

# The Civil Rights Era, 1954-1969

(Page 1 of 3)

Tactics employed by the Civil Rights Movement:

- ↪ Moral suasion – the strategic use of guilt to generate moral behavior
- ↪ Litigation – the direct use of lawsuits to challenge Jim Crow
- ↪ Civil disobedience – use of collective non-violent action to disrupt state activity
- ↪ Economic boycott – use of collective non-violent actions to disrupt private activity
- ↪ Grassroots organizing – rural and urban strategies to build mass movement
- ↪ Solicitation of corporate sponsors – use of private organizations to fund political activities
- ↪ Use of television – the first movement to coincide with the rise of mass media

The strategy of public education, legislative lobbying, and litigation in the court system that typified the Civil Rights Movement in the first half of the 20th Century broadened after Brown to a strategy that emphasized "direct action"—primarily boycotts, sit-ins, Freedom Rides, marches and similar tactics that relied on mass mobilization, nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience. This mass action approach typified the movement from 1960 to 1968.

Churches, the centers of their communities, local grassroots organizations, fraternal societies, and black-owned businesses, mobilized volunteers to participate in broad-based actions. This was a more direct and potentially more rapid means of creating change than the traditional approach of mounting court challenges.

The Jewish community supported the Civil Rights Movement.

- ↪ Statistically Jews were one of the most actively involved non-black groups in the Movement.
- ↪ Many Jewish students worked in concert with blacks for CORE, SCLC, and SNCC as full-time organizers and summer volunteers during the Civil Rights era. Jews made up roughly half of the white northern volunteers involved in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project and half of the civil rights attorneys active in the South during the 1960s.
- ↪ The American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, and Anti-Defamation League actively promoted civil rights

Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC)

- ↪ Formed by Martin Luther King Jr, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Ella Baker, among others.
- ↪ It did not attempt to create a network of chapters as the NAACP did. It offered training and leadership assistance for local efforts to fight segregation. The headquarters organization raised funds, mostly from Northern sources, to support such campaigns.
- ↪ It made non-violence both its central tenet and its primary method of confronting racism.

Invigorated by the victory of Brown and frustrated by the lack of immediate practical effect, citizens rejected gradualist, legalistic approaches as the primary tool to bring about desegregation.

- ↪ They were faced with "massive resistance" in the South by proponents of racial segregation and voter suppression.
- ↪ In defiance, African Americans adopted a combined strategy of direct action with nonviolent resistance.

1952, Cesar Chavez travels California urging Mexican Americans to registrar to vote.

Brown v. Board of Education, 1954

- ↪ Supreme Court case ruled that segregation in schools was illegal

Teenager Emmitt Till murdered in Sumner Mississippi, 1955

1956 Autherine (Audrey) Lucy wins Supreme Court case ordering the University of Alabama to enroll her.

- ↪ In defiance of the ruling, they expelled her in response

Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1956

- ↪ Claudette Colvin and Mary Louise Smith were previously arrested for the same thing; Colvin was a pregnant teenager and Smith's father was an alcoholic, so the NAACP did not pursue their cases for fear of encouraging stereotyping

1956, a policy of "massive resistance" is declared by Senator Harry Byrd (Virginia) to unite other white politicians and leaders in a cause to prevent desegregation.

- ↪ The Southern Manifesto, opposing integration of schools, is created and signed by 19 senators and 81 members of the House of Representatives from Southern states.

1956 FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover orders the FBI to begin the COINTELPRO program to investigate and disrupt "dissident" groups within the United States.

- ↪ COINTELPRO was a series of covert, and often illegal, projects conducted by the FBI aimed at surveilling, infiltrating, discrediting, and disrupting domestic political organizations.
- ↪ COINTELPRO tactics included discrediting targets through planting false reports in the media, smearing through forged letters, harassment, wrongful imprisonment & assassination.

Desegregation of Central HS (Little Rock, Arkansas), 1957

- ↪ In response to the governor using state police to prevent desegregation, President Eisenhower nationalized the National Guard and uses the military to force the school's desegregation.

Cooper v. Aaron (1958)

- ↪ The Supreme Court rules that states are bound by the Court's decisions, and could not choose to ignore them.

NAACP v. Alabama (1958)

- ↪ The Supreme Court rules that the NAACP was not required to release membership lists to continue operating in the state.

