

Civil Rights during the 1950s -- NAACP achieves desegregation

- A. Eisenhower did not intend to be a "civil rights" president.
 - Yet he was president during some of the most significant civil rights gains in U.S. history.
- B. 1940s -- NAACP began to attack "separate but equal" by suing segregated colleges and universities; African Americans gained entrance into Southern universities.
 - Elementary and secondary schools remained segregated.
- C. Earl Warren appointed by Eisenhower as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1953
 - Although viewed as a conservative, Warren would become the most significant Chief Justice of the 20th century and lead most liberal court of the 20th century.
- D. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954
 - 1. NAACP filed suit on behalf of Linda Brown, a black elementary school student.
 - a. Topeka school board had denied Brown admission to an all-white school.
 - b. Case reached Supreme Court in 1954
 - 2. Thurgood Marshall represented Linda Brown
 - i. Charged that public school segregation violated the "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.
 - ii. Segregation deprived blacks an equal educational opportunity.
 - iii. Separate could not be equal because segregation in itself lowered the morale and motivation of black students.
 - 3. Chief Justice Earl Warren persuaded fellow justices to overturn Plessy v. Ferguson.
 - a. "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. It has no place in public education.
 - b. One year later, Court ordered school integration "with all deliberate speed."
- C. Response to Brown v. Board of Education
 - 1. Southern officials considered ruling a threat to state and local authority.
 - a. Eisenhower felt gov't should not try to force segregation.
 - Called appointment of Warren "my biggest mistake."
 - b. 80% of southern whites opposed Brown decision.
 - c. Some white students, encouraged by parents, refused to attend integrated schools.
 - d. KKK reemerged in a much more violent incarnation than in 1920s.
 - 2. Southern state legislatures passed more than 450 laws and resolutions aimed at preventing enforcement of Brown decision.
 - a. "Massive Resistance" -- 1956, Virginia state legislature passed a massive resistance measure cutting off state aid to desegregated schools.
 - b. By 1962, only one-half of one percent of non-white school children in the South were in integrated schools.
 - 3. Crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957
 - a. Gov. Orval Faubus ordered National Guard to surround Central High School to prevent nine black students ("Little Rock Nine") from entering the school.
 - b. Federal court ordered removal of National Guard and allowed students to enter.
 - Riots erupted and forced Eisenhower to act.
 - c. Eisenhower reluctantly ordered 1000 federal troops into Little Rock and nationalized the Arkansas National Guard, this time protecting students.
 - First time since Reconstruction a president had sent federal troops into South to

- enforce the Constitution.
 - d. Next year, Little Rock public schools closed entirely.
 - i. White attended private schools or outside city schools.
 - ii. Most blacks had no school to attend.
 - e. August 1959, Little Rock school board gave in to integration after another Supreme Court ruling.
- D. Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56)
1. December 11, 1955, Rosa Parks arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, after refusing to give her bus seat to a white man; she was ordered to sit at the back of the bus.
 - Found guilty and fined \$14; over 150 others arrested and charged as well for boycotting buses during the following months.
 2. Immediate calls for boycott ensued; nearly 80% of bus users were African Americans.
 - Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., leader of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, became a leader of the boycott; emerged as leader of civil rights movement.
 3. Montgomery bus boycott lasted nearly 400 days.
 - a. King's house was bombed.
 - b. 88 other African American leaders were arrested and fined for conspiring to boycott.
 4. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on Montgomery buses was unconstitutional.
 - On December 20, 1956, segregationists gave up.
- E. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
1. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) -- King president in Jan. 1957
 2. Nonviolent resistance
 - a. King urged followers not to fight with authorities even if provoked.
 - b. King's nonviolent tactics similar to Mohandas Gandhi (both were inspired by Henry David Thoreau's On Civil Disobedience)
 - i. Use of moral arguments to changed minds of oppressors.
 - ii. King linked nonviolence to Christianity: "Love one's enemy."
 - c. Sit-ins became effective new strategy of nonviolence.
 - i. Students in universities and colleges all over U.S. vowed to integrate lunch counters, hotels, and entertainment facilities.
 - ii. Greensboro sit-in (Feb. 1960): First sit-in by 4 North Carolina college freshmen at a Woolworth lunch counter for student being refused service.
 - After thousands participated in the sit-in merchants in Greensboro gave in 6 months later
 - iii. A wave of sit-ins occurred throughout the country.
 - Targets were southern stores of national chains.
 - iv. Variations of sit-ins emerged: "kneel-ins" for churches; "read-ins" in libraries; "wade-ins" at beaches; "sleep-ins" in motel lobbies.
 3. Student movement
 - a. Nonviolence of students provoked increasingly hostile actions from those who opposed them.
 - Some blacks were beaten, and harassed by white teen-agers.
 - b. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee created by SCLC to better organize the movement. (SNCC pronounced "snick")
 - i. "Jail not Bail" became the popular slogan.
 - ii. Students adopted civil disobedience when confronted with jail.

