

# The Artios Home Companion Series

## Unit 23a: A New Civil Rights Movement

### Teacher Overview

Despite the emerging affluence of the new American middle class, there was a poverty, racism and alienation in America during the 1950s that was rarely depicted on TV. During the first half of the 20th century, the United States existed as two nations in one—one African American and one white.



Civil Rights March on Washington, leaders marching from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial

### Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete three lessons in which they will learn about **A New Civil Rights Movement**, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Define vocabulary words.
- Conduct research on **the Civil Rights March on Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech, *I Have a Dream***.
- Listen to or watch a recording of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech, *I Have a Dream*.
- Listen to or watch a recording of Robert Kennedy’s speech announcing the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

- As an optional assignment, prepare a 2-3 page essay on the life and mission of **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

## Leading Ideas

### Before God, all men (and women) are created equal.

*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

— Galatians 3:28

## Key People, Places, and Events

Ralph Ellison - *The Invisible Man*  
 Operation Wetback  
 Eisenhower's policy of "Termination"  
 Jack Kerouac – *On the Road*  
 Allen Ginsberg – *Howl*  
 C. Wright Mills' – *The Power Elite*  
 Willem de Kooning  
 Hans Hoffman  
 Mark Rothko  
 Jackson Pollock  
 Marlon Brando  
 Martin Luther King, Jr.  
 Malcolm X  
 Black Power  
*Plessy v. Ferguson*  
 President Harry Truman  
 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Jackie Robinson  
 Jim Crow laws  
 Attorney Thurgood Marshall  
*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*  
 Rosa Parks  
 Ralph Abernathy  
 Montgomery Bus Boycott  
 Montgomery Improvement Association  
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
 The Civil Rights Act of 1959  
 Civil Rights Sit-in  
 Medgar Evers  
 President Lyndon Johnson  
 The Civil Rights Act  
 Voting Rights Act of 1965

## Vocabulary

### Lesson 1:

Bohemian  
 tacit

### Lesson 2:

impasse

### Lesson 3:

none

## Lesson One

### History Overview and Assignments Voices Against Conformity

Despite the emerging affluence of the new American middle class, there were poverty, racism, and alienation in America during the 1950s that were rarely depicted on TV.



Through his paintings, Norman Rockwell challenged people to address the problem of racism in America. *The Problem We All Live With*, a work from the early days of desegregation, depicts a little girl being escorted to school by federal marshals.

### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *Voices Against Conformity*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Be sure to visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

## Vocabulary

Bohemian                      tacit

## Key People, Places, and Events

Ralph Ellison – *The Invisible Man*  
Operation Wetback  
Eisenhower’s policy of “Termination”  
Jack Kerouac – *On the Road*  
Allen Ginsberg – *Howl*  
C. Wright Mills’ – *The Power Elite*  
Willem de Kooning  
Hans Hoffman  
Mark Rothko  
Jackson Pollock  
Marlon Brando  
*Brown v. Board of Education*  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Malcolm X  
Black Power

## Discussion Questions

1. Describe the socio-economic status of African Americans as described in this article.
2. Describe the socio-economic status of Native Americans as described in this article.
3. Who were the “beat generation”?
4. What is said to be the most significant artistic movement ever to come out of America?
5. How would you describe the relationship between the arts and society at that time?
6. What was the status of equality among African Americans and whites in the South at that time?
7. What was the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling?

Adapted for High School from the book:

### ***U.S. History Online Textbook***

source: [ushistory.org](http://ushistory.org)

### ***Voices Against Conformity***

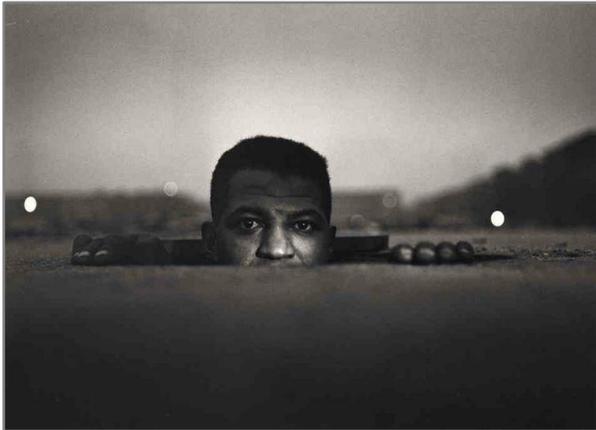
Despite the emerging affluence of the new American middle class, there were poverty, racism, and alienation in America during the 1950s that were rarely depicted on TV.

