27 CHAPTER

Walking into Freedom Land: The Civil Rights Movement 1941–1973

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IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

How did the civil rights movement evolve over time, and how did competing ideas and political alliances affect its growth and that of other social movements?

In June 1945, as World War II was ending, Democratic senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi stood on the floor of the U.S. Senate and brashly told his colleagues that "the Negro race is an inferior race." Raising his arms, his tie askew from vigorous gesturing, Eastland ridiculed black troops. "The Negro soldier was an utter and dismal failure in combat," he said.

Eastland's assertions were untrue. Black soldiers had served honorably; many won medals for bravery in combat. All-black units, such as the 761st "Black Panther" Tank Battalion and the famous Tuskegee Airmen, were widely praised by military commanders. But segregationists like Eastland were a nearly unassailable force in Congress, able to block civil rights legislation and shape national opinion.

In the 1940s, two generations after W. E. B. Du Bois famously wrote that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line," few white Americans believed wholeheartedly in racial equality. Racial segregation remained entrenched across the country. Much of the Deep South, like Eastland's Mississippi, was a "closed society": black people had no political rights and lived on the margins of white society, impoverished and exploited. Northern cities proved more hospitable to African Americans, but schools, neighborhoods, and many businesses remained segregated and unequal in the North as well.

Across the nation, however, winds of change were gathering. Between World War II and the 1970s, slowly at first, and then with greater urgency in the 1960s, the civil rights movement swept aside systematic racial segregation. It could not sweep away racial inequality completely, but the movement constituted a "second Reconstruction" in which African American activism reshaped the nation's laws and practices. Civil rights was the paradigmatic social movement of the twentieth century. Its model of nonviolent protest and its calls for self-determination inspired the New Left, feminism, the Chicano movement, the gay rights movement, the American Indian movement, and many others.

The black-led civil rights movement, joined at key moments by Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, redefined *liberalism*. In the 1930s, New Deal liberalism had established a welfare state to protect citizens from economic hardship. The civil rights movement forged a new **rights liberalism**: the notion that individuals require state protection from discrimination. This version of liberalism focused on identities—such as race or sex—rather than general social welfare, and as such would prove to be both a necessary expansion of the nation's ideals and a divisive force that produced political backlash. Indeed, the quest for racial justice would contribute to a crisis of liberalism itself.

The March from Selma to Montgomery, 1965 Leading a throng of 25,000 marchers, Martin Luther King Jr. holds the hand of his wife, Coretta Scott King, as they enter downtown Montgomery, Alabama, at the end of the Selma to Montgomery march. Bob Adelman/Magnum Photos, Inc.

The Emerging Civil Rights Struggle, 1941–1957

As it took shape during World War II and the early Cold War, the battle against racial injustice proceeded along two tracks: at the grass roots and in governing institutions — federal courts, state legislatures, and ultimately the U.S. Congress. Labor unions, churches, and protest organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) inspired hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens to join the movement. But grassroots struggle was not African Americans' only weapon. They also had the Bill of Rights and the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution. Civil rights lived in those documents — especially in the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed equal protection under the law to all U.S. citizens, and in the Fifteenth, which guaranteed the right to vote regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" — but had been ignored or violated for nearly a century. The task was to restore the Constitution's legal force. Neither track — grassroots or legal/legislative — was entirely independent of the other. Together, they were the foundation of the fight for racial equality in the postwar decades.

Life Under Jim Crow

Racial segregation and economic exploitation defined the lives of the majority of African Americans in the postwar decades. Numbering 15 million in 1950, African Americans were approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population. In the South, however, they constituted between 30 and 50 percent of the population of several states, such as South Carolina and Mississippi. Segregation, commonly known as **Jim Crow** (Chapter 18), prevailed in every aspect of life in the southern states, where two-thirds of all African Americans lived in 1950. African Americans could not eat in restaurants patronized by whites or use the same waiting rooms at bus stations. All forms of public transportation were rigidly segregated by custom or by law. Public parks and libraries were segregated. Even drinking fountains were labeled "White" and "Colored."

This system of segregation underlay economic and political structures that further marginalized and disempowered black citizens. Virtually no African

Segregation in Mobile, 1956

As the law of the land in most southern states, racial segregation (known as Jim Crow) required the complete separation of blacks and whites in most public spaces. The "white only" drinking fountain shown in this 1956 photograph in Mobile, Alabama, was typical. Everything from waiting areas to libraries, public parks, schools, restrooms, and even cola vending machines was subject to strict racial segregation. Gordon Parks, courtesy of the Gordon Parks Foundation.

American could work for city or state government, and the best jobs in the private sector were reserved for whites. Black workers labored "in the back," cleaning, cooking, stocking shelves, and loading trucks for the lowest wages. Rural African Americans labored in a sharecropping system that kept them stuck in poverty, often prevented them from obtaining an education, and offered virtually no avenue of escape. Politically, less than 20 percent of eligible black voters were allowed to vote, the result of poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation, fraud, and the "white primary" (elections in which only whites could vote). This near-total disenfranchisement gave whites power disproportionate to their numbers — black people were one-third of the residents of Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia but had virtually no political voice in those states.

In the North, racial segregation in everyday life was less acute but equally tangible. Northern segregation took the form of a spatial system in which whites increasingly lived in suburbs or on the outskirts of cities, while African Americans were concentrated in declining downtown neighborhoods. The result was what many called ghettos: all-black districts characterized by high rents, low wages, and inadequate city services. Employment discrimination and lack of adequate training left many African Americans without any means of support. Few jobs other than the most menial were open to African Americans; journalists, accountants, engineers, and other highly educated men from all-black colleges and universities often labored as railroad porters or cooks because jobs commensurate with their skills remained for whites only. These conditions produced a self-perpetuating cycle that kept far too many black citizens trapped on the social margins.

To be certain, African Americans found greater freedom in the North and West than in the South. They could vote, participate in politics, and, at least after the early 1960s, enjoy equal access to public accommodations. But we err in thinking that racial segregation was only a southern problem or that poverty and racial discrimination were not also deeply entrenched in the North and West. In northern cities such as Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia, for instance, white home owners in the 1950s used various tactics — from police harassment to thrown bricks, burning crosses, bombs, and mob violence — to keep African Americans from living near them. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 26, Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and bank redlining excluded African American home buyers from the all-white suburbs emerging around major cities. Racial segregation was a national, not regional, problem.

Origins of the Civil Rights Movement

Since racial discrimination had been part of American life for hundreds of years, why did the civil rights movement arise when it did? After all, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, had begun challenging racial segregation in a series of court cases in the 1930s. And other organizations, such as Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s, had attracted significant popular support. These precedents were important, but several factors came together in the middle of the twentieth century to make a broad movement possible.

