TIMELINE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Significant events in the history of the Civil Rights Movement inthe United States of America from Reconstruction through 1960s.

RECONSTRUCTION AMENDMENTS AND LAWS

JANUARY 31, 1865

The House of Representatives passed the 13th Amendment. While Section 1 of the 13th Amendment outlawed chattel slavery and involuntary servitude (except as punishment for a crime), Section 2 gave the U.S. Congress the power "to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." Congress also required the former Confederate states to ratify the 13th Amendment in order to regain representation in the federal government.

APRIL 9, 1866

The year after the amendment's passage, Congress used this power to pass the nation's first civil rights bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1866. The law invalidated the so-called Black Codes - those laws put into place in the former Confederate states that governed the behavior of Black people, effectively keeping them dependent on their former owners.

JUNE 8, 1866

Passed by the Senate in 1866 and ratified two years later, on July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all persons "born or naturalized in the United States," including formerly enslaved people, and provided all citizens with "equal protection under the laws," extending the provisions of the Bill of Rights to the states. The amendment authorized the government to punish states that abridged citizens' right to vote by proportionally reducing their representation in Congress. It granted Congress the power to enforce this amendment, a provision that led to the passage of other landmark legislation in the 20th century.

FEBRUARY 26, 1869

Passed by Congress in 1869 and ratified February 3, 1870, the 15th Amendment granted African American men the right to vote. However, in the early 1890s, steps were taken to ensure subsequent "white supremacy." Literacy tests for the vote, "grandfather clauses" excluding from all whose ancestors had not voted in the 1860s, poll taxes, and other devices to disenfranchise African Americans were written into the laws of former Confederate states. Women did not get the right to vote until the 19th Amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920.

1896

The Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized "separate but equal" facilities for the races. For more than 50 years, the overwhelming majority of African American citizens were reduced to second-class citizenship under the "Jim Crow" segregation system. During that time, African Americans sought to secure their rights and improve their position.

DESEGREGATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

JUNE 25, 1941

After thousands of Black people threatened to march on Washington to demand equal employment rights, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941. It opened national defense jobs and other government jobs to all Americans regardless of race, creed, color or national origin.

JULY 26, 1948

As the Cold War began, President Truman initiated a civil rights agenda and signed Executive Order 9981 to end discrimination in the military. These events helped set the stage for grass-roots initiatives to enact racial equality legislation and incite the civil rights movement.

1953 (SEVERAL DATES)

President Dwight D. Eisenhower quickly went to work on furthering advances made by Truman as soon as he took office.

First, he desegregated Washington, D.C. by executive order since it is under the jurisdiction of the federal government. He and the First Lady refused to attend events or patronage businesses that were segregated. He pressured Hollywood to open their theaters and end segregation in their studios. By the end of the year, virtually all segregation had ended in public facilities in the District of Columbia.

Second, Eisenhower used his clout within the military to push all branches of the armed services including military schools, hosptials, and bases to fully desegregate as ordered in Truman's Executive Order 9981.

His most important and far-reaching action was nominating his former political rival, Earl Warren, to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on September 30. Warren would later be a central figure in numerious decisions the high court made in dismantling discrimination in the country including *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, and *Loving v. Virginia*. He also appointed federal judges to the bench who were of a similar mind, who collectively gave some of the biggest victories to the movement (especially in the South) in the years to come.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA

MAY 17, 1954

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Educational Fund, led by Thurgood Marshall, spent decades fighting against racial segregation in education. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separating children on the basis of race is unconstitutional. Justice Earl Warren delivered the ruling that segregating kids violates the 14th Amendment. This decision took precedence over the ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which kept schools segregated on the basis "separate but equal". People believed the court overstepped its boundary and relied too much on social scientists' data. The decision led to future decisions that the Warren courts made. While the *Brown* ruling applied only to schools, it implied that segregation in other public facilities was unconstitutional as well. Many schools, however, remained segregated.



EMMETT TILL MURDERED - AUGUST 28, 1955

AUGUST 28, 1955

Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago is brutally murdered in Mississippi for allegedly flirting with a white woman. He was kidnapped from the home was he staying in, brutally beaten and shot in the head. A large metal fan was tied to his neck with barbed wire, and his body was dumped into the river. When his body was discovered, he was unrecognizable and identification was made by a ring he was wearing. His murderers were acquitted. The case brought international attention to the civil rights movement after Jet magazine published a photo of Till's mutilated body at his open-casket funeral. His mother wanted the world to see what had happened to her son. His murder launched a renewed call to end racism and discrimination in the nation. Decades after his murder, Carolyn Bryant, the woman at the center of the story, recanted her story that Till made unwanted advances and threats toward her.



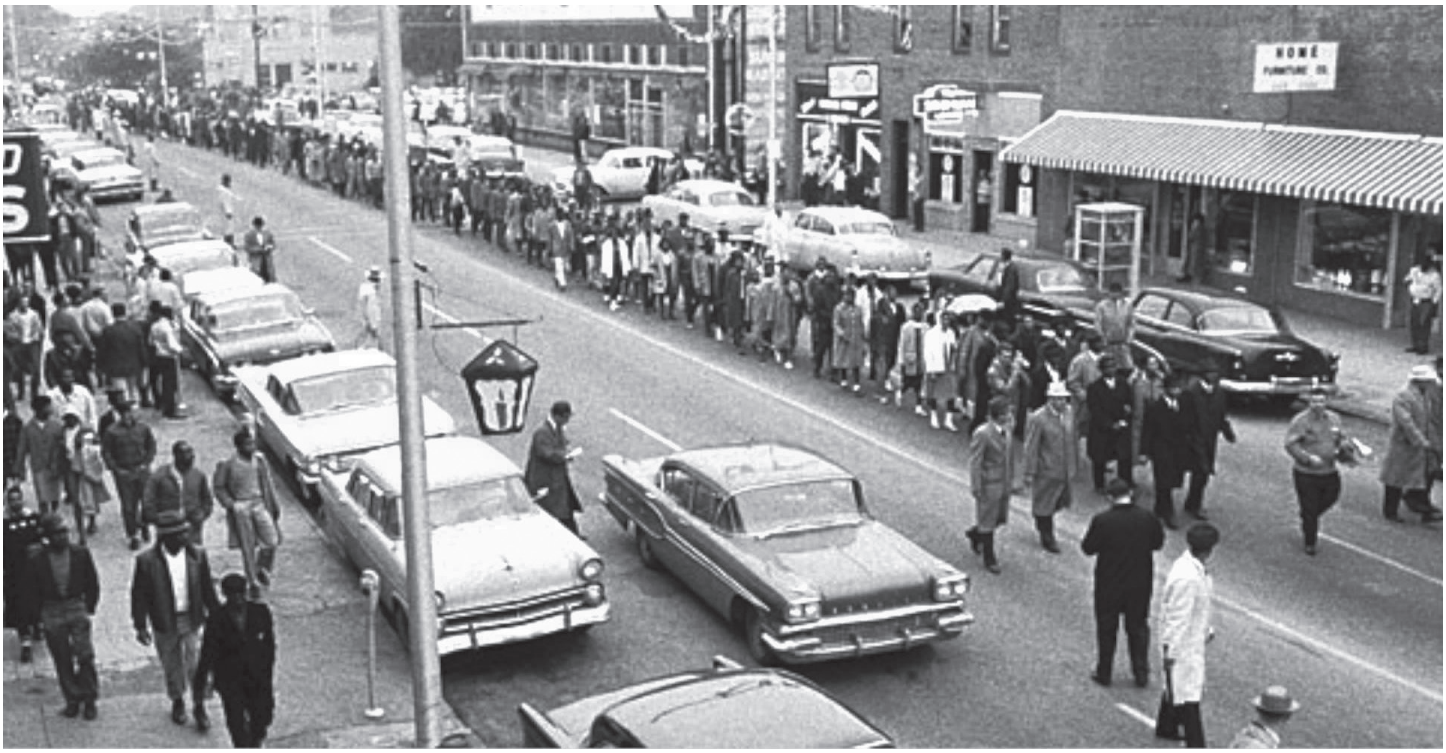
MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

