

Name _____

Date _____

Civil Rights and Equal Rights

The Civil Rights Movement

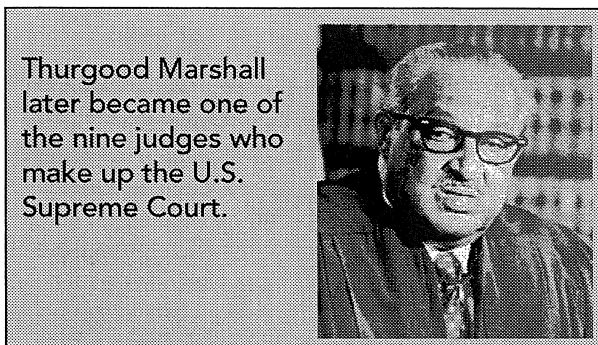
African Americans had been denied basic civil rights both during and after the days of slavery. In the years after World War II, a broad movement to secure these rights finally developed. Blacks who had fought in the war demanded equal treatment at home. Many whites agreed. Also, the United States was trying to get developing nations in Asia and Africa to line up on its side in the Cold War. Racist laws and customs in the U.S. damaged this effort.

Segregation. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) had been founded in 1909. Ever since, it had been a leading African-American rights group. In the 1940s and 1950s, the NAACP waged war in the courts on laws that treated blacks unequally. One of its cases was *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This case produced a landmark Supreme Court ruling in 1954. The case attacked the “separate but equal” doctrine the Court had proclaimed in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The NAACP lawyer who argued the case was Thurgood Marshall. He argued against forcing black children to attend separate schools from white students. He said this resulted in an unequal education for blacks. It also caused emotional damage to these students, Marshall added. The Court agreed. It was a huge breakthrough for African Americans.

Segregated southern school districts resisted the *Brown* decision strongly. In Little Rock, Arkansas, things came to a head. The state’s governor used National Guard troops to keep black students from attending Central

High School. This was a direct refusal to obey federal court rulings. President Eisenhower took federal control of the National Guard. He used the troops to protect the black students.

Blacks and many northern whites now took action. They were resolved to change things all through the South. They worked to overturn segregation laws. They struggled to secure voting rights for African Americans. In Montgomery, Alabama, blacks successfully boycotted the city bus system until they got equal seating rights with whites. A new leader emerged during this boycott. He was Martin Luther King, Jr., a charismatic minister. He urged his followers to use the tactics of passive resistance. That is, he promoted a policy of protest without violence.



A new wave of protests began in 1960. Four black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat at a whites-only lunch counter. Sit-ins spread across the South. Next came freedom rides. Buses full of blacks and whites traveled around the South. They stopped at segregated eating places and bus stations. The sit-ins and freedom rides got national attention. Many Americans spoke out against the illegal segregation of public places. Over the next few years, the racial barriers crumbled.

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Unit 4

STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET

Civil Rights and Equal Rights *(continued)*

Voting Rights. Whites often blocked blacks from registering to vote in the South. Starting in 1962, SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) worked to change this. SNCC sent a wave of workers, mostly students, across the South. These workers helped African Americans secure their voting rights. Racist whites viciously attacked the SNCC workers. Some were murdered. Demands for protection and change mounted. In response, President Kennedy proposed a civil rights act. This law was passed after his death. It outlawed segregation in public places, such as hotels and restaurants. It also barred discrimination in employment. A Voting Rights Act followed in 1965. It gave federal protection to the rights of blacks to register and to vote. Within five years, the number of blacks registered to vote in the South leaped from 35 to 65 percent.

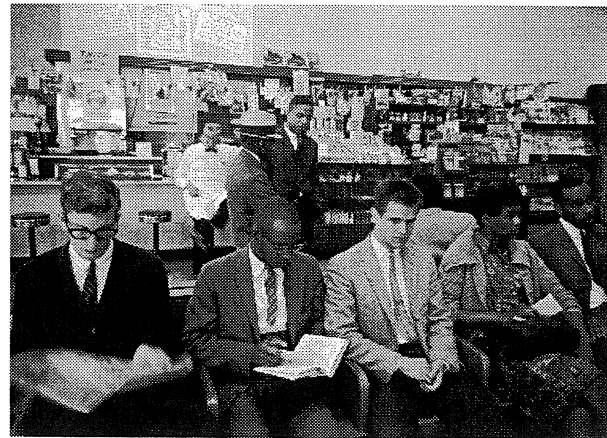
More Militant Voices. As the civil rights movement went on, many blacks became more radical and militant. Martin Luther King continued to call for nonviolence. Others were more aggressive. They wanted changes in oppression of African Americans all across the country.