Poverty rates for African Americans were typically double those of their white counterparts. Segregation in the schools, the lack of a political voice, and longstanding racial prejudices stifled the economic advancement of many African Americans. In 1952, Ralph Ellison penned *Invisible Man*, which pinpointed American indifference to the plight of African Americans. “I am an invisible man,” he wrote. “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me ...”

Latino Americans languished in urban American barrios, and the Eisenhower Administration responded to Mexican government pressure to curb illegal entry of Mexican workers to the U.S. with an immigration enforcement initiative (derisively named Operation Wetback) which deported millions of Mexican Americans.

Reservation poverty increased with the Eisenhower policy of “Termination,” designed to end federal support for tribes. Incentives such as relocation assistance and job placement were offered to Native Americans who were willing to venture off the reservations and into the cities. Unfortunately, the government excelled at

relocation but struggled with job placement, leading to the creation of Native American ghettos in many western cities.



While writing parts of *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison lived at Gordon Parks's home. Parks, a photographer, made a series of prints that comprised his interpretation of events in Ellison's novel. This one is entitled *Man Peeking from Manhole, Harlem* (1949).

Ethnic minorities—Jews, Italians, Asians, and many groups—all struggled to find their place in the American quilt.

### The Beat Generation

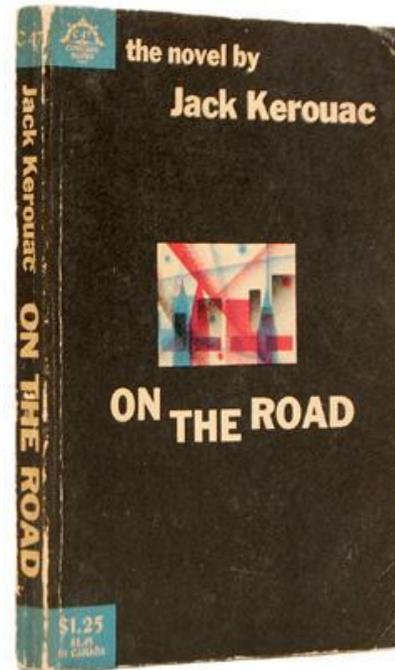
In the artistic world, dozens of “beat” writers reviled middle-class materialism, racism, and uniformity. Other intellectuals detached themselves enough from the American mainstream to review it critically.

Greenwich Village in New York City became the center of the beat universe. Epitomized by such Columbia University students as writer Jack Kerouac and poet Allen Ginsberg, the beats lived an unconventional “Bohemian” lifestyle.

While mainstream America seemed to ignore African American culture, the beats celebrated it by frequenting jazz clubs and romanticizing their poverty. The use of alcohol and drugs foreshadowed the counterculture of the following decade. Believing that American society was terribly

repressed, the beats experimented with new sexual lifestyles.

In *On the Road* Kerouac's hero travels around the nation, delving into America's fast-living underside. In his poem “Howl,” Allen Ginsberg assails materialism and conformity and calls for the unleashing of basic human needs and desires.



In 1957, Kerouac published *On the Road*, the definitive beat generation novel. The beats were a subculture of young people dissatisfied with the blandness of American culture and its shallow, rampant consumerism.

The booming postwar defense industry came under fire in C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*. Mills feared that an alliance between military leaders and munitions manufacturers held an unhealthy proportion of power that could ultimately endanger American democracy.