DECEMBER 1, 1955

This protest lasted a total of 13 months and was sparked by Rosa Parks. On December 1, 1955, a 42 year-old woman named Rosa Parks found a seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus after work. Segregation laws at the time stated Black passengers must sit in designated seats at the back of the bus, and Parks did not comply. When a white man got on the bus and couldn't find a seat in the white section at the front of the bus, the bus driver instructed Parks and three other Black passengers to give up their seats. Parks refused and was arrested.

The arrest sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a demonstration of a peaceful protest against racial segregation on public buses that lasted 381 days. In actuality, the idea started when a 15 year-old Claudette Colvin and 18 year-old Mary Louise Smith had both been arrested for refusing to give up their seats to white passengers nine months prior to Parks arrest. Dr. Martin Luther King said that, "Mrs. Parks was ideal for the role" of being the face of the boycott. Colvin was considered too young and "feisty", since she was charged with of assaulting a police officer during her arrest. By refusing to utilize the transportation system, the protest caused the bus company to lose revenue.

On November 14, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled segregated seating was unconstitutional in their *Browder v. Gayle* decision, handing NAACP lawyers a major victory. The following month, when the Supreme Court indicated that it would not hear an appeal of that decision, all avenues to delay bus integration had been exhausted. The next day, December 21, 1956, thousands of black riders were on the buses again — sitting in any seats they chose. Yet the troubles did not end. Shots were fired at the buses and Rev. Ralph Abernathy's home and church were bombed. Abernathy had been one of the lead organizers of the boycott. The success of the protests led to the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with another rising community leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as its president.



CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL INTEGRATED

AUGUST 26, 1956

In January of 1956, the McSwain family sued Clinton High School, since the school had refused to allow their daughter to attend the school following the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Clinton High School became the first school to test *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision on August 26, 1956 when 12 black students attended the Tennessee school. The twelve new students faced angry mobs and had to be escorted to school by supportive adults. The Klu Klux Klan protested the integration of the school and bullied, harassed, and assaulted the kids. The town's Black community was terrorized while threats were also made to the local newspaper, courthouse, and the mayor's home. Teachers, the school's principal, and many family members of the Clinton 12 left the town. Only two of the twelve graduated - Bobby Cain in 1957 and Gail Ann Epps 1958 - making them the first black male and female to graduate from an integrated high school in Tennessee. The school was bombed on October 5, 1958. No one was killed or injured, but no one has ever been held responsible for the bombing either.



LITTLE ROCK NINE

SEPTEMBER 4, 1957

In 1957, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas asked for volunteers from all-Black high schools to attend the formerly segregated school. Nine Black students, known as the Little Rock Nine, arrived at Central High School to begin classes but were instead met by the Arkansas National Guard (on order of Governor Orval Faubus) and a screaming, threatening mob. For the next 18 days President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Governor Faubus, and Little Rock Mayor Woodrow Mann discussed the situation. The Little Rock Nine returned on September 23 but were, yet again, met with violence and sent home. They returned on September 25 after President Eisenhower nationalized the Arkansas National Guard and used the 101st Airborne to protect the students and enforce the desegregation order of the federal courts. White students bullied, threatened, and assaulted the nine students daily. Although the students were continually harassed, eight of the nine completed the academic year. The entire confrontation drew international attention not only to civil rights in the United States but also to the struggle between federal and state power. Ernest Green was the first African American to graduate from Central High School.





CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1957

SEPTEMBER 9, 1957

Even though all Americans had gained the right to vote, many southern states made it difficult for Black citizens to register to vote. They often required prospective voters of color to take literacy tests that were confusing, misleading, and nearly impossible to pass.

Wanting to show a commitment to the civil rights movement and minimize racial tensions in the South, the Eisenhower Administration pressured Congress to consider new civil rights legislation.

On September 9, 1957, President Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into law, the first major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. It allowed federal prosecution of anyone who tried to prevent someone from voting. It also created a commission to investigate voter fraud.



THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS

FEBRUARY 1, 1960

The Sit-ins were inspired by other peaceful protests that had been going around the world. Inspired by the nonviolent protest of Gandhi, four Black college students - Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain and Joseph McNeil - took a stand against segregation in Greensboro, North Carolina when they refused to leave a Woolworth's lunch counter without being served. After they left, they told people at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College what they experienced. The next day, 29 people went and sat at Woolworth's lunch counter. The protests kept growing and white men would harass, spit, throw food, and verbally abuse the protesters. The protests also moved to stores that were segregated, and then spread across the state. Forty-one African American students were arrested for trespassing, but the action eventually led to the desegregation of restaurants. Their efforts spearheaded peaceful sit-ins and demonstrations in dozens of cities and helped launch the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to encourage all students to get involved in the civil rights movement.



RUBY BRIDGES ATTENDS NEW ORLEANS SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 14, 1960

Six-year-old Ruby Bridges is escorted by four armed federal marshals as she became the first student to integrate William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. They were met with angry mobs shouting their disapproval, and throughout the day, parents marched in to remove their children from the school as a protest to desegregation. Every subsequent day of that academic year, Bridges was escorted to school, enduring insults and threats on her way, and then learned her lessons from her young teacher, Barbara Henry, in an otherwise empty classroom. Her actions inspired Norman Rockwell's 1964 painting *The Problem We All Live With*.





THE FREEDOM RIDES

MAY 4, 1961

There were 13 passengers in the first group of the Freedom Riders - seven African Americans and six whites, ten men and three women. One of these passengers was a 21-year old John Lewis, the future 17-term Congressman. Mounting a Greyhound bus, the trip was supposed to be 13 days long starting in Washington D.C. and ending in New Orleans. Their goal was to challenge Jim Crow laws in southern states that still had segregated public transportation. They wanted the federal government to be more involved and enforce the *Boynton v. Virginia* ruling. The group was confronted by violence in South Carolina, and, on May 14, when one bus stopped to change a slashed tire, the vehicle was firebombed and the Freedom Riders were beaten. Unable to travel further, the original riders were replaced by a second group of ten, partly organized by the SNCC in Nashville. As riders were either arrested or beaten, more groups of Freedom Riders would take their place.

