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Civil Rights Activities

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Civil Rights Activities *adapted from Journeys in Film*

Standards Addressed:

Social Studies:

SS.8.C.2 Evaluate how citizens can influence and participate in government at the local, state, and national levels and assume the role of an active citizen participating in the democratic process.

SS.8.C.4 Differentiate between the divisions of powers and responsibilities for each of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the US and WV governments and describe the system of checks and balances.

SS.8.C.9 Analyze the functions and jurisdictions of the federal, state, local, and special courts.

SS.8.H.CL6.2 Evaluate the sequence and analyze the impact of contemporary social, economic, and technological developments on people and culture in WV.

SS.8.H.CL6.4 Examine the economic, social, and political impact of 20th century events on WV.

Essential Questions:

- What impact did the events of the Civil Rights Movement have on the US?
- How did the events of the Civil Rights Movement influence the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Materials:

- Civil Rights: Jim Crow Laws (Handout 1)
- Brown v. Board of Education Overview
- Montgomery Bus Boycott Overview
- The Sit-In Movement
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Civil Rights Handout
- Team Quiz

Lesson:

1. Read about Jim Crow Laws as a class (Handout 1)
 - a. Discuss how you would feel living in a system like that
 - b. Discuss how it is different/like slavery
2. Put students into 4 groups to read the articles about the Civil Rights movement. (Topics: Brown v. Board of Education, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Woolworth Sit-in, Civil Rights Act of 1964)
 - a. Students will complete a handout associated with each topic
 - b. Travel around reading the articles & filling out the handout
3. Have students complete a team quiz about Civil Rights

Civil Rights: Jim Crow Laws

What were the Jim Crow laws?

Jim Crow laws were laws in the South based on race. They enforced segregation between white people and black people in public places such as schools, transportation, restrooms, and restaurants. They also made it difficult for black people to vote.



Jim Crow Drinking Fountain by John Vachon

When were the Jim Crow laws enforced?

After the Civil War there was a period in the South called the Reconstruction. During this time the federal government controlled the southern states. However, after the Reconstruction, the state governments took back over. Most Jim Crow laws were put in place in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many of them were enforced until the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Why were they called "Jim Crow"?

The name "Jim Crow" comes from an African-American character in a song from 1832. After the song came out, the term "Jim Crow" was often used to refer to African-Americans and soon the segregation laws became known as "Jim Crow" laws.

Examples of Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws were designed to keep black and white people apart. They touched on many aspects of society. Here are a few examples of laws in different states:

- Alabama - All passenger stations shall have separate waiting rooms and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races.
- Florida - The schools for white children and the schools for black children shall be conducted separately.
- Georgia - The officer in charge shall not bury any colored persons upon the ground set apart for the burial of white persons.
- Mississippi - Prison wardens shall see that the white convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the negro convicts.

There were also laws that tried to prevent black people from voting. These included poll taxes (a fee people had to pay to vote) and reading tests that people had to pass before they could vote.

Grandfather Clauses

In order to make sure that all white people could vote, many states enacted "grandfather"

clauses into their voting laws. These laws stated that if your ancestors could vote before the Civil War, then you did not have to pass the reading test. This allowed for white people who could not read to vote. This is where the term "grandfather clause" comes from.



Rex Theatre by Dorothea Lange

Black Codes

After the Civil War, many southern states created laws called Black Codes. These laws were even harsher than the Jim Crow laws. They tried to maintain something like slavery in the south even after the war. These laws made it difficult for black people to leave their current jobs and allowed them be arrested for just about any reason. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment tried to put an end to the Black Codes.

Fighting Segregation

African-Americans began to organize, protest, and fight segregation and the Jim Crow laws in the 1900s. In 1954, the Supreme Court said that segregation of the schools was illegal in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case. Later, protests such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Birmingham Campaign, and the March on Washington brought the issue of Jim Crow to national attention.

The End of Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws were made illegal with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Interesting Facts about Jim Crow Laws

- The U.S. army was segregated until 1948 when President Harry Truman ordered the armed services desegregated.
- As many as 6 million African-Americans relocated to the North and West to get away from the Jim Crow laws of the south. This is sometimes called the Great Migration.
- Not all Jim Crow laws were in the south or were specific to black people. There were other racial laws in other states such as a law in California that made it illegal for people of Chinese ancestry to vote. Another California law made it illegal to sell alcohol to Indians.
- The phrase "separate but equal" was often used to justify segregation.