In preparation for sit-in's, activist Jim Lawson teaches students tactics in passive-aggressive non-violence; specifically, in how to take the blows while responding with dignity.

- ↪ Sit-ins's occur throughout south!

1958, Malcolm X expounds a militant philosophy, advocating for blacks to arm themselves and to act in self-defense. His speeches routinely call the white person "devil" and are divisive.

Civil Rights Act of 1960

Signed by Eisenhower, it established federal inspection of local voter registration polls and introduced penalties for anyone who obstructed someone's attempt to register to vote or actually vote.

- ↪ The Act survived a 125+ hour filibuster; a calculated act of defiance by 18 Southern Democrats who sought to delay the vote on the bill by continuous speeches in the Senate.

1960, Elijah Mohammed, leader of the Nation of Islam, calls for a all-black state. He advocated for complete separation of the races.

Voter registration organizing

- ↪ Local black leaders in Mississippi (Amzie Moore, Aaron Henry, Medgar Evers) asked SNCC to help register black voters and to build community organizations that could win a share of political power in the state.

1961, "Black Like Me" by John Howard Griffin is published

- ↪ A white southerner deliberately tanned and dyed his skin to allow him to directly experience the life of the Negro in the Deep South, displaying the brutality of Jim Crow segregation to a national audience.

Integration of Mississippi Universities, 1956-1965

- ↪ James Meredith and the University of Mississippi, 1962

The growing militancy of the freedom struggle was in part due to the pressure put on the mainstream civil rights organizations by the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X, who sharply criticized their weaknesses and hesitations, and their inability to prevent racist attacks against Black people.

Albany (Georgia) Movement, 1961-1962

The SCLC, which had been criticized by some student activists for its failure to participate more fully in the Freedom Rides, committed much of its prestige and resources to a desegregation campaign in Albany.

- ↪ The campaign was a failure because of the tactics of the local police chief, and divisions within the black community.
- ↪ The police contained the marchers without violent attacks on demonstrators that inflamed national opinion; arrested demonstrators were taken to jails in surrounding communities, allowing plenty of room to remain in the local jail.
- ↪ Prichett also foresaw King's presence as a danger and forced his release to avoid King's rallying the black community. King left in 1962 without having achieved any dramatic victories.

# The Civil Rights Era, 1954-1969

(Page 2 of 3)

## Freedom Rides, 1961

Civil Rights activists on buses travel to the segregated south to test *Boydton v. Virginia* (1960), which legally ended segregation for passengers engaged in interstate travel.

↳ Organized by CORE, but support from SNCC intensified in response to the ensuing violence.

1962, Representatives of SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP form the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO).

1962, Cesar Chavez, advocating for Chicano migrant worker rights creates the National Farm Workers Association.

King initially regarded much of the effort of the Kennedys as an attempt to control the movement and siphon off its energies. Yet he came to find the efforts of the Kennedy brothers to be crucial.

↳ It was at Robert Kennedy's constant insistence that King came to recognize the fundamental nature of electoral reform and suffrage – the need for black Americans to actively engage not only protest but political dialogue at the highest levels.

## Birmingham Campaign, 1963-1964

It focused on one goal – the desegregation of Birmingham's downtown merchants, rather than total desegregation, as in Albany. The movement's efforts were helped by the brutal response of local authorities

↳ The campaign used a variety of nonviolent methods of confrontation, including sit-ins, kneel-ins at local churches, and a march to the county building to mark the beginning of a drive to register voters. King arrested in April 1963.

↳ While in jail, King wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail" on the margins of a newspaper, since he had not been allowed any writing paper while held in solitary confinement.

↳ Supporters appealed to the Kennedy administration, which intervened to obtain King's release.

↳ The campaign, however, was faltering because the movement was running out of demonstrators willing to risk arrest.

↳ James Bevel of SCLC came up with a bold and controversial alternative: to train high school students to take part in the demonstrations.

↳ As a result, more than 1,000 students skipped school to join the demonstrations, in what would come to be called the "Children's Crusade."

↳ A day later, police dogs are unleashed on the students, and then the police turned the city's fire hoses water streams on the children. Television cameras broadcast to the nation the scenes.

↳ Widespread public outrage led the Kennedy administration to intervene more forcefully in negotiations. Agreement leads to desegregation.

