

# Major Events of the African American Civil Rights Movement, 1953-1963



©2009 PEARSON EDUCATION INC. Publishing as Longman Publishers

Directions: Read and analyze all readings and visual documents AND answer the seven (7) questions on the answer sheet. The questions on the answer sheet are also after the reading and visual documents to help you find your answers faster. AGAIN, only record your answers on the ANSWER SHEET. THANK YOU.

Mr. Sapia

Name/Class:  
Date:

U.S History  
Mr. Sapia

Civil Rights Movement #1--- THE FREEDOM RIDERS  
*CITIZENS TAKE ACTION AGAINST SEGREGATION ON INTERSTATE TRAVEL*

In early May 1961, a group of 13 men and women, both black and white, set out from Washington, D.C., on two buses. They called themselves "freedom riders"; they wanted to demonstrate that segregation continued throughout much of the South despite a federal ban on segregated travel on interstate buses. The freedom riders' trip was sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a civil rights group dedicated to breaking down racial barriers through nonviolent protest. Inspired by the nonviolent, direct action ideals incorporated in the philosophy of Indian Nationalist Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom riders were willing to endure jail and suffer beatings to achieve integration. "We can take anything the white man can dish out," said one black freedom rider, "but we want our rights ... and we want them now."

In Virginia and North Carolina, the freedom riders met with little trouble. Black freedom riders were able to use white restrooms and sit at white lunch counters. But in Winnsboro, South Carolina, police arrested two black freedom riders, and outside of Anniston, Alabama, a white hurled a bomb through one of the bus's windows, setting the vehicle on fire. Waiting white thugs beat the freedom riders as they tried to escape the smoke and flames. Eight other whites boarded the second bus and assaulted the freedom riders before police restrained the attackers.

In Birmingham, Alabama, another mob attacked the second bus with pipes. In Montgomery, a club-swinging mob of 100 whites attacked the freedom riders; and a group of white youths poured an inflammable liquid on one black man, igniting his clothing. Local police arrived ten minutes later, state police an hour later. Explained Montgomery's police commissioner: "We have no intention of standing police guard for a bunch of troublemakers coming into our city."

President Kennedy was appalled by the violence. He quickly deputized 400 federal marshals and Treasury agents and flew them to Alabama to protect the freedom riders' rights. The president publicly called for a "cooling-off period," but conflict continued. When the freedom riders arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, 27 were arrested for entering a "white-only" washroom and were sentenced to 60 days on the state prison farm.

The threat of racial violence in the South led the Kennedy administration to pressure the Interstate Commerce Commission to desegregate air, bus, and train terminals. In more than 300 Southern terminals, signs saying "white" and "colored" were taken down from waiting room entrances and lavatory doors.

1. *How did the violent response to the Freedom Rides aid the civil rights movement?*
2. *Do you believe the response to the Freedom Rides would have been any different if social media (facebook, twitter, Instagram) had existed during the time period in question?*

Name/Class:  
Date:

U.S History  
Mr. Sapia

## CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT #2 *VARIOUS LEADERS AND STRATEGIES*

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a grass- roots efforts of ordinary citizens determined to end racial injustice in the United States. Although no central organization directed the movement, several major groups formed to share information and coordinate civil rights activities. Each of these groups had its own priorities, strategies, and ways of operating, but they all helped to focus the energies of thousands of Americans committed to securing civil rights for all citizens.

Behind the case of the famous *Brown vs Board of Education* was **the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**, one of the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. The group formed in 1909 as an interracial organization-- one with both African-Americans and white Americans as members. W.E.B Dubois, a prominent African-American scholar, was a founding member. Dubois had been the first African-American to receive a doctoral or PHD from Harvard University. He served as the NAACP's director of publicity and research and also edited the NAACP magazine, named *Crisis*.

From the start, the NAACP focused on challenging the laws that prevented African-Americans from exercising their full rights as citizens. The NAACP worked to secure full legal equality for all Americans and to remove barriers that kept him from voting.