Adapted from: http://www.ducksters.com/history/civil_rights/jim_crow_laws.php

***Brown v. Board of Education* Overview**

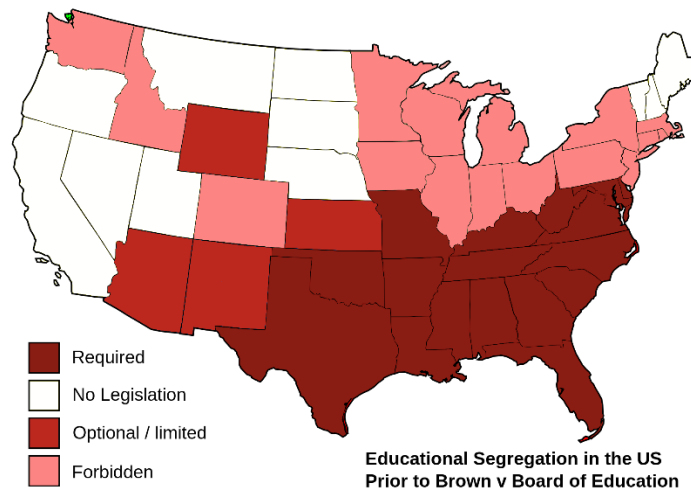
- In ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*** (1954) a unanimous Supreme Court declared that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.
- The Court declared “separate” educational facilities “inherently unequal.”
- The case electrified the nation, and remains a landmark in legal history and a milestone in civil rights history.

A segregated society

An 1896 Supreme Court decision, ***Plessy v. Ferguson***, had declared “separate but equal” Jim Crow segregation legal. The *Plessy* ruling asserted that so long as purportedly “equal” accommodations were supplied for African Americans, the races could, legally, be separated. In consequence, “colored” and “whites only” signs proliferated across the South at facilities such as water fountains, restrooms, bus waiting areas, movie theaters, swimming pools, and public schools.

Despite the claim that black schools were equal to white schools, schools for black children frequently lacked even basic necessities. In South Carolina, black children attended schools without running water, flush toilets, or electricity. In one county, \$149 was spent per year on each white student, but only \$43 on each black student. In Delaware, black students attended a poorly-equipped one-room schoolhouse, while a well-equipped white school existed nearby. In Virginia, a black high school at the center of the case was overcrowded and was without a cafeteria or gym; the same was not true at the local white school.

In 1950s America segregation was largely, though not exclusively, a southern practice. Every state in the South mandated school segregation, and ten other states outside of the South either permitted or required segregation in public schools.



Map of school segregation laws in each state before the *Brown v. Board* decision. Map adapted from Wikimedia Commons.

The Brown v. Board of Education case

Linda Brown, a third grader, was required by law to attend a school for black children in her hometown of Topeka, Kansas. To do so, Linda walked six blocks, crossing dangerous railroad tracks, and then boarded a bus that took her to Monroe Elementary. Yet, only seven blocks from her house was Sumner Elementary, a school attended by white children, and which, save for segregation, Linda would otherwise have attended. Her father, **Oliver Brown**, encouraged by NAACP chief counsel **Thurgood Marshall**, brought suit against the Topeka school district.

The case was named after a lawsuit filed in 1951 by NAACP lawyers against the Topeka, Kansas school district on behalf of Linda Brown and her family. By the time the Brown's case made it to the US Supreme Court in 1954 it had been combined with four other similar school segregation cases into a single unified case.

Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP, and the Supreme Court

The NAACP's chief counsel, Thurgood Marshall, argued the unified case in *Brown v. Board* before the Supreme Court.

Marshall and a team of NAACP lawyers had been challenging segregation laws for several years prior to Brown. In 1950 Marshall had won a case before the Supreme Court, *Sweatt v. Painter*, in which the Court had ruled that a Texas law school purporting to offer black students an education equal to that which it offered whites was not—as measured by funding, faculty, or facilities—in fact equal. (The law school for black students consisted initially of only three basement classrooms and no library).



Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP's chief counsel, argued the *Brown v. Board* case before the Supreme Court. Marshall would go on to become the first African American Supreme Court justice. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

After their success in *Sweatt*, Marshall and the other NAACP lawyers wanted to find and develop test cases by which means they could strike at the heart of segregation itself. They wanted the fact that students were being separated into different schools solely because of race itself declared unconstitutional. And, in *Brown v. Board*, Marshall and his colleagues found five cases through which they could work to achieve their goal.

