 August, FBI officers discovered the bodies of Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. They had been buried at a dam site.
- They had been shot dead; Chaney had also been very badly beaten. <sup>2</sup>

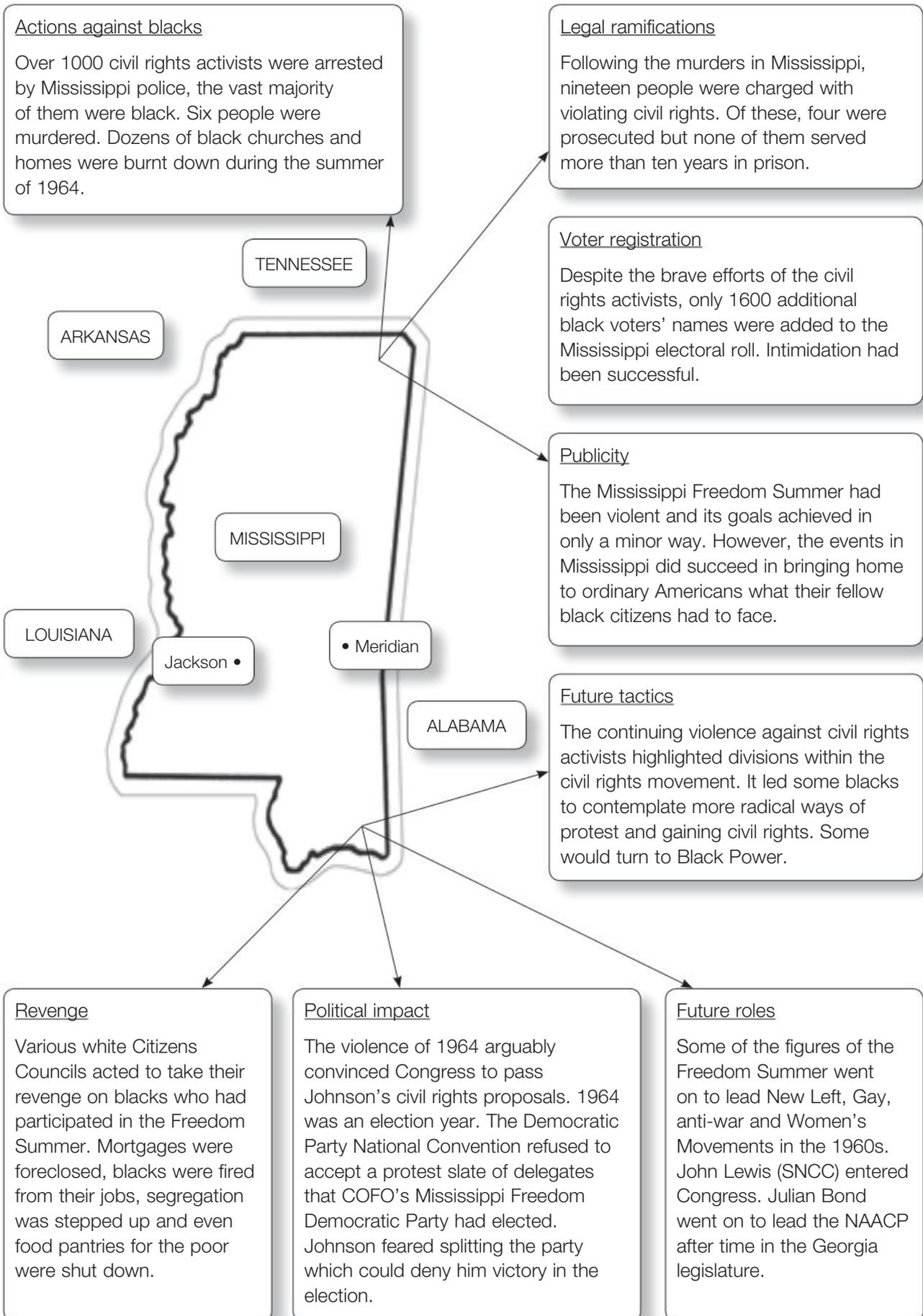
## Significance

The significance of the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 is summarised in Figure 12.1.

<sup>1</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) had become president following the assassination of John Kennedy in November 1963.

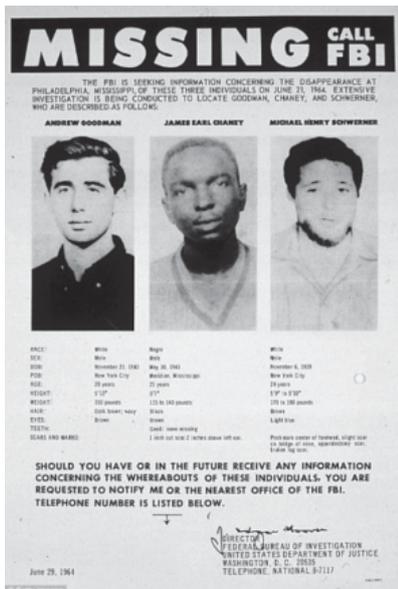
<sup>2</sup> It appears that a local Klansman had accepted a bribe from the FBI to reveal the whereabouts of the bodies.

**Figure 12.1 Significance of the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964**



**Exercise 12.1** Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What were the twin purposes of the Mississippi Summer Project?	
2	Why was Mississippi such a difficult state for civil rights campaigning?	
3	What was the attitude of the Mississippi authorities to the issue of black voter registration?	
4	Name the three civil rights activists whose disappearance and murder caught the nation's attention.	
5	Why did the murders referred to in question 4 have such an impact?	
6	What was the attitude of the FBI Director J Edgar Hoover to the civil rights struggle?	
7	What happened to those charged over the Mississippi Summer violence?	
8	How successful was the Mississippi Summer Project in its voter registration drive?	
9	What economic revenge was meted out to some of Mississippi's blacks by white Citizens Councils?	
10	What impact did the Mississippi Freedom Summer have on federal civil rights legislation?	



**Figure 12.2** FBI poster seeking information about the three missing civil rights activists who were later found murdered. As Dave Dennis of CORE said, it arguably took the murder of young white men to rouse the authorities into action. The murder of black activists in 1964 would have been seen as “well that’s what goes on in Mississippi”.

## Some final comments

### 1. Fannie Lou Hamer

One of the key local activists in the Mississippi Summer was Fannie Lou Hamer. She was a pastor who later challenged the white delegation that attended the Democratic National Convention to select the party’s candidate for President (who would be Johnson). She later ran for Congress. Her passion and pleading came to epitomise the events in Mississippi for many Americans. She suffered a severe beating in a Winona jail but her zeal never left her. She told fellow volunteers:

*“...God is not pleased at all the murdering, and all the brutality, and all the killings for no reason at all. God is not pleased at the Negro children in the State of Mississippi suffering from malnutrition. God is not pleased because we have to go raggedy each day. God is not pleased because we have to go to the field and work from ten to eleven hours for three lousy dollars...”*

### 2. Wisconsin Historical Society <sup>3</sup>

Disillusionment had settled in by autumn 1964. As a result, many civil rights activists were coming to the view that non-violence was no longer the appropriate strategy for their struggle. The federal government was proving reluctant to be involved and the behaviour of the Democratic Party at the convention later in the year suggested that traditional politics was not worth the effort. As a result:

*“...Some national leaders, such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, therefore began to urge African-Americans to seize their rights “by any means necessary.” This sentiment helped create the Black Power Movement and organizations such as the Black Panthers...”*

<sup>3</sup> The Wisconsin Historical Society provides a detailed but quite manageable account of the causes, events and impact of the Mississippi Summer. See: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3707>

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# Notes

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# Chapter 13:

## Assassination of Martin Luther King

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### Background

In Memphis, Tennessee, on 1 February, 1968, two black garbage workers called Robert Walker and Echol Cole, were crushed and killed when a garbage truck malfunctioned. This tragic incident highlighted the poor conditions and low wages of sanitation workers in that city and elsewhere in the south. By 12 February black sanitation workers went on strike. They set up picket lines and many carried signs at the time that said *"I am a man"*.

- Martin Luther King was asked to go to Memphis in support of the 1300 black sanitation workers who were experiencing discrimination from the Memphis city authorities.
- King joined a protest march but it became violent as a radical section of the march began smashing windows.
- He said, despairingly, to colleagues at the time:

*"Maybe we just have to admit that the day of violence is here, and maybe we just have to give up"*.

Martin Luther King and his associates, who included future significant black figures such as Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson <sup>1</sup>, checked into the Lorraine motel.

- It was one of the few motels in Memphis that was kindly disposed to African Americans.
- King checked into Room 306.
- A few hours later, and struggling with a bad cold, he went to the Mason Temple Church where he spoke to an overflow audience, many of them Memphis sanitation workers.

It was here that Martin Luther King gave his last, and terribly prophetic speech, now referred to as the 'Mountain Top' speech. He concluded his speech in the following way:

*Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land! And so, I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!!*

### The events

On the evening of 4 April, Martin Luther King and some of his close associates were planning on having dinner at the home of the Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles. Reverend Kyles was a local Memphis minister. About 6.00 pm, King stepped out on to his balcony to take the evening air.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Young would go on to become a US Congressman representing Georgia, US Ambassador to the United Nations and Mayor of Atlanta. Jesse Jackson ran for president twice, in 1984 and 1988. In the 1988 Democratic primaries he gained over seven million votes.

It was a cold evening and Andrew Young called out to him to put on a coat. Within seconds, a shot rang out.

- A bullet hit Martin Luther King in the right cheek. It shattered his jaw and severed his spinal cord.
- He was rushed to St Joseph’s hospital.
- He was pronounced dead at 7.05 pm.

King’s assassin was a misfit called James Earl Ray. Ray had been known to refer to King as ‘Martin Lucifer King’ and ‘Martin Luther Coon’. He was staying in Bessie Brewer’s Rooming House on South Main Street, whose rear side faced the Lorraine motel. He fired a single .30 calibre bullet.

### Figure 13.1

Mural from the Martin Luther King centre in Atlanta depicting Martin Luther King on the balcony of the Lorraine motel with Jesse Jackson on his right, and Ralph Abernathy<sup>2</sup> on his left.



<sup>2</sup> Ralph Abernathy was a co-founder, and following Martin Luther King’s death, president of the SCLC.