12 June 1963, Civil rights leader Medgar Evers is murdered in Mississippi by a member of the KKK.

September 1963, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (Birmingham, Alabama) is bombed by the KKK, murdering four girls.

Governor Wallace of Alabama tried to block the integration of the University of Alabama. President Kennedy uses soldiers to force enrollment of two black students.

## March on Washington 1963

A collaborative effort of all of the major civil rights organizations, the more progressive wing of the labor movement, and other liberal organizations. The march had six official goals:

↳ Meaningful civil rights laws,

↳ A massive federal works program,

↳ Full and fair employment,

↳ Decent housing,

↳ The right to vote

↳ Adequate integrated education.

Of these, the march's major focus was on passage of the civil rights law that the Kennedy administration had proposed after the upheavals in Birmingham

22 November 1963, President Kennedy assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, who dislikes Kennedy's anti-Cuba and pro-Civil Rights positions.

By mid-1963, Malcolm X is not willing to engage in the integrationist struggle, as he believes that only the complete separation of the races is the solution to racial tensions.

↳ To this end, he held secret meetings with the KKK (1961), and the Nation of Islam publically welcomed the American Nazi Party to attend their rallies (1962).

## St. Augustine (Florida) Movement, 1963-1964

Following the assault, detainment and terrorizing of local Civil Rights leaders by the KKK, the activists ask the SCLC assist.

↳ SCLC mobilized college students to protest there over spring break. Mass arrests and beatings follow. Martin Luther King Jr writes to a northern friend who is a Rabbi.

↳ The resulting recruitment of a new wave of activists leads to the largest mass arrest of Rabbis in American history.

## Civil Rights Act of 1964

Although President Kennedy had proposed civil rights legislation and it had support from Northern Congressmen, Southern Senators blocked consideration of the bill by threatening filibusters.

↳ After considerable parliamentary maneuvering and 54 days of filibuster on the floor of the Senate, President Johnson got a bill through the Congress.

↳ The new law banned discrimination based on "race, color, religion, sex or national origin" in employment practices and public accommodations.

## Freedom Summer, 1964 (Mississippi)

COFO brought nearly 1,000 activists to Mississippi – most of them white college students – to join with local black activists to register voters, teach in "Freedom Schools," and organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

↳ Many of Mississippi's white residents deeply resented the outsiders and attempts to change their society. State and local governments, police, the White Citizens' Council KKK used arrests, beatings, arson, murder, spying, firing, evictions, and other forms of intimidation and harassment to oppose the project and prevent blacks from registering to vote or achieving social equality.

↳ 21 June 1964, three civil rights workers disappeared.

↳ The bodies of James Chaney (a young black Mississippian) and Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner (both white Jewish students) were found weeks later.

↳ Murdered by the KKK (including some who were members of the sheriff's department).

↳ Over the course of the Summer Project, some 17,000 Mississippi blacks attempted to become registered voters in defiance of the red tape and forces of white supremacy arrayed against them – only 1,600 (less than 10%) succeeded.

↳ But more than 80,000 joined the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, founded as an alternative political organization, showing their desire to vote and participate in politics.

↳ Though Freedom Summer failed to register as many voters as they had hoped, it nevertheless had is of profound significance.

↳ It broke down the decades of isolation and repression that were the foundation of the Jim Crow system.

↳ Before Freedom Summer, the national news media had paid little attention to the persecution of black voters in the Deep South and the dangers endured by black civil rights workers.

↳ The progression of events throughout the South increased media attention to Mississippi. The deaths of affluent northern white students and threats to other northerners attracted the full attention of the media spotlight to the state.

↳ Many black activists became embittered, believing the media valued lives of the two races differently.

## Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, 1964

↳ It was organized by black and white Mississippians, with assistance from SNCC and Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), to challenge the legitimacy of the white-only Democratic Party.

## Martin Luther King Jr is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

By 1964, Malcolm X is willing to work with other civil rights leaders, but feels there must first be harmony among blacks before they can welcome whites into their movement.

# The Civil Rights Era, 1954-1969

(Page 3 of 3)

Boycott of New Orleans by the American Football League players, January 1965

- ↳ After numerous black players were refused service by a number of New Orleans hotels and businesses, and white cabdrivers refused to carry black passengers, black and white players alike lobbied for a boycott of New Orleans.
- ↳ The discriminatory practices that prompted the boycott were illegal under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This new law likely encouraged the AFL players in their cause. It was the first boycott by a professional sports event of an entire city.