F. End of "Massive Resistance"

- 1959, federal and state courts nullified Virginia laws which prevented state funds from going to integrated schools.

JFK and Civil Rights

- A. Did nothing during his first two years.
 - 1. Tried to avoid losing either white or black southern vote.
 - 2. Most civil rights initiatives were merely symbolic
 - 3. RFK's attempts at enfranchisement in the South was largely unsuccessful
 - a. Only small percentage of blacks able to register due to spelling mistakes on literacy tests, poll taxes, white primaries, and grandfather clauses.
 - b. White segregationists wreaked terror on Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC – "snick"); church bombings; assaults on blacks
 - 4. While Kennedy was initially able to satisfy both sides of the issue, the rise of civil rights militants forced his hand.
- B. Kennedy and the militants
 - 1. May 1961, Freedom Riders organized by CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)
 - a. Rode interstate buses to verify that segregation was not occurring..
 - b. In Alabama, Freedom Riders were arrested by police, state troopers, and National Guard; some were severely beaten.
 - c. More Freedom Riders kept coming all summer.
 - d. RFK petitioned Interstate Commerce Commission to issue a ruling against segregation of interstate facilities; sent 400 marshals to protect freedom riders.
 - e. ICC made the announcement on Sept. 22, 1961; CORE victorious.
 - 2. Sept. 1962, JFK had to send the U.S. Army to enforce a court order to enroll James Meredith in the University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss")
 - Kennedy was losing control of the segregation issue.
 - 3. Showdown in Birmingham, Alabama
 - a. 1963, Birmingham closed parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and golf courses to avoid desegregation.
 - b. King chose Birmingham because it was the toughest challenge and a victory would break segregation.
 - c. MLK and supporters arrested on Good Friday for marching without a permit and spent 2 weeks in jail.

"We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was 'well-timed' in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the worked "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that justice too long delayed is justice denied." -- Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail

- d. After his release, King began using black school children in the demonstrations:
 - i. Police commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor used cattle prods and ordered police

- dogs on demonstrators and used fire hoses on children as world watched in horror.
- ii. Public pressure mounted for civil rights legislation.
- e. Local business leaders gave in and agreed to desegregate the big department stores.
 - King called off the demonstrations.
- f. Shortly after, King's motel was bombed as was his brother's home
 - i. Rioting erupted.
 - ii. Kennedy decided to side with King.
- 4. Kennedy actively pursues civil rights
 - a. June 1963, JFK federalized Alabama National Guard to enforce a court order requiring the admission of two blacks to the University of Alabama.
 - Governor George Wallace symbolically stood in the door way protesting that states' rights were being crushed (earlier had said in his inaugural speech: "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.")
 - b. That night, Medgar Evers, NAACP director in Mississippi, was assassinated
 - Seen as retaliation for University of Alabama incident
 - c. In response, JFK announced he would send Congress a civil rights bill which would crush segregation, outlaw discrimination in elections, and give the justice department authority to enforce school integration.
 - d. March on Washington, August 28, 1963
 - i. Largest protest in nation's history thus far; 200,000
 - Organized in part by A. Philip Randolph (who had started March on Washington Movement during WWII)
 - ii. Protesters demanded support for Kennedy's civil rights bill and for better and more jobs.
 - iii. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his "I have a dream" speech

"I have a dream. 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 every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places shall be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.... This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring'..... When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"

- iii. By the time JFK was assassinated, his civil rights bill was moving toward passage in the House.