An important influence was World War II. "The Jewish people and the Negro people both know the meaning of Nordic supremacy," wrote the African American poet Langston Hughes in 1945. In the war against fascism, the Allies sought to discredit racist Nazi ideology. Committed to fighting racism abroad, Americans increasingly condemned racism at home. The Cold War placed added pressure on U.S. officials. "More and more we are learning how closely our democracy is under observation," President Harry S. Truman commented in 1947. To inspire other nations in the global standoff with the Soviet Union, Truman explained, "we must correct the remaining imperfections in our practice of democracy."

Among the most consequential factors was the growth of the urban black middle class. Historically small, the black middle class experienced robust growth after World War II. Its ranks produced most of the civil rights leaders: ministers, teachers, trade unionists, attorneys, and other professionals. Churches, for centuries a sanctuary for black Americans, were especially important. Moreover, in the 1960s African American college students — part of the largest expansion of college enrollment in U.S. history — joined the movement, adding new energy and fresh ideas (Table 27.1). With access to education, media, and institutions, this new middle class had more resources than ever before. Less dependent on white patronage, and therefore less vulnerable to white retaliation, middle-class African Americans were in a position to lead a movement for change.

IDENTIFY CAUSES
How did the growth of the black middle class assist the civil rights movement?

Still other influences assisted the movement. White labor leaders were generally more equality-minded than the rank and file, but the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers, and the Communications Workers of America, among many other trade unions,

TABLE 27.1

African American College Enrollment

Year	Number of African Americans Enrolled (rounded to nearest thousand)
1940	60,000
1950	110,000
1960	185,000
1970	430,000
1980	1.4 million
1990	3.6 million

were reliable allies at the national level. The new medium of television, too, played a crucial role. When television networks covered early desegregation struggles, such as the 1957 integration of Little Rock High School, Americans across the country saw the violence of white supremacy firsthand. None of these factors alone was decisive. None ensured an easy path. The civil rights movement faced enormous resistance and required dauntless courage and sacrifice from thousands upon thousands of activists for more than three decades. Ultimately, however, the movement changed the nation for the better and improved the lives of millions of Americans.

World War II: The Beginnings

During the war fought "to make the world safe for democracy," the United States was far from ready to extend full equality to its own black citizens. Black workers faced discrimination in wartime employment, and the more than one million black troops who served in World War II were placed in segregated units commanded by whites. Both at home and abroad, World War II "immeasurably magnified the Negro's awareness of the disparity between the American profession

Postwar Desegregation

Picketers outside the July 1948 Democratic National Convention demand that the party include equal rights and anti–Jim Crow planks in its official platform and desegregate the armed services. Leading the pickets is A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Randolph headed the March on Washington Movement that pressured President Roosevelt to desegregate defense employment during World War II, and he led the committee that convinced President Truman to desegregate the armed forces in 1948. © Bettmann/Corbis.

and practice of democracy," NAACP president Walter White observed.

Executive Order 8802 On the home front, activists pushed two strategies. First, A. Philip Randolph, whose **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters** was the most prominent black trade union, called for a march on Washington in early 1941. Randolph planned to bring 100,000 protesters to the nation's capital if African Americans were not given equal opportunity in war jobs — then just beginning to expand with President Franklin Roosevelt's pledge to supply the Allies with materiel. To avoid a divisive protest, FDR issued Executive Order 8802 in June of that year, prohibiting racial discrimination in defense industries, and Randolph agreed to cancel the march. The resulting Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) had few enforcement powers, but it set an important precedent: federal action. Randolph's efforts showed that white leaders and institutions could be swayed by concerted African American action. It would be a critical lesson for the movement.

Wartime Workers

During World War II, hundreds of thousands of black migrants left the South, bound for large cities in the North and West. There, they found jobs such as the welding work done by these African American women at the Landers, Frary, and Clark plant in New Britain, Connecticut. Fighting employment discrimination during the war represented one of the earliest phases in the long struggle against racial segregation in the United States. Library of Congress.

The Double V Campaign A second strategy jumped from the pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the foremost African American newspapers of the era. It was the brainchild of an ordinary cafeteria worker from Kansas. In a 1942 letter to the editor, James G. Thompson urged that "colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory" — victory over fascism abroad and victory over racism at home. Edgar Rouzeau, editor of the paper's New York office, agreed: "Black America must fight two wars and win in both." Instantly dubbed the Double V Campaign, Thompson's notion, with Rouzeau's backing, spread like wildfire through black communities across the country. African Americans would demonstrate their loyalty and citizenship by fighting the Axis powers. But they would also demand, peacefully but emphatically, the defeat of racism at home. "The suffering and privation may be great," Rouzeau told his readers, "but the rewards loom even greater."

The Double V efforts met considerable resistance. In war industries, factories periodically shut down in Chicago, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities because of "hate strikes": the refusal of white workers to labor alongside black workers. Detroit was especially tense. Referring to the potential for racial strife, *Life* magazine reported in 1942 that "Detroit is Dynamite. . . . It can either blow up Hitler or blow up America." In 1943, it nearly did the latter. On a hot summer day, whites from the city's ethnic neighborhoods taunted and beat African Americans in a local park. Three days of rioting ensued in which thirty-four people were killed, twenty-five of them black. Federal troops were called in to restore order.

Despite and because of such incidents, a generation was spurred into action during the war years. In New York City, employment discrimination on the city's transit lines prompted one of the first bus boycotts in the nation's history, led in 1941 by Harlem minister Adam Clayton Powell Jr. In Chicago, James Farmer and three other members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a nonviolent peace organization, founded the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** in 1942. FOR and CORE adopted the philosophy of nonviolent direct action espoused by Mahatma Gandhi of India. Another FOR member in New York, Bayard Rustin, was equally instrumental in promoting direct action; he led one of

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES

Why did World War II play such a critical role in the civil rights movement?