Linda Brown's case was particularly useful to Thurgood Marshall's efforts because Monroe Elementary was not underfunded in comparison to Sumner Elementary. The school Linda attended

was separate, but it was not, measured by funding, unequal. The case allowed Marshall and the other NAACP lawyers to focus attention on the question of the constitutionality of segregation itself.

In making the case in *Brown*, Marshall drew upon the research of two psychologists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, to argue that the very fact black and white children were sent to separate schools damaged the black children's self-esteem, stigmatized them, and adversely shaped their self-image for the rest of their lives. Separate schools, Marshall argued, made plain to black children that they were deemed unworthy of being educated in the same classrooms as white children; school segregation reinforced notions of difference and inequality associated with race prejudice and racism.

Separate is "inherently unequal"

In *Brown v. Board*, the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and outlawed segregation. The Court agreed with Thurgood Marshall and his fellow NAACP lawyers that segregated schooling violated the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of law. Speaking for a unanimous Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." He added: "Any language in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected." The decision challenged *de jure* segregation of the races, and electrified the nation.

De jure is a Latin phrase that means "according to the law." It's sometimes used as the opposite of *de facto*, which means "according to fact" or "according to reality," to denote instances in which what the law dictates is different from what's really going on in society.

Though the Court's ruling applied only to public schools, its declaration that "separate" is "inherently unequal" served as a reminder that not only in schools, but in all aspects of life, the separation of black and white Americans signaled an "inherently unequal" status between them. As such segregation did not measure up to the nation's founding ideal that "all men are created equal."

Brown II: Desegregating with "all deliberate speed"

In the summer of 1955 the Supreme Court issued its implementation ruling in a decision called *Brown II*. In *Brown II* the Court ordered that schools undertake desegregation with "all deliberate speed." But just what the Court meant by "deliberate speed" came quickly into dispute. White citizens in the South organized a "Massive Resistance" campaign against integration.

Although the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board* was a major step forward in civil rights, it is important to note that the decision applied only to public schools. *Brown v. Board* did not address Jim Crow laws across the South that applied to restaurants, movie halls, public transportation, and more. Not until the 1960s--in laws such as The Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Voting Rights Act of 1965, and The Housing Rights Act of 1968—would these aspects of *de jure* segregation be put to an end.

Adapted from: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-us-history/period-8/apush-civil-rights-movement/a/brown-v-board-of-education>

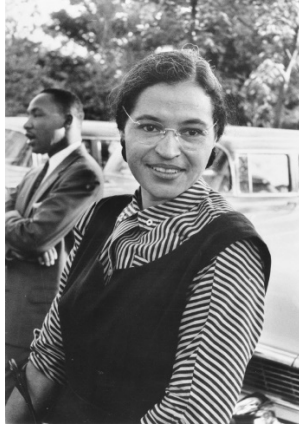
Montgomery Bus Boycott Overview

- On December 1, 1955, **Rosa Parks**, a black seamstress, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to give up her bus seat so that white passengers could make use of it.
- Rosa Parks's arrest sparked the **Montgomery Bus Boycott**, during which the black citizens of Montgomery refused to ride the city's buses in protest over the bus system's policy of racial segregation. It was the first mass-action of the modern civil rights era, and served as an inspiration to other civil rights activists across the nation.
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, a Baptist minister who endorsed nonviolent civil disobedience, emerged as leader of the Boycott.
- Following a November 1956 ruling by the Supreme Court that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional, the bus boycott ended successfully. It had lasted 381 days.

Rosa Parks's arrest

Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama for failing to give up her bus seat—so that it would be available for white passengers—when instructed to do so by the bus's driver.

Parks was arrested at a time in American history when, under Jim Crow laws, African Americans faced discrimination and segregation across the South. Jim Crow bus laws in Montgomery at the time of Parks' arrest established a section for whites at the front of the bus, and a section for blacks in the back. The law required that when the white section filled, black passengers in the "colored section" give up their seats and move further back.



Black and white photograph of Rosa Parks. Martin Luther King Jr. can be seen in the background.