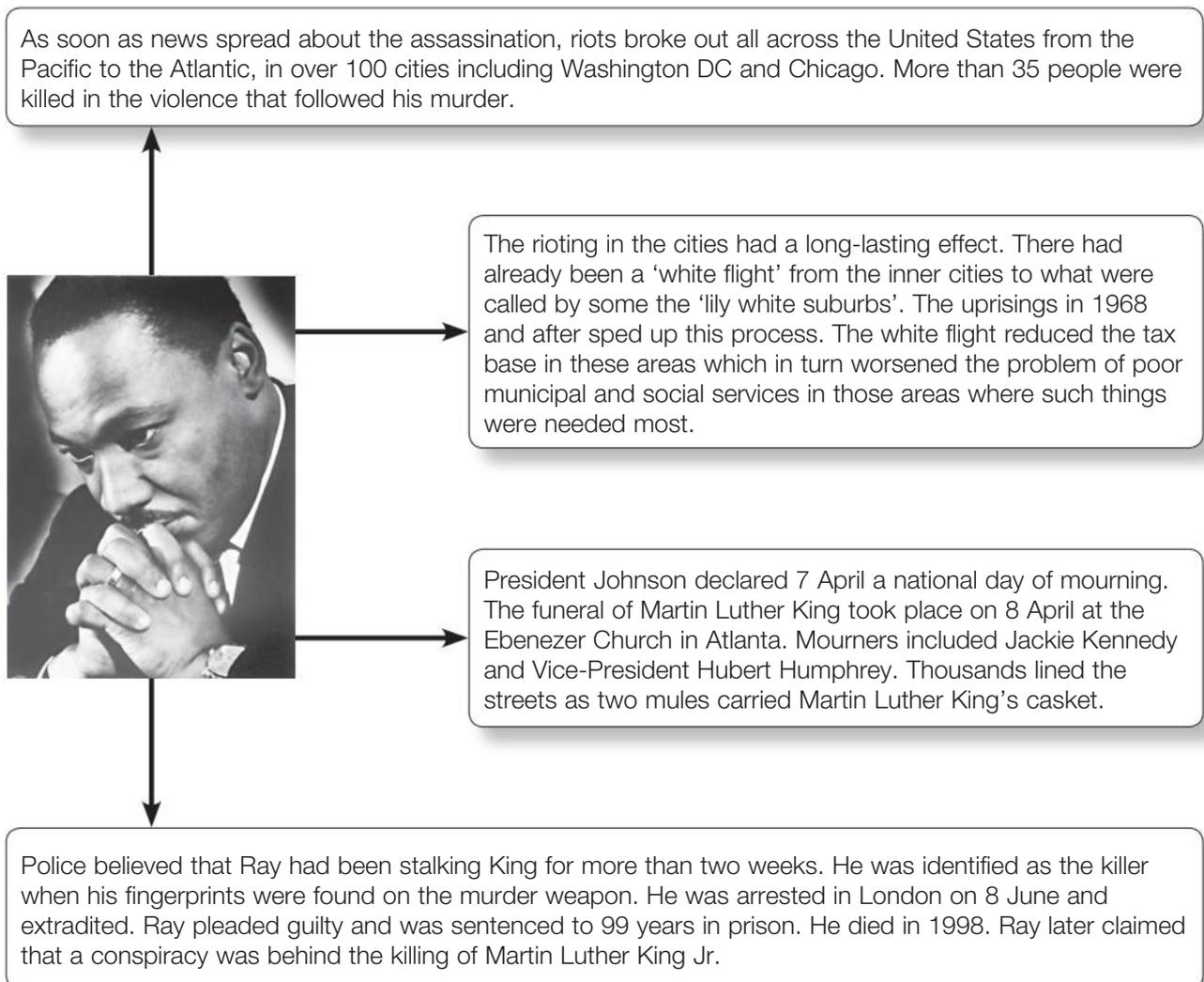
Figure 13.2 The Lorraine motel, Memphis, where Martin Luther King was shot.



### Significance

The murder of Martin Luther King Jr, shocked the nation and the world. It would have a major short-term significance for race relations in the United States and it would raise Dr King to the level of sainthood for many. However, as was explained in Chapter Five, opinions were already divided about his legacy and the way his role in the civil rights movements had evolved.

Figure 13.3 Significance of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr



**Exercise 13.1**

Match the description on the left with the person's name on the right.

1	Memphis garbage worker who was killed because of a malfunctioning truck		RALPH ABERNATHY
2	Civil rights leader asked to visit Memphis to support striking sanitation workers		JESSE JACKSON
3	Associate of Martin Luther King, later US Ambassador to the United Nations		JAMES EARL RAY
4	Associate of Martin Luther King who in the 1980s twice ran for the Democrat presidential nomination		ROBERT WALKER
5	A local Memphis minister who had planned to entertain Martin Luther King and his associates on 4 April		MARTIN LUTHER KING
6	The man who assassinated Martin Luther King and who was sentenced to 99 years in prison		HUBERT HUMPHREY
7	Key supporter of Martin Luther King who later became the president of the SCLC		ANDREW YOUNG
8	Vice-President of the United States who attended the funeral of Martin Luther King		SAMUEL BILLY KYLES

## In the aftermath of the assassination

The reputation of historical figures who are assassinated, and their place in history, can change dramatically because of such a tragic event. This applied no less to Martin Luther King Jr than it has done to other figures.<sup>3</sup>

By early 1968, Martin Luther King was being denounced in many quarters:

- White southerners had always been hostile to him and many in the south viewed him as nothing more than a communist sympathiser (a view that FBI Director, J Edgar Hoover, would have agreed with).
- Many in the northern states had been criticising him for pushing too hard and fast for civil rights there.
- When he began speaking out against the Vietnam War, he was pilloried by some liberals who said he should stick to civil rights. From their perspective, it was a case of ‘he should know his place’.
- The administrations of both President Kennedy and President Johnson had been supporting civil rights legislation. However, his stance on the Vietnam War had made him ‘persona non grata’ in the White House.

It could be argued Martin Luther King’s assassination had the effect of totally distorting what he was trying to say. He is hailed today as the champion of civil rights, of non-violent protest and as a man who sacrificed himself for what he believed. Clearly, there is some truth in this. He has a statue in Washington DC, streets, parks and institutions are named after him. His speeches are studied by high school students across the world.

***Yet, if one examines what he was doing in 1967 and 1968, he was more than a gentle civil rights campaigner. He challenged the wrongs of American society and American government policies, and was willing to take the opprobrium of that. He believed he had to take a stand against militarism and inequality.***

- In April 1967, he delivered his “Beyond Vietnam” speech in New York in which he argued that because of Vietnam, America had become *“the greatest purveyor of violence in the world”*:
  - Dozens of newspapers ran stories attacking King’s position in the speech;
  - Opinions polls taken after the speech showed 72% of whites and 55% of blacks disagreed with his stance on Vietnam;
  - President Johnson said, in the only way Johnson could, *“What is the goddamned nigger preacher doing to me?”*
- In 1968, Martin Luther King stated that economic equality could not be ended *“without the nation spending billions of dollars and undergoing a radical redistribution of economic power”*.
- In 1965 he had spoken of the need for a grand alliance of *“white, black and indeed all working people”*. Towards the end of his life he launched *The Poor People’s Campaign*.

<sup>3</sup> This happened to other major American political figures such as Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy who all suffered enormous criticism and opposition during their lifetimes.

## Carl Wendell Hines Jr

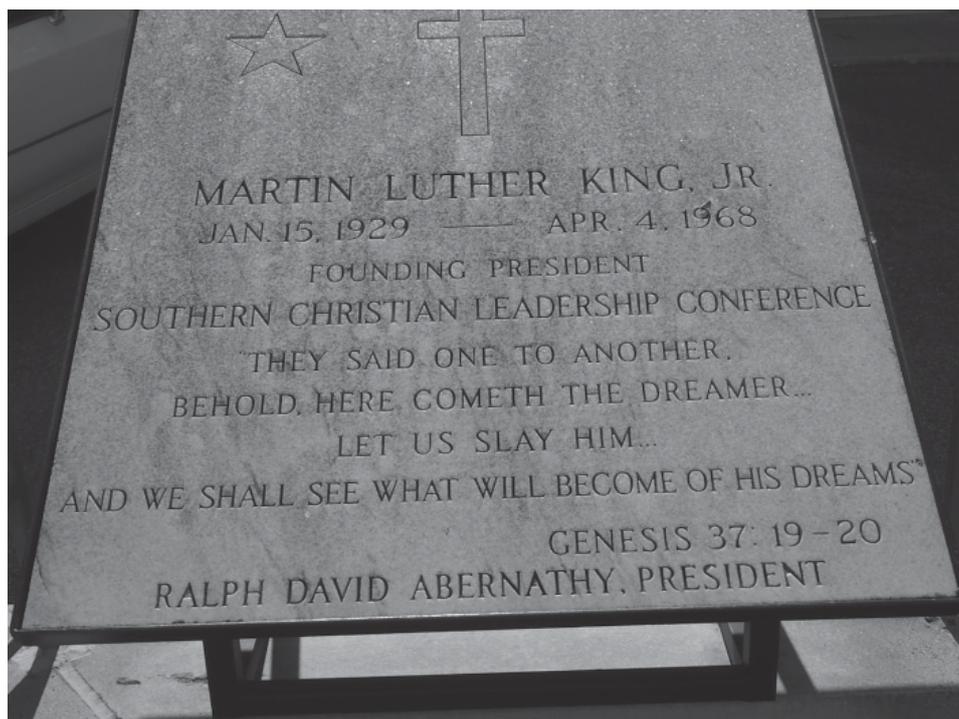
After the death of Malcolm X in 1965, the poet/ musician Carl Wendell Hines Jr wrote a short poem called *“A Dead Man’s Dream”*.

- Hines’ poem has also been associated with the death of Martin Luther King Jr.
- It highlights the argument presented above in its brief three verses.

The poem’s third verse reads:

*Dead men make such convenient heroes.  
For they cannot rise to challenge the images  
That we might fashion from their lives.  
It is easier to build monuments  
Than to build a better world.*

Figure 13.4 Memorial outside the Lorraine motel, Memphis



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**Section Four – Focus of Study (3) ■**  
**Achievements of the Civil Rights Movement**

**Chapter 14:**  
**Nature of social and political change**

---

**Change was in the air**

The black civil rights movement in the United States was both the result of social and political change that was occurring in the country, and the cause of that change. Nothing happens in a vacuum. The US of the 1950s has often been described as a boring, dull, conformist, self-satisfied society. Even at the time, President Eisenhower was viewed as dull but he was seen as trustworthy and reliable.

This is a generalisation but generalisations often have a ring of truth.

- In the early 1950s, the US was undisputedly the world's great power, victorious in war and its military supremacy virtually unchallenged.
- Life was good for most (white) Americans.
  - The economy was booming, unemployment was low and living standards had never been higher. This was in stark contrast to a generation earlier.
- The US was a conformist society.
  - The music was safe, sweet and innocent.
  - Dress styles were conservative and the teenager was only just beginning to appear.
  - Young people were not wearing long hair, taking drugs, sleeping around and protesting against the government.
- And America was a deeply racist society.
  - Jim Crow ruled in the south, blacks and whites were largely kept apart in the north.
  - Inter-racial relationships were not common and frowned upon.

However, change was in the air. African Americans were beginning to stir. Previous chapters have highlighted the efforts of individuals and organisation to promote civil rights ranging from Rosa Parks' bus protest to the brave actions of the Freedom Riders. Martin Luther King was making his mark on American society.

Young people were slowly but surely beginning to question their parents' values and their complacency.

- Actors like Marlon Brando and James Dean seemed to symbolise this.
- Elvis Presley today seems tame after decades of punk, new wave, heavy metal and hip hop.
  - Yet in the mid-1950s, he was feared by white middle-class America.
  - The television evangelist, Reverend Jimmy Snow, warned young people not to listen to Presley's satanic music.
  - Snow said young people risked turning into the devil's servant

The advent of rock 'n' roll music came as a shock to comfortable, middle class white Americans.

## The importance of music: enter Soul!

In the 1950s, music was as segregated as Montgomery restaurants and bus terminals. There were separate black and white radio stations. Neither would play the music of the other race. Some disc jockeys like Alan Freed tried to promote black harmony groups but by and large, respectable white folks did not listen to 'negro music'. However, young people were beginning to tune into black 'R and B' stations. <sup>1</sup> The manager of Sun Records in Memphis, Sam Philips, had said that what he needed was a white man who could sing and perform like a black man. Then in 1954 he discovered Elvis Presley.

- White southerners accused Presley of singing 'negro music'.
- The Alabama White Citizens Council said at the time: *"The obscenity and vulgarity of the rock and roll music is obviously a means by which the white man and his children can be driven to a level with the nigger"*.

Rock 'n' roll music became tamer by the late 1950s, especially after Elvis Presley was called up for army service. Pop singers became respectable again. Performers like Pat Boone would take black music and sing it in an acceptable 'white manner'.

By the early 1960s, more and more white performers were performing black R and B or rock 'n' roll music. In England the Rolling Stones covered many black artists; in their early days; both the Stones and the Beatles covered Chuck Berry songs.