Triumph of civil rights (part of the Great Society)

- A. 24th Amendment (ratified in January 1964): Abolished the poll tax in federal elections.
- B. Civil Rights Bill of 1964

1. Johnson's skill with Congress allowed him to get Kennedy's bill passed.
 2. Provisions
 - a. Forbade segregation in hotels, motels, restaurants, lunch counters, theaters, and sporting arenas that did business in interstate commerce.
 - Equal Employment Opportunity Commission created to enforce the law.
 - b. Relieved individuals of responsibility for bringing discrimination complaints to court themselves; federal government now responsible.
 - c. Eliminated remaining restrictions on black voting.
 - d. Title VII: Discrimination based on race, religion gender and national origin was illegal.
 3. Result: Most businesses in the South's cities and larger towns desegregated immediately.
- C. Voting Rights Act of 1965
1. Legislation still did not address the 15th Amendment guaranteeing the right to vote.
 2. March from Selma to Washington
 - a. Only 383 out of 15,000 African Americans registered to vote in Selma, Alabama
 - b. After 2 months of beatings, arrests, and one murder, civil rights leaders in Selma announced a climactic protest march from Selma to Montgomery.
 - c. First march: state troopers violently ended the march on bridge outside Selma.
 - d. March 9, Martin Luther King led a second march
 - i. This time he halted on the bridge and marched back to Selma as protesters sang "We Shall Overcome"
 - ii. King had agreed to President Johnson's request to discontinue march
 - e. March 15, Johnson promised on TV to send a bill to Congress that would extend voting rights to African Americans in the Deep South.
 - f. March 21, March proceeded peacefully from Selma to Montgomery with the protection of the federalized Alabama National Guard.
 3. Provisions:
 - a. Literacy tests unlawful if less than 50% of all voting-age citizens were registered. If so, African Americans could be enrolled whether or not they could read.
 - b. If local registrars would not enroll African Americans, the president could send federal examiners who would.
 - This gave teeth to the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - c. As a result, 740,00 African Americans registered to vote in three years.
 - i. Hundreds of African Americans elected by the late 1960s in the Old South.
 - ii. African Americans no longer feared white reprisals during elections.
 - iii. Southerners now began courting African American votes and businesses.
 - iv. For first time since Reconstruction, African Americans migrated into the South.
- D. Affirmative Action (part of the Great Society)
1. Johnson signed an executive order in 1965 requiring employers on federal contracts to take "affirmative action" to ensure underprivileged minorities and women were hired.
 2. President Nixon later furthered affirmative action.
 3. Countless American corporations that did business with the gov't, colleges and universities
 - that received federal scholarship and research funding became obligated to meet guidelines.
 4. Result: Black, Asian, and Hispanic enrollment in universities increased dramatically.

5. 1970s saw cries of "reverse discrimination as the economy began to suffer and whites faced increased competition for jobs or were denied promotions and students were denied college admission.
6. Bakke case, 1978
 - a. Supreme Court ruled that Allan Bakke, a white medical student, was unfairly turned down to medical school because of an admissions program that favored minorities.
 - b. Court declared preference in admissions could not be given to members of any group on the basis of ethnic or racial identity alone.
7. Jesse Jackson became a leading advocate in the 1970s and 1980s for the continuing of affirmative action and the furthering of civil rights.
8. Affirmative action weakened by Supreme Court in late 1980s and 1990s
- D. 1967, Johnson appointed Thurgood Marshall as first African American to Supreme Court
- E. Forced busing
 1. 1968, Supreme Court ordered end to de facto segregation of nation's school.
 2. Court ordered school districts to bus children from all-minority neighborhoods in the center cities to achieve integration of schools.
 3. Issue became controversial with middle class suburban whites in early 1970s into 1990s
- F. African-American civil rights movement in retrospect
 1. Years between 1954 and 1968 seen as "2nd Reconstruction"
 - Equality before the law largely achieved.
 2. Other minorities, e.g. women, Native Americans, Hispanics and gays looked to civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s as a model for their own efforts.