### Painting Against the Tide

American painters also took shots at conformity. In New York City, painters broke with the conventions of Western art

to create abstract expressionism, widely regarded as the most significant artistic movement ever to come out of America. Abstract expressionists, such as Willem de Kooning, Hans Hoffman, Mark Rothko, and Jackson Pollock sought to express their subconscious and their dissatisfaction with postwar life through unique and innovative paintings. Jackson Pollock gained fame through “action painting”—pouring, dripping, and spattering the paint onto the canvas. Rothko covered his canvas with large rectangles, which he believed conveyed “basic human emotions.”



Jackson Pollock's 1950 painting *Lavender Mist* typifies “action painting,” in which he fixed his canvas to the floor, then dripped paint all over it. Pollock's unorthodox methods were heavily criticized (he was labeled “Jack the Dripper”), but his novel painting style proved that American artists were on par with their European counterparts.

### Big Screen Rebels

While the 1950s silver screen lit up mostly with the typical Hollywood fare of westerns and romances, a handful of films shocked audiences by uncovering the dark side of America's youth culture. Marlon Brando played the leather-clad leader of a motorcycle gang that ransacks a small town in 1953's *The Wild One*. The film terrified adults but fascinated teenagers, who emulated Brando's style.



*Rebel without a Cause*, a story of anguished middle class juvenile delinquents, was an instant sensation when released in 1955. The film was particularly scandalous because the main characters “came from good families.” James Dean played the main character, Jim Stark.

### A New Civil Rights Movement

Despite the efforts of radical Reconstructionists, the American South emerged from the Civil War with a system of laws that undermined the freedom of African Americans and preserved many elements of white privilege. No major successful attack was launched on the segregation system until the 1950s.

Although the Civil War did bring an official end to slavery in the United States, it did not erase the social barriers built by that “peculiar institution.”



The Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* determined that “separate but equal” public facilities like restrooms and railroad cars were legal. The laws that resulted drove a further spike between the races in America.

Beginning with the Supreme Court's school integration ruling of 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the American legal system seemed sympathetic to African American demands that their Fourteenth Amendment civil rights be protected. Soon, a peaceful equality movement began under the unofficial leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A wave of marches, boycotts, sit-ins, and freedom rides swept the American South and even parts of the North.

Public opinion polls across the nation and the world revealed a great deal of sympathy for African Americans. The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations gave the Civil Rights Movement at least tacit support. Although many obstacles to complete racial equity remained, by 1965 most legal forms of discrimination had been abolished.

Legal equality did not bring economic equality and social acceptance, however. On the contrary, a radical wing of the movement grew stronger and stronger during the 1960s. Influenced by Malcolm X, the Black Power Movement rejected the policy of nonviolence and even believed integration was not a desirable short-term goal. Black nationalists called for the establishment of a nation of African Americans dependent on each other for support without the interference or help of whites.

Race-related violence began to spread across the country. Beginning in 1964, a series of "long, hot summers" of rioting plagued urban centers. More and more individuals dedicated to African American causes became victims of assassination. Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were a few of the more famous casualties of the tempest.

## Lesson Two

### History Overview and Assignments Separate No Longer?

In the aftermath of World War II, American sought to demonstrate to the world the merit of free democracies over communist dictatorships. But its segregation system exposed fundamental hypocrisy, and change began brewing in the late 1940s.



Jim Crow laws existed in several southern states and served to reinforce the white authority that had been lost following Reconstruction. One such law required African Americans and whites to drink from separate water fountains.

### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *Separate No Longer?*
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary word in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Be sure to visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

## Key People, Places, and Events

*Plessy v. Ferguson*

President Harry Truman

Jackie Robinson

Jim Crow laws

Attorney Thurgood Marshall

Rosa Parks

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ralph Abernathy

Montgomery Bus Boycott

Montgomery Improvement Association

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

The Civil Rights Act of 1959

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

The National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People  
(NAACP)

## Vocabulary

impasse

## Discussion Questions

1. Explain the ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case.
2. How effective was this ruling in the South?
3. Describe the events surrounding Rosa Parks being arrested.
4. Describe the civil rights showdown that took place in Little Rock, Arkansas.