However, black performers did not sit idly by while white artists appropriated their music. A key impact of the civil rights struggle, and the development of black power thinking, was the growth of **"black pride"**.

- A feature of this belief in 'black pride' was the strength of **soul music** as it developed in the 1960s.
  - Soul music is a blend of gospel and R and B. It is very much urban-based music.
- Soul music as it grew in the 1960s was uncompromising in its delivery and content. It was passionate, the rhythms were strong and the lyrics were redolent with meaning.
  - It bore no relation to the saccharine lyrics of a Pat Boone or a Ricky Nelson.
  - The lyrics of Soul music combined both elements of protest and elements of hope.
- It can be seen as the soundtrack of black protest in the 1960s.
- The great master of soul music was James Brown.
  - His 1968 song, 'Say it loud', epitomised what soul was all about: "Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud".
- Soon other artists, like Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, Sam and Dave, and Sly and the Family Stone were performing and invoking the concept of black racial pride.

### "Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud"

Soul singers like James Brown would soon be joined by other black artists who were able to bring to the fore their own ideas about black concerns and wider issues affecting the United

<sup>1</sup> R and B is short for "rhythm and blues".

States at this time. Examples include Marvin Gaye and his song “*What’s goin’ on?*” and Stevie Wonder and his song “*Living for the city*”.

However, black pride went beyond the music of the time. It began to enter the world of fashion and wider culture.

- The phrase “black is beautiful” became a powerful slogan.
- For many years, black women had sought to wear their hair in a white style.
  - They would purchase special combs which could straighten their hair.
  - Black pride taught that black women should be proud of how they looked, that they did not need to emulate white styles.
- Black fashions began to venture into areas not seen before. Fabrics such as kenete (from Ghana) were being used; Africa-style colours and African-style garments were being promoted amongst young black people. Examples included:
  - the buba – a type of Nigerian blouse
  - the dashiki – a loose top that often featured elaborate embroidery.

Black people were proudly announcing pride in their identity and heritage. However, as so often happens when such developments occur, what began as a form of protest quickly became mainstream. Business concerns realised that money could be made by promoting these black styles and fashions.

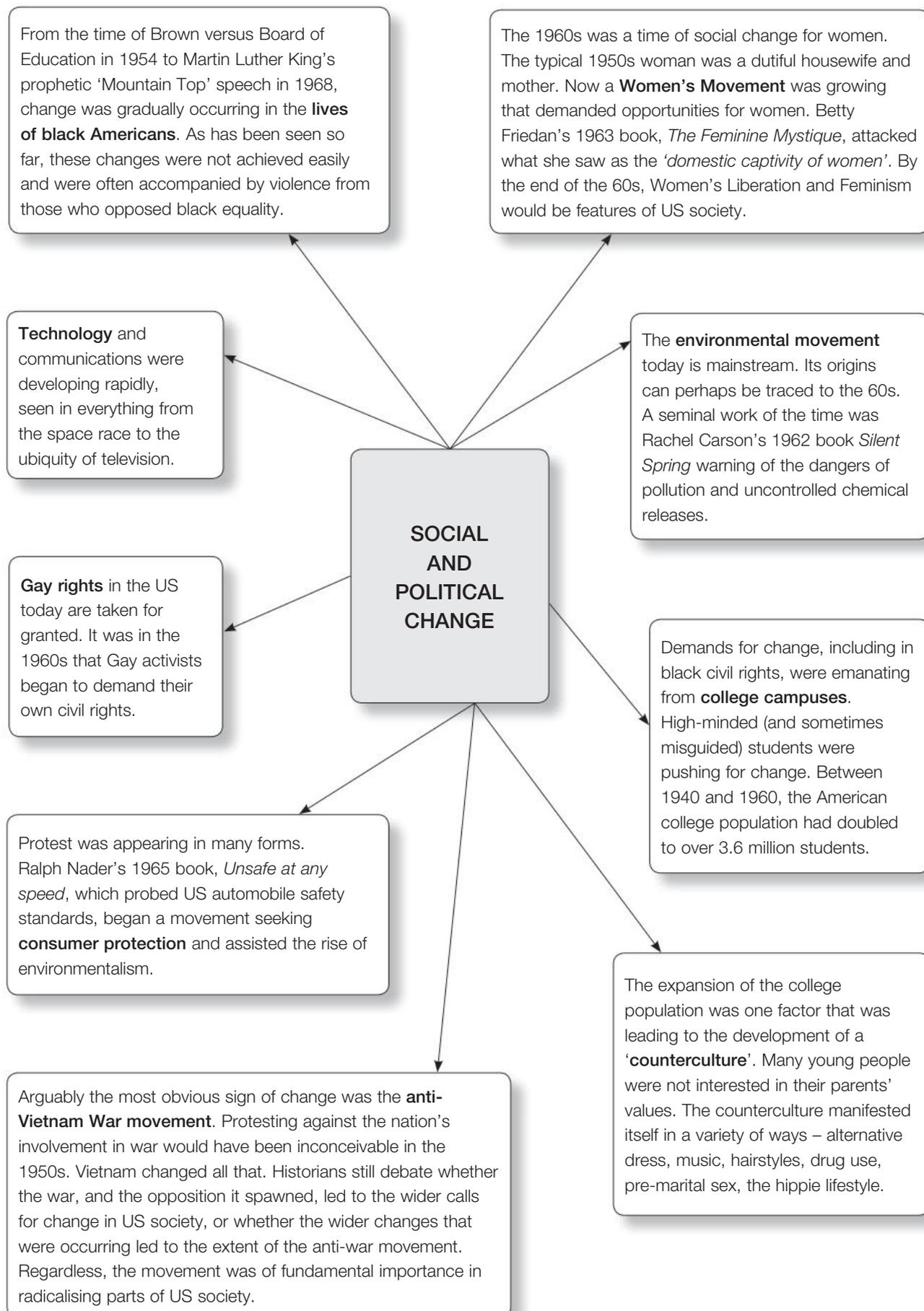
The influence of black pride also began to make its presence felt in education.

- In the 21st century, courses in Black History or African American studies, and a whole variety of ethnic studies, are common features of university curricula in North American universities.
- However, in the 1950s they were unheard of.
  - By the late 1960s, demands were being made for them, and by 1968 they were appearing in colleges in California.

### The times they are a changin’

As was stated earlier, the civil rights movement was not happening in a vacuum. In 1964, Bob Dylan penned a song which could surely be an anthem of the period: *The Times they are a changin’*. In his song he exhorts parent not to criticise their children whom they can no longer understand. He tells them that their “*old road is rapidly agin’*”, and he concludes “*Please get out of the new one if you can’t lend your hand*”. And why? Because the ‘times they are a changin’’. Between the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956) and the assassination of Martin Luther King (1968), US society was being transformed. It would take future decades to fully realise these changes but the mid-1960s marked the beginning. Figure 14.1 summarises *the times that were a changin’*. The civil rights movement was both a symptom and a part of these changes.

**Figure 14.1** The times they are a changin’



**Exercise 14.1** Indicate whether each statement below is true or false.

1	1950s US society is often seen as a dull place of unquestioning conformity and complacency.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	The civil rights movements can be seen as both a cause of social change and as a result of social change	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	White southerners did not mind Elvis Presley's music because he was southerner himself	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	Soul music in the 1960s tried to emulate white pop music in order to maximise record sales and radio air time play	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	One of the main motivations in black soul music as it developed in the 1960s was self-belief in black pride	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	Most black Americans rejected the 'black is beautiful' concept because they did not want to upset their fellow white citizens	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	The anti-Vietnam War protest movement was fundamental in radicalising social attitudes and behaviour in the 1960s	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	The women's movement failed to take off in the 1960s and it would take future generations to push for women's rights	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	Most American parents welcomed the counterculture as it showed their children thinking for themselves	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	Many of the causes and the rights US society accepts as normal today, had their origins in the social change of the 1960s	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

**Final thoughts on social and political change**

Comedians have often jested in the past that *"if you can remember the 1960s, you weren't really there"*. The implication of this line is that the decade was so drug-addled and self-indulgent the minds of those who experienced it could not possibly know what was going on. Amusing perhaps, but it must be remembered the vast majority of Americans – even the young – were not part of the counterculture.

However, it is true enough to argue that the social and political changes of the 1960s were fundamental in shaping the future of the United States, both in the area of black civil rights and beyond. Here are the opinions of some thinkers on this issue.

### 1. Todd Gitlin

Todd Gitlin is a writer and media critic, and professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. He argues in his book *The Sixties: Days of Hope, Days of Rage*,<sup>2</sup> the ideas and issues which were let loose in the 1960s affected the United States well into the future, and in some cases are still making trouble.

*“...For the civil rights and antiwar and countercultural and women’s and the rest of that decade’s movements forced upon us central issues for Western civilisation – fundamental questions of value, fundamental divides of culture, fundamental debates about the nature of the good life...”*

### 2. Robert Dallek

Up until 2004, Robert Dallek was Professor of History at the University of Boston. He has written extensively about US presidents, including Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. He was also the historical consultant for the 2002 television movie, *Path to War*, which detailed the US entry into the Vietnam War. Dallek sees the 1960s in American history as a defining moment, and as a watershed moment launching the country’s next half-century.

*“...The sixties decade remains a very significant landmark moment in the country’s history. It was a huge jumping-off point for the country...”*

### 3. Geoff Garin

Geoff Garin is an American pollster. He has worked extensively on several campaigns for the Democratic Party over the years. Garin lived through the 1960s as a teenager. He points to the movements for women’s rights, civil rights and growing tolerance as the key trends of the decade. Americans experienced affluence like never before and the nation developed a sense of social conscience. And he concludes:

*“...The sky literally became the limit in terms of what was possible technologically...”*

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<sup>2</sup> Gitlin, T, *The Sixties: Days of Hope, Days of Rage*, Bantam Books, New York, 1993

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## Chapter 15:

# Significance of the legislative change and the attitude of US presidents

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This chapter has two distinct parts. The first section is simply a narrative account of legislative (and in some cases judicial) change that occurred between 1945 and 1968 in the area of civil rights. The second section, in Figure 15.1, looks at the four presidents of this period – Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. It is of a more analytical nature. Obviously, there is some overlap between the narrative and the more analytical sections.

### Legislative change

Between 1945 and 1968, a series of Civil Rights legislative acts came into existence. Some of these were of fundamental importance; others barely touched the surface of the discrimination and prejudice that black Americans were facing at the time. Some acts had no long-term significance; others still matter in the 21st century.

#### 1947

President Truman supported the *To Secure These Rights* report which called for an end to various forms of discrimination. In a racist nation like the US, especially its southern states, this was a radical report. Truman did what he could, with the power he had, to implement its measures.

#### 1948

By executive order, Truman desegregated the armed forces. However, it would be a few years for this to have practical effect, and black officers did not appear for some time.

During Truman's time as president, there were some Supreme Court decisions which began to pave the way for an end to the "separate but equal" thinking, embedded in the 1896 Plessy versus Ferguson decision, which effectively legitimised Jim Crow.

- Henderson versus the US: this made illegal segregated dining in interstate railway cars.
- McLaurin versus Oklahoma State Regents said that a black student could not be separated from a white student. The groundwork for Brown versus Board of Education was already being laid.

#### 1954-57

(For Brown versus Board of Education – see Chapter 4; for the Montgomery Bus Boycott – see Chapter 8; for Little Rock – see Chapter 9)

*Eisenhower's Civil Rights Act of 1957 proved to be of little benefit for black Americans seeking to be able to vote as its hopeful provisions were watered down in Congress. South Carolina senator, Strom Thurmond tried to "filibuster" the bill.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the US Congress, "filibustering" is the process of speaking for hours and hours on an issue one opposes so that time runs out and the bill in contention cannot be passed.