Another organization that fought for civil rights in the United States was the **National Urban League**, founded in 1911. The league sought to assist people moving to major American cities. It helped African-Americans moving out of the South to find homes and jobs and ensured that they received fair treatment at work. They also insisted and factory owners and union leaders allow African-American workers the opportunity to learn the skills that could lead to better jobs.

Founded by pacifists in 1942, the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** was dedicated to bringing about change through peaceful confrontation. It too was interracial, with both African-American and white members. During World War II, CORE organized demonstrations against segregation in cities including Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, and Detroit.

In the years after World War II, CORE director James Farmer worked without pay in order to keep the organization alive. The growing interest in civil rights in the 1950s gave him a new base of support and allowed him to turn CORE into a national organization, one that would play a major role in the confrontation that lay ahead.

Growing opposition to the gains made by African-Americans through the *Brown* decision, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott resulted in increasing violence and hostility towards African-Americans. Even so, rising new leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., preached a philosophy of

nonviolence, also known as civil disobedience. They asked anyone involved in the fight for civil rights not to retaliate with violence out of fear or hate.

In 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other African-American clergymen began a new and important civil rights organization, the **Southern Christian leadership Conference (SCLC)**, SCLC advocated the practice of nonviolent protest, a peaceful way of protesting against restrictive racial policies. Nonviolent protesters do not resist even when attacked by opponents. In its first official statement, SCLC set out this principle: "*to understand that nonviolence is not a symbol of weakness or cowardice, but as Jesus demonstrated, nonviolent resistance transforms weakness into strength and breeds courage in the face of danger.*" SCLC shifted the focus of the civil rights movement to the South. Early organizations had been dominated by northerners. Now Southern African-American church leaders move into the forefront of the struggle for equal rights. Among them, Dr. King, Jr. became a national figure.

A new, student organization--**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**-- began in 1960 at a meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina. This organization was first conceived by members of the Southern Christian leadership Conference. SCLC executive director Ella Baker thought that the NAACP and SCLC were not keeping up with the demands of young African-Americans. She wanted to give them a way to play an even greater role in the civil rights movement.

Nearly 200 students showed up for the first SNCC meeting. Most came from southern communities, but some northerners attended as well. Baker delivered the opening address. "The younger generation is challenging you and me," she told those present in the meeting. Dr. King Jr., spoke next to the young audience, calling the civil rights movement "*a revolt against the apathy and complacency of adults in the Negro community...*"

A month later, student leaders met with Baker and other SCLC and CORE leaders and voted to maintain their independence from other civil rights groups. By the end of the year, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a permanent and separate organization. It was interracial at first, though that change in later years. SNCC fill its own niche (place/function) in the American civil rights movement. The focus of the civil rights movement shifted away from church leaders alone and gave young activists a chance to make decisions about priorities and tactics. SNCC also sought more immediate change, as opposed to the gradual change advocated by most of the older organizations.

*3. What functions to the National Urban League and CORE serve for African-Americans?*

*4. Evaluate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) approach to securing civil rights in America and provide an opinion supporting or attacking it.*

Name/Class:  
Date:

U.S History  
Mr. Sapia

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT #3  
*LYNDON JOHNSON CRUSADE AGAINST POVERTY  
HIS FAMOUS "GREAT SOCIETY" PLATFORM*

Lyndon B. Johnson had a vision for America. Believing that problems of housing, income, employment, and health were ultimately a federal responsibility, Johnson used the weight of the presidency and his formidable political skills to enact the most impressive array of reform legislation since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. He envisioned a society without poverty or discrimination, in which all Americans enjoyed equal educational and job opportunities. He called his vision the "Great Society."