- Malcolm X of the Black Muslims urged complete separation of blacks from white society. (He moderated this position just before his death by assassination.)
- Stokely Carmichael of SNCC coined the slogan "Black Power." It urged blacks to take pride in their African-American identity and culture. It called on blacks to fight for their own black communities.
- Growing black anger resulted in a series of destructive riots in cities across the country. Watts, a black ghetto in Los Angeles,

erupted in 1965. More serious riots shook U.S. cities in 1966 and 1967. Many riots broke out after the assassination of Martin Luther King in April 1968.

Other Rights Movements

Latinos. Other Americans also struggled for equal rights and equal treatment during the 1960s and later. Many Mexican Americans lived in the U.S. Southwest. They had long suffered from discrimination. Now American Latinos began to organize. Like African Americans, they demanded change. They wanted equal treatment in jobs, housing, and schools. They stressed pride in their culture. César Chávez became a leader of Latino migrant farm workers. He organized them into the United Farm Workers union. He then led a national boycott of table grapes. The boycott at last forced growers to respond to the workers' demands.



Freedom riders stage a sit-in at a Montgomery, Alabama waiting room

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Civil Rights and Equal Rights *(continued)*

Native Americans. Indians also called for changes in their status. They began to call themselves Native Americans. Activists formed the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968. They also founded Indians of All Tribes in 1969. They called for the return of lands taken from them against the law over the years. They demanded the right to govern their own tribes. As with blacks and Latinos, they promoted pride in their cultures. Radicals took high-profile action to call attention to their cause. One group seized and stayed on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay in 1969. Others took over a trading post at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1973. The Native-American movement was never well unified, though. It was made up of many different tribes. They tended to focus on their own distinct concerns and social groups.



Native Americans protesting at Alcatraz

Other Minorities. Other Americans took note of the calls by blacks, Latinos, and Indians for equal rights. Members of other minority groups become more aware of their social status. They saw themselves as part of a group. Asian Americans and other ethnic groups began to organize. They too stressed pride in their own cultures. They demanded to be treated in an equal way. Homosexuals pressed for equal rights. They also called for overall social acceptance.

The Women's Movement

Women's groups had worked for equal rights since before the Civil War. Women at last gained the right to vote in 1920. But then the women's movement had gone into a long sleep. In the 1960s, many women became active in the civil rights movement. They noticed that they were mostly given second-class status behind the men. Working women began to resent the status quo. They didn't like the ways in which the mass media treated the housewife as the ideal woman. They also resented the many forms of job discrimination they had to deal with. They were fed up with lower wages, closed jobs, and little chance for promotion.

In 1966, a group of activists formed NOW, the National Organization for Women. It lobbied strongly for equal employment rights. In 1967, President Johnson agreed. He added women to people covered in federal affirmative action programs. NOW also sponsored an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The ERA would ban all discrimination based on gender. The Amendment sailed through Congress in 1972. But then it bogged down in the state legislatures. It was never ratified.

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Civil Rights and Equal Rights (continued)

The ERA failed for a number of reasons. One was a backlash against the more radical women's rights figures. This backlash was led by Phyllis Schlafly. She was a working woman who promoted the time-honored role of women as homemakers. Another cause of the ERA's failure was a new split in the women's movement. This split was caused by the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. *Roe* said that women had a right under the U.S. constitution to abortion in the early months of pregnancy. Many women hailed the decision as upholding a woman's right to control of her own body. Others, though, were appalled. In their view, abortion was murder of an unborn child, at any stage of pregnancy. Women (and men) who felt this way mounted a strong right-to-life movement. The fight between pro- and anti-abortion forces continues today.



Chief Justice
Earl Warren

The Warren Court

Roe v. Wade was a decision of the Supreme Court when it was headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren. Under Warren, the Court made a number of important decisions. They had far-reaching effects on American life. *Roe* was one. Another, before *Roe*, was *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1964). It found a right to privacy in the Consti-

tution. This privacy right played a big part in the *Roe* decision and other important cases.