### 1960

The Eisenhower administration brought in a second Civil Rights Act to ensure blacks could vote. Again, this was a fairly ineffective measure, and only a small percentage of black voters were added to the electoral roll.

### 1961-1963

The Kennedy administration took many 'symbolic steps' in the area of civil rights (see Figure 15.1 for details). However, though Kennedy's attitude towards the issue might have been more positive than that of Eisenhower, little substantive change had been achieved in civil rights.

Kennedy did intervene on several occasions following violence in the south against black protestors. He said that the actions of "Bull" Connor in Birmingham, Alabama, had sickened him. However, both he and his brother, Attorney-General Robert Kennedy, tended to react to events in the south. They rarely initiated actions.

### 1963

In February, the administration brought forward into Congress a civil rights bill. It sought to desegregate public places and enable black Americans to vote. However, it became bogged down in Congress. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963 before the bill had a chance to be passed.

### 1964

In July 1964, President Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act, the one that Kennedy had been promoting. This was a landmark moment.

- The federal government now had the power to end southern "legal" segregation.
- Any discrimination in public areas was now a crime.
- The act pushed school desegregation.
- The act also set up an Equal Employment Commission.

However, the act did little to help blacks vote. Alabama governor, George Wallace gained some support when he entered the primaries for the Democratic Party nomination for president. In the summer of 1964, race riots broke in eastern cities.

### 1965

Johnson's Higher Education Act of 1965 gave assistance to poorer black colleges and enabled more black students to graduate.

Johnson brought in Medicare and Medicaid for poorer minorities.

The Voting Rights Act was another major contribution of the Johnson Administration.

- Poll taxes and literacy tests were outlawed; they had been ways that southern governments had been able to ‘justify’ denying blacks the vote;
- Even Mississippi had 59% of blacks registered to vote by 1968.
- As the years passed, black voter registration almost equalled that of whites.
- In the 21st century, appeals to the black vote by all parties, and the appearance of blacks at all levels of government in the United States is now taken for granted.

### 1967

Johnson appointed an African American to the Supreme Court for the first time in American history. This was former NAACP advocate, Thurgood Marshall.

### 1968

The Civil rights Act of this year aimed to stop discrimination in the sale and renting of housing, based on race.

(see Table 15.1 for more details on civil rights legislation).

## **American presidents and civil rights**

Between 1945 and 1968, four US presidents had the job of grappling with civil rights and the country’s racial tensions: Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. Table 15.1 details their attitudes and their achievements in this area.

HARRY S  
TRUMAN



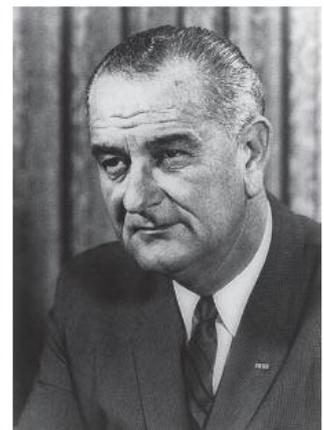
DWIGHT D  
EISENHOWER



JOHN F  
KENNEDY



LYNDON B  
JOHNSON



**Table 15.1 Attitudes of US presidents in the area of civil rights**

President/ background	Attitudes/ pronouncements	Actions
<p><b>Harry S Truman</b> Senator for Missouri 1934-1944 Vice-President January-April 1945 President April 1945 – January 1953 Died 1972, aged 88</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Running for the Senate (Missouri) in 1940, made a bold pro-civil rights statement: <i>“if any class or race can be permanently set apart from, or pushed down below the rest in politics and civil rights, so may any class or race..”</i></li> <li>■ In his state of the union address in 1948, he said the aim of the country should be <i>“to secure fully the essential human rights of our citizens”</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ He gave no help to the FEPC when it sought an end to discrimination by a Washington DC transport company</li> <li>■ As far as he could, he supported the recommendations of the 1947 <i>To Secure These Rights</i> report which called for an end to segregation and discrimination. This was radical for the time.</li> <li>■ In 1948, he issued an executive order ending discrimination in the armed forces.</li> <li>■ Truman placed a black judge on the federal court.</li> <li>■ He appointed a black governor of the Virgin Islands.</li> <li>■ By executive order he set up a Committee on Government Contract Compliance. Government contracts were not to go to companies that practised discrimination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dwight D Eisenhower</b> <i>Supreme allied commander</i> at the end of World War II President: January 1953 – January 1961 Died 1969, aged 78</p>	<p>For a southerner, Truman can be seen as being quite far-sighted and liberal in his attitude to race relations. Missouri was not the ‘deep south’ but prejudice and discrimination were still strong. The measures that he introduced took some time to come to fruition, eg his top army people opposed his desegregation of the armed forces, and it took a while before black officers appeared. However, Truman faced major obstacles. The country was probably not ready for major civil rights moves at the time. He needed to court southern congressmen in order to gain support for his other programs. In addition, he could not afford to get congress offside once the Korean War (1950-53) was in full swing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Eisenhower had little interest in civil rights and did not want to get involved in such matters like Truman.</li> <li>■ He was certainly not a vicious racist but rather a typical southerner, a product of his background.</li> <li>■ He disagreed with federal intervention in civil rights.</li> <li>■ He was concerned at the political cost in Congress of his party supporting civil rights.</li> <li>■ In his 1953 State of the Union address he called for persuasion and conscience to end discrimination.</li> </ul> <p>Critics would argue that what civil rights progress that occurred in the 1950s had little to do with the president. He lacked the interest, the motivation and the empathy to get involved. His Civil Rights Acts were almost irrelevant. What progress that did occur was the result of the Supreme Court, brave individuals such as Rosa Parks and the students at Little Rock. Eisenhower’s supporters would argue that his ‘gentle as she goes’ evolutionary approach was appropriate for the times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Eisenhower remained silent on the Emmett Till murder (see Chapter 7)</li> <li>■ He did not offer support in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.</li> <li>■ He did appoint liberal judges to the Supreme Court.</li> <li>■ Eisenhower refused to use federal powers in support of the 1954 decision, <i>Brown versus Board of Education</i>.</li> <li>■ In 1957, Eisenhower did finally act over Little Rock (see Chapter 9) but only with great reluctance did he finally send in federal troops.</li> <li>■ His 1957 and 1960 Civil Rights Acts did little to improve things for black voters in the south.</li> </ul>

President/ background	Attitudes/ pronouncements	Actions
<p><b>John F Kennedy</b> <i>Representative for Massachusetts</i> 1947-1953</p> <p><i>Senator</i> 1953-1960</p> <p><i>President</i> January 1961 – November 1963</p> <p>Died 1963, aged 46</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kennedy came from a rich, Irish family. His brother, Robert, admitted that black issues were not in the mind of he and his brother before 1960.</li> <li>■ In 1960 Kennedy promised to help black Americans, particularly in the area of housing.</li> <li>■ In 1961, Kennedy took little interest in civil rights. He was certainly no racist. Kennedy's 1960 victory had been very narrow, and opinion polls suggested to the administration that the country saw civil rights as a low priority.</li> <li>■ The Kennedys preferred a quiet, legalistic approach to the achievement of civil rights.</li> <li>■ Kennedy opposed the tactics of the SNCC, blaming them for the violence that occurred in the south.</li> <li>■ He at first opposed the August 1963 Washington March (see Chapter 11), fearing Congress would stop his civil rights bill.</li> <li>■ Kennedy was pushed by the actions of black activists; he did not have civil rights as a priority.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kennedy appointed blacks to federal posts where he could, eg five black judges went to the federal court.</li> <li>■ Attorney-General, Robert Kennedy, brought 57 legal suits for southern voting rights violations. Eisenhower had managed six.</li> <li>■ He made many symbolic gestures for equality, eg he denied the Washington Redskins football team use of a federal stadium until it agreed to sign black players.</li> <li>■ He created the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.</li> <li>■ Violence against Freedom Riders led Robert Kennedy to force the Interstate Commerce Commission to ensure desegregated bus seating and terminal use.</li> <li>■ Violence against James Meredith, when he sought to enrol in the University of Mississippi, and against protestors when Birmingham mayor, Bull Connor, turned the hoses on them "sickened Kennedy" and so federal forces were sent there to protect the black protestors.</li> <li>■ After trouble in Alabama, Kennedy gave an important speech in which he stated civil rights was a 'moral issue'. Martin Luther King was very happy with the speech.</li> <li>■ Kennedy introduced a civil rights bill in February 1963 that sought to ensure desegregation in public places, and that would enable black Americans to vote. He was assassinated before he had a chance to push it through. His black detractors said the bill was 'too little, too late.'</li> </ul>
	<p>Kennedy was sympathetic to civil rights issues 'in principle'. As a man of Irish catholic background, he knew what bigotry and prejudice meant, though his experiences paled into significance compared to what black Americans had to go through on a daily basis. Black activists were disappointed with the lack of progress made during the Kennedy administration. The administration took symbolic actions but often John and Robert Kennedy acted only in response to the actions of black activists and the racist southern authorities. However, several factors need to be mentioned to defend the Kennedys' cautious moves on civil rights. Kennedy knew that if the Democrat Party pushed too hard on civil rights, he would risk his re-election in 1964. Throughout 1963, Kennedy would have been well aware of his falling popularity in the southern states. In Congress, southern congressmen were slowing down passage of other administration programs. Would Kennedy have pushed on with a radical civil rights program had he not been murdered in November 1963? One of history's big 'ifs'. Certainly, the sympathy that welled up in the nation after Kennedy's death, made the job of his successor, Lyndon Johnson, in passing civil rights legislation, that much easier.</p>	

President/ background	Attitudes/ pronouncements	Actions
<p><b>Lyndon B Johnson</b> <i>Representative</i> for Texas 1937-49 <i>Senator</i> 1949-1961 <i>Vice-President</i> January 1961 – November 1963 <i>President</i> November 1963 – January 1969 Died 1973, aged 64</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Johnson had a reputation as a tough, no-holds barred politician. There is certainly some truth in this. However, his early career had displayed a willingness to take risks on behalf of Hispanic and black minorities.</li> <li>■ Those close to Johnson in the 1950s, said that though he talked like a “good ol’ southern boy”, he was sincere in his desire for racial equality. NAACP leader, Roy Wilkins, believed Johnson was far more serious on race issues than Kennedy.</li> <li>■ Johnson was a realist. He believed that racial tensions in the south stopped people investing there. The solution was thus to remove the cause of the racial tensions.</li> <li>■ Johnson had ambitions. White southern racists did not become president; he would need northern votes too.</li> <li>■ After Kennedy’s death, Johnson championed the civil rights bill. A sense of duty to Kennedy, southern economic need and genuine commitment explain his actions.</li> </ul> <p>Johnson was genuine in his desire for social improvement and civil rights. However, circumstances would intervene to stop his “Great Society” and civil rights hopes. As early as 1965, black rioting in places such as Watts, in Los Angeles, led to a white backlash against further civil rights change. Federal troops had to be sent in to restore order, such as in Detroit in 1967. Johnson himself could not understand the behaviour of the rioters after all he had been trying to do. Racism remained deep-seated, even in the north. There was opposition when black families moved into what were seen as white neighbourhoods. Above all, there was the Vietnam War. As the US became mired in the war, Johnson’s social programs evaporated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In his early political career, Johnson sided with southern Congressmen against civil rights laws.</li> <li>■ Behind the scenes, he gained federal funding for blacks, Mexicans and poor whites in his congressional district (1938).</li> <li>■ He supported Brown versus Board of Education in 1954.</li> <li>■ Johnson was important in getting Eisenhower’s civil rights bills of 1957 and 1960 through. However, he was also responsible for diluting some aspects of those bills.</li> <li>■ As Vice-President, Johnson chaired the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Federal black employment went up. Johnson was aware the lack of funds prevented greater action.</li> <li>■ As president, Johnson fought hard for Kennedy’s civil rights bill. He signed it into law in July 1964.</li> <li>■ The Higher Education Act was passed in 1965.</li> <li>■ In 1965, Medicare and Medicaid were introduced for poor blacks (and other minorities).</li> <li>■ In 1965, Johnson brought in the Voting Rights Act. The act forbade poll taxes and literacy tests which had been common in the south to deny blacks the right to vote.</li> <li>■ In 1967, Johnson appointed Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court – the first African American in history.</li> <li>■ The 1968 Civil Rights Act banned discrimination in housing rentals and sales based on race.</li> </ul>

**Exercise 15.1**

Match the description on the left with the personality listed on the right.