Rise of Black Power and racial violence

- A. Not all African Americans agreed with Martin Luther King's non-violent methods.
 1. After the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 King's ideas seemed obsolete to many young blacks.
 2. Many questioned whether it was a good idea for blacks to try to integrate with whites.
- B. Black Separatism
 1. Called for the separation of the races in America by returning to Africa or occupying an exclusive area of land in the U.S. supplied by the federal gov't.
 - a. Opposite of integration.
 - b. Inspired by ideas of Marcus Garvey (leader during "Harlem Renaissance")
 - c. Nation of Islam (black Muslim movement) most notable and well-organized
 2. Malcolm X
 - a. Most vocal and brilliant orator of Nation of Islam
 - b. Preached religious justification for black separatism and furthering of African American rights through "any means necessary."
 - i. Advocated use of weapons for self-defense believing nonviolence encouraged white violence
 - ii. Many in the white community were alarmed
 - c. His views softened after his pilgrimage to Mecca; he left Nation of Islam
 - d. February 21, 1965, assassinated by three members of the Nation of Islam.
 - e. Never supported King's nonviolent methods: "The white people should thank Dr. King for holding black people in check."

C. SNCC and Stokely Carmichael

1. Influenced by Malcolm X
2. 1966, CORE and SNCC called for civil rights movements to be staffed, controlled and financed by blacks, thus rejecting interracial cooperation.
 - Black nationalism replaced integration as the goal.
3. Black Power -- attempt to seize political power in an Alabama election.
4. Carmichael later a member of Black Panthers, based in Oakland, and founded by urban revolutionaries Huey Newton and Bobby Seale.
 - a. Revolutionary social movement to organize African American men in northern and western cities to fight for liberation.
 - b. H. Rap Brown another leader of the movement.

D. Racial violence

1. Poverty, unemployment, & racial discrimination common in major inner-cities.
 - Empty promise of racial equality in the North ignited rage in many African American communities
2. "Long Hot Summers": throughout summers of 1965, 1966 & 1967, racial disorders hit.
 - a. Watts Riots -- Los Angeles, August 11-16, 1965
 - 34 people dead, 1,072 injured, 4,000 arrested, 1,000 buildings destroyed, property loss nearly \$40 million.
 - b. 1967, 7,000 arrested in Detroit
 - i. White businesses targeted but many black businesses inadvertently burned.
 - ii. Snipers prevented fire-fighters from doing their work.
 - c. During first 9 months of 1967, more than 150 cities reported incidents of racial disorders
3. Kerner Commission appointed by LBJ to investigate the riots. Conclusion:
 - a. Frustrated hopes of African Americans led to violence.
 - b. Approval and encouragement of violence both by white terrorists and by black protest groups led to violence
 - c. Blacks had a sense of being powerless in a society dominated by whites.
 - d. Recommended:
 - i. Elimination of all racial barriers in jobs, education, and housing
 - ii. Greater public response to problems of racial minorities
 - iii. Increased communication across racial lines.

E. Assassination of Martin Luther King -- April 4, 1968

1. 39-year-old minister shot while standing on a balcony with friends in Memphis.
 - King was working to increase wages for Memphis trash collectors.
2. King had lost many supporters when he opposed the Vietnam War.
3. Was attempting to rebuild his support -- speech on April 3rd:

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountain top. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight... that we as a people will get to the promised land."