*Adapted for High School from the book:*

## ***U.S. History Online Textbook***

source: [ushistory.org](http://ushistory.org)

### ***Separate No Longer?***

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States existed as two nations in one.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) had decreed that the legislation of two separate societies—one African American and one white—was permitted as long as the two were equal.

States across the North and South passed laws creating schools and public facilities for each race. Across the land, African Americans and whites dined at separate restaurants, bathed in separate swimming pools, and drank from separate water fountains.

In the aftermath of World War II, America sought to demonstrate to the world the merit of free democracies over

communist dictatorships. But its segregation system exposed fundamental hypocrisy, and change began brewing in the late 1940s. President Harry Truman ordered the end of segregation in the armed services, and Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play Major League Baseball. But the wall built by Jim Crow (a derogatory term for African Americans) legislation seemed insurmountable.

The first legal battleground was in the schools. It was very clear by mid-century that southern states had enacted separate educational systems. These schools, however, were never equal. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), led by attorney (later Supreme Court Justice) Thurgood

Marshall, sued public schools across the South, insisting that the “Separate But Equal” clause had been violated. The Supreme Court finally decided to rule on this subject in 1954 in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case.

years after Brown, fewer than ten percent of southern public schools had integrated, but first steps toward an equal society had been taken.



The July 31, 1948, edition of the *Chicago Defender* announces President Truman’s executive order ending segregation in the U.S. armed forces.

The verdict was unanimous against segregation. “Separate facilities are inherently unequal,” read Chief Justice Earl Warren’s opinion. Warren worked tirelessly to achieve a 9-0 ruling. He feared any dissent might provide a legal argument for the forces against integration. The united Supreme Court sent a clear message: schools had to integrate.

The North and the border states quickly complied with the ruling, but the Brown decision fell on deaf ears in the South. Ten



In the summer of 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play major league baseball. After a stellar career, he became the first African American player elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.



May 17, 1954, saw the Supreme Court—in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*—rule that segregation of public schools was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, which states that all citizens deserve equal protection under the law.

It would take a decade of protest, legislation, and bloodshed before America neared a truer equality.

## Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

On a cold December evening in 1955, a woman named Rosa Parks quietly incited a revolution—by just sitting down.

She was tired after spending the day at work as a department store seamstress. She stepped onto the bus for the ride home and sat in the fifth row—the first row of the “colored section.”



Rosa Parks riding at the front of a Montgomery, Alabama, bus on the day the Supreme Court’s ban on segregation of the city’s buses took effect. A year earlier, she had been arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus.

In Montgomery, Alabama, when a bus became full, the seats nearer the front were given to white passengers.

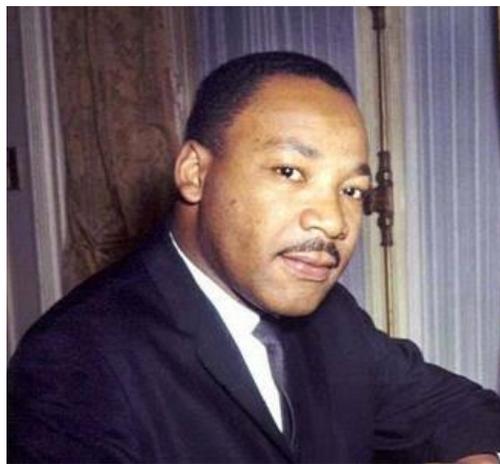
Montgomery bus driver James Blake ordered Parks and three other African Americans seated nearby to move to the back of the bus.

Three riders complied; Parks did not.

After Parks refused to move, she was arrested and fined \$10. The chain of events triggered by her arrest changed the United States.

## King, Abernathy, Boycott, and the SCLC

In 1955, a little-known minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery.