1	He segregated the US armed forces		JOHN KENNEDY
2	The young black man on whose brutal murder President Eisenhower decided to remain silent		GEORGE WALLACE
3	He became the first black judge to sit on the Supreme Court		HARRY TRUMAN
4	He claimed to have been “sickened” by the Alabama violence.		BULL CONNOR
5	He was willing to use great force to fight against desegregation in his city of Birmingham		THURGOOD MARSHALL
6	He tried hard to filibuster the 1957 civil rights bill		DWIGHT EISENHOWER
7	He ran against Johnson in the 1964 Democratic Party primaries		LYNDON JOHNSON
8	He showed little interest in the pursuit of civil rights		ROBERT KENNEDY
9	He used the office of Attorney-General to pursue legal suits against southern voting rights violations		EMETT TILL
10	Arguably, he achieved far more in civil rights than any US president.		STROM THURMOND

**Exercise 15.2**

Place the events listed on the right in the correct chronological order.

1st event		JOHNSON'S CIVIL RIGHTS ACT
2nd event		BROWN VERSUS BOARD OF EDUCATION
3rd event		THE 'TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS' REPORT
4th event		ASSASSINATION OF JOHN KENNEDY
5th event		JOHNSON'S VOTING RIGHTS ACT
6th event		EISENHOWER'S 1st CIVIL RIGHTS ACT
7th event		JOHN KENNEDY'S 'MORAL ISSUE' SPEECH
8th event		APPOINTMENT OF THURGOOD MARSHALL TO THE SUPREME COURT
9th event		HENDERSON VERSUS THE US
10th event		FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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# Chapter 16:

## Influence of US civil rights movement beyond the USA

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### Introduction

The ramifications of the civil rights movement in the United States were felt far and wide. They influenced the behaviour of other minority groups within the United States and they also affected the actions of other groups across the globe. Equally, the civil rights movement, itself, learned from others. Martin Luther King's non-violent strategy took much from the example of Gandhi in India.

In the 21st century, we are used to instant communications. Something can happen on the other side of the world, and a simple iPhone can have pictures of that event watched ten thousand miles away in seconds. In the 1950s, telecommunications were in their infancy. However, by the 1960s, there were satellites capable of transmitting events. The dramatic events of the civil rights struggle that were taking place in the United States could be seen across the world, if in a delayed fashion. <sup>1</sup>

This raises an interesting point:

- Were the civil rights protests that occurred across the world in the 1960s and after, prompted by the example of black civil rights activists in the United States?
- Or were such protests the result of home-grown factors?

It was likely a combination of both.

Figure 16.1 outlines the global impact of the civil rights movement.

### Impact within the United States

One of the factors that caused friction between Martin Luther King and some other members of the civil rights movement was King's desire to widen the movement. He began speaking out against the Vietnam War and general inequality. He also reached out to other groups such as Latinos and Native Americans. These groups had their own grievances but the example of the civil rights movement was not lost on them.

Very soon, Spanish may well become the most widely-spoken language in the United States. **Latinos** were a smaller but still significant minority in the 1960s.

- Mexican and Filipino immigrants had reasons to protest. They suffered labour exploitation, had to put up with poor housing and the educational opportunities for their children were limited.
- As early as 1929, Latinos had begun organising with the creation of the League of United Latin American Citizens.

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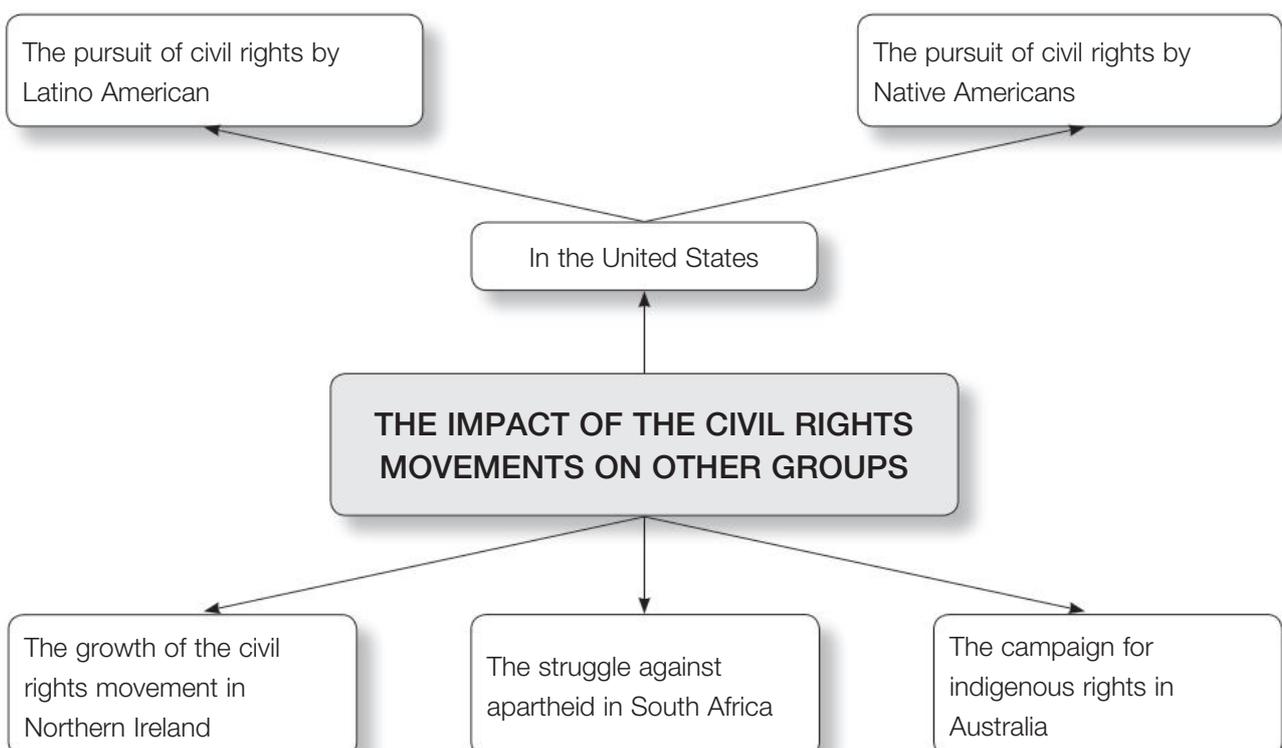
<sup>1</sup> In a similar fashion, events in Vietnam could be beamed home into US lounge rooms. Never before had a war that the US was involved in had such immediate contact with the people at home. Some consider that this was a major factor in leading to anti-war sentiment in the US. In the same way, when pictures of Bull Connors' dogs, savaging civil rights protestors, were seen across the US, sympathy for the civil rights movements increased.

- In 1968, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund was set up. Its purpose was to deal with the same issues that black Americans were dealing: segregation in education and lack of voting rights.
- In 1965, the Delano Grape Strike saw Mexican and Filipino strike against California grape growers. This strike would last several years

**Native North Americans** had long suffered from discrimination and much worse since the white takeover of their lands in the 18th and 19th centuries.

- They suffered far worse health, living and educational conditions than white Americans.
  - Segregation was a feature of their lives as much as it was for black Americans.
  - In 1924 the Snyder Act gave native Americans citizenship. However, it was up to individual states to decide their eligibility to vote. As a result, they faced the same restrictions in voter registration as did black Americans in the southern states.
- Their smaller numbers, and the fact that most native Americans were restricted to a reservation existence meant that the discrimination and prejudice they suffered did not gain the same amount of attention as that of black Americans.
- In 1968, native Americans formed the American Indian Movement (AIM) to campaign for their civil rights.
- In 1973, the native American struggle for civil rights became violent when the AIM and some of the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organisation clashed with FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Reservation.
  - Two American Indians were killed, hundreds were arrested and many AIM leaders went to prison.

**Figure 16.1 The impact of the civil rights movement**



## The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement

Relations between Ireland and England have a long and often violent history, dating back to the 12th century. The Irish have never forgotten the suffering they experienced under Oliver Cromwell in the 17th century. Even today, many Irish blame the English for the great famine of the 1840s.

In 1801, the Act of Union formally linked Ireland and the rest of Britain. In the years after the end of World War I (1918), Irish nationalists fought for their independence. This bloody episode was finally ended with the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. The long-term result of the treaty would be the eventual establishment of an independent Ireland, Eire, generally referred to as the Republic. However, the six northern counties of Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. “Northern Ireland” is predominantly Protestant, and in Northern Ireland, religion matters. In the four decades since the division of Ireland, the Protestant majority in the North sought to maintain their ascendancy against the minority Catholic population.

- Protestants were favoured for employment.
- Government spending favoured Protestant schools.
- Protestants were favoured over Catholics for housing.
- Northern Ireland quickly developed into Protestant areas and Catholic areas.
  - Electoral boundaries were “gerrymandered”<sup>2</sup> to ensure that the Northern Ireland Stormont parliament always had a solid Protestant majority.

The reporting of the black civil rights campaign in the United States inspired people in Northern Ireland to seek their civil rights. In 1967, the **Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA)** was formed. It was originally set up as a non-sectarian<sup>3</sup> organisation and comprised people across the religious and political divide. Its demands included:

- an end to gerrymandering;
- an end to discrimination in the allocation of government jobs and council housing;
- the disbanding of the “B Specials”.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1968, the first civil rights march took place from Coalisland to Dungannon. It was a peaceful march, based on the example of Martin Luther King’s marches in the United States. A second march took place in October in Londonderry (Derry). This march ended in violence. Following these and other civil rights actions, the Northern Ireland government of Terence O Neill offered some reforms. However, the civil rights campaign continued.

- A new civil rights grouping, called The People’s Democracy (PD), was created by mainly university students like Bernadette Devlin. It was a socialist/ nationalist (Republican) group.
- The PD organised a march from Belfast to Londonderry in January 1969. The marchers were attacked by “loyalists” (Protestants) at Burntollet Bridge.

<sup>2</sup> Gerrymandering is the process of drawing up electoral constituencies in an unfair manner. In Northern Ireland, this could mean that 60 000 Catholic voters might be needed to elect an MP, while a Protestant constituency might only require 10 000 voters.

<sup>3</sup> This means that originally it was neither Catholic nor Protestant.

<sup>4</sup> The B Specials was an almost exclusively Protestant special police force that was often accused of biased behaviour against the Catholic population.

By the end of 1969, Northern Ireland had descended into violent conflict between “Protestant/ Loyalists” groups and “Catholic/ Nationalist” groups. The British government would soon be forced to send in the army. This bloody conflict – referred to as “the troubles” - would continue until the 1998 Good Friday Agreement brought hostilities to an end.

The remnants of loyalist and nationalist feeling during “the troubles” can still be seen in Belfast today, as shown in Figures 16.2 and 16.3.