21 February 1965, Malcolm X is murdered in New York by three Nation of Islam members.

- ↳ The FBI had advanced information on the plot and took no action to warn him.

Selma to Montgomery Marches, 1965

Three marches in 1965 that marked the political and emotional peak of the American civil rights movement.

Organized by Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) and SNCC.

- ↳ The first march took place on 7 March 1965 – "Bloody Sunday" – when 600 civil rights marchers were attacked by state and local police with billy clubs and tear gas.
- ↳ When white resistance to black voter registration proved intractable, the DCVL requested the assistance of Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC, who brought many prominent civil rights and civic leaders to support voting rights.
- ↳ The marchers averaged 10 miles a day, and were protected by 2,000 military soldiers, 1,900 members of the Alabama National Guard under Federal command, and many FBI agents and Federal Marshals

Voting Rights Act of 1965

Further outlawed discriminatory voting practices

- ↳ Echoing the language of the 15th Amendment, the Act prohibits states from imposing any "voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure ... to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."

Watts Riot (Los Angeles, California), 1965

- ↳ A six day long riot in response to police brutality.
- ↳ 34 people killed, 1,032 injured, and 3,438 arrested. Over 1,000 businesses destroyed.

1966, actress Nichelle Nichols is cast in Star Trek, making her the first regularly-returning black character on television.

- ↳ The show also includes the nation's first televised inter-racial kiss. (which CBS wanted edited out.)

Black Power, 1966

At the same time King was finding himself at odds with factions of the Democratic Party, he was facing challenges from within the Civil Rights Movement to the two key tenets upon which the movement had been based: integration and non-violence.

- ↳ Stokely Carmichael, who became the leader of SNCC in 1966, was one of the earliest and spokespersons for what became known as the "Black Power" movement.
- ↳ Carmichael began urging black communities to confront the KKK armed and ready for battle. He felt it was the only way to ever rid the communities of the terror caused by the Klan
- ↳ Several people engaging in the Black Power movement started to gain more of a sense in black pride and identity as well. In gaining more of a sense of a cultural identity, several blacks demanded that whites no longer refer to them as "Negroes" but as "Afro-Americans."

Black Panther Party, 1966

Founded by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, the group's provocative rhetoric, militant posture, and cultural and political flourishes permanently altered the contours of American Identity.

- ↳ The organization initially set forth a doctrine calling for the protection of black neighborhoods from police brutality.
- ↳ Its leaders espoused socialist and communist doctrines; however the Party's early black nationalist reputation attracted a racially diverse membership.
- ↳ Black Panther Party objectives and philosophy expanded and evolved rapidly during the party's existence, so ideological consensus within the group was difficult to achieve, and some prominent members openly disagreed with its leaders.
- ↳ They condemned black nationalism as "black racism" and became more focused on socialism without racial exclusivity.
  - ↳ They instituted community social programs designed to alleviate poverty and improve health among inner city black communities as well as soften its public image.
- ↳ The Black Panther Party's most widely known programs were its armed citizens' patrols to evaluate behavior of police officers and its Free Breakfast for Children program. However, the group's political goals were often overshadowed by their confrontational, militant, and violent tactics against police.

King was not comfortable with the "Black Power" slogan, which sounded too much like black nationalism to him.

- ↳ SNCC activists, in the meantime, began embracing the "right to self-defense" in response to attacks from white authorities, and booed King for continuing to advocate non-violence.
  - ↳ When King was murdered in 1968, Stokely Carmichael stated that whites murdered the one person who would prevent rampant rioting and that blacks would burn every major city to the ground.

Loving v. Virginia, 1967

- ↳ The Supreme Court rules that prohibiting interracial marriage is unconstitutional.

Rumors abound that the US was using Vietnam for genocide.

- ↳ Money is being directed to the war instead of to poor black communities in America.
- ↳ Draft Boards had no blacks on them (even KKK was there!)
- ↳ Deferment options – the reasons why someone may not be drafted – were easier for whites than blacks to achieve.

Poor People's Campaign

This addressed the issues of economic justice and housing for the poor in the United States. Organized by King and the SCLC.