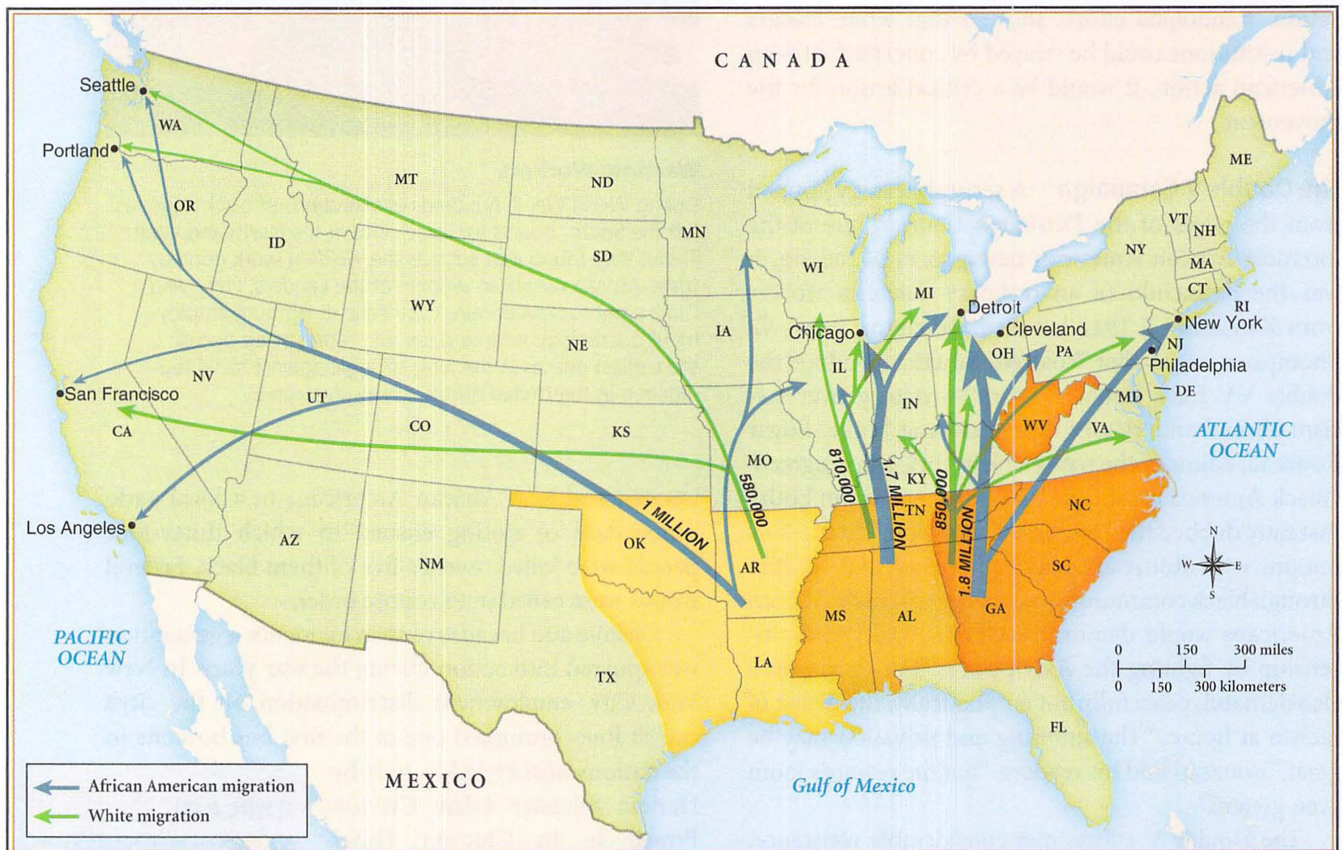
the earliest challenges to southern segregation, the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation. Meanwhile, after the war, hundreds of thousands of African American veterans used the GI Bill to go to college, trade school, or graduate school, placing themselves in a position to push against segregation. At the war's end, Powell affirmed that "the black man . . . is ready to throw himself into the struggle to make the dream of America become flesh and blood, bread and butter."

Cold War Civil Rights

Demands for justice persisted in the early years of the Cold War. African American efforts were propelled by symbolic victories — as when Jackie Robinson broke through the color line in major league baseball by joining the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 — but the growing black vote in northern cities proved more decisive. During World War II, more than a million African Americans migrated to northern and western cities, where they joined the Democratic Party of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal (Map 27.1). This newfound political leverage awakened northern liberals, many of whom became allies of civil rights advocates. Ultimately, the Cold War produced mixed results, as the nation's commitment to anticommunism opened some avenues for civil rights while closing others.

Civil Rights and the New Deal Coalition

African American leaders were uncertain what to expect from President Truman, inheritor of the New Deal coalition but not opposed to using racist language himself.



MAP 27.1
Internal Migrations

The migration of African Americans from the South to other regions of the country produced one of the most remarkable demographic shifts of the mid-twentieth century. Between World War I — which marked the start of the Great Migration — and the 1970s, more than 6 million African Americans left the South. Where they settled in the North and West, they helped change the politics of entire cities and even states. Seeking black votes, which had become a key to victory in major cities, liberal Democrats and Republicans alike in New York, Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania, for instance, increasingly made civil rights part of their platform. In this way, migration advanced the political cause of black equality.

Though he did not immediately support social equality for African Americans, Truman supported civil rights because he believed in equality before the law. Moreover, he understood the growing importance of the small but often decisive black vote in key northern states such as New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Civil rights activists Randolph and Powell — along with vocal white liberals such as Hubert Humphrey, the mayor of Minneapolis, and members of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), a liberal organization — pressed Truman to act.

With no support for civil rights in Congress, Truman turned to executive action. In 1946, he appointed the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights, whose 1947 report, **"To Secure These Rights,"** called for robust federal action to ensure equality for African Americans. With the report fresh in his mind, in 1948 Truman issued an executive order desegregating employment in federal agencies and, under pressure from Randolph's Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service, desegregated the armed forces. Truman then sent a message to Congress asking that all of the report's recommendations — including the abolition of poll taxes and the restoration of the Fair Employment Practices Commission — be made into law. It was the most aggressive, and politically bold, call for racial equality by the leader of a major political party since Reconstruction.

Truman's boldness was too much for southern Democrats. Under the leadership of Strom Thurmond, governor of South Carolina, white Democrats from the South formed the **States' Rights Democratic Party**, known popularly as the Dixiecrats, for the 1948 election (Chapter 25). This brought into focus an internal struggle developing within the Democratic Party and its still-formidable New Deal coalition. Would the civil rights aims of the party's liberal wing alienate southern white Democrats, as well as many suburban whites in the North? It was the first hint of the discord that would eventually divide the Democratic Party in the 1960s.

Race and Anticommunism The Cold War shaped civil rights in both positive and negative terms. In a time of growing fear of communist expansionism, Truman worried about America's image in the world. He reminded Americans that when whites and blacks "fail to live together in peace," that failure hurt "the cause of democracy itself in the whole world." Indeed, the Soviet Union used American racism as a means of discrediting the United States abroad. "We cannot escape the fact that our civil rights record has been an issue in world politics," the Committee on Civil Rights wrote. International tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union thus appeared to strengthen the hand of civil rights leaders, because America needed to demonstrate to the rest of the world that its race relations were improving (America Compared, p. 876).

However, the Cold War strengthened one hand while weakening the other. McCarthyism and the hunt for subversives at home held the civil rights movement back. Civil rights opponents charged that racial integration was "communistic," and the NAACP was banned in many southern states as an "anti-American" organization. Black Americans who spoke favorably of the Soviet Union, such as the actor and singer Paul Robeson, or had been "fellow travelers" in the 1930s, such as the pacifist Bayard Rustin, were persecuted. Robeson, whose career was destroyed by such accusations, told House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) interrogators, "My father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to . . . have a part of it just like you." The fate of people like Robeson showed that the Cold War could work *against* the civil rights cause just as easily as for it.