**Figure 16.2: Mural in the protestant Shankill Road area of Belfast remembering a terrorist bombing that killed five Protestants.**



**Figure 16.3: Mural in the Catholic Falls Road area of Belfast remembering the death of nationalist hunger striker, Bobby Sands.**

The historian, J J Lee, suggests that the marchers of the People’s Democracy movement erred when they decided to march through the traditionally Protestant territory from Belfast on their way to Derry. He argues that on this occasion they were probably inspired by what had happened in Alabama just a few years earlier.

*“...Some of the participants imagined they were engaged on an Ulster 5 version of the Selma to Montgomery March...”*<sup>6</sup>

## The campaign for Indigenous Rights in Australia

The American civil rights movements had a direct impact on the struggle of Indigenous people to achieve equality in Australia. In 1961, black civil rights activists engaged in “Freedom Rides” in various US states to highlight discrimination and segregationist policies.<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal activists attempted to use the concept of the ‘Freedom Ride’ to highlight the plight of Indigenous Australians, particularly in regional areas. The Freedom Ride in Australia would be led by Charles Perkins.

<sup>5</sup> Ulster is a region of Ireland that roughly equates with the six counties of Northern Ireland.

<sup>6</sup> Lee, J J, Ireland 1912-85, CUP, Cambridge, 1990

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 10.



*Charles Perkins was born in Alice Springs in 1936. He was rare amongst Aboriginal people of his time as he received a good education, though less rare was his experience of being taken from his culture. He was a fitter and turner apprentice in Adelaide during his youth. Perkins was an excellent football (soccer) player, played in the UK for three years and was offered a trial by Manchester United. He returned to Australia to play in Sydney. Perkins became the first Aboriginal person to graduate from university (Sydney). In the 1970s and 1980s, he promoted the interests of Aboriginal people, and in 1984 became the secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the first Aboriginal head of a federal government department. He resigned in 1989 and then worked for ATSIC<sup>8</sup> and other Aboriginal organisations. He died in 2000.*

In 1963, Charles Perkins founded the 'Student Action for Aborigines'. In February 1965, he led a group of 28 people on a 'freedom ride' through the rural areas of NSW. Perkins made a point of visiting towns like Walgett, Moree and Kempsey. In these towns, racism was entrenched.

- Aboriginal people were denied entry to certain establishments.
- They were not allowed to use public swimming pools on the same day as non-Aboriginal people.
- Aborigines who were ex-servicemen were even denied entry to the RSL clubs.

As in the US, the Australian freedom riders faced verbal and physical abuse from white opponents.<sup>9</sup>

Charles Perkins' Freedom Ride brought significant publicity to the plight of Aboriginal people in Australia. In the years that followed, the situation for Aboriginal people began to slowly improve. Perkins' action in 1965 was certainly a factor that led to a "yes" vote in the 1967 referendum.<sup>10</sup> Governments began to take a much greater interest in Aboriginal affairs. Aboriginal/ Indigenous people became pro-active, following Perkins' examples. This has been seen in more recent years in the area of Land Rights and seeking recompense for victims of the Stolen Generation. However, as is the case for many African Americans, many Indigenous Australians can still face discrimination in their daily lives.

## South Africa

In the 1950s and 1960s, the government of South Africa enforced the system of apartheid – roughly meaning 'separate development'. By the 1960s, South African society had become fully segregated between blacks, whites, coloured (mixed race people) and Indians. As time went on, these racial classifications would determine where a person could live, work, travel, be educated and so on. It was segregation on a fully-institutionalised level.

<sup>8</sup> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

<sup>9</sup> Some Aboriginal activists looked to the US example of Black Power, such as the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League. Younger activists in Sydney's Redfern sought to take control of their own affairs, setting up bodies such as an Aboriginal legal service. In 1972, Aboriginal protestors set up the Tent Embassy opposite parliament house in Canberra to protest for land rights.

<sup>10</sup> Australians were asked two questions: Should Aboriginal people be counted in the census? Should the Federal Government have the power to make laws for Aboriginal people. Both questions received a resounding yes vote.

US civil rights activists often faced violence when they attempted to protest. However, what they faced did not compare to the government-enforced violence against protestors in South Africa.

- Protests in South Africa could lead to severe beatings with whips, arrest and long terms of imprisonment.
- Many protestors were killed.
- In 1960, security forces killed sixty-nine protestors in what became known as the ‘the Sharpeville Massacre’.

Many civil rights activists in the United States saw their struggle as part of a wider struggle of persecuted black people against their white oppressors. Radicals like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael believed that the black person’s struggle in Alabama was connected to the anti-colonial struggle of black people in Africa. Both these men spent time in Africa. Martin Luther King referred to South Africa’s white rulers as ‘barbarians’.

The efforts to remove the system of apartheid was a difficult one, and any attempt to emulate their black brothers in the United States brought instant violence and retribution from the South African government. Even so, anti-apartheid figures later stated that they took heart from the progress which civil rights activists were making in the US. <sup>11</sup>

**Figure 16.4 Mural from West Belfast depicting Nelson Mandela**



<sup>11</sup> In 1990, the leader of the anti-apartheid movement, Nelson Mandela, was released from prison after serving 27 years. In 1994 he was elected President of South Africa. Apartheid was finally a thing of the past.

**Exercise 16.1** Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	In what ways was the situation of Latinos and Native Americans similar to that of African Americans?	
2	What was the Snyder Act? How did individual states circumvent the act to deny Native Americans the vote?	
3	In what ways did Catholics in Northern Ireland suffer discrimination?	
4	What organisations did civil rights activists in Northern Ireland create in order to promote their cause?	
5	What happened to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland?	
6	Who was Charlie Perkins?	
7	How did Aboriginal activists try to emulate the US civil rights movement in 1965?	
8	How were the Australian freedom riders received during their travels?	
9	What was apartheid?	
10	Why was civil rights protest so difficult in South Africa?	

**Exercise 16.2** Indicate whether each statement below is true or false.

1	The black civil rights movement had little impact outside of the United States.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	Unlike African Americans, Latinos in the US have not had to suffer discrimination and prejudice in employment and education	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	The activism of Native Americans to achieve their rights sometimes led to violence.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, set up in 1967, was originally a purely Catholic grouping.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	Many Protestants in Northern Ireland reacted to the activism of the NICRA in a violent manner.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	Charlie Perkins made a point of visiting towns that practised racism during the 1965 Freedom Ride.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	White residents of towns like Walgett and Moree were universally happy to see the arrival of the Freedom Riders in 1965.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	In the period after the Freedom Ride, Aboriginal people took the initiative in trying to improve their living conditions.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	The Apartheid system in South Africa echoed the situation in the southern US states but in a much more extreme way.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	The South African authorities consistently dealt with anti-apartheid protestors in a low-key manner.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

## **Chapter 17:**

# **“Mississippi Burning”**

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### **Introduction**

The film *Mississippi Burning* was released in 1988. The film was directed by Alan Parker. The screenplay was by Chris Gerolmo, though following some disagreements between director and writer, Parker introduced a few uncredited rewrites. It stars Gene Hackman as FBI agent Anderson, and Willem Defoe as his younger FBI superior, agent Ward. The film is loosely based on the disappearance of the three civil rights activists in Mississippi in 1964 - Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James E Chaney – who were eventually found murdered.

The film works on several levels. It is a Hollywood movie, made for entertainment, a crime-thriller, and it was expected to make money at the box office, which it did. The film was nominated for seven Oscars. The acting is first rate, and the cinematography and art direction deserved the plaudits it gained at the time.

However, it is not a history documentary, and students of course must not take the film as the literal truth of what happened in Mississippi at that time. No feature film could ever claim to achieve this. Yet the film does manage to capture many important aspects of the civil rights issues and attitudes of the time:

- the deep racism felt by many Mississippians;
- the fear and intimidation that Mississippi blacks experienced;
- the evidence of segregation;
- the close connections between the state police and the Ku Klux Klan;
- the political power of the Ku Klux Klan;
- the resentment felt by the people of (fictitious) Jessup County to the intrusion of the FBI in their town;
- the exercise of justice in Mississippi;
- and of course, the events surrounding the Mississippi summer of 1964.

### **Advice to teachers**

- The film has an “M” rating. It may be necessary to get clearance to show the film at school. This obviously depends on the individual school. There is violence in the film but it is unlikely that students who are studying this topic will be shocked or surprised by what is going on. This is Mississippi in 1964 after all. (And the computer games many students play certainly would be far more graphic).
- It is not a good idea to start the topic “*Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1964*” by showing the film. Indeed, it is not a good idea to show before the section “*Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964*” has been studied. The film is complex and students will only truly gain from a viewing if they already have good background knowledge.

- It may not be a good idea to show the film in one go. It is just over two hours long. It might be better to show it in 30/ 40 minute segments. However, teachers know their classes and can judge how to view the film.
- The following **study guide** is broken down into specific scenes and might assist teachers in planning their lessons on this topic. The study guide is fairly detailed.
  - For some teachers it may be too detailed and they may choose to use only part of it. Alternatively, it can be used fully as a useful revision tool.
  - Teachers might divide their class up and allocate certain scenes to certain students for each part of the viewing.
  - Another strategy of using the film would be to debrief with the class after each part of the viewing to discuss the various questions.

*Mississippi Burning* is not flawless. Some detractors have problems with the seemingly heroic role of the FBI. We are clearly meant to show sympathy towards Agent Anderson (played by Gene Hackman). However, students should respond well to it. The vast majority of us have not had to experience the sorts of things African Americans did in early 1960s Mississippi. The film can add to students' understanding, particularly when considering southern attitudes of the time.

### Advice to students

- Encourage your teacher to show the film in class.
- If you cannot watch it in class, watch it at home but not until you are well into the topic. The DVD can be easily obtained from online stores and it might be on a streaming service such as Netflix.

### *The "disappearance of the civil rights activists"*

1. Describe what happened to the three occupants of the car that was being chased and then rammed in the opening scene of the film.

2. Describe Sheriff Stuckey's attitude to the arrival of the FBI agents?

3. Why do you think the attitude presented in 2 prevailed?

4. What is the reason for the FBI's presence in the town?

5. How does Sheriff Stuckey explain the disappearance of the three civil rights activists?

### *Being in Jessup County*

6. Why does the restaurant go quiet? What is this scene showing?

7. Agent Anderson was born and raised in Mississippi. He relates a story about his father. What does it tell us about poor white attitudes in Mississippi?

8. Who attacked the motel that Agents Ward and Anderson were staying in? How do we know?

9. What happened to the young black man who spoke to Agent Ward? What is the significance of this?

*The people of Jessup County in Mississippi in 1964*

10. Outline the views of the local people regarding the disappearance of the three civil rights activists? Do you think such views would have been typical? Give reasons for your answer.

11. Summarise the views of Mayor Tillman when he is being interviewed by the media?

Mayor Tillman:

*Fact is, we got two cultures down here: a white culture, and a colored culture. Now, that's the way it always has been, and that's the way it always will be.*

Anderson:

*Rest of America don't see it that way, Mr. Mayor.*

Sheriff Ray Stuckey:

*Rest of America don't mean jack shit. You in Mississippi now.*

*The insularity of the Jessup County*

12. How do you explain the refusal of the black population to cooperate with the FBI in spite of all that happens to them?

13. Describe the attitude of Deputy Pell when he is being interviewed by the FBI. What is the significance of this?

14. What is the reaction of the locals to the media presence? Why do they behave this way?

*The court scene*

15. What sentence is handed down to the white men who are found guilty of burning down the houses of the local black residents?

16. What is the significance of the brief trial scene? How would this affect the FBI investigation?

*After the trial*

17. What happened to the man who tried to defend his home after it was attacked? This is 1964. What is the scene suggesting?

18. Mayor Tillman is speaking at a white rally beneath a sign that says "Never, Never, Never". What does the sign refer to? Explain what he means by "successful segregation"? What is Agent Ward's view of the meeting?