Facing violence from both police officers and white protesters, the Freedom Rides drew international attention. On Mother's Day 1961, the bus reached Anniston, Alabama, where a mob of 200 people mounted the bus and firebombed it. The Freedom Riders escaped the burning bus but were assaulted once they were off the bus. Photos of the bus engulfed in flames were widely circulated, and the group could not find a bus driver to continue their journey. U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy negotiated with Alabama Governor John Patterson to find a suitable driver, and the Freedom Riders resumed their journey under police escort on May 20. But the officers left the group once they reached Montgomery, where a white mob brutally attacked the bus. Attorney General Kennedy responded to the riders—and a call from Martin Luther King Jr.—by sending federal marshals to Montgomery.

On May 24, 1961, a group of Freedom Riders reached Jackson, Mississippi. Though met with hundreds of supporters, the group was arrested for trespassing in a "whites-only" facility and sentenced to 30 days in jail. Attorneys for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought the matter to the U.S. Supreme Court, which reversed the convictions. Hundreds of new Freedom Riders were drawn to the cause, and the rides continued.

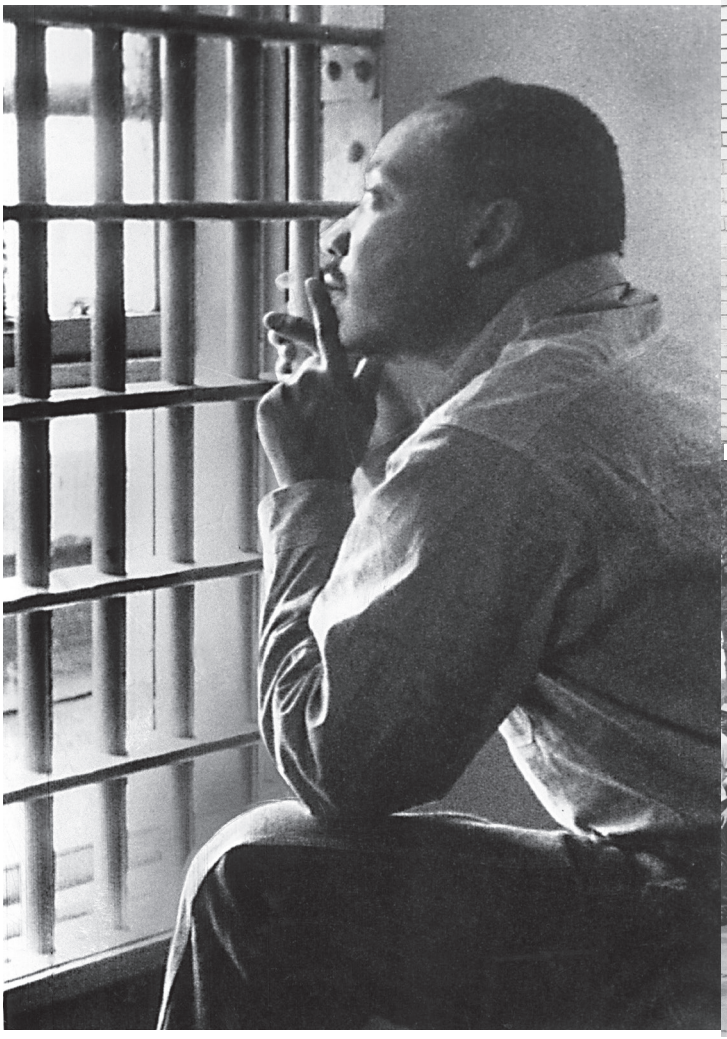
In the fall of 1961, under pressure from the Kennedy administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued regulations prohibiting segregation in interstate transit terminals.



THE BIRMINGHAM DEMONSTRATIONS

APRIL 3, 1963

In the spring of 1963, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., launched a large-scale campaign of sit-ins and marches in Birmingham, Alabama to protest the city's brutal segregation policies. The demonstrations faced challenges from many sides including an indifferent African American community, adversarial white and Black leaders, and a hostile Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor. On April 12, King was arrested for violating an anti-protest injunction and placed in solitary confinement. While behind bars, Dr. King wrote a long public letter that explained his philosophy of nonviolent protest. This document, which became known as "The Letter from Birmingham Jail," went on to be widely republished and regarded as a classic defense of the principles of civil disobedience. The demonstrations continued, but, after a month without any concessions, King was convinced to launch the Children's Crusade. Beginning on May 2, 1963, school-aged volunteers skipped school and began to march. Many submitted politely to arrests, and local jails quickly filled up. On May 3, Connor ordered the police and fire department to set high-pressure water hoses and attack dogs on protesters. The violent tactics against peaceful demonstrators continued in ensuing days, causing outrage in the community and gaining national attention. The negative media spurred President John F. Kennedy to propose a civil rights bill on June 11. Although the Birmingham campaign eventually negotiated an agreement with local reforms, tensions remained high in the city, and the meeting places of civil rights activists were continually threatened.







INTEGRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

JUNE 11, 1963

Governor George C. Wallace stood in a doorway at the University of Alabama to block two Black students accepted to the university - Vivian Malone and James A. Hood - from registering for classes. The students left campus. The standoff continued when they returned the following day until President John F. Kennedy sent the federalized National Guard troops to the campus. Wallace yielded, and Malone and Hood were then able to enroll in the school.

Later, Wallace tried to block the segregation of a public high school in Tuskegee only to yield once again to federalized National Guard troops sent by Kennedy.



MARCH ON WASHINGTON

AUGUST 28, 1963

Over 250,000 people arrived in Washington, D.C. for the largest non-violent civil rights demonstration that the nation had ever seen: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march was organized in a few months - coordinated by veteran strategist Bayard Rustin - and was meant to demonstrate an urgent need for substantive change. The demands in the event program began with "Comprehensive and effective civil rights legislation from the present Congress" and included the end of discrimination in education, housing, employment, and more. Leaders and organizers met with members of Congress and with President John F. Kennedy, while the march ended at the Lincoln Memorial with music and speeches, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s eloquent and uplifting message that famously became known as the "I Have a Dream" speech. The event included celebrities such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Odetta, and Marian Anderson.



16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH BOMBING

SEPTEMBER 15, 1963

A bomb at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killed four teen girls - Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Carol Denise McNair - and injured several other people prior to Sunday services. The church was targeted by four KKK members, because it had become a rallying point for civil rights activists and a meeting place for its leaders during the Birmingham campaign. The bombing fuels angry protests and violence. Though the suspects were largely known to law enforcement, the case was not tried until 1977.



THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

JULY 2, 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed segregation in public places, public schools, and made employment discrimination based on one's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin illegal. This was also used to end Jim Crow laws for segregated restrooms, water fountains, and restaurants. The act established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to help enforce the law and granted the commission the power to file lawsuits on behalf of workers. The bill faced backlash from southern Democrats who tried to kill it in the filibuster. It passed 73-27 in the Senate and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed July 2, 1964. It was later expanded to include the disabled, the elderly, and women in college sports.

The act paved the way for later legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.