- ↳ Under the "economic bill of rights," the movement asked the government to prioritize helping the poor with an anti-poverty package that included a commitment to full employment, a guaranteed annual income and more low-income housing.
- ↳ "We believe the highest patriotism demands the ending of the war and the opening of a bloodless war to final victory over racism and poverty" (Martin Luther King Jr)
- ↳ Thousands of poor people of all races set up a shantytown known as "Resurrection City." The city was closed down in mid-June and the economic bill of rights was never passed.
- ↳ The Poor People's Campaign was part of the second phase of the movement. While the first phase had exposed the problems of segregation, King hoped to address the "limitations to our achievements" with a second, broader phase.

Chicano Blowouts, 1968

- ↳ A series of protests against unequal conditions in LA schools.

4 April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr is assassinated by white supremacist James Earl Ray

- ↳ Riots broke out in more than 110 cities

Rev. Ralph Abernathy succeeded King as the head of the SCLC and attempted to carry forth King's plan for a Poor People's March.

- ↳ It was to unite blacks and whites to campaign for fundamental changes in American society and economic structure. The march went forward but did not achieve its goals.

6 June 1968, Robert Kennedy is assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian nationalist upset with Kennedy's pro-Israel views.

4 December 1969, Fred Hampton, Illinois leader of the Black Panther Party, murdered by police

- ↳ The Weathermen (also known as Weather Underground, a multi-racial student radical group) strongly sympathized with the radical Black Panthers. Hampton's death prompted the Weatherman to issue a declaration of war upon the US.

1969 Stonewall Riots (New York)

- ↳ A series of violent clashes between police and the gay and transgendered population.
- ↳ Considered the start of the modern Gay Rights Movement

1970, Committed to non-violence, Cesar Chavez organized protests and strikes advocating for higher wages for farm workers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Brainstorm review – Civil Rights Movement 1954-1969

Please respond to the following on a separate piece of paper, and attach this as a cover sheet to whatever you turn in.

1. What did Brown v. Board of Education do?
2. What did Cooper v. Aaron do?
3. What did NAACP v. Alabama do?
4. What did Loving v. Virginia do?
5. Who was murdered in Sumner, Mississippi in 1955?
6. How would you describe the second phase of the civil rights movement?
7. For what reasons did many blacks feel that the US was using Vietnam for genocidal purposes?
8. What did Cesar Chavez do?
9. How did the American Football League respond to the racism they witnessed?
10. What were the Freedom Rides?
11. Why was Martin Luther King not comfortable with the 'black power' slogan?
12. What was Freedom Summer?
- 13-14. Who are the two founders of the Black Panther Party?
  - a)
  - b)
15. Describe the views of Malcolm X in 1958.
16. Who was the director of the FBI?
17. What was the Council of Federated Organizations comprised of?
18. What was Bloody Sunday?
19. What was the Watts Riot?
20. What were the Chicano Blowouts?
- 21-27. Identify the seven tactics employed by the Civil Rights movement
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
  - r)
  - f)
  - g)
28. What did Senator Harry Byrd advocate in 1956?
29. What is Elijah Mohammed and the Nation of Islam advocating for in 1960?
30. Controversially, Malcolm X held meetings with both the KKK and American Nazi Party. What were their common beliefs?
31. Nine months before Rosa Parks, another girl was in a similar situation. Who was she?
32. Who is Stokely Carmichael?
33. What is the significance of the Stonewall Riots?
34. Southern Democrats tried to block the Civil Rights Act of 1960. How?
35. By 1964, how has Malcolm X's views changed relative to his earlier positions?
36. What was the goal of the Birmingham campaign?
- 37-39. Name the three activists who were murdered in 1964.
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
40. Of the white population, what group was the most supportive of the blacks civil rights movement?
41. What did the author of 'Black Like Me' do?
42. To what extent was Martin Luther King feeling like the central tenants of his movement was being challenged?
43. What was the purpose of COINTELPRO?
44. What overshadowed the Black Panthers political goals?
45. Why is Nichelle Nichols significant to the civil rights movement?
46. What was the Children's Crusade?
47. What was Resurrection City?
- 48-53. What were the six goals of the March on Washington?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
  - e)
  - f)
54. What was the philosophy of the SCLC?
55. In what ways did Malcolm X affect the approach of other civil rights groups?
56. What was the approach of the Black Panther Movement toward civil rights?
57. Who murdered Fred Hampton?
58. What did Jim Lawson teach people who were preparing to engage in sit-in's?
59. What was the Weathermen (also known as Weather Underground)?