19. The scene between Agent Anderson and Mrs Pell. What explanation does she give for the racism of Mississippi?

20. The film ends with the arrests of the murderers of the three civil rights activists. How this was done in the film has been created for dramatic effect. However, it does tell us something about the Mississippi summer case. With what were the men involved charged? Why was this so? What sentences did they receive?

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# Advice on writing HSC responses on “Change in the Modern World”

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## Basic examination information

The examination paper for HSC Modern History comprises four parts:

- Section I: Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946
- Section II: National Studies
- Section III: Peace and Conflict
- Section IV: **Change in the Modern World**

Each section is worth 25 marks. It is important that students allocate their time correctly and give 45 minutes for each section.

Section IV – Change in the Modern World – comprises six options of which Civil Rights in the USA 1945–1968 is one. It will appear as Option C in Section IV.

- There will be one question set on *Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968*.
- It will be in the form of a “structured essay question”:
  - that is, it will not be a single essay question;
  - it will contain several parts, possibly three parts, possibly four parts;
  - all parts of the question must be answered.
- One part of the question will be worth 10 to 15 marks.
- Questions set on *Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968* may come from any part of the syllabus including “Survey”, “Focus of Study” or “Key Features”.
- The allocation of marks for each part of the question will probably vary over the years. Possible mark distributions might be:

Part (a)	Part (b)	Part (c)	Part (d)
5 marks	8 marks	12 marks	
4 marks	6 marks	15 marks	
3 marks	4 marks	8 marks	10 marks
5 marks	5 marks	15 marks	
3 marks	4 marks	6 marks	12 marks

Time allocation within the question on Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968 is of crucial importance.

- Questions that have a low mark value will probably commence as "describe" or "outline" or "how did" or "what is". Such questions are aiming at low level skills. They are essentially narrative or descriptive questions.
  - If a question is worth 3 marks, students should provide three distinct points, in a paragraph and spend no more than five minutes answering it.
  - If a question is worth 4 marks, students should provide four distinct points, in a paragraph and spend no more than seven minutes answering it.
  - A student could write three pages on such a question but will still only receive three (or four) marks.
  
- Questions that have a mark value of about 6-8 marks, will probably commence as "explain" or "account for" or "what was the most significant factor" or "why". Such questions are aiming at higher level skills. They require some argument in the answer.
  - If a question is worth 8 marks, students spend about 15 minutes answering it.
  - 5 minutes on this type of question would clearly be insufficient; 30 minutes is a misallocation of time.
  - This is a lengthy response. It needs a brief introduction and to be written with paragraphs.
  - Students could almost treat it as a mini-essay.
  
- Questions that have a mark value of 10-15 marks, will probably commence as "to what extent" or "discuss the view" or "assess" or "evaluate". Such questions are aiming at much higher-level skills. They require analysis, and the more sophisticated that analysis can be, the better.
  - Time allocation is crucial.
  - As a rough guide, a 10 marks question needs about 18 minutes, a 12-mark question about 23 minutes and 15-mark question about 27 minutes.
  - These will be lengthy responses.
  - These types of questions need to be treated as a mini-essay with all the usual techniques required for an essay: an introduction, paragraphs that are linked, an argument throughout and a conclusion.
  - Markers will be looking for an argument in the introduction which will be supported throughout the response with specific evidence.
  - Students need to avoid falling into 'a narrative trap' and simply 'telling the story' and 'reeling off a string of facts'.

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# Responding to HSC questions on “Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1968”

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## Three-mark questions might be similar to the following:

- Describe the effect of World War II on African-Americans.
- What were the groups which supported civil rights?
- Describe the events surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Outline the events of the Mississippi Summer of 1964.
- What is meant by the term segregation?

### What is meant by the term segregation? (3)

Five minutes, a paragraph, provide three clear points – response might include:

- Segregation was the practice of separating blacks and whites, especially in the south
- It resulted in blacks and whites going to separate schools, living in separate parts of a town
- It meant blacks had to use different facilities, travel separately, eat separately

## Four/ five-mark questions might be similar to the following:

- Describe the role of Malcolm X in the struggle for black civil rights.
- Describe the methods employed by civil rights movements to promote their cause.
- Describe the events of the March on Washington in 1963.

### Describe the events of the March on Washington in 1963. (5)

About eight minutes, a paragraph or two, provide clear facts – response might include:

- In June Kennedy had sent equal rights proposals to Congress and meanwhile Alabama exploded into violence
- Massive march planned to pressure Congress to back Kennedy
- August 1963 – massive organisation, 200-250 000 people
- Peaceful march from Washington Memorial to Lincoln Memorial
- Peaceful, no violence, Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream speech’
- Massive national and international coverage

**Eight-mark questions might be similar to the following:**

- Explain the attitudes of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to the issue of civil rights.
- What were the most significant achievements of the civil rights movement?
- Explain the nature of social and political change surrounding the civil rights movement to 1968.
- In what ways did the US civil rights movement have an impact beyond the United States?
- Explain the southern white reaction to the civil rights movement.

**Explain the southern white reaction to the civil rights movement. (8)**

About fifteen minutes, treat as a mini-essay, needs a brief introduction, paragraphs

- Southern white opposition to civil rights deep-seated, extreme, frequently very violent and seen in the behaviour of police, politicians and ordinary people
- Ingrained racism stretching back to the days of slavery
- Slavery had become part of the southern identity, its demise and the defeat in the civil war were shocks that threatened the whole southern way of life
- Existence of slavery meant even the lowest white person was not at the bottom of the social scale – partly explains willingness of poor whites to follow their more-educated white citizens to suppress black civil rights
- Federal politicians often oppose civil rights because they needed southern votes in Congress for other things
- Local politicians knew that by playing on white racism in the south it would assist their electoral chances
- Opposition took various forms: White Citizens Councils, Ku Klux Klan activities, random violence (lynching had not totally disappeared), white authorities like Bull Connor and George Wallace used police and their national guard to prevent desegregation

**Higher-mark questions might be similar to the following:**

- To what extent had the civil rights movement been successful by 1968?
- Assess the role of Martin Luther King Jr in the civil rights movements.
- To what extent had real legislative and judicial change been achieved in the area of civil rights by 1968?
- Discuss the view that the methods employed by the civil rights movement were largely ineffective.
- To what extent had the struggles of the civil rights movement managed to bring about an end to segregation and discrimination in the United States?
- To what extent were Presidents Kennedy and Johnson successful in their promotion of civil rights?

**To what extent were Presidents Kennedy and Johnson successful in their promotion of civil rights? (15)**

About twenty-seven minutes, treat as a mini-essay, needs an introduction, and the response should incorporate the usual essay rule. Ensure that the introduction outlines the argument of the response.

- Provide your introduction with arguments that the essays will pursue:
  - though Kennedy was sympathetic to civil rights, he preferred a quiet approach to achieving change;
  - often annoyed at the tactics of some civil rights activists and was finally pushed into action because of the violence in 1963;
  - Kennedy's death meant he was never able to achieve significant civil rights reform;
  - Johnson was a hard-nosed politician but he had a genuine desire for civil rights reform;
  - real achievements occurred under Johnson;
  - the backlash that followed black violence in the 1960s made the chance of more change difficult;
  - above all, Vietnam put an end to any social and civil rights programs Johnson sought.
- Kennedy:
  - feared antagonising southern Congressmen who could stymie his other program;
  - also worried how being pro-civil rights might affect his re-election;
  - 'behind the scenes' work for civil rights;
  - refer to Robert Kennedy's work as attorney-general;
  - use of appointments;
  - Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity;
  - June 63 speech after the Alabama violence;
  - introduced a Civil Rights Bill;
  - assassinated before he could achieve more;
  - black detractors said he only reacted to events, too little too late.
- Johnson:
  - more interested than Kennedy – civil rights fitted in with his Great Society hopes;
  - able to use sympathy after Kennedy's death to get the Civil Rights Act through Congress;
  - other legislation: Higher Education Act, Medicare and Medicaid, 1965 Voting Rights Act;
  - appointed Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court;
  - soon facing major problems that prevented further progress:
    - black rioting in US cities – frustrated Johnson
    - growing white opposition, even in the north
    - and above all Johnson's preoccupation with the Vietnam War;
    - Vietnam would destroy Johnson's political career.



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# Timeline

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1833	Creation of American Anti-Slavery Society by William Lloyd Garrison
1859	John Brown's attack at Harper's Ferry
1861-65	American Civil War
1863	Lincoln's Gettysburg Address
1865-77	Period of Reconstruction
1865	Creation of the Ku Klux Klan
1868	Adoption of the 14th Amendment to the American Constitution
1870	Adoption of the 15th Amendment to the American Constitution
To 1900	Imposition of the Jim Crow laws in the southern states Lynching of blacks becomes widespread in the south
1896	Supreme Court Decision: Plessy v Ferguson
1909	Formation of the NAACP
1915	Revival of the Ku Klux Klan
1924	Snyder Act
1925	Formation of the African-American Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Birth of Malcolm Little (Malcolm X)
1929	Birth of Martin Luther King Formation of the League of United Latin American Citizens
1930	Formation of the Nation of Islam
1931	Scottsboro Boys Incident
1941-45	Black soldiers in the US Army Activities of the Tuskegee Airmen
1942	Formation of CORE
1944	Supreme Court Decision: Smith v Allwright
1945-53	Administration of Harry Truman
1947	'Journey of Reconciliation' Freedom Ride 'To secure these rights' report
1948	President Truman desegregates the armed forces
1951	Formation of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership
1953-61	Administration of Dwight Eisenhower
1954	Supreme Court Decision: Brown v Board of Education
1955	Murder of Emmett Till Rosa Parks bus protest
1956	Montgomery Bus Boycott
1957	Eisenhower's 1st Civil Rights Act Martin Luther King helps establish the SCLC Prayer March in Washington DC Little Rock Central High School incident

- 1960 Supreme Court Decision: *Boynton v Virginia*  
 “sit-ins” in Greensboro, North Carolina  
 Eisenhower’s 2nd Civil Rights Act  
 Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa
- 1961-63 Administration of John Kennedy
- 1961 Freedom Rides
- 1962 Rachel Carson’s book: ‘Silent Spring’
- 1963 Betty Friedan’s book: ‘The Feminine Mystique’  
 Violence in Birmingham, Alabama – “Bull” Connors’ actions  
 Martin Luther King arrested – Letter from Birmingham Jail  
 The March on Washington  
 Martin Luther King delivers his ‘I have a dream’ speech  
 Assassination of President John Kennedy
- 1963-69 Administration of Lyndon Johnson
- 1964 Bob Dylan song: ‘The Times they are a changin’  
 Martin Luther King wins the Nobel Peace Prize  
 Johnson’s Civil Rights Act  
 Mississippi Freedom Summer  
 Muhammad Ali becomes World Heavyweight Champion and joins the Nation of Islam
- 1965 Ralph Nader’s book: ‘Unsafe at any speed’  
 Assassination of Malcolm X  
 The Selma March  
 Johnson’s Higher Education Act  
 Johnson’s Voting Rights Act  
 Start of the Delano Grape Strike  
 Freedom Ride in NSW led by Charles Perkins
- 1966 James Meredith’s solo march
- 1966 Stokely Carmichael becomes leader of the SNCC  
 Formation of the Black Panthers
- 1967 Thurgood Marshall appointed to the Supreme Court  
 Formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association  
 Muhammad Ali is stripped of World Boxing crown
- 1968 Assassination of Martin Luther King  
 Assassination of Robert Kennedy  
 Black Power protest by Tommy Smith and Jon Carlos at the Mexico Olympics  
 James Brown song: ‘Say it loud’  
 Formation of the American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
 Formation of the American Indian Movement  
 Formation of People’s Democracy in Northern Ireland