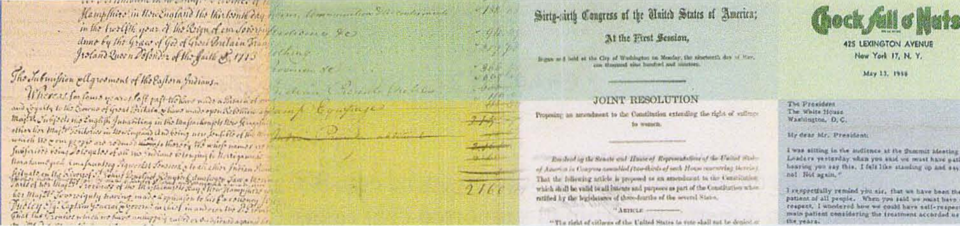
UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW
How did the Cold War work in the favor of civil rights? How did it work against the movement?

Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans

African Americans were the most prominent, but not the only, group in American society to organize against racial injustice in the 1940s. In the Southwest, from Texas to California, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans endured a "caste" system not unlike the Jim Crow system in the South. In Texas, for instance, poll taxes kept most Mexican American citizens from voting. Decades of discrimination by employers in agriculture and manufacturing — made possible by the constant supply of cheap labor from across the border — suppressed wages and kept the majority of Mexican Americans barely above poverty. Many lived in *colonias* or barrios, neighborhoods separated from Anglos and often lacking sidewalks, reliable electricity and water, and public services.

Developments within the Mexican American community set the stage for fresh challenges to these conditions in the 1940s. Labor activism in the 1930s and 1940s, especially in Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions with large numbers of Mexican Americans, improved wages and working conditions in some industries and produced a new generation of

AMERICA COMPARED



Freedom in the United States and Africa

Hailou Wolde-Giorghis

Hailou Wolde-Giorghis was an Ethiopian student who visited the United States at the invitation of the State Department in the early 1960s.

"Negroes are dirty," say the whites, but in nearly all restaurants I saw Negro waiters and cooks. "They're lazy": I noticed that it is the Negro who does the hardest manual work. They are said to be uncultivated and are therefore denied access to culture. As George Bernard Shaw said, "The haughty American nation makes the Negro shine its shoes, and then demonstrates his physical and mental inferiority by the fact that he is a shoe-cleaner." . . .

What is known as integration in the South is the ability of a Negro to enter a shop and buy a record, or the fact that, of ten thousand students enrolled in a university, two of them are Negroes. "A miracle!" they cry. Real integration, however, does not exist, not even in the North, and by real integration I mean interracial communication, complete equality in the strict sense of the word. Still another example drawn from the South: the manager of a television studio told me in frigid terms that he would not hire Negroes; there would be a scandal and all his sponsors would protest.

Source: Hailou Wolde-Giorghis, "My Encounters with Racism in the United States," in *Views of America*, ed. Alan F. Westin et al. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), 228–231.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Here, the American civil rights leader celebrates the independence of the African nation of Ghana in 1957.

And it's a beautiful thing, isn't it that . . . [Ghana] is now free and is free without rising up with arms and ammunition. It is free through nonviolent means. Because of that the British Empire will not have the bitterness for Ghana that she has for China, so to speak. Because of that when the British Empire leaves Ghana she leaves with a different attitude than she would have left with if she had been driven out by armies. We've got to revolt in such a way that after revolt is over we can live with people as their brothers and sisters.

Source: Martin Luther King Jr., "The Birth of a New Nation," *Liberation* 28 (April 1957).

Kwame Nkrumah

Kwame Nkrumah was the first president of the independent nation of Ghana. In the 1930s and 1940s, Nkrumah studied in the United States, earning degrees at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania.

The "wind of change" has become a raging hurricane, sweeping away the old colonialist Africa. The year 1960 was Africa's year. In that year alone, seventeen African States emerged as proud and independent sovereign nations. Now the ultimate freedom of the whole of Africa can no more be in doubt.

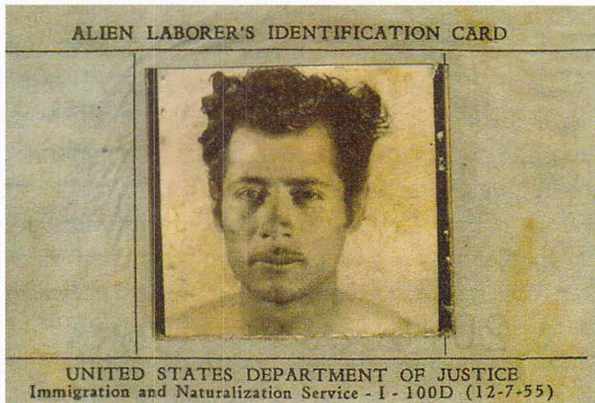
For centuries, Europeans dominated the African continent. The white man arrogated to himself the right to rule and to be obeyed by the non-white. . . .

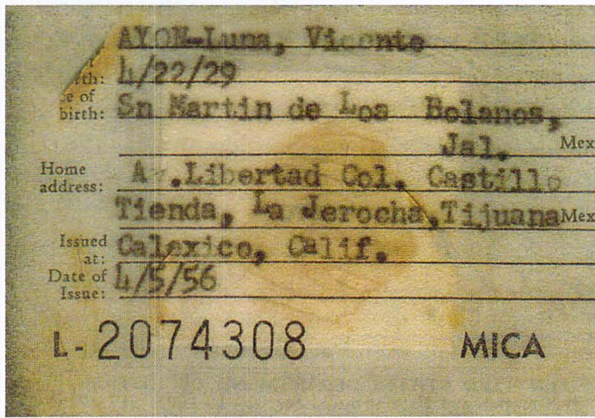
All this makes a sad story, but now we must be prepared to bury the past with its unpleasant memories and look to the future. All we ask of the former colonial powers is their goodwill and cooperation to remedy past mistakes and injustices and to grant independence to the colonies in Africa.

Source: Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1961), ix.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Wolde-Giorghis is especially critical of southern "integration." As an African, what kind of perspective would he bring to this question?
2. What values and goals do King and Nkrumah seem to share? How were their circumstances and goals different?
3. Compare the circumstances of African Americans in the United States and Africans in nations colonized by Europeans. What were the similarities and differences?





Bracero Worker Card

In the Southwest, Mexican immigrants and many Mexican Americans encountered a caste system not unlike Jim Crow segregation. Most of the hardest, lowest-paying work in states such as Texas, Arizona, and California was performed by people of Mexican descent. Under a government program, braceros, or migrant Mexican workers, were allowed into the United States for a limited time to harvest a variety of fruit and vegetable crops. A worker card issued to one such bracero is pictured here. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Behring Center.

leaders. More than 400,000 Mexican Americans also served in World War II. Having fought for their country, many returned to the United States determined to challenge their second-class citizenship. Additionally, a new Mexican American middle class began to take shape in major cities such as Los Angeles, San Antonio, El Paso, and Chicago, which, like the African American middle class, gave leaders and resources to the cause.