The Warren Court also made the rights of people accused of a crime more clear. *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) said that anyone accused of a crime had a right to a lawyer. If a person was too poor to pay for a lawyer, the court had to provide one. *Miranda v. Arizona* ruled that police must tell suspects they have the right to remain silent. Suspects also have a right to have a lawyer present while police are asking them questions about a crime.

In 1962, the Court ruled that students could not be required to recite a prayer in public schools. In 1963, the Court also banned required reading of passages from the Bible in public schools. Some people didn't like these decisions. They called for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow school prayer. These calls continue today.

The Court also set the standard of "one man, one vote" in 1962. The case was *Baker v. Carr*. The Court ruled that each seat in state and local legislatures had to represent roughly the same number of voters. City and suburban voters at last got a fair number of seats. Smaller rural populations lost a lot of their hold on state and local governments.

The Warren Court played an active role in causing social change. This Court role faded away after the 1960s. More liberal and moderate Court members retired or died. Republican presidents Nixon and Reagan took their opportunities to make a change. They named more conservative people to the Court. Recent Court decisions have set limits on some of the rights opened up by the Warren Court. Most affected so far are abortion rights and rights of people accused of crimes. Still, the basic Warren Court principles remain in effect.



Name _____

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Black Rights: Groups and Leaders

Directions: Several different groups took leadership roles in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. For each group listed below, name its most prominent leader(s) and tell what its goals and methods were. For groups listed by acronym, also write out the group's full name.

Group	Leader(s)	Goals, methods
NAACP		
National Urban League		
SCLC		
CORE		
SNCC		
Black Muslims (Nation of Islam)		
Black Panthers		



Black Rights and Protests: Different Views

Different African-American leaders had different ideas about what changes blacks should strive for in American society, and what methods they should use. Here are some of their words.

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963

You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.

. . . I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies—a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.



Stokely Carmichael, 1966

Politically, black power means . . . the coming-together of black people to elect representatives and to *force those representatives to speak to their needs*. . . .

As for initiating the use of violence, we hope that such programs as ours will make that unnecessary; but it is not for us to tell black communities whether they can or cannot use any particular form of action to resolve their problems. Responsibility for the use of violence by black men, whether in self-defense or initiated by them, lies with the white community.

James Farmer, 1962

What are our objectives; segregation, separation? Absolutely not! The disease and the evils that we have pointed to in our American culture have grown out of segregation and its partner, prejudice. We are for integration, which is the repudiation of the evil of segregation. . . . We are working for the right of Negroes to enter all fields of activity in American life. To enter business if they choose, to enter the professions, to enter the sciences, to enter the arts, to enter the academic world. To be workers, to be laborers if they choose. Our objective is to have each individual accepted on the basis of his individual merit and not on the basis of his color. On the basis of what he is worth himself.

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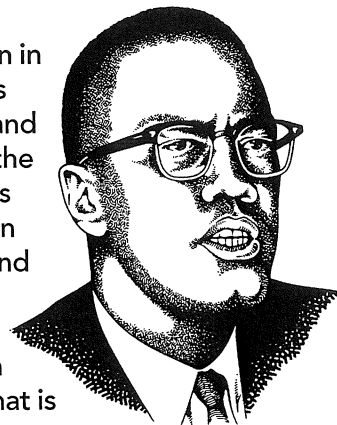


Focus on U.S. History: The Era of
World War II Through Contemporary Times

Black Rights and Protests: Different Views *(continued)*

Malcolm X

1962: We don't think that it is possible for the American white man in sincerity to take the action necessary to correct the unjust conditions that 20 million black people here are made to suffer morning, noon, and night. And because we don't have any hope or confidence or faith in the American white man's ability to bring about a change in the injustices that exist, instead of asking or seeking to integrate into the American society we want to face the facts of the problem the way they are, and separate ourselves. And in separating ourselves this doesn't mean that we are anti-white or anti-American, or anti-anything. We feel, that if integration all these years hasn't solved the problem yet, then we want to try something new, something different and something that is in accord with the conditions as they actually exist.



1964: I don't go along with any kind of nonviolence unless everybody's going to be non-violent. If they make the Ku Klux Klan nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. If they make the White Citizens Council nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. But as long as you've got somebody else not being nonviolent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any nonviolent talk. I don't think it is fair to tell our people to be nonviolent unless someone is out there making the Klan and the Citizens Council and these other groups also be nonviolent.

Roy Wilkins, 1966

The only possible dividend of "black power" is embodied in its offer to millions of frustrated and deprived and persecuted black people of a solace, a tremendous psychological lift, quite apart from its political and economic implications. Ideologically it dictates "up with black and down with white" in precisely the same manner that South Africa reverses that slogan. It is a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan. . . .

We seek, therefore, as we have sought these many years, for the inclusion of Negro Americans in the nation's life, not their exclusion. This is our land, as much as it is any American's—every square foot of every city and town and village. The task of winning our share is not the easy one of disengagement and flight, but the hard one of work, of short as well as long jumps, of disappointments and of sweet success.

Directions: Take part in a panel discussion with classmates on the different approaches black leaders and black people in general took toward achieving equal rights and equal treatment during the 1960s. Why did different people adopt different approaches? How effective were the various approaches? What approaches are African Americans taking today in the continuing work for an equal place in American society?



Is Separate Unequal?

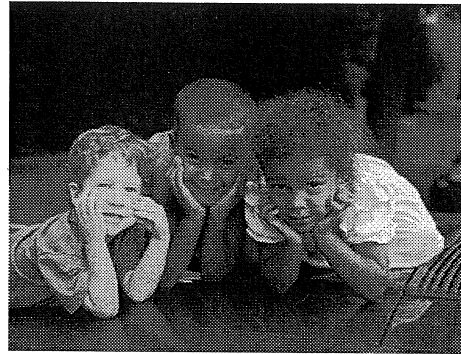
On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the decision that sparked the civil rights movement. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Court reversed its earlier 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In *Plessy*, the Court had said that segregation was acceptable if the separate facilities were equal. Here are key parts of the Court's *Brown* decision.

Directions: Read this excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

To separate [schoolchildren] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The effect of this separation on their educational opportunities was well stated by a finding in a Kansas case. . . :

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system.

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.



1. Compare this decision with *Plessy v. Ferguson*.
 - (a) What was the basis of the Court's reasoning in *Plessy*?
 - (b) What was the basis of the Court's reasoning in *Brown*?
 - (c) What accounts for the change in the Court's reasoning?
2. Read the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Based on that, and the Supreme Court's reasoning in the *Plessy* and *Brown* cases, write your own decision on the equal protection of the laws question as it applies to segregation of the races.



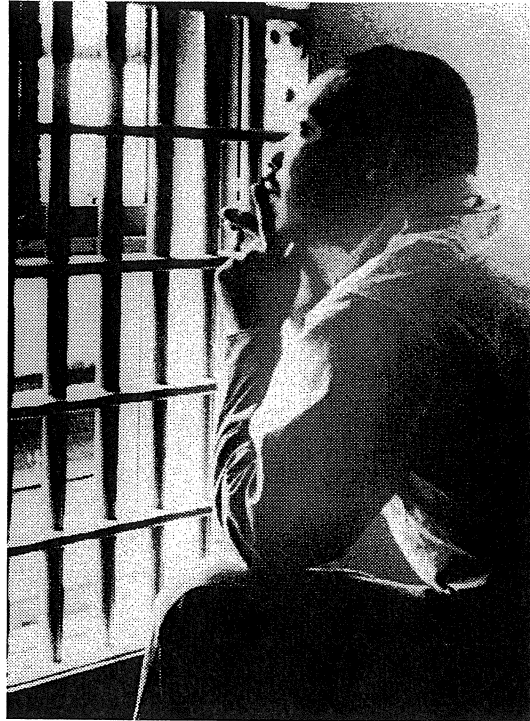
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A Letter From Jail

Why did African Americans in the South rise up in great numbers in the early 1960s, no longer able to put up with their conditions of life? Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., expressed the reasons eloquently in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He wrote the letter while he was behind bars in April 1963 for a nonviolent protest in Birmingham, Alabama.

Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an air-tight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television . . . ; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are), and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.



Martin Luther King, Jr., in Jefferson County jail, Birmingham, Alabama