ASSASSINATION OF MALCOLM X

FEBRUARY 21, 1965

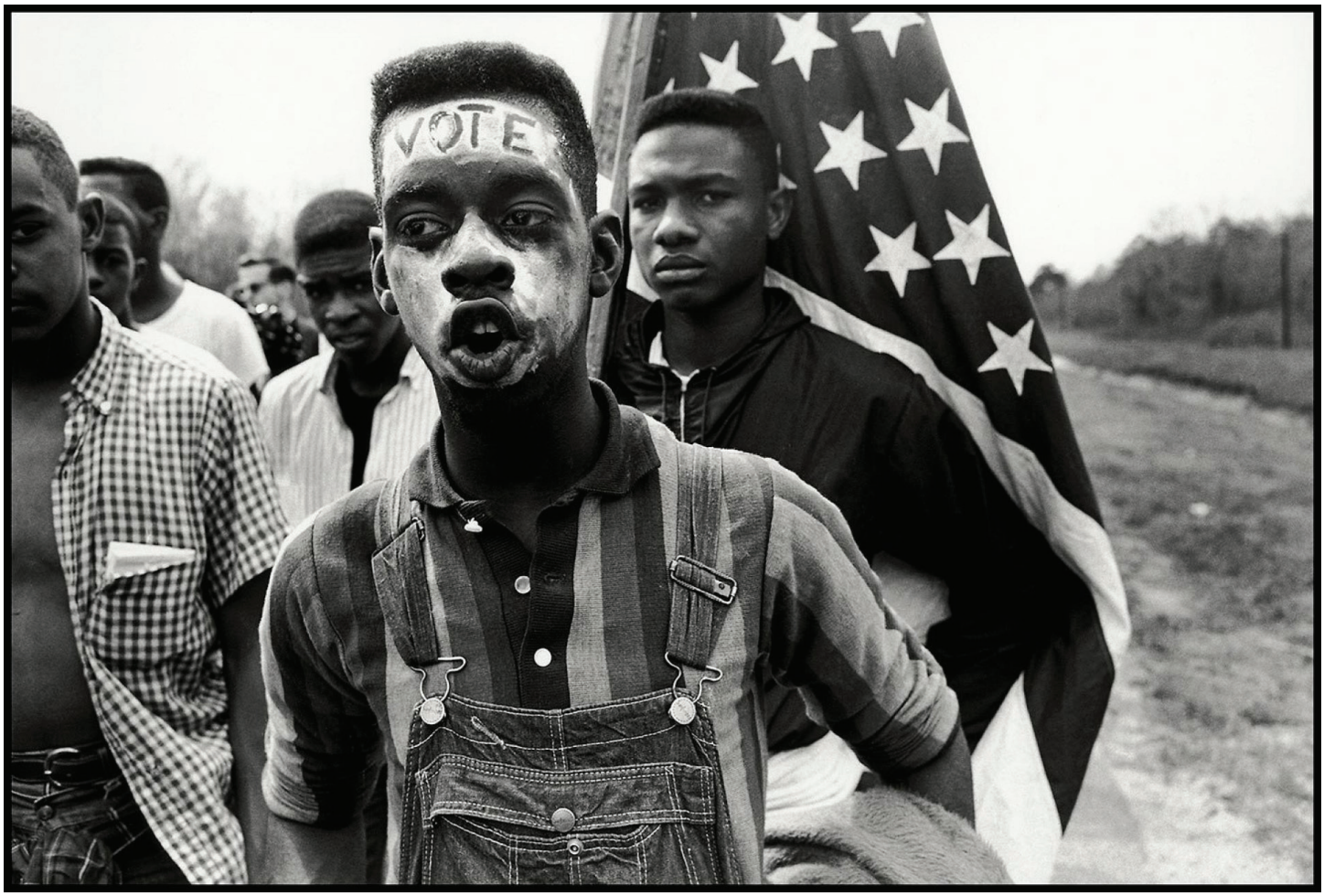
On February 21, 1965, the prominent Black leader Malcolm X was assassinated while lecturing at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, New York. An eloquent orator, Malcolm X spoke out on the civil rights movement, demanding it move beyond civil rights to human rights, and argued that the solution to racial problems was in orthodox Islam. His speeches and ideas contributed to the development of Black Nationalist ideology and the Black Power movement. Towards the end of his life, he had started to embrace Dr. King's more peaceful approach to the civil rights movement. Though he previously rejected participation in the political process, he later joined in the cause to increase voter registration among Blacks.



BLOODY SUNDAY
MARCH 7, 1965

On March 7, 1965 during a civil rights march to protest the killing of Black civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson by a white police officer in Selma, Alabama, John Lewis led 600 protesters as they were attacked by state troopers and sheriff's deputies in their attempt to cross the city's Edmund Pettus Bridge. Coverage of the marchers being beaten, tear-gassed, and trampled by police horses prompted outrage across the nation, and activists, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens flooded into Selma to lend their support. On March 9, a second group of 2,000 marchers, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., approached the bridge, prayed there, and returned to Brown Chapel. The media attention prompted President Johnson to introduce voting rights legislation on March 15.

On March 21, King once again led a group of marchers out of Selma; this time, they were protected by federalized National Guard troops, federal marshals, and FBI agents. Marchers arrived in Montgomery on March 25, where King addressed the crowd with what would be called his "How Long, Not Long" speech. At its conclusion, activists presented Governor George Wallace with a petition asking him to remove obstacles to voter registration. Americans saw the heroes of the civil rights movement on the national news, and then heard about the Ku Klux Klan's murder of a white homemaker from Michigan named Viola Liuzzo who had volunteered for the cause.



VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

AUGUST 6, 1965

African American voters were being denied the right to vote in state and local elections with certain states placing prerequisites for voting on Black citizens such as a poll tax, literacy tests, intimidation, violence, and economic reprisals. When President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965, he took the Civil Rights Act of 1964 several steps further. Laying out the importance of the bill, Johnson said, "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men." The new law banned all voter literacy tests and provided federal examiners in certain voting jurisdictions. It also allowed the attorney general to contest state and local poll taxes. As a result, poll taxes were later declared unconstitutional in *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections* in 1966.

Part of the Act was walked back decades later, in 2013, when a Supreme Court decision ruled that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional, holding that the constraints placed on certain states and federal review of states' voting procedures were outdated since discrimination was no longer an issue.



THE WATTS RIOTS
AUGUST 11, 1965

The Watts Riots lasted for six days and started when a white state trooper pulled over Marquette Frye for suspicion of drunk driving in Los Angeles, California. Eye witness accounts agree that Frye did resist arrest; they do not agree if excessive force was used by officers who made the arrest. In either cast, the event drew a crowd and increased tension between police and civilians. Violence errupted. Fourteen thousand National Guard troops were deployed to end the riots that caused 40 million dollars in damage and left 34 dead, over 1,000 people injured, and 4,000 arrested. It was the largest and most expensive violent event in the Civil Rights Era.

Governor Pat Brown called for an investigation of the riots (called the McCone Commission). The final report concluded the cause to have been community frustration with unemployment, substandard housing, and poor schools, which had been neglected in civil rights legislation. Despite the commission's recommendations, local and state officials failed to implement any social or economic policy changes to alleviate the conditions of inner city communities like Watts.



BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOUNDED

OCTOBER 15, 1966

In the wake of the assassination of Malcolm X and urban uprisings, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, to protect African American neighborhoods from police brutality. The Black Panthers launched numerous community programs that offered such services as tuberculosis testing, legal aid, transportation assistance, and free shoes to disadvantaged people. The programs confronted the economic problems of African Americans, which the party argued the civil rights reforms did not do enough to address. The Black Panthers' socialist viewpoint, however, made them a target of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterintelligence Program, which accused them of being a communist organization and an enemy of the U.S. government. A campaign to annihilate the group came to a head in December 1969 with a police shoot-out at the group's Southern California headquarters and the killing of Fred Hampton and another Panther during an Illinois state police raid.