Martin Luther King, Jr. organized the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, which began a chain reaction of similar boycotts throughout the South. In 1956, the Supreme Court voted to end segregated busing.

Born and educated in Atlanta, King studied the writings and practices of Henry David Thoreau and Mohandas Gandhi. Their teaching advocated civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance to social injustice.

A staunch devotee of nonviolence, King and his colleague Ralph Abernathy organized a boycott of Montgomery’s buses. King and Abernathy’s organization, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), hoped for a 50 percent support rate among African Americans. To their surprise and delight, 99 percent of the city’s African Americans refused to ride the buses. People walked to work or rode their bikes, and carpools were established to help the elderly. The bus company suffered thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

Montgomery officials stopped at nothing in attempting to sabotage the boycott. King and Abernathy were arrested.

Violence began during the action and continued after its conclusion. Four churches—as well as the homes of King and Abernathy—were bombed. But the boycott continued.



Together with Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy (shown here) organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and helped lead the nonviolent struggle to overturn Jim Crow laws.

Finally, on November 23, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the MIA. Segregated busing was declared unconstitutional. City officials reluctantly agreed to comply with the court ruling.

The Montgomery bus boycott triggered a firestorm in the South. Across the region, African Americans resisted “moving to the back of the bus.” Similar actions flared up in other cities. The boycott put Martin Luther King, Jr. in the national spotlight. He became the acknowledged leader of the nascent Civil Rights Movement.

With Ralph Abernathy, King formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), dedicated to fighting Jim Crow segregation. African Americans boldly declared to the rest of the country that their movement would be peaceful, organized, and determined.

To modern eyes, getting a seat on a bus may not seem like a great feat. But in 1955, sitting down marked the first step in a revolution.

### **Showdown in Little Rock**

Three years after the Supreme Court declared race-based segregation illegal, a military showdown took place in Little Rock, Arkansas. On September 3, 1957, nine African American students attempted to attend the all-white Central High School.

Under the pretext of maintaining order, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus mobilized the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the students, known as the Little Rock Nine, from entering the school. After a federal judge declared the action illegal, Faubus removed the troops. When the students tried to enter again on September 24, they were taken into the school through a back door. Word of this spread throughout the community, and a thousand irate citizens stormed the school grounds. The police desperately tried to keep the angry crowd under control as concerned onlookers whisked the students to safety.

The nation watched all of this on television. President Eisenhower was compelled to act.

Eisenhower was not a strong proponent of civil rights. He had feared that the Brown decision might lead to an impasse between the federal government and the states. Now that very stalemate had come. The rest of the country seemed to side with the African American students, and the Arkansas state government was defying a federal decree. The situation harkened back to the dangerous federal-state conflicts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the heels of the Civil War.



President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne to Little Rock, Arkansas, to ensure the integration of Central High School in 1957.

On September 25, Eisenhower ordered the troops of the 101st Airborne Division into Little Rock, marking the first time United States troops were dispatched to the South since Reconstruction. He federalized the Arkansas National Guard in order to remove the soldiers from Faubus's control. For the next few months, the African American students attended school under armed supervision.

The following year, Little Rock officials closed the schools to prevent integration. But in 1959, the schools were open again. Both African American and white children were in attendance.



To ensure their safety, African American students were escorted to Central High School in a U.S. Army car.

The tide was slowly turning in favor of those advocating civil rights for African Americans. An astonished America had watched footage of brutish, white southerners mercilessly harassing clean-cut, respectful African American children trying to get an education. Television swayed public opinion toward integration.

In 1959, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, the first such measure since Reconstruction. The law created a permanent civil rights commission to assist African American suffrage. The measure had little teeth and proved ineffective, but it paved the way for more powerful legislation in the years to come.

Buses and schools had come under attack. Next on the menu: a luncheonette counter.

## Lesson Three

### History Overview and Assignments The Civil Rights Movement

Martin Luther King, Jr. helped African American activities win support across the nation and around the world due to his promotion of nonviolent measure. As equality advocates notched more and more successes, the forces against change grew more active as well. Early in the morning of April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated at the hand of James Earl Ray.



Students from across the country came together to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and organize sit-ins at counters throughout the South. This front page is from the North Carolina A&T University student newspaper.

#### Key People, Places, and Events

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Civil Rights Sit-in  
Medgar Evers  
President Lyndon Johnson  
The Civil Rights Act  
Voting Rights Act of 1965

#### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions then read the article:  
*The Civil Rights Movement.*
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Do additional research about the Civil Rights March on Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, *I Have a Dream.*
- Listen to or watch a recording of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, *I Have a Dream.*
- Listen to or watch a recording of Robert Kennedy's speech announcing the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Be sure to visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Describe the events of February 1, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina.
2. What was President Kennedy's position regarding Civil Rights?
3. What need was there for a voting rights act for African Americans?
4. How did Martin Luther King, Jr. die?

Adapted for High School from the book:

## U.S. History Online Textbook

source: ushistory.org

### The Civil Rights Movement

By 1960, the Civil Rights Movement had gained strong momentum. The nonviolent measures employed by Martin Luther King, Jr. helped African American activists win supporters across the country and throughout the world.

On February 1, 1960, a new tactic was added to the peaceful activists' strategy. Four African American college students walked up to a whites-only lunch counter at the local Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and asked for coffee. When service was refused, the students sat patiently. Despite threats and intimidation, the students sat quietly and waited to be served.

The civil rights sit-in was born.



By sitting in protest at an all-white lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, four college students sparked national interest in the push for civil rights

The instructions were simple: sit quietly and wait to be served. Often the participants would be jeered and threatened by local customers. In the event of a physical attack, the student would curl up into a ball on the floor and take the punishment. When the

local police came to arrest the demonstrators, another line of students would take the vacated seats.

Before the end of the school year, over 1500 black demonstrators were arrested. But their sacrifice brought results. Slowly, but surely, restaurants throughout the South began to abandon their policies of segregation.

In April 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr. sponsored a conference to discuss strategy. Students from the North and the South came together and became the grassroots organizers of future sit-ins at lunch counters, wade-ins at segregated swimming pools, pray-ins at white-only churches, and freedom rides, where busloads of integrated black and white students rode through the South.



To challenge laws that kept interstate bus trips segregated, black and white students organized freedom rides through the South. The first such ride was interrupted when an angry mob attacked riders and destroyed their bus during a stop in Alabama.

### Gains and Pains

As sit-ins and freedom rides spread

across the South, African American leaders set a new, ambitious goal: a federal law banning racial discrimination in all public accommodations and in employment. In the summer of 1963, President Kennedy indicated he would support such a measure, and thousands marched on Washington to support the bill.

Blacks and whites sang “We Shall Overcome” and listened to Martin Luther King, Jr. deliver his “I Have a Dream” speech. The Civil Rights Movement seemed on the brink of triumph.

As equality advocates notched more and more successes, the forces against change grew more active as well. Groups such the Ku Klux Klan increased hate crimes.

Earlier in 1963, the nation watched the Birmingham police force under the direction of Bull Connor unleash dogs, tear gas, and fire hoses on peaceful demonstrators.



Over 250,000 individuals flooded Washington, D.C., in August 1963 to protest the treatment of African American citizens throughout the United States.

NAACP leader Medgar Evers was murdered in cold blood that summer in Mississippi as he tried to enter his home.

Church burnings and bombings increased. Four young girls were killed in one such bombing in Birmingham as they attended Sunday school lessons.

Many who had looked to John F. Kennedy as a sympathetic leader were crushed when he fell victim to assassination in November 1963. But Kennedy’s death did not derail the Civil Rights Act.

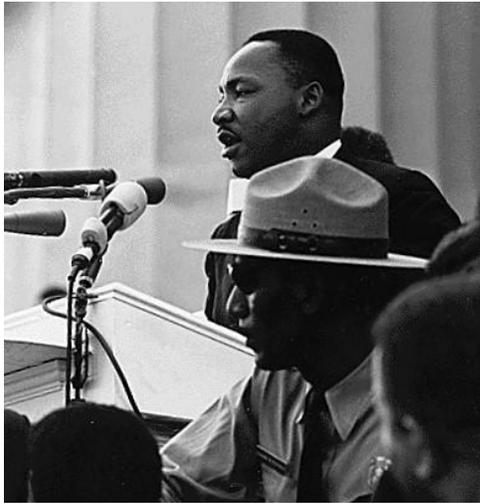
President Lyndon Johnson signed the bill into law in July 1964. As of that day, it became illegal to refuse employment to an individual on the basis of race. Segregation at any public facility in America was now against the law.



16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, served as a meeting place for many participants of the civil rights movement. Tragedy struck the church in 1963 when a bomb exploded there, killing four young girls and injuring 22 others.

The passage of that act led to a new focus. Many African Americans had been robbed of the right to vote since southern states enacted discriminatory poll taxes and literacy tests. A new landmark law, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, banned the literacy test and other such measures designed to keep blacks from voting. It also

placed federal registrars in the South to ensure black suffrage. By 1965, few legal barriers to racial equality remained.



Martin Luther King, Jr. began his address at the March on Washington by saying *"I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation."*

But centuries of racism could not be erased with the pen, and the fight continues to this day.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

*"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 a table of brotherhood....*

*I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."*

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, King turned his efforts to registering African American voters in the South. In 1965, he led a march in Selma, Alabama, to increase the percentage of African American voters in Alabama. Again, King was arrested. Again, the marchers faced attacks by the police. Tear gas, cattle prods, and billy clubs fell on the peaceful demonstrators. Finally, President Johnson ordered the National Guard to protect the demonstrators from attack, and King was able to complete the long march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery. The action in Selma led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Early in the morning of April 4, 1968, King was shot by James Earl Ray. Spontaneous violence spread through urban areas as mourners unleashed their rage at the loss of their leader. Rioting burst forth in many American cities.



Bobby Kennedy with Martin Luther King, Jr., June 22, 1963, Washington, D.C.

The day Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, Robert F. Kennedy was campaigning for the presidency in Indianapolis, Indiana. Kennedy made this

speech in remembrance of Dr. King’s tireless efforts:

*“I have bad news for you, for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight.*

*Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings, and he died because of that effort.*

*In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are black—considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible—you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization—black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another.*

*Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love.*

*For those of you who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own*

*heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to go beyond these rather difficult times.*

*My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He wrote: “In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”*

*What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black.*

*So I shall ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King, that’s true, but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love—a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.*

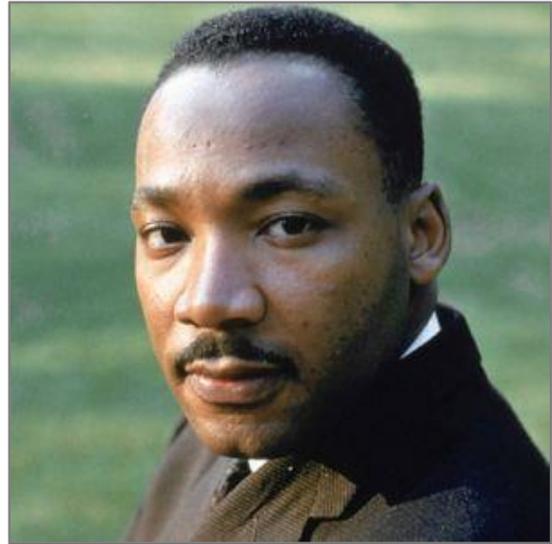
*We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we’ve had difficult times in the past; we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; it is not the end of disorder.*

*But the vast majority of white*

*people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land.*

*Let us dedicate to ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.*

*Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.”*



As the leader of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr. traversed the country in his quest for freedom. His involvement in the movement began during the bus boycotts of 1955 and was ended by an assassin’s bullet in 1968.