A major feature of Johnson's Great Society was the "War on Poverty." The federal government raised the minimum wage and enacted programs to train poorer Americans for new and better jobs, including the 1964 Manpower Development and Training Act and the Economic Opportunity Act, which established such programs as the Job Corps and the Neighborhood Youth Corps. To assure adequate housing, in 1966 Congress adopted the Model Cities Act to attack urban problems, set up a cabinet-level Department of Housing and Urban Development, and began a program of rent supplements.

To promote education, Congress passed the Higher Education Act in 1965 to provide student loans and scholarships, the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965 to pay for textbooks, and the Educational Opportunity Act of 1968 to help the poor finance college educations. To address the nation's health needs, the Child Health Improvement and Protection Act of 1968 provided for prenatal and postnatal care, the Medicaid Act of 1968 paid for the medical expenses of the poor, and Medicare, established in 1965, extended medical insurance to older Americans under the Social Security system.

Johnson also relentlessly convinced Congress to pass a broad spectrum of civil rights laws, ranging from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to the 1968 Fair Housing Act barring discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. In 1965, LBJ issued an executive order requiring government contractors to ensure that job applicants and employees were not discriminated against. It required all contractors to prepare an "affirmative action plan" to achieve these goals.

Johnson broke many other color barriers. In 1966, he named the first black cabinet member and appointed the first black woman to the federal bench. In 1967, he appointed Thurgood Marshall to become the first black American to serve on the Supreme Court. The first Southerner to reside

in the White House in half a century, Johnson showed a stronger commitment to improving the position of black Americans than any previous president.

When President Johnson announced his Great Society program in 1964, he promised substantial reductions in the number of Americans living in poverty. When he left office, he could legitimately argue that he had delivered on his promise. In 1960, 40 million Americans (20 percent of the population) were classified as poor. By 1969, their number had fallen to 24 million (12 percent of the population). Johnson also pledged to qualify the poor for new and better jobs, to extend health insurance to the poor and elderly to cover hospital and doctor costs, and to provide better housing for low-income families. Here, too, Johnson could say he had delivered. Infant mortality among the poor, which had barely declined between 1950 and 1965, fell by one-third in the decade after 1965 as a result of expanded federal medical and nutritional programs. Before 1965, 20 percent of the poor had never seen a doctor; by 1970, the figure had been cut to 8 percent. The proportion of families living in houses lacking indoor plumbing also declined steeply, from 20 percent in 1960 to 11 percent a decade later.

Although critics argued that Johnson took a shotgun approach to reform and pushed poorly thought-out bills through Congress, supporters responded that at least Johnson tried to move toward a more compassionate society. During the 1960s, median black family income rose 53 percent; black employment in professional, technical, and clerical occupations doubled; and average black educational attainment increased by four years. The proportion of blacks below the poverty line fell from 55 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1968. The black unemployment rate fell 34 percent. The country had taken major strides toward extending equality of opportunity to black Americans. In addition, the number of whites below the poverty line dropped dramatically, and such poverty-plagued regions as Appalachia made significant economic strides.

*5. Why was President Johnson's domestic program called "The Great Society"?*

*6. Identify two programs or acts passed under President Johnson's Great Society program. Which one of his acts do you believe was the most important or would have the greatest effect on Americans?*

Name/Class:  
Date:

U.S History  
Mr. Sapia

Visual Document #1--Comparing and Contrasting

# PRESIDENTIAL DOMESTIC AGENDAS



## FDR and the New Deal

FDR's Legislative agenda was designed to provide relief, recovery, and reform for a nation crippled by the Great Depression



## LBJ and The Great Society

LBJ's Legislative agenda was designed to create a higher standard of living and an equal opportunity that promoted a richer quality of life for every American

7. Based on the reading, the above cartoon and your knowledge on Social Studies, identify ONE similarity between President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program?





5. *Why was President Johnson's domestic program called "The Great Society"?*

6. *Identify two programs or acts passed under President Johnson's Great Society program. Which one of his acts do you believe was the most important or would have the greatest effect on Americans?*

7. *Based on the reading, the above cartoon and your knowledge on Social Studies, identify ONE similarity between President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society program?*