In Texas and California, Mexican Americans created new civil rights organizations in the postwar years. In Corpus Christi, Texas, World War II veterans founded the **American GI Forum** in 1948 to protest the poor treatment of Mexican American soldiers and veterans. Activists in Los Angeles created the Community Service Organization (CSO) the same year. Both groups arose to address specific local injustices (such as the segregation of military cemeteries), but they quickly broadened their scope to encompass political and economic justice for the larger community. Among the first young activists to work for the CSO were Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, who would later found the United Farm Workers (UFW) and inspire the Chicano movement of the 1960s.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How were the circumstances facing Mexican and Japanese Americans similar to those facing African Americans? How were they different?

Activists also pushed for legal change. In 1947, five Mexican American fathers in California sued a local school district for placing their children in separate "Mexican" schools. The case, *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, never made it to the U.S. Supreme Court. But the Ninth Circuit Court ruled such segregation unconstitutional, laying the legal groundwork for broader challenges to racial inequality. Among those filing briefs in the case was the NAACP's Thurgood Marshall, who was then developing the legal strategy to strike at racial segregation in the South. In another significant legal victory, the Supreme Court ruled in 1954—just two weeks before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—that Mexican Americans constituted a "distinct class" that could claim protection from discrimination.

Also on the West Coast, Japanese Americans accelerated their legal challenge to discrimination. Undeterred by rulings in the *Hirabayashi* (1943) and *Korematsu* (1944) cases upholding wartime imprisonment (Chapter 24), the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) filed lawsuits in the late 1940s to regain property lost during the war. The JACL also challenged the constitutionality of California's Alien Land Law, which prohibited Japanese immigrants from owning land, and successfully lobbied Congress to enable those same immigrants to become citizens—a right they were denied for fifty years. These efforts by Mexican and Japanese Americans enlarged the sphere of civil rights and laid the foundation for a broader notion of racial equality in the postwar years.

Fighting for Equality Before the Law

With civil rights legislation blocked in Congress by southern Democrats throughout the 1950s, activists looked in two different directions for a breakthrough: to northern state legislatures and to the federal courts. School segregation remained a stubborn problem in northern states, but the biggest obstacle to black

progress there was persistent job and housing discrimination. The states with the largest African American populations, and hence the largest share of black Democratic Party voters, became testing grounds for state legislation to end such discriminatory practices.

Winning antidiscrimination legislation depended on coalition politics. African American activists forged alliances with trade unions and liberal organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee (a Quaker group), among many others. Progress was slow and often occurred only after long periods of unglamorous struggle to win votes in state capitals such as Albany, New York; Springfield, Illinois; and Lansing, Michigan. The first fair employment laws had come in New York and New Jersey in 1945. A decade passed, however, before other states with significant black populations passed similar legislation. Antidiscrimination laws in housing were even more difficult to pass, with most progress not coming until the 1960s. These legislative campaigns in northern states received little national attention, but they were instrumental in laying the groundwork for legal equality outside the South.

Thurgood Marshall Because the vast majority of southern African Americans were prohibited from voting, state legislatures there were closed to the kind of organized political pressure possible in the North. Thus activists also looked to federal courts for leverage. In the late 1930s, NAACP lawyers Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston, and William Hastie had begun preparing the legal ground in a series of cases challenging racial discrimination. The key was prodding the U.S. Supreme Court to use the Fourteenth Amendment's "equal protection" clause to overturn its 1896 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld racial segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine.

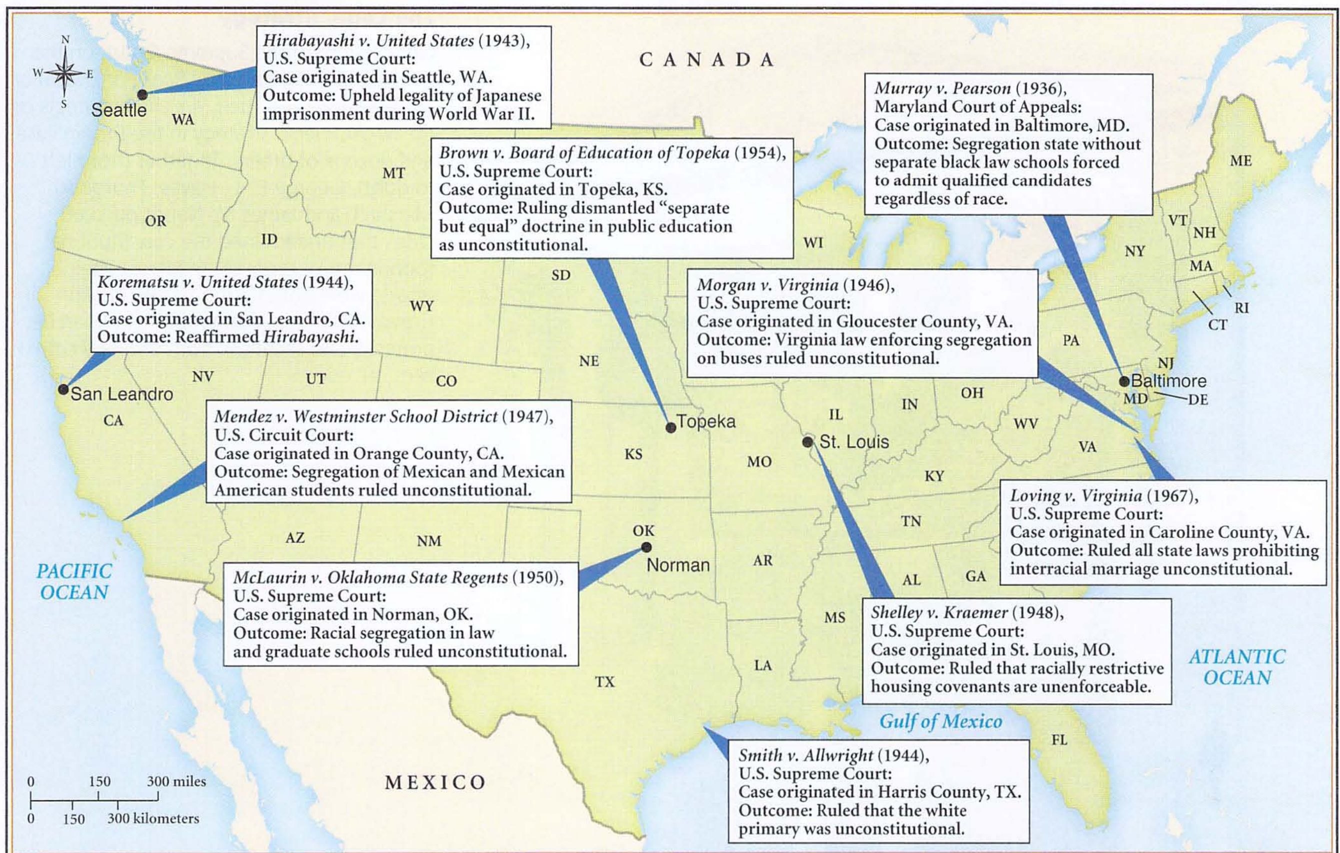
Marshall was the great-grandson of slaves. Of modest origins, his parents instilled in him a faith in law and the Constitution. After his 1930 graduation from Lincoln University, a prestigious African American institution near Philadelphia, Marshall applied to the University of Maryland Law School. Denied admission because the school did not accept black applicants, he enrolled at all-black Howard University. There Marshall met Houston, a law school dean, and the two forged a friendship and intellectual partnership that would change the face of American legal history. Marshall, with Houston's and Hastie's critical strategic input, would argue most of the NAACP's landmark cases. In the late 1960s, President Johnson appointed Marshall to the Supreme Court — the first African American to have that honor.

TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME
How did the NAACP go about developing a legal strategy to attack racial segregation?

Marshall, Houston, Hastie, and six other attorneys filed suit after suit, deliberately selecting each one from dozens of possibilities. The strategy was slow and time-consuming, but progress came. In 1936, Marshall and Hamilton won a state case that forced the University of Maryland Law School to admit qualified African Americans — a ruling of obvious significance to Marshall. Eight years later, in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), Marshall convinced the U.S. Supreme Court that all-white primaries were unconstitutional. In 1950, with Marshall once again arguing the case, the Supreme Court ruled in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* that universities could not segregate black students from others on campus. None of these cases produced swift changes in the daily lives of most African Americans, but they confirmed that civil rights attorneys were on the right track.

Brown v. Board of Education The NAACP's legal strategy achieved its ultimate validation in a case involving Linda Brown, a black pupil in Topeka, Kansas, who had been forced to attend a distant segregated school rather than the nearby white elementary school. In ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*** (1954), Marshall argued that such segregation was unconstitutional because it denied Linda Brown the "equal protection of the laws" guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (Map 27.2). In a unanimous decision on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court agreed, overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine at last. Writing for the Court, the new 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." In an implementing 1955 decision known as *Brown II*, the Court declared simply that integration should proceed "with all deliberate speed."

In the South, however, Virginia senator Harry F. Byrd issued a call for "massive resistance." Calling May 17 "Black Monday," the Mississippi segregationist Tom P. Brady invoked the language of the Cold War to discredit the decision, assailing the "totalitarian government" that had rendered the decision in the name of "socialism and communism." That year, half a million southerners joined White Citizens' Councils dedicated to blocking school integration. Some whites revived the old tactics of violence and intimidation, swelling the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan to levels not seen since the 1920s. The "Southern Manifesto," signed in 1956 by 101 members of Congress, denounced the



MAP 27.2

Desegregation Court Cases

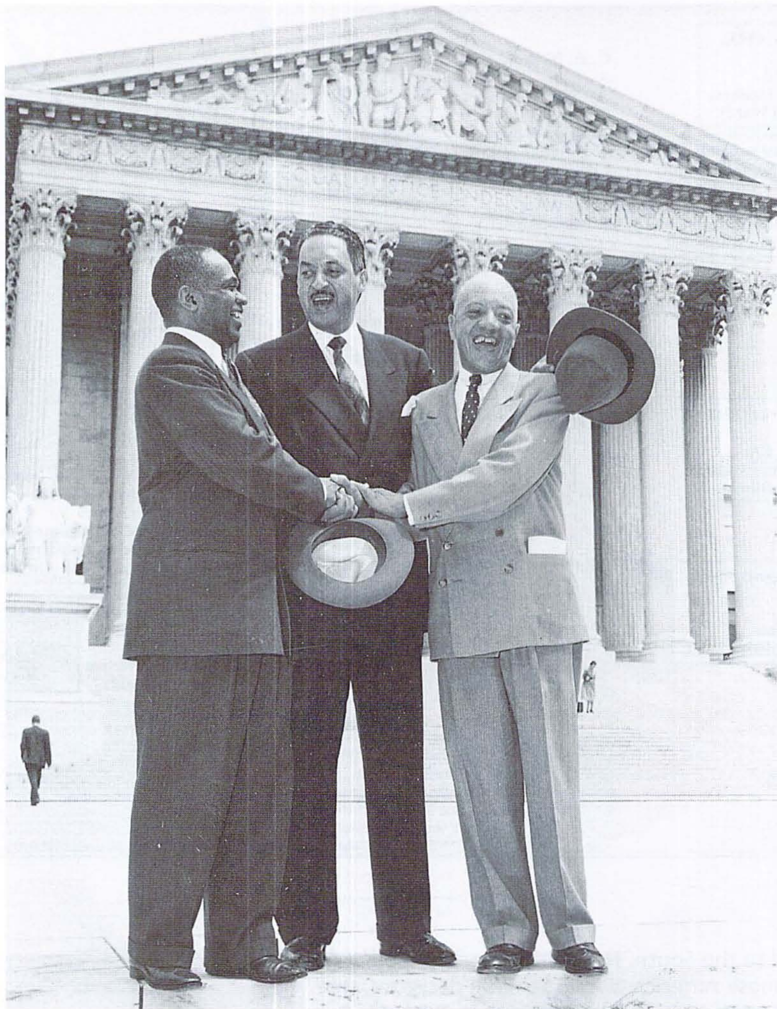
Desegregation court battles were not limited to the South. Note the important California cases regarding Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans. Two seminal decisions, the 1948 housing decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* and the 1954 school decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, originated in Missouri and Kansas, respectively. This map helps show that racial segregation and discrimination were a national, not simply a southern, problem.

Brown decision as "a clear abuse of judicial power" and encouraged local officials to defy it. The white South had declared all-out war on *Brown*.

Enforcement of the Supreme Court's decision was complicated further by Dwight Eisenhower's presence in the White House — the president was no champion of civil rights. Eisenhower accepted the *Brown* decision as the law of the land, but he thought it a mistake. Ike was especially unhappy about the prospect of committing federal power to enforce the decision. A crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, finally forced his hand. In September 1957, when nine black students attempted to enroll at the all-white Central High School, Governor Orval Faubus called out the National Guard to bar them. Angry white mobs appeared daily to taunt the students, chanting "Go back to the jungle." As the vicious scenes played out on television night after night, Eisenhower finally acted. He sent 1,000 federal troops to Little Rock and nationalized the Arkansas National Guard, ordering them to protect the black students. Eisenhower thus became the first president since Reconstruction to use federal troops to enforce the rights of African Americans. But Little Rock also showed that southern officials had more loyalty to local custom than to the law — a repeated problem in the post-*Brown* era.

Forging a Protest Movement, 1955–1965

Declaring racial segregation integral to the South's "habits, traditions, and way of life," the Southern Manifesto signaled that many whites would not accept African American equality readily. As Americans had



The Legal Strategy

On the steps of the Supreme Court, on the day in 1954 that *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was decided, are the architects of the NAACP legal strategy in the *Brown* case and dozens of others. Together (from left to right), George E. C. Hayes, Thurgood Marshall, and James M. Nabrit pursued cases that undermined the constitutional foundation of racial segregation. Their efforts were not enough to destroy Jim Crow, however—that would take marches, protests, and sacrifices from ordinary citizens. AP Images.

witnessed in Little Rock, the unwillingness of local officials to enforce *Brown* could render the decision invalid in practice. If legal victories would not be enough, citizens themselves, black and white, would have to take to the streets and demand justice. Following the *Brown* decision, they did just that, forging a protest movement unique in the history of the United States.

Nonviolent Direct Action

Brown had been the law of the land for barely a year when a single act of violence struck at the heart of black America. A fourteen-year-old African American from the South Side of Chicago, Emmett Till, was visiting relatives in Mississippi in the summer of 1955. Seen talking to a white woman in a grocery store, Till was tortured and murdered under cover of night. His mutilated body was found at the bottom of a river, tied with barbed wire to a heavy steel cotton gin fan. Photos of Till's body in *Jet* magazine brought national attention to the heinous crime.

Two white men were arrested for Till's murder. During the trial, followed closely in African American communities across the country, the lone witness to Till's kidnapping—his uncle, Mose Wright—identified both killers. Feeling "the blood boil in hundreds of white people as they sat glaring in the courtroom," Wright said, "it was the first time in my life I had the courage to accuse a white man of a crime." Despite Wright's eyewitness testimony, the all-white jury found the defendants innocent. This miscarriage of justice—later, the killers even admitted their guilt in a *Look* magazine article—galvanized an entire generation of African Americans; no one who lived through the Till case ever forgot it.

Montgomery Bus Boycott In the wake of the Till case, civil rights advocates needed some good news.

School Desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas

Less well known than the crisis at Little Rock's Central High School the same year, the circumstances at North Little Rock were nonetheless strikingly similar: white resistance to the enrollment of a handful of black students. In this photograph, white students block the doors of North Little Rock High School, preventing six African American students from entering on September 9, 1957. This photograph is noteworthy because it shows a striking new feature of southern racial politics: the presence of film and television cameras that broadcast these images to the nation and the world. AP Images.

They received it three months later, as southern black leaders embraced an old tactic put to new ends: nonviolent protest. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a civil rights activist in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. She was arrested and charged with violating a local segregation ordinance. Parks's act was not the spur-of-the-moment decision that it seemed: a woman of sterling reputation and a longtime NAACP member, she had been contemplating such an act for some time. Middle-aged and unassuming, Rosa Parks fit the bill perfectly for the NAACP's challenge against segregated buses.

Once the die was cast, the black community turned for leadership to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., the recently appointed pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Street Baptist Church. The son of a prominent Atlanta minister, King embraced the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Working closely, but behind the scenes, with Bayard Rustin, King studied nonviolent philosophy, which Rustin and others in the Fellowship of Reconciliation had first used in the 1940s. After Rosa Parks's arrest, King endorsed a plan proposed by a local black women's organization to boycott Montgomery's bus system. The **Montgomery Bus Boycott** was inspired by similar boycotts that had taken place in Harlem in 1941 and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1953.

For the next 381 days, Montgomery's African Americans formed car pools or walked to work. "Darling, it's empty!" Coretta Scott King exclaimed to her husband as a bus normally filled with black riders rolled by their living room window on the first day of the boycott. The transit company neared bankruptcy, and downtown stores complained about the loss of business. But only after the Supreme Court ruled in November 1956 that bus segregation was unconstitutional did the city of Montgomery finally comply. "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested," said one woman boycotter.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott catapulted King to national prominence. In 1957, along with the Reverend

Ralph Abernathy and dozens of black ministers from across the South, he founded the Atlanta-based **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**. The black church, long the center of African American social and cultural life, now lent its moral and organizational strength to the civil rights movement. Black churchwomen were a tower of strength, transferring the skills they had honed during years of church work to the fight for civil rights. The SCLC quickly joined the NAACP at the leading edge of the movement for racial justice.

Greensboro Sit-Ins

The battle for civil rights entered a new phase in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960, when four black college students took seats at the whites-only lunch counter at the local Woolworth's five-and-dime store. This simple act was entirely the brainchild of the four students, who had discussed it in their dorm rooms over several preceding nights. A New York–based spokesman for Woolworth's said the chain would "abide by local custom," which meant refusing to serve African Americans at the lunch counter. The students were determined to "sit in" until they were served. For three weeks, hundreds of students inspired by the original foursome took turns sitting at the counters, quietly eating, doing homework, or reading. Taunted by groups of whites, pelted with food and other debris, the black students — often occupying more than sixty of the sixty-six seats — held strong. Although many were arrested, the tactic worked: the Woolworth's lunch counter was desegregated, and sit-ins quickly spread to other southern cities (American Voices, p. 884).

Ella Baker and SNCC

Inspired by the developments in Greensboro and elsewhere, Ella Baker, an administrator with the SCLC, helped organize the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee** (**SNCC**, pronounced "Snick") in 1960 to facilitate student sit-ins. Rolling like a great wave across the Upper South, from North Carolina into Virginia, Maryland, and Tennessee, by the end of the year students had launched sit-ins in 126 cities. More than 50,000 people participated, and 3,600 were jailed. The sit-ins drew African American college students into the movement in significant numbers for the first time. Northern students formed solidarity committees and raised money for bail. SNCC quickly emerged as the most important student protest organization in the country and inspired a generation of students on college campuses across the nation.

Baker took a special interest in these students, because she found them receptive to her notion of participatory democracy. The granddaughter of slaves, Baker had moved to Harlem in the 1930s, where she worked for New Deal agencies and then the NAACP. She believed in nurturing leaders from the grass roots, encouraging ordinary people to stand up for their rights rather than to depend on charismatic figureheads. "My theory is, strong people don't need strong leaders," she once said. Nonetheless, Baker nurtured a generation of young activists in SNCC, including Stokely Carmichael, Anne Moody, John Lewis, and Diane Nash, who went on to become some of the most important civil rights leaders in the United States.

Ella Baker

Born in Virginia and educated at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, Ella Baker was one of the foremost theorists of grassroots, participatory democracy in the United States. Active all her life in the black freedom movement, in 1960 Baker cofounded the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Her advocacy of leadership by ordinary, nonelite people often led her to disagree with the top-down movement strategy of Martin Luther King Jr. and other ministers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). AP Images.

Freedom Rides

Emboldened by SNCC's sit-in tactics, in 1961 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized a series of what were called Freedom Rides

on interstate bus lines throughout the South. The aim was to call attention to blatant violations of recent Supreme Court rulings against segregation in interstate commerce. The activists who signed on — mostly young, both black and white — knew that they were taking their lives in their hands. They found courage in song, as civil rights activists had begun to do across the country, with lyrics such as "I'm taking a ride on the Greyhound bus line. . . . Hallelujah, I'm traveling down freedom's main line!"

Courage they needed. Club-wielding Klansmen attacked the buses when they stopped in small towns. Outside Anniston, Alabama, one bus was firebombed; the Freedom Riders escaped only moments before it exploded. Some riders were then brutally beaten. Freedom Riders and news reporters were also viciously attacked by Klansmen in Birmingham and Montgomery. Despite the violence, state authorities refused to intervene. "I cannot guarantee protection for this bunch of rabble rousers," declared Governor John Patterson of Alabama.

Once again, local officials' refusal to enforce the law left the fate of the Freedom Riders in Washington's hands. The new president, John F. Kennedy, was cautious about civil rights. Despite a campaign commitment, he failed to deliver on a civil rights bill. Elected by a thin margin, Kennedy believed that he could ill afford to lose the support of powerful southern senators. But civil rights was unlike other domestic issues. Its fate was going to be decided not in the halls of Congress, but on the streets of southern cities. Although President Kennedy discouraged the Freedom Rides, beatings shown on the nightly news forced Attorney General Robert Kennedy to dispatch federal marshals. Civil rights activists thus learned the value of nonviolent protest that provoked violent white resistance.

The victories so far had been limited, but the groundwork had been laid for a civil rights offensive that would transform the nation. The NAACP's legal strategy had been followed closely by the emergence of a major protest movement. And now civil rights leaders focused their attention on Congress.

Legislating Civil Rights, 1963–1965

The first civil rights law in the nation's history came in 1866 just after the Civil War. Its provisions were long ignored (Chapter 15). A second law was passed during Reconstruction in 1875, but it was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. For nearly ninety years, new civil rights legislation was blocked or filibustered by southern Democrats in Congress. Only a weak, largely symbolic act was passed in 1957 during the Eisenhower administration. But by the early 1960s, with legal precedents in their favor and nonviolent protest awakening the nation, civil rights leaders believed the time had come for a serious civil rights bill. The challenge was getting one through a still-reluctant Congress.

TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME

What lessons did activists learn from the evolution of the civil rights movement between 1957 and 1961?

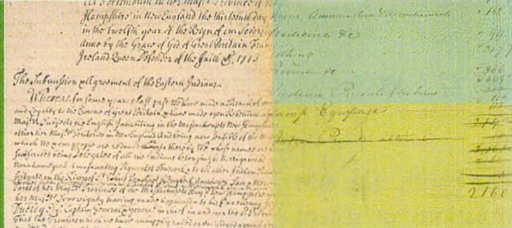
The Battle for Birmingham

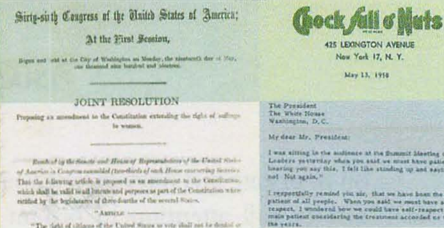
The road to such a bill began when Martin Luther King Jr. called for demonstrations in "the most segregated city in the United States": Birmingham, Alabama. King and the SCLC needed a concrete victory in Birmingham to validate their strategy of nonviolent protest. In May 1963, thousands of black marchers tried to picket Birmingham's department stores. Eugene "Bull" Connor, the city's public safety commissioner, ordered the city's police troops to meet the marchers with violent force: snarling dogs, electric cattle prods, and high-pressure fire hoses. Television cameras captured the scene for the evening news.

While serving a jail sentence for leading the march, King, scribbling in pencil on any paper he could find, composed one of the classic documents of nonviolent direct action: "Letter from Birmingham Jail." "Why direct action?" King asked. "There is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth." The civil rights movement sought, he continued, "to create such a crisis and establish such a creative tension." Grounding his actions in equal parts Christian brotherhood and democratic liberalism, King argued that Americans confronted a moral choice: they could "preserve the evil system of segregation" or take the side of "those great wells of democracy . . . the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

Outraged by the brutality in Birmingham and embarrassed by King's imprisonment for leading a nonviolent march, President Kennedy decided that it was time to act. On June 11, 1963, after newly elected Alabama governor George Wallace barred two black students from the state university, Kennedy denounced racism on national television and promised a new civil rights bill. Many black leaders felt Kennedy's action was long overdue, but they nonetheless hailed this "Second Emancipation Proclamation." That night, Medgar Evers, president of the Mississippi chapter of the NAACP, was shot in the back in his driveway in

AMERICAN VOICES





Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;

At the First Session,

JOINT RESOLUTION

Chock full o'Nuts

425 LEXINGTON AVENUE

New York 17, N. Y.

May 13, 1958

The President

The White House

Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. President:

Challenging White Supremacy

Among the many challenges historians face is figuring out the processes by which long-oppressed ordinary people finally rise up and demand justice. During the 1950s, a liberating process was quietly under way among southern blacks, bursting forth dramatically in the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and then, by the end of the decade, emerging across the South. Here are excerpts of the testimony of two individuals who stepped forward and took the lead in those struggles.

Franklin McCain

Desegregating Lunch Counters

Franklin McCain was one of the four African American students at North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro, North Carolina, who sat down at the Woolworth's lunch counter on February 1, 1960, setting off a wave of student sit-ins that rocked the South and helped initiate a national civil rights movement. In the following interview, McCain describes how he and his friends took that momentous step.

The planning process was on a Sunday night, I remember it quite well. I think it was Joseph who said, "It's time that we take some action now. We've been getting together, and we've been, up to this point, still like most people we've talked about for the past few weeks or so — that is, people who talk a lot but, in fact, make very little action." After selecting the technique, then we said, "Let's go down and just ask for service." It certainly wasn't titled a "sit-in" or "sit-down" at that time. "Let's just go down to Woolworth's tomorrow and ask for service, and the tactic is going to be simply this: we'll just stay there."

. . . Once getting there . . . we did make purchases of school supplies and took the patience and time to get receipts for our purchases, and Joseph and myself went over to the counter and asked to be served coffee and doughnuts. As anticipated, the reply was, "I'm sorry, we don't serve you here." And of course we said, "We just beg to disagree with you. We've in fact already been served." . . . The attendant or waitress was a little bit dumbfounded, just didn't know what to say under circumstances like that. . . .

At that point there was a policeman who had walked in off the street, who was pacing the aisle . . . behind us, where we were seated, with his club in his hand, just sort of knocking it in his hand, and just looking mean and red and a little bit upset and a little bit disgusted. And you had the feeling that he didn't know what the hell to do. . . . Usually his defense is offense, and we've provoked him, yes, but we haven't provoked outwardly enough for him to resort to violence. And I think this is just killing him; you can see it all over him.

If it's possible to know what it means to have your soul cleansed — I felt pretty clean at that time. I probably felt better on that day than I've ever felt in my life. Seems like a lot of feelings of guