

# African-American Civil Rights Movement

© Student Handouts, Inc.

# Life for African Americans in the South (circa 1950)

---

- ◉ **De jure segregation** – legal segregation through written laws
- ◉ **Jim Crow laws** – designed to separate blacks and whites
- ◉ ***Plessy v. Ferguson***, 1896 – “separate but equal”
- ◉ **Segregation** of beaches, cemeteries, hospitals, restaurants, schools, transportation, and more
- ◉ **Disenfranchised** – few could vote – grandfather clauses, literacy tests, poll taxes

# Life for African Americans in the North (circa 1950)

---

- **De facto segregation** – unwritten segregation through customs, housing patterns, and traditions
- **Segregation and discrimination** in housing, jobs, and more

# Life for African Americans Nationwide (circa 1950)

---

- **Segregated** from whites, either legally or through custom, throughout the United States
- **Employment** – generally filled the lowest paid, least desirable positions – “last hired, first fired”
- **Standard of living** – higher rates of illiteracy and poverty, and shorter life expectancy, than whites
- **Housing** – fewer black than white homeowners
- **World War II** – following the defeat of Hitler and his racist ideology, African Americans expected changes within the United States

# Civil Rights Movement, 1900-1950

---

- 1905 – **Niagara Movement** begun by W.E.B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and others – denounced the vocational training and gradual progress espoused by Booker T. Washington
- 1909 – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (**NAACP**) founded by Florence Kelley, Ida B. Wells, Jane Addams, Ray Stannard Baker, and others – strategy involved using the court system to challenge inequality and racism
- 1911 – **Urban League** formed to help poor black workers in cities
- 1920s – Marcus Garvey's "**Back to Africa**" movement and Universal Negro Improvement Association
- 1930 – **Nation of Islam** founded by Elijah Muhammad

# Civil Rights Movement, 1900-1950 (Continued)

---

- 1941 – **FDR** ended discrimination in **defense industries**
- 1942 – Congress of Racial Equality (**CORE**) founded by James Farmer and others – advocated **nonviolent protests**
- 1944 – **Gunnar Myrdal's** *An American Dilemma* published
- 1946 – **Committee on Civil Rights** appointed by Harry Truman
- 1947 – **Major League Baseball** desegregated when **Jackie Robinson** joined the Brooklyn Dodgers
- 1948 – **Harry Truman** desegregated the **United States military**



# NAACP Legal Victories, 1950

---

- ***Sweatt v. Painter*** – all-black law school established by Texas violated 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment because facilities unequal
- ***McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*** – University of Oklahoma graduate student George McLaurin's constitutional rights violated when he was denied equal access to the classrooms, dining hall, and library

# *Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*

---

- Challenged the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- Attorney **Thurgood Marshall** argued before Supreme Court led by Chief Justice **Earl Warren**
- Unanimous decision – “In the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.”
- *Brown II* ruled for school desegregation “with all deliberate speed”
- But strong opposition to decision from whites, and desegregation moved slowly



# Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1956

---

- **Rosa Parks** was asked to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama (December, 1955)
- She refused and was arrested
- Activists from the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) began a bus boycott that lasted over a year
- 1956 – Supreme Court ruled that segregated buses were unconstitutional

# Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

---

- MLK had spoken out in support of the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- SCLC established by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy in 1957
- Nonviolent protest and resistance based on civil disobedience of Henry David Thoreau and Mohandas Gandhi
- Christian-themed organization

# Little Rock, Arkansas – 1957

---

- “**Little Rock Nine**” enrolled at Central High School
- Governor Orval Faubus called out Arkansas National Guard to block them
- Eisenhower sent federal troops who stayed for the whole school year
- Full compliance with school desegregation continued to meet resistance in the South, however

# Civil Rights Act of 1957

---

- ◉ First federal civil rights legislation since Reconstruction
- ◉ Established the **United States Civil Rights Commission**
- ◉ Civil rights violations to be investigated
- ◉ **Voting rights** of African Americans protected by the U.S. Attorney General

# Greensboro Sit-in, 1960

---

- Four African-American college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, ordered coffee and doughnuts at a Woolworth's lunch counter
- Restaurant refused to serve them, so students sat there until it closed
- Sparked similar restaurant sit-ins, along with “read-ins” at libraries, “wade-ins” at beaches, etc.

# Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), 1960

---

- African American students invigorated by sit-ins
- Ella Baker organized Easter, 1960, meeting at North Carolina's Shaw University
- James Lawson spoke about civil rights as a "moral issue"
- SNCC organization created a grass-roots movement to end discrimination and segregation



# Freedom Riders, 1961

---

- ***Boynton v. Virginia***, 1960 – segregation in interstate transportation unconstitutional
- **Freedom ride** on two Greyhound buses going from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans, Louisiana – seven blacks and six whites
- One bus firebombed in Anniston, Alabama
- Other bus attacked by a mob in Birmingham, Alabama
- U.S. marshals sent in when bus reached Montgomery, Alabama
- Riders arrested in Jackson, Mississippi
- Hundreds more were inspired and joined the freedom rides

# Kennedy's Response

---

- ◉ Federal government forced to act
- ◉ JFK got leaders in Mississippi to agree to protect freedom riders
- ◉ Federal Transportation Commission ordered interstate transportation to be desegregated

# “Ole Miss” Integrated, 1962

---

- ◉ **Medgar Evers** worked to get Air Force veteran **James Meredith** into the all-white University of Mississippi
- ◉ September 30, 1962 – riot sparked by rumors of Meredith’s campus arrival – 2 killed and 160 injured
- ◉ Meredith enrolled, graduating in 1963
- ◉ June, 1963 – Medgar Evers assassinated
- ◉ 1966 – James Meredith shot and wounded

# MLK and SCLC in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963

---

- Birmingham considered most segregated city
- City leaders got a ban on SCLC demonstration
- MLK joined demonstration and arrested
- Famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
- Public Safety Commissioner T. Eugene “Bull” Connor turned fire hoses and police dogs on protestors, including kids
- Nationwide sympathy for demonstrators resulted from national news coverage

# Kennedy's Television Address, 1963

---

- ◉ June 11, 1963
- ◉ John F. Kennedy spoke on national television
- ◉ Civil rights were a “moral issue”
- ◉ Pledged “equal rights and equal opportunities”
- ◉ Proposed new civil rights legislation
- ◉ Aided by Attorney General Robert “Bobby” Kennedy (his brother)

# March on Washington, 1963

---

- ◉ August 28, 1963
- ◉ NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and other groups
- ◉ Over 200,000 peaceful demonstrators
- ◉ MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial
- ◉ Broadcasted live on national television



# Birmingham Church Bombing, 1963

---

- ◉ September 15, 1963
- ◉ Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama
- ◉ Four young girls killed when bomb exploded

# Assassination of JFK, 1963

---

- ◉ November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas
- ◉ Lyndon B. Johnson became president
- ◉ LBJ pledged to continue JFK's work toward civil rights

# Civil Rights Act of 1964

---

- Southern senators tried using a **filibuster** to block its passage – 80 days of long speeches
- July, 1964 – became law
- Established the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**
- Justice Department could prosecute discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin
- Outlawed segregation in public accommodations
- Required schools to desegregate

# Disenfranchised Southern Black Voters

---

- Most African Americans in the South could not vote
- **Intimidation** – African Americans were dissuaded from registering to vote
- **Literacy tests** – difficult reading tests required in order to vote
- **Poll taxes** -- fees required in order to vote
- **Grandfather clauses** – whites avoided these voting requirements because of clauses exempting those whose grandfathers had been able to vote

# Murder in Mississippi, 1964

---

- Civil rights workers **James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner** went missing during a trip to investigate the burning of a church – June 21, 1964
- Arrested on speeding charges and held incommunicado at Neshoba County Jail
- Deputy Price, a KKK member, alerted his fellow Klansmen to the situation
- Price ordered the three young men to leave town, followed their car, then pulled them over again
- Klansmen arrived and killed the three young men, buried them, and set fire to their car
- LBJ forced **J. Edgar Hoover** (FBI) to investigate
- Six-week search for bodies caught national attention
- State of Mississippi would not prosecute, so 18 men charged in federal court (charged with violating victims' civil rights by murdering them)

# Freedom Summer, 1964

---

- Major voter registration drive in the South
- Despite murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, approximately 1,000 black and white student volunteers participated
- Formed **Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party** (MFDP) because Democratic Party of Mississippi was 100% white



# Democratic Convention, 1964

---

- ◉ New Jersey – August, 1964
- ◉ MFDP sought to represent Mississippi
- ◉ **Fannie Lou Hamer** spoke about blacks' desire to “live as decent human beings”
- ◉ Convention offered “at-large delegate” position to two MFDP members as a compromise
- ◉ Official Mississippi delegation walked out

# Selma March, 1965

---

- SCLC march in Selma, Alabama, for voting rights legislation
- Edmund Pettus Bridge, between Montgomery and Selma
- “Bloody Sunday” – March 7, 1965
- Alabama state troopers and others violently stopped marchers
- March 15, 1965 – LBJ spoke for a federal voting rights law on national television

# LBJ's Address to the Nation

---

- March 15, 1965
- “Their cause is our cause too, because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And, we shall overcome.”

# Voting Rights

---

- ***Baker v. Carr***, 1962 – federal government could have election districts redrawn to halt racial gerrymandering
- ***Reynolds v. Sims***, 1964 – legal principle of “one person, one vote” via equally-populated state legislative districts
- **Twenty-fourth Amendment**, 1964
  - Outlawed poll taxes
- **Voting Rights Act of 1965**
  - Outlawed literacy tests
  - Federal government to oversee elections and voter registration
  - Extended to Hispanics in 1975
- Numbers of African Americans registered to vote and elected to office multiplied

# Race Riots

## ● Watts, Los Angeles, California – August, 1965

- Long-term causes – poverty, discrimination, and police brutality
- Immediate cause – African American pulled over – his brother wanted to drive car home but police officer called impound lot – brother and mother arrested during argument – crowd gathered
- Several days of arson and looting
- National Guard called in to restore order
- 35 dead and over 1,000 wounded

## ● Newark, New Jersey – July, 1967

- Long-term causes – Italian-Americans dominated local politics despite a large black population – blacks also suffered from poverty, poor housing, discrimination, and police brutality
- Immediate cause – incapacitated African American seen being taken to police station and rumors spread that he'd been killed while in police custody
- 26 dead and hundreds wounded

## ● Detroit, Michigan – July, 1967

- Long-term causes – police brutality, poverty, and poor housing
- Immediate cause – police raid on a blind pig (speakeasy)
- \$50 million in property damage
- 43 deaths and hundreds of injuries

# Kerner Commission Report, 1967

---

- **National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders** established by LBJ
- Determined **cause** of riots = racial discrimination
- Commission's **solution** = establish and expand federal programs to reduce and eliminate problems of the "racial ghetto"
- Public **reaction** = programs considered too expensive and seen as a reward for rioting; LBJ distracted by Vietnam War



# Malcolm X

---

- Honors student who ended up in jail
- Converted to **Nation of Islam** while in prison
- X replaced his “slave name,” *Little*
- Initially advocated separation of races
- 1964 – broke away from Nation of Islam, formed own group, and went on hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca)
- Trip to Mecca, where he saw all races praying together, convinced him that Islam transcended race
- 1965 – assassinated by members of the Nation of Islam

# Black Power, 1966

---

- “March Against Fear” voter registration drive in Mississippi
- **James Meredith** shot and wounded
- **Stokely Carmichael** (later known as Kwame Toure) and others arrested in Greenwood, Mississippi
- Carmichael coined term “**black power**” in a speech after his release – he later coined the term “**institutional racism**”
- Many whites felt threatened

# Black Power Movement

- African-American reaction to white resistance to civil rights movement
- Varied political ideologies – some adherents advocated black separatism and/or the use of violence, while others were nonviolent and wanted desegregation and equality
- Overall movement saw blacks linked in a global struggle for rights and self-determination
- Use of term “black” instead of “colored” or “Negro”
- Celebrated African heritage by adopting African hairstyles, names, etc.
  - e.g., Stokely Carmichael became Kwame Toure

# Black Panthers, 1966

---

- Formed by **Bobby Seale** and **Huey Newton** in Oakland, California
- Retaliated against police brutality by organizing armed patrols of black neighborhoods
- Socialist doctrine – “**Ten Point**” program included calls for “Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice and Peace”
- Started urban poverty programs (e.g., free breakfasts for kids)
- J.Edgar Hoover called them “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country” and used numerous unlawful methods to destroy the group

# Thurgood Marshall, 1967

---

- ◉ Former attorney for the NAACP
- ◉ Argued *Brown v. Board of Education*
- ◉ Appointed as first African-American justice of the Supreme Court
- ◉ Supported affirmative action to correct racial imbalances in education, employment, etc.

# Poor People's Campaign, 1968

---

- MLK lived in Chicago's black ghetto for a year
- Pledged himself to helping poor blacks
- April, 1968 – traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to support striking sanitation workers



# Assassination of MLK, 1968

---

- ◉ April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee
- ◉ Shot on balcony of Lorraine Motel (now the Civil Rights Museum)
- ◉ Killed by James Earl Ray, an ex-convict
- ◉ Riots erupted nationwide

# Fair Housing Act, 1968

- Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968
  - Outlawed housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, and national origin
  - 1974 – added sex to list of protected classes
  - 1988 – disability and familial status added
  - State and local governments (not federal) have, in some areas, broadened their laws to end housing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.
- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) oversees its enforcement
- For example:
  - You cannot be denied housing because you have a child, or even a lot of children.
  - You cannot be denied housing because of your race or sex.
  - You cannot be denied housing because of a disability.

# Affirmative Action

---

- Designed to correct racial imbalances in education, employment, etc.
- Begun under Kennedy and Johnson
- Revised Philadelphia Plan, 1969 – under Nixon, affirmative action required for all federally-funded projects
- Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – affirmative action for all federal government positions (civil service jobs)
- Controversial – many considered it to be reverse discrimination

# Angela Davis, 1970

---

- Associated with SNCC and the Black Panthers
- Interested in communism and feminism at an early age
- Assistant professor of philosophy at UCLA
- Implicated in murder (gun used was registered in her name), fled, and captured two months later
- Acquitted of charges
- Started a bail program for indigent prisoners
- Called a “terrorist” by Richard Nixon and others
- Later life to today – professor, lecturer, and activist advocating continuing struggle for civil rights, women’s rights, socialism, prison reform, and more

# Civil Rights Legacy

- ◉ Legal segregation ended
- ◉ Federal civil rights legislation enacted
- ◉ Massive numbers of African Americans became registered voters
- ◉ Affirmative action gave African Americans a foot in the door to economic power
- ◉ Formerly unspoken issues of discrimination, inequality, and racism became part of public discourse
- ◉ “White flight” – whites intensified desertion of cities for life in suburbs

# Continuing Struggle

---

- ◉ Struggle for civil rights did not end with the 1960s
- ◉ Discrimination and ensuing court cases continue to this day
- ◉ Poverty continues to plague inner-cities
- ◉ 2007 – Federal Census data showed three times as many African Americans living in prison cells than in college dormitories



# Review Questions

- What is the difference between de jure segregation and de facto segregation?
- Why did the civil rights movement intensify after World War II?
- What Supreme Court decision overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
- Describe nonviolent protest (passive resistance).
- Describe the Southern reaction to desegregation and voter registration drives.
- What was achieved through the Civil Rights Act of 1964?
- How were blacks in the South disenfranchised?

# Review Questions

- What laws and court rulings guaranteed voting rights to African Americans?
- What were the long-term causes of race riots?
- What did the black power movement represent, and how was it received by whites?
- What was achieved through the Fair Housing Act?
- What did the civil rights movement achieve?
- Compare and contrast life for African Americans in 1950 and today.
- Do you believe that all Americans today enjoy equal rights and opportunities? Why or why not?