Rosa Parks, the 42 year old secretary of the Montgomery, Alabama NAACP, provided the inspiration for the Montgomery Bus Boycott with her 1955 arrest for refusing to give up her seat on the bus to accommodate white passengers. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Parks, tired after a day's work at her job as a seamstress in a downtown department store, was sitting in the first row of seats in the bus's "colored" section. As the white section filled, the driver announced that black passengers in the "colored" section's front row were to give up their seats. But Parks refused to do so. She was arrested and fined ten dollars.

Rosa Parks was forty-two years old, married, regularly attended church, and worked as a seamstress in a downtown department store. She had also been active in her local chapter of the NAACP for more than a decade. Four days before her arrest she had attended a large meeting at which the August 1955 murder of Emmett Till had been discussed by a member of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership. She later recounted that Emmett Till was on her mind the evening of her arrest.

Origins of the bus boycott

E.D. Nixon, head of the Alabama NAACP, and Jo Ann Robinson, head of the local Women's Political Council, had been looking for means by which to challenge the treatment of African Americans in Montgomery for some time. As a model citizen and woman of unimpeachable conduct, Parks was an ideal candidate for a public campaign. After Parks's arrest, they decided to call for a boycott of the city's buses.

Nixon held meetings with members from the community in area churches. Robinson and members of her Council worked tirelessly to produce some fifty-thousand leaflets which were distributed that Sunday at

the city's black churches. The leaflets read, "Don't ride the bus to work, town, to school, or any place Monday, December 5. . . . Come to a mass meeting, Monday at 7:00 P.M. at the Holt Street Baptist Church for further instruction."

Martin Luther King, Jr., a little-known, twenty-six year old Baptist minister with a doctorate from Boston University, led the boycott. During the boycott he began his rise to national and international prominence in the US Civil Rights Movement. Drawing on his study of nonviolent civil disobedience in the teachings of Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi, King delivered a message of nonviolent protest against racial injustice in eloquent, powerful sermons and speeches. On the boycott's first day, speaking before a crowd of more than 5,000 black citizens, he said:

"There comes a time when people get tired.... tired of being segregated and humiliated.... If you will protest courageously and yet with dignity and Christian love...historians will have to pause and say 'there lived a great people—a black people—who injected a new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization.' This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility."

The boycott succeeds

African American men, women, and children stopped taking the bus, and instead carpooled or walked to their destinations. Most bus riders had been African American, and with the precipitous decline in ridership, bus company revenues collapsed. The boycott became major news as the nation's television networks, newspapers, and major news magazines covered it.

The leaders of the boycott brought suit, demanding the end of segregation on public buses in Montgomery. The suit took months to make its way through the judicial system, but by mid-November 1956 the US Supreme Court—basing its decision on the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection under the law—ruled that segregated public buses were unconstitutional. The boycott was a success.

Many of the elements in the Montgomery Bus Boycott—organization, community solidarity, nonviolence, and the intervention of the federal government—proved to be the groundwork on which the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s would be based.

Adapted from: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-us-history/period-8/apush-civil-rights-movement/a/the-montgomery-bus-boycott>

THE SIT-IN MOVEMENT

The Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) was a social movement in the United States during which activists attempted to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. This movement employed several different types of protests.



"5 – The U.S. Civil Rights Movement" by U.S. Embassy The Hague is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

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, the peaceful activists introduced a new tactic into their set of strategies. 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.

No one participated in a sit-in of this sort without seriousness of purpose. The instructions were simple: sit quietly and wait to be served. Often the participants would be jeered and threatened by local customers. Sometimes they would be pelted with food or ketchup. Protestors did not respond when provoked by angry onlookers. In the event of a physical attack, the student would curl up into a ball on the floor and take the punishment. Any violent reprisal would undermine the spirit of the sit-in. When the local police came to arrest the demonstrators, another line of students would take the vacated seats.

Sit-in organizers believed that if the violence were only on the part of the white community, the world would see the righteousness of their cause. 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 formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Early leaders included Stokely Carmichael and Fannie Lou Hamer. The Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) was a northern group of students led by James Farmer, which also endorsed direct action. These groups became the grassroots organizers of future sit-ins at lunch counters, wade-ins at segregated swimming pools, and pray-ins at white-only churches.

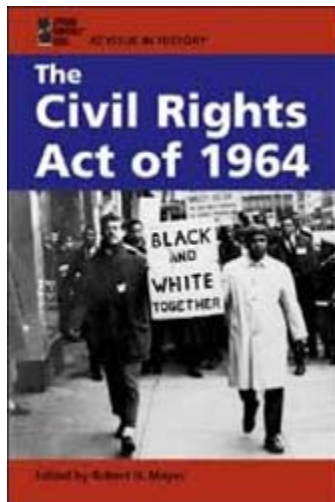
Bolstered by the success of direct action, CORE activists planned the first freedom ride in 1961. To challenge laws mandating segregated interstate transportation, busloads of integrated black and white students rode through the South. The first freedom riders left Washington, D.C., in May 1961 en route to New Orleans. Several participants were arrested in bus stations. When the buses reached Anniston, Alabama, an angry mob slashed the tires on one bus and set it aflame. The riders on the other bus were violently attacked, and the freedom riders had to complete their journey by plane. New Attorney General Robert Kennedy ordered federal marshals to protect future freedom rides. Bowing to political and public pressure, the Interstate Commerce Commission soon banned segregation on interstate travel. Progress was slow indeed, but the wall between the races was gradually being eroded.

Adapted from: <https://www.commonlit.org/texts/the-sit-in-movement>

Civil Rights Act of 1964

The years leading up to the 1960's were filled with unrest, violence and unhappiness as the Black Americans faced continual discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives.

The Civil Rights Movement brought attention to their situation and in all parts of the country, people began to realize the unfairness that existed in the treatment of Black Americans. The March on Washington was a peaceful demonstration that finalized the meaning of freedom and opportunity. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed to try to end segregation for the Black American.



Up until 1964, a variety of places in the country, mostly in the southern states had complete segregation between black and white citizens. This extended to bathrooms, restaurants, public transportation, hotels and even to the point of people working together.

Local laws called "Jim Crow Laws" in the south took things even further, allowing the direct attack and killing of Black Americans without due process of law as well as local rules that kept Black Americans from being able to vote. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination of employment based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It also banned discrimination involving any public place.

This act was originally proposed by President John F. Kennedy and, at the time of the first discussion, was completely opposed by those that lived in the Southern United States, and therefore it was opposed by their representatives in Congress.

After the assassination of President Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson continued to move the act forward, even though there were many that were against it. There was a great amount of arguing in Congress as members of the Southern states repeatedly tried to keep the act from being approved.

The passing of the act created the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission that would oversee that the laws were upheld in employment and hiring. It became against the law to allow any Federal money to be used if there were situations of discrimination.

This opened the door to allow schools, who received Federal funding, to have segregated classrooms. This was of great importance in the south, where many of the 'Black Only' schools were poorly supported. It removed the "Jim Crow Laws" that kept Black Americans away from the voting polls and was hailed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr as a 'second emancipation'.



The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the beginning of the final expansion of freedoms for many people. In the years to follow, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, which removed any of the previous requirements set in place by local governments requiring literacy tests to be passed before being allowed to vote.

Additional laws that were passed, thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 included The Fair Housing Act of 1968 which stated that discrimination of any kind in the purchase or renting of a home or any living area was against the law.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 became the turning point in American history for Black Americans but also led to the fair treatment of other minorities and women. It removed Federal dollars from any organization or company that promoted discrimination and that led to changes that are felt to this day.

Adapted from: <http://www.historyforkids.net/civil-rights-act-of-1964.html>

Civil Rights Handout

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Read the articles provided and complete the questions.

Jim Crow Laws

1. What were Jim Crow Laws?
2. Give an example of a Jim Crow Law.
3. What made Jim Crow Laws illegal?

Brown v. Board of Education Overview

1. What decision was declared legal because of *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
2. How many states mandated or permitted school segregation in the 1950s?
3. What amendment was being violated by segregated schooling?
4. What did *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregate? What was still segregated?

Montgomery Bus Boycott Overview

1. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?
2. Why was it important for the protests to be nonviolent?
3. Why did the bus boycott succeed?

The Sit-In Movement

1. What happened on February 1, 1960?
2. How many protestors were arrested by the end of the school year?
3. What were the freedom rides protesting?

Civil Rights Act of 1964

1. What did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ban?
2. What commission was created and what was its purpose?
3. What could Federal money not be used for because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Civil Rights Team Quiz

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Complete the following questions as a table.

1. How do you think other nations around the world reacted to the idea of segregation?
2. How effective do you think nonviolent protests are?
3. What inequalities still remain in society today? What could be some effective methods of bringing equality to everyone?