LOVING V. VIRGINIA

JUNE 12, 1967

Richard Loving, a white man, and Mildred Jeter, a woman of mixed African American and Native American ancestry, were convicted of violating a Virginia state law that prohibited a white person and a "colored" person from leaving the state to be married and returning to live as man and wife. Their one-year prison sentence was suspended on the condition that the couple leave Virginia and not return as husband and wife for 25 years. The couple moved to the District of Columbia and sued Virginia over the law.

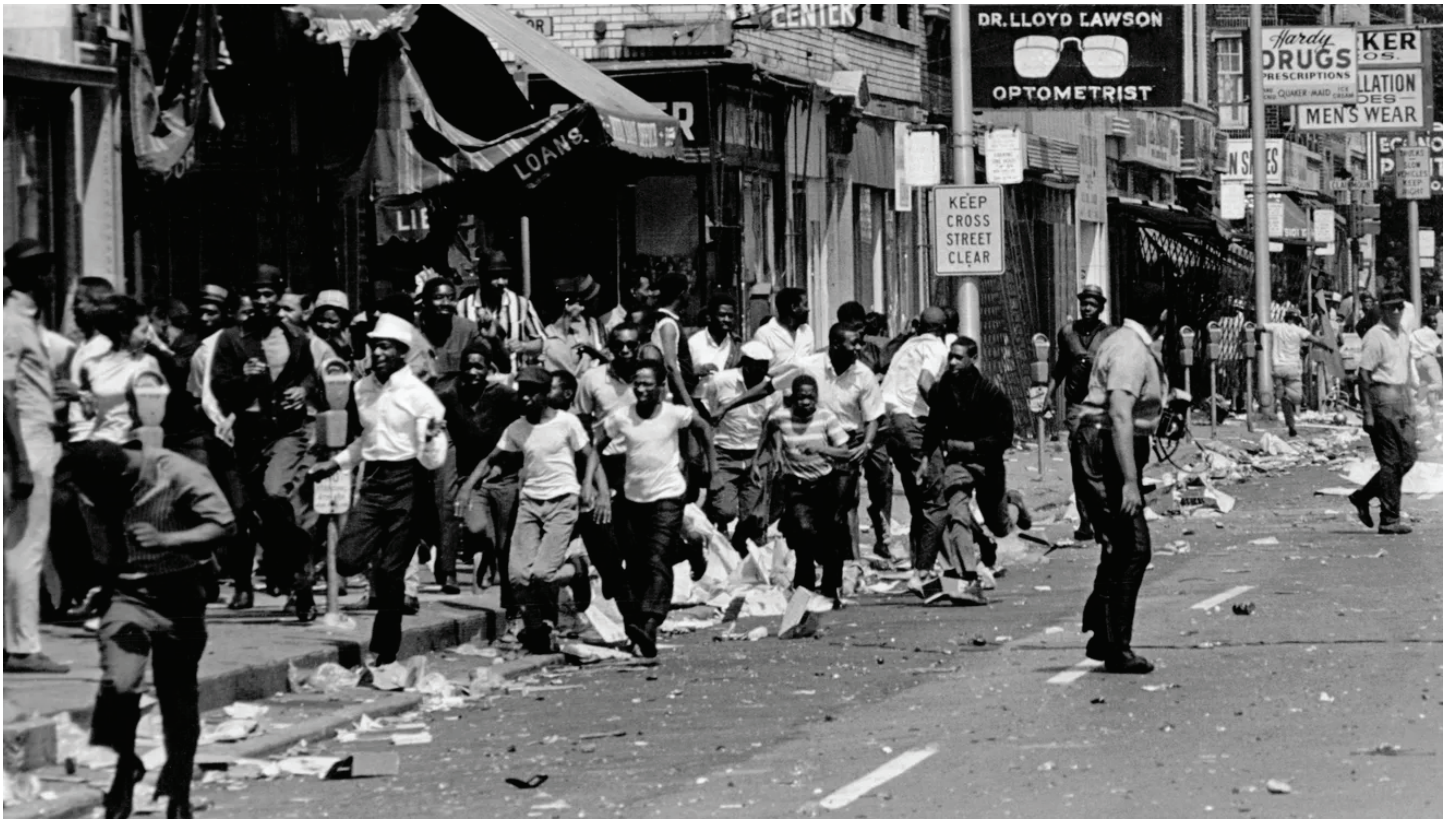
In its decision in the case, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down laws banning interracial marriage. Chief Justice Earl Warren rejected the argument by Virginia and wrote for a unanimous court that the law violated a basic civil right and the fundamentals of marriage while its only purpose was to carry out a white supremacist agenda. The ruling invalidated laws against interracial marriage in Virginia and 15 other states.



DETROIT RIOTS
JULY 23, 1967

The riot started after police raided an illegal drinking club that arrested everyone inside including 82 African Americans. Nearby residents saw the raid and went to the streets to raid local businesses, bars, and liquor stores for five straight days. The riots caused 43 deaths, hundreds of injuries, and around 7,000 people arrested.

As the disturbances continued, President Johnson appointed a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) to investigate recent urban uprisings. The commision discovered racism, poverty, and discrimination are some of the causes that led to the riots. It further noted that white people created the environment in which African Americans were living in and that they were also the ones who controlled and condoned that lifestyle. Finally, it revealed that we are heading in the direction of a nation with two different types of societies - one black, one white - that were “separate and unequal”.



ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

APRIL 4, 1968

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated by a sniper while standing on the second-floor balcony at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He had been staying at the motel after leading a nonviolent demonstration in support of striking sanitation workers in the city. Emotionally-charged looting and riots followed, putting pressure on the Johnson administration to push through additional civil rights laws. There was a nationwide response to his murder. April 7th was declared a Day of Mourning, and for days after the assassination, businesses were closed, sports games were rescheduled, and the Academy Awards were postponed. King's funeral was hosted at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and his coffin was followed through the Atlanta streets by a crowd of over 100,000 people. King's death increased the national debate over whether nonviolence was effective. Some viewed the assassination as a symbolic representation of the ineffectiveness of nonviolence, and over 100 cities broke out in violence. Others, such as the student leaders in Atlanta, chose to honor his legacy by continuing with peaceful protests.

The call for a federal holiday to honor Dr. King began just four days after his death when Rep. John Conyers first introduced legislation to observe his birthday. It failed to even come to the floor for a vote. It would take 11 years before the House would ever vote on the measure. When it did, it failed to receive the two-thirds majority needed to pass by five votes. Instead of getting discouraged, supporters increased their efforts. Four years later, the bill passed after strong debate and an attempted smear campaign by Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina. Reluctantly, President Reagan signed the legistation in November 1983. It was first officially observed as a federal holiday in 1986. However, many states did not observe the holiday at the state level until years later. Even when they did, some of those states - mostly Southern states - called the holiday a different name and even choose to recognize the day inconjuction with a day honoring General Robert E. Lee or other prominent Confederates. It was not until the year 2000 that all states observed MLK Day.

The national "Martin Luther King, Jr., National Day of Service" was started by former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator Harris Wofford and Atlanta Congressman John Lewis, who co-authored the King Holiday and Service Act. The federal legislation challenges Americans to transform the King Holiday into a day of volunteer service in honor of Dr. King. The federal legislation was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on August 23, 1994. Since 1996, Wofford's former state office director, Todd Bernstein, has been directing the annual Greater Philadelphia King Day of Service, the largest event in the nation honoring King. The day of service has been coordinated nationally by AmeriCorps, a federal agency, which provides grants to organizations that coordinate service activities on MLK Day. The only other official national day of service in the U.S., as designated by the government, is the September 11 National Day of Service (9/11 Day).

FAIR HOUSING ACT OF 1968

APRIL 11, 1968

The Fair Housing Act became law on April 11, 1968, just days after King's assassination. It prevented housing discrimination based on race, sex, national origin and religion. Despite Supreme Court decisions such as *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) and *Jones v. Mayer Co.* (1968), which outlawed the exclusion of African Americans or other minorities from certain sections of cities, race-based housing patterns were still in force in the housing segment in the late 1960s. Those who challenged them were often met with resistance, hostility, and even violence. The Fair Housing Act was also the last major legislation enacted during the Civil Rights Era.

In practice however, housing remained segregated in many areas of the United States in the years that followed. From 1950 to 1980, the total Black population in America's urban centers more than doubled - from 6.1 million to 15.3 million. During this same time period, white Americans steadily moved out of the cities into the suburbs, taking many employment opportunities with them. This led to the growth in urban communities with high minority populations that had high rates of unemployment, crime, and other social ills.

In 1988, Congress passed the Fair Housing Amendments Act, which expanded the law to prohibit discrimination in housing based on disability or on family status (pregnant women or the presence of children under 18).

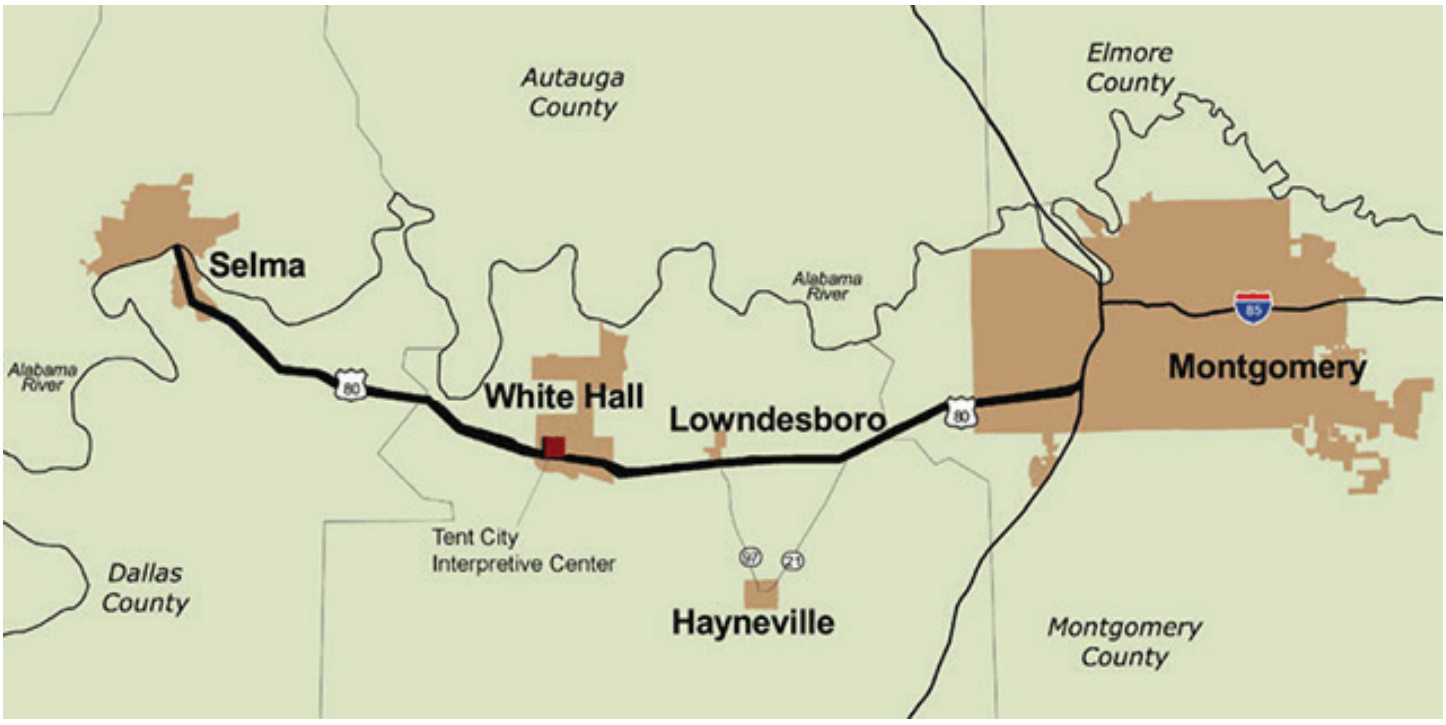


SELMA TO MONTGOMERY MARCHES

The first march on March 7, led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams, was in response to the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson. It was stopped at the Edmund Pettus Bridge resulting in what is now called Bloody Sunday.

The second march, held two days later, was just to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Once at the bridge, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked the marchers to kneel and pray. Afterwards, they turned around and went back to Brown Chapel - avoiding a confrontation with law enforcement. The march became known as Turnaround Tuesday.

The final Selma to Montgomery march, led again by Dr. King, was supported by the Federal District Court, but limited the number of people allowed on the march. This led to many people joining the march by day and returning to their homes at night. President Johnson ordered federalized National Guard troops, FBI agents, and federal marshals to protect the marchers along the route. The march lasted five days and spanned 54 miles. The group started with around 3,200 marchers (though only 300 could stay at night) and ended with approximately 25,000 when they reached the capital city. They walked between seven and seventeen miles each day and slept in fields and the yards of supporters at night. At these camps, they were entertained by performers including Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Nina Simone. After a final rally on the steps of the capitol, leaders of the march tried to deliver a voting rights petition to Governor Wallace but were denied.



CAMP PHOTOS









MARCH PHOTOS















EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE

The Edmund Pettus Bridge is remembered as the site of Bloody Sunday and the Selma March. It is now the site of an annual march to commemorate Bloody Sunday and the Selma March.