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# Glossary

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CORE	Congress for Racial Equality
AIM	American Indian Movement
amendment	a change to the American constitution
Black Power	radical black movement associated with Stokely Carmichael
black pride	the sense of worth and value blacks developed about themselves in the 1960s
boycott	refusal to use a service
Brown versus Board of Education	Supreme Court case of 1954 that overturned Plessy versus Ferguson
citizens councils	white organisations set up to frustrate desegregation
COFO	Council of Federated Organisations, Mississippi 1964
Confederacy	name given to the 11 southern states who seceded from the union in the Civil War
desegregation	policy of ending the practice of segregation
discrimination	practice of favouring one group (whites) at the expense of another (blacks)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
freedom ride	1961 protests seeking desegregation on interstate transport
ghetto	poorer areas of northern cities in which African Americans ended up living
hajj	traditional Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca
Jim Crow laws	laws passed in the American South to enforce segregation
John Birch Society	anti-civil rights and anti-communist group
Ku Klux Klan	secretive violent white organisation aimed at suppressing African Americans
Latino	term referring to Mexican, Latin American and Filipino Americans
lynching	the hanging of African Americans by white vigilantes
Mississippi Summer Project	voter registration drive in Mississippi 1964
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples
Nation of Islam	radical black movement of the 1950s and 1960s
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
People's Democracy	socialist/ nationalist civil rights group in Northern Ireland
persona non grata	a person whose presence is unwanted, indeed might even be banned
Plessy versus Ferguson	a Supreme Court decision that in favour of the idea of 'separate but equal'
prejudice	irrational dislike/ hatred of a group based on colour, religion, race
prohibition	the banning of the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquor
Quakers	religious group which assisted slaves to escape the south before the Civil War
RCNL	Regional Council of Negro Leadership
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
segregation	practice of separating blacks and white, especially in the South
soul	distinctive black music of the 1960s linking gospel and rhythm and blues
Supreme Court	highest court in the US which can decide if a law is constitutional or not
the troubles	term describing the violence in Northern Ireland from 1968-1998

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# Dramatis Personae

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Abernathy, Ralph	President of the SCLC after Martin Luther King's death
Ali, Muhammad	World Heavyweight boxing champion, supporter of Nation of Islam
Brown, James	the leading soul singer of the 1960s
Carmichael, Stokely	Black Power leader
Carson, Rachel	author of Silent Spring
Chaney, James E	black civil rights worker, murdered in the Mississippi Summer, 1964
Clinton, Bill	US President 1993-2001
Cole, Eschol	Memphis sanitation worker killed in February 1968
Davis Jr, Benjamin O	Commander of the Tuskegee Airmen during WWII
Dennis, Dave	CORE organiser in Mississippi 1964
Devlin, Bernadette	student activist leader of People's Democracy in Northern Ireland
Douglas, Frederick	African American anti-slavery campaigner
Dylan, Bob	protest singer of the 1960s, wrote 'The Times they are a changin''
Eisenhower, Dwight	US President 1953-61
Evans, Medgar	NAACP director, murdered mid-1963
Faubus, Orville	Governor of Arkansas at the time of "Little Rock"
Friedan, Betty	author of The Feminine Mystique
Gandhi	Indian independence leader
Garrison, William Lloyd	founder of American Anti-Slavery Society
Goodman, Andrew	white civil rights worker, murdered in the Mississippi Summer, 1964
Gravelly Jr, Samuel L	Commander of the USS PC-1264 during World War II
Haley, Alex	author, wrote about and interviewed Malcolm X
Hamer, Fannie Lou	pastor, local civil rights activist, Mississippi Summer 1964
Harding, Warren	US President 1921-23
Hines Jr, Carl Wendell	poet/ musician, author of A Dead Man's Dream
Hoover, J Edgar	director of the FBI
Houston, Charles Hamilton	legal advocate for the NAACP
Howard, TRM	founder of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership
Jackson, Jesse	civil rights worker who worked closely with Martin Luther King
Jefferson, Thomas	US President 1801-09
Johnson, L B	US President 1963-69
Kennedy, John	US President 1961-63
Kennedy, Robert	US Attorney-General under President Kennedy
King, Martin Luther	leading non-violent civil rights leader of the 1950s and 1960s
Lincoln, Abraham	US President 1861-65
Malcolm X	major figure in the Nation of Islam movement
Mandela, Nelson	anti-apartheid campaigner, first black President of South Africa
Marshall, Thurgood	first African American appointed to the Supreme Court, 1967
Miller, Doris	African American naval cook decorated for bravery at Pearl Harbour
Moses, Bob	key figure in the COFO in Mississippi 1964

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

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Muhammad, Elijah	leader of the Nation of Islam movement
Nader, Ralph	author of Unsafe at any speed
Nixon, ED	Montgomery NAACP leader
Obama, Barack	US President 2009-2017
Parks, Rosa	woman at the centre of the Montgomery Bus Boycott
Perkins, Charles	Aboriginal activist, led the 1965 Freedom Ride
Presley, Elvis	pioneer of rock 'n' roll music in the 1950s
Randolph, A Philip	African American trade union leader during World War II
Ray, James Earl	assassin of Martin Luther King Jr
Roosevelt, Franklin	US President 1933-45
Rustin, Bayard	organiser of the March on Washington
Schwerner, Mickey	white civil rights worker, murdered in the Mississippi Summer, 1964
Thurmond, Strom	South Carolina senator opposed to civil rights legislation
Till, Emmett	black teenager brutally murdered in Mississippi in 1955
Truman, Harry	US President, 1945-53
Walker, Robert	Memphis sanitation worker killed in February 1968
Wallace, George	Governor of Alabama
Warren, Earl	Supreme Court Chief Justice
White, Walter	key NAACP activist during the first half of the 20th century
Wilkins, Roy	NAACP leader
Williams, R F	supporter of black armed self-reliance
Wilson, Woodrow	US President 1913-21
Young, Andrew	civil rights worker who worked closely with Martin Luther King

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# Answers to Revision Exercises

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## Exercise 1.1

1 – all men are created equal; 2 – three fifths other persons; 3 – prevent African Americans taking their legal rights, use of violence; 4 – keep blacks and whites separate; 5 – 3446; 6 – they were used to being treated better in France; 7 – to the northern states for work; 8 – National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples; 9 – Catholics, Jews, immigrants as well as African Americans; 10 – they held some governorships and had senators elected

## Exercise 1.2

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – true

## Exercise 2.1

Freedom – citizenship – vote – literacy – grandfather – reconstruction – Jim Crow – segregation – Supreme Court – separate – northern – discrimination – work – housing – ghettos

## Exercise 3.1

1 – CORE; 2 – Black Panthers; 3 – Nation of Islam; 4 – NAACP; 5 – The Quakers; 6 – African-American Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; 7 – Southern Christian Leadership Conference; 8 – Fellowship of Reconciliation; 9 – Negro Labor Congress; 10 – American Anti-Slavery Society

## Exercise 4.1

1st – Plessy versus Ferguson; 2nd – The Red Summer violence; 3rd – Charles H Houston's early legal cases; 4th – Columbia Tennessee race riot; 5th – Appointment of Earl Warren to the Supreme Court; 6th – Brown versus Board of Education; 7th – Montgomery bus boycott; 8th – Prayer March to the Lincoln Memorial; 9th – March on Washington; 10th – Selma March

## Exercise 5.1

1st – Completion of his PhD; 2nd – Involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott; 3rd – Elected as President of the SCLC; 4th – Meets President Kennedy; 5th – The Birmingham protests; 6th – Delivers his I have a dream speech; 7th – Receives the Nobel Peace prize; 8th – The Selma to Montgomery march; 9th – Campaigns in Chicago; 10th – Assassinated in Memphis

## Exercise 5.2

1 – Coretta Scott; 2 – Rosa Parks; 3 – James Meredith; 4 – Stokely Carmichael; 5 – "Bull" Connor; 6 – Richard Daley; 7 – J Edgar Hoover; 8 – Clayton Powell; 9 – James Earl Ray; 10 – Alberta King

**Exercise 6.1**

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false

**Exercise 7.1**

1 – existence of slavery and pseudo-scientific views of the time; 2 – to ensure they did not fall to the bottom of the social pyramid; 3 – they needed southern white vote for their programs; 4 – to fight against segregation; 5 – Governor of Alabama; 6 – stated he would fight to maintain it, tried to prevent black students enter university; 7 – he was brutally murdered by whites; 8 – showed how blacks could be treated in Mississippi and the lack of justice for blacks; 9 – an agreement by southern politicians to fight school desegregation; 10 – violence and murder

**Exercise 8.1**

1st – Rosa Parks joins the NAACP; 2nd – Baton Rouge bus boycott; 3rd – Rosa Parks is arrested; 4th – One-day Montgomery bus boycott; 5th – Formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association; 6th – Case of Browder versus Gayle; 7th – End of Montgomery bus segregation; 8th – Martin Luther King helps form the SCLC

**Exercise 9.1**

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

**Exercise 10.1**

Boynton v Virginia – Morgan v Virginia – CORE – freedom rides – southern – May – Washington DC – Alabama – beatings – firebombed – Mississippi – penitentiary – November – SNCC – Georgia – segregation – violent

**Exercise 11.1**

1st – Montgomery Bus Boycott; 2nd – Freedom Rides; 3rd – “Bull” Connor’s police actions; 4th – George Wallace bars black students registering at university; 5th – Murder of Medgar Evers; 6th – March on Washington; 7th – Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama; 8th – Assassination of President Kennedy; 9th – The 1964 Civil Rights Act; 10th – Increased violence in Mississippi

**Exercise 12.1**

1 – voter registration and freedom schools; 2 – depth of racism and segregation; 3 – they were violently opposed to it; 4 – Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, James E Chaney; 5 – two of the victims were white; 6 – he saw civil rights activists as troublemakers and potential communists; 7 – charged with civil rights offenses, four of them received small sentences; 8 – not very successful, 1600 new voters added to the roll; 9 – mortgage foreclosures, sackings; 10 – arguably it might have speeded up its introduction

**Exercise 13.1**

1 – Robert Walker; 2 – Martin Luther King; 3 – Andrew Young; 4 – Jesse Jackson; 5 – Samuel Billy Kyles; 6 – James Earl Ray; 7 – Ralph Abernathy; 8 – Hubert Humphrey

**Exercise 14.1**

1 – true; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – false; 10 – true

**Exercise 15.1**

1 – Harry Truman; 2 – Emmett Till; 3 – Thurgood Marshall; 4 – John Kennedy; 5 – Bull Connor; 6 – Strom Thurmond; 7 – George Wallace; 8 – Dwight Eisenhower; 9 – Robert Kennedy; 10 – Lyndon Johnson

**Exercise 15.2**

1st – The 'To Secure These Rights report'; 2nd – Henderson versus the US; 3rd – Brown versus Board of Education; 4th – Eisenhower's First Civil Rights Act; 5th – Formation of the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity; 6th – John Kennedy's 'moral issue' speech; 7th – assassination of John Kennedy; 8th – Johnson's Civil Rights Act; 9th – Johnson's Voting Rights Act; 10th – appointment of Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court

**Exercise 16.1**

1 – suffering similar discrimination, prejudice, violence and segregation; 2 – gave citizenship to Native Americans but states could deny them the vote by imposing poll taxes and literacy tests; 3 – in housing, employment, education, voting; 4 – creation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the People's Democracy; 5 – Was overtaken by thirty years of sectarian violence; 6 – Aboriginal activist in Australia in the 1960s; 7 – The Freedom Ride that visited segregated rural towns in NSW; 8 – They frequently faced verbal and physical abuse; 9 – The racist social system in South Africa that forced the separation of the different races; 10 – Because of the violent actions of the authorities and the severity of the white laws

**Exercise 16.2**

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – true; 10 – false