



The Civil Rights Movement

The “American Dream”

- **1950’s** was a prosperous time with **suburbs** popping up and **new cars in the driveway**
- A **house of one’s own** with a little plot of land



But not for everyone...

- Only if you were **white**



Civil Rights Movement

- The civil rights movement was a struggle by African Americans in the mid-1950s to late 1960s **to achieve Civil Rights equal to those of whites**, including equal opportunity in employment, housing, and education, as well as the right to vote, the right of equal access to public facilities, and the right to be free of racial discrimination



Equal Rights



- This movement sought to restore to African Americans the rights of citizenship guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (right for all citizens to be treated equally and to be able to vote)
- These rights had been eroded by segregationist Jim Crow Laws in the South

Executive Order 9981

- Signed by President Truman in 1948
- Required **equality of treatment and opportunity to all people in the armed services** regardless of race
- **Began a gradual revolution** in American society – beginning of desegregation



Racial Prejudice

- Still deeply ingrained in American life, particularly in the South



Legal discrimination?

- Facilities were **supposed to be “separate but equal”**
- Schools were separate, but never equal



Poor Treatment in North

- After both world wars blacks **migrated in large numbers** from the south **to work in northern factories**
- Owners liked cheap labor, but many **whites, fearing they would lose their jobs to them, met them with hostility**



Low paying jobs

- Blacks were **restricted to simple, low-paying jobs**
- This **forced them to live in ghettos**



Brown vs. Board of Education

- In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled that **separate black schools were *not* equal to white schools**
- **Schools had to be integrated**
- **Many white schools violently resisted and federal troops sometimes had to intervene**



Little Rock Nine

- 9 black students who were escorted by National Guard troops into Central HS in Little Rock, Ark. while white protesters shouted insults at them



Rosa Parks

- A black woman from Montgomery, AL who after a hard day's work sat down in a seat at the front of the bus
- *Was a crime not to give up your seat to a white person*
- **She refused to go to the back of the bus and was arrested and jailed**



Montgomery Bus Boycott

- In response to the arrest blacks in the city refused to ride the bus if they could not ride in the front, *even though most of them depended on the busses*
- Led by a young pastor named **Martin Luther King Jr.**



Bus Boycott

- Lasted for **over a year** - despite losing \$ busses wouldn't change policy
- 50,000 blacks **walked or rode bikes** up to 12 miles a day



National Attention

- Finally Supreme Court ruled it **unconstitutional**
- **Focused national attention on MLK Jr.** and more importantly on the **Civil Rights Movement**



Freedom Riders

- Despite ruling segregated public buses unconstitutional, southern states continued to ignore the law
- Black and White Civil rights activists rode interstate buses together to challenge local laws that still enforced segregation



Met With Violence

- Often **attacked by angry white mobs** in the south before being arrested by police (who often first allowed the violent attacks)
- In some places, like Birmingham, AL, police cooperated with Ku Klux Klan



Racial Violence in the 60's

- A black church in Birmingham, AL was **bombed** killing 4 black girls
- 2 white civil rights activists are killed while trying to register black voters
- **Watts riots** in LA after police brutality – lasted 6 days and 34 killed



Selma Freedom March



- Town in Alabama where racism and discrimination were strong
- Though the town had a large black population, they were kept from voting by Jim Crow laws that required them to pass a difficult test in order to vote – most could not
- “Bloody Sunday” – attack by state troopers and members of Alabama posses perpetrated on peaceful protest marchers who tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965

Martin Luther King Jr.

- A minister from Montgomery, AL who was the **leader of the National Civil Rights Movement**



Civil Disobedience

- Strategy used by MLK Jr. that he learned from **Gandhi** in India
- **Nonviolent resistance** – *disobey a law, but in a peaceful way*
- For example, “**Sit-ins**” – blacks **would sit at a lunch counter that was reserved only for whites** until the police came and arrested them



“I have a Dream”

- **March on Washington** – a huge rally for Civil Rights in D.C. in August 1963 in which **MLK Jr.** gave his famous speech
- **Dream** was to live in a country where **blacks and whites could live together in harmony and equality**



April 4, 1968

- **MLK Jr. was killed by an assassin** while standing on his **hotel balcony** in Tennessee



Malcolm X

- Wanted rights for blacks as well, but not by “kissing up to the white man and begging for them”
- said **blacks should be separate, not integrated - if we want respect we need to demand it from the white man**
- Assassinated in 1965



Black Panthers

- A militant black political party that rejected peaceful attempts at gaining respect and wanted **equality “by any means necessary”**



Black Power

- To **take pride in being black** – not to try to be like white people to fit in to their society
- “black is beautiful”
- **African Americans should unite**, take charge of their own destiny, and **reject white society**



Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Part of LBJ's Great Society, it banned segregation and discrimination in public facilities like restaurants and hotels
- Also prevented employers from hiring people based on race