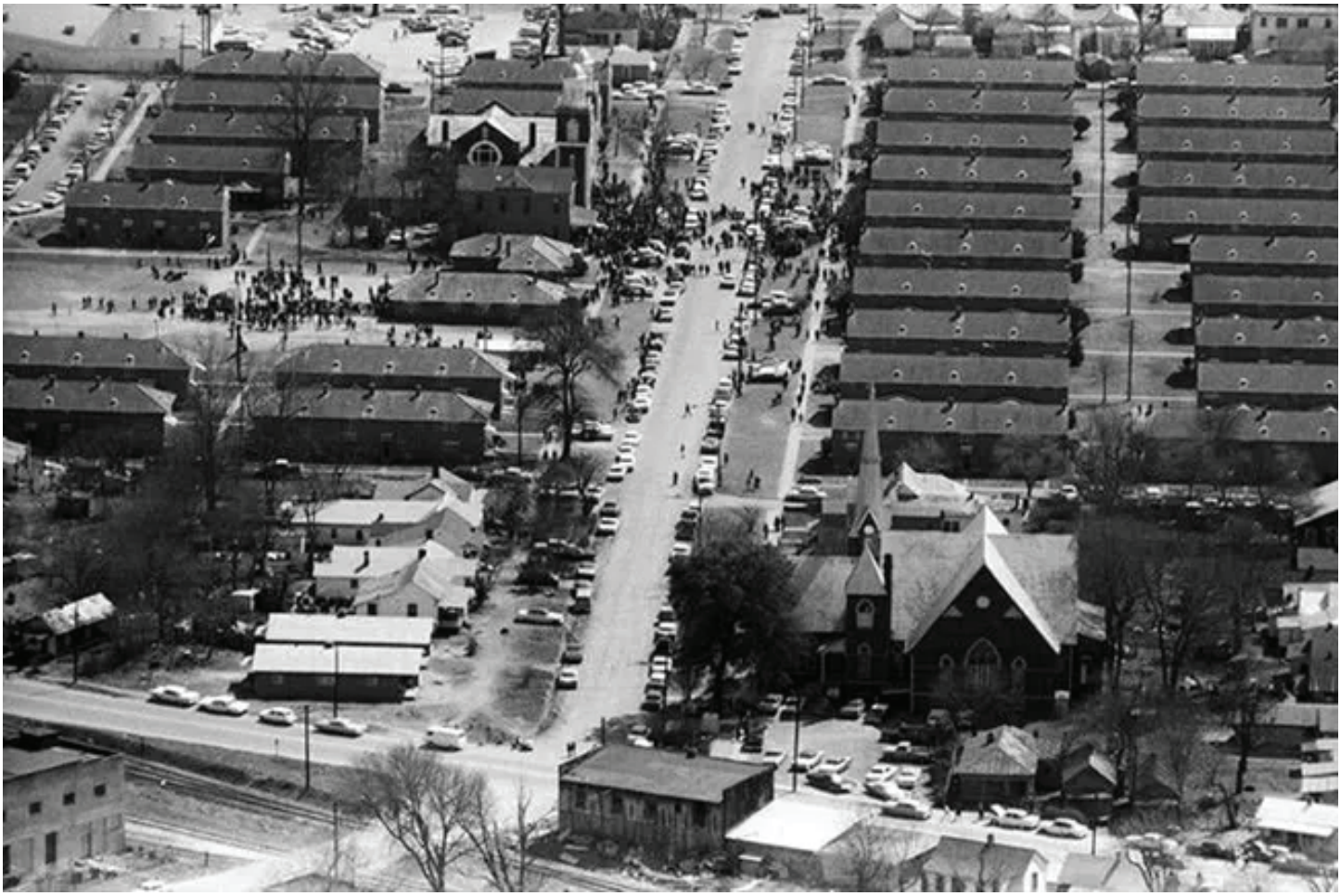
BROWN CHAPEL

Brown Chapel is an AME church in Selma, Alabama, and it served as a hub for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Civil Rights Movement - until Governor Wallace banned mass meetings in Black churches. However, the lead pastor quickly got permission from the bishop to continue holding meetings illegally. This chapel was the starting place for the march that ended on Bloody Sunday. It also functioned as a safe space for people who traveled into Selma for the march and those who were injured on the bridge. Today, it is an active church, a national historic landmark, and marks the start of the National Historic Trail from Selma to Montgomery. Outside of the church, there is a monument dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement leaders entitled The Freedom Wall.



GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER HOMES

George Washington Carver Homes is a neighborhood of Selma post-WWII public housing built in 1952 specifically for the African American community. Due to its proximity to Brown Chapel and the residents' activism, this neighborhood served as the headquarters and a safe space for the Civil Rights Movement in Selma. When leaders came to town many, including MLK Jr, would stay with the families here.



SINGING FOR FREEDOM

Songs, especially hymns, played a massive role in the Civil Rights Movement, allowing people to connect and express their feelings. Music is a central part of most Black church services and has held a significant role in African American history (i.e. all of the songs that came out of slavery and emancipation), so using hymns only seemed natural as a part of a movement that was grounded in the church. Specifically, using hymns helped to connect everyone, because most of the audience would have been familiar with these traditional songs and the stories they tell. Typically, a song leader guides the congregation through a song, but everyone sings. The song leaders in the Civil Rights Movement were known for adapting the lyrics of traditional hymns to reflect the context in which they were sung. Dr. Claire Crawford, a professor at Wake Forest, described the use of music in the movement as a way in which people could find their purpose and their desire for freedom. Generally, most of the freedom songs emphasize themes of freedom and love.

Here is a look at four freedom songs featured in our production of *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom*.

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

The origin of "This Little Light of Mine" is unknown, but it was likely first sung in slavery. After being written in a poetry book by Edward G. Ivins in 1925, it became a popular hymn sung in African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches across the country. It was first recorded–as a folk song–by a prisoner in 1934. Harry Dixon Loes composed an arrangement in the 1940s, which is the version most churches sing today.

This song was one most members of the movement grew up with, but it took on a whole new meaning during the 1960s. In the Civil Rights Movement, this song was sung in almost every meeting (sometimes multiple times) and became one of Betty Fikes' strongest songs and Fannie Lou Hamer's "theme song." She was known for changing or adding lyrics depending on the context. For example, in Selma, she would sing "Tell [Sheriff] Jim Clark, I'm going to let it shine." The use of "I" in Black hymns symbolizes community, because everyone is singing "I" together. Bernice Johnson Reagon notes that it's a more active communal gesture because saying "we" allows people to back away, but saying "I" shows individual responsibility. She also mentioned the power in letting one's light shine in a context where Black people were often told to just be efficient and invisible. In contrast to the traditional humility interpretation of this song in white churches, Black churches typically sing this song arrogantly, showing their presence is valuable. The musicality reflected this sentiment, with many song leaders adding riffs and claps while singing. One especially notable use of this song was when Fannie Lou Hamer sang it outside the 1964 Democratic National Convention, advocating for the right to vote. Most recently, it was sung as part of the counterprotest to the Neonazi demonstration in Charlottesville.

Quote About This Song
Rutha Mae Harris: "It kept us from being afraid."

Some added lyrics:
"All in the JailHouse, This Little Light of Mine" (Fainnie Lou Hamer)
"Up and down this street, Lord, I'm going to let it shine" (Betty Mae Fikes)
"Every time I'm bleeding, I'm going to let it shine" (Sam Block)
"Voting for my freedom, I'm going to let it shine" (Dock Reese)

WE SHALL OVERCOME

"We Shall Overcome" is largely considered the theme song of the Civil Rights Movement. It was inspired by the 1903 hymn, "I'll Overcome Someday" and the traditional gospel song, "I'll be Alright." Before the Civil Rights Movement, it played a big role in the Charleston labor strikes, where the lyrics changed from "I" to "we." The song was brought by two women (whose names have been lost to history) to the Highlander Folk School, which trained many of the Civil Rights Movement's song leaders. It was here, in 1948, that folk singer Pete Seeger changed "will" to "shall" and added two verses about community while Guy Carawin and Frank Hamilton changed the rhythm. Pete Seeger is largely credited with popularizing the song. Carawin, Hamilton, and Seeger donate all royalties from the song to the "We Shall Overcome Fund" which was "created to nurture grassroots efforts within African American communities to use art and activism against injustice." Another notable change was that of the time signature. Originally written in 3/4 , the time signature was switched to 4/4 with the goal of making it easier to learn and to sync better with marching. Throughout the movement, lyrics like "we are not afraid," "Black and white together, we shall overcome," and more were added.

Quote About This Song
Martin Luther King, Jr: "There's something about that song that haunts you."

"The freedom songs are playing a strong and vital role in our struggle. They give the people new courage and a sense of unity."
--Martin Luther King, Jr.

OH FREEDOM

This song originated as a response to the end of slavery. It contains symbolism of freedom after death (a common theme in African American spirituals) and freedom from slavery. It was used throughout the Civil War, Reconstruction, Labor Movement, and eventually the Civil Rights Movement. In the Civil Rights Movement, lyrics like "no more Jim-Crow," "no more burning churches," "no more weeping," and more were added.

"Music was an anchor. It kept us from being afraid. You start singing a song, and somehow, those billy clubs would not hit you. It played a very important role in the movement."

--Rutha Mae Harris

UP OVER MY HEAD

This song represents one of the more powerful lyric changes in the Civil Rights Movement. The original lyric was "Up over my head I see trouble in the air." However, when Bernice Johnson Reagon sang it after marching to support Black students who were arrested buying tickets from the "white only" ticket booth after the Interstate Commerce Commission's recent ban of segregation transportation across state lines, she felt like something had changed. Instead of seeing trouble in the air, she saw freedom; so that's what she sang. This marked "the first time [Reagon] had the sort of awareness that these songs were [hers] and [she] could use them for what [she] needed to."

Quote About This Song

Bernice Johnson Reagon: "It was the first time my living had changed a song even as it came out of my body."

"[Singing] brings out the soul;" "singing is one of the main things that keeps us going."

--Fannie Lou Hamer

Voter Registration Restrictions

Common Obstacles Before the Voting Rights of Act



GRANDFATHER CLAUSE

People who could not read and owned no property were allowed to vote if their fathers or grandfathers had voted before 1867. Of course, practically no blacks could vote before 1867, so the grandfather clause worked only for whites.



POLL TAX

In Southern states, people had to pay a tax to vote. Many people had extremely low incomes and could not afford this tax. This poll tax applied to all people who wanted to vote - black and white. There were ways for whites to get around other laws, but not around the poll tax. Many poor whites could not vote because of the poll tax.



THREATS

Blacks who tried to register to vote often lost their jobs and/or their housing. Many threatened with physical violence and harassed. Their credit could be threatened if they had loans (or could not receive a loan). Some were lynched as a "warning" to other Blacks to not register to vote.



LITERACY TESTS

People had to pass a test in order to vote. State tests varied, and many of the questions were not related to civics. They were deliberately confusing. The test outcome was determined by local government officials, all of whom were white.



PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

In the South one hundred years ago, many states allowed only property owners to vote. Many blacks and whites had no property and could not vote.

Other Methods of Voter Suppression

- Purges: From time to time, white officials purged the voting rolls. That means they took people's names off the official lists of voters. Some voters would arrive at the polls and find that they were not registered to vote. Often they could not register to vote again until after the election. Purges more often affected blacks than whites.

- All-white primary elections: In the South from about 1900 to about 1960, the Democratic candidates usually won. (See the exhibit Political Parties in Black and White to learn the reason for this.) Republicans were almost never elected, especially in the Deep South. This means that the Democratic primary election was usually the only election that mattered.

  African Americans were not allowed to vote in the Democratic primary elections. White Democrats said the Democratic Party was a "club" and did not allow black members. So blacks could not vote in the only elections that mattered.





1964 Voter Registration Statistics in Dallas County, Alabama *(where Selma is located)*

Residents	Registered Voters
• 14,400 white (48.79%)	• 9.195 white (96.48%)
• 15,115 black (51.21%)	• 335 black (3.52%)

Dallas County was not unique in this stat. Across the state of Alabama, only 3% of black adults were registered to vote. In Mississippi, it was 1%.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965

Changes from the Act



- Made discriminatory registration practices like the grandfather clause, literacy test, and property ownership illegal as prequistes for voter registration. It also banned all-white primaries. The 24th Amendment to the US Constitution banned poll taxes, which was passed the previous year in 1964.
- Prohibited voter discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group. It also required certain places to provide election materials in languages besides English.
- Identified specific states with a history of discriminatory voter practices and required they receive prior approval from the Department of Justice before implementing any policy changes. It further required federal observermonitor elections in these states.
- Empowered federal courts to impose the Act's requirements.

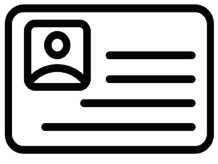
Recent Supreme Court Decisions & VRA

While the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has gone through a number of legislative changes and extensions over the years, two recent Supreme Court decisions have weakened what was once considered the crowning achievement of the civil rights movement.

In 2013 in a 5-4 Shelby v. Holder decision, the Supreme Court held that while preclearance was constitutional, the formula used to determine which states and localities should be required to obtain preclearance was outdated and was therefore unconstitutional. The Court concluded that the formula in Section IV (4b) was old and that it should be updated by Congress. Without the formula, no states or localities are required to seek preclearance. Thus, the preclearance requirement in Section V (5) is effectively unenforceable. This means that places with a history of discrimination no longer have federal oversight before changing their voting processes. The decision gutted the VRA by significantly reducing its power to prevent the passing of discriminatory election laws. Effectively, it means protections that were in place from 1965 to 2013 no longer exist.

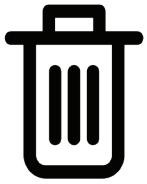
In their split decision in *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* in 2021, the Supreme Court found the burden on voters of color and Native voters (Bronovich represented the state of Arizona which has a significant number of Native American voters) to be "too modest" even while acknowledging discrimination exists. The Court also stated challenges to the State's policy should be considered in the context of the State's entire voting system meaning that as long as there's an alternative option, racially discriminatory practices might be ok. While federal courts have historically played a critical role in protecting voting rights for all Americans, the ruling makes it significantly more difficult to challenge voter suppression and indicates that The Supreme Court will no longer protect voters or our democracy.

New Threats to Voter Registration



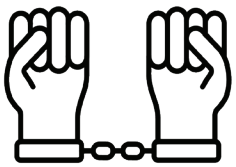
ID CARDS

While most Americans have a government-issued photo ID, not all do. These laws would disporprotionately affect people of color, elderly, & people of color. It would also mean college students who live in a different state from home may have to get another ID in the state they attend college.



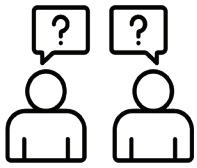
ROLL PURGES

When voter rolls are purged, individuals may not find out until the day they attempt to vote. It can take weeks to get back on the registration roll, and then it may be too late to cast their ballot.



INFRACTIONS

Some states have harsh penalities including jail terms for voting offenses such as voting in the wrong precinct, registering after being of certain crimes, or giving food or water to voters waiting in line. These laws make people reluctent to vote.



DISTRICT CHANGES

Gerrymandered districts give one political party an advantage & further disinfranchise voters. It also confuses voters who do not know where to vote, who represents them, or who the candidates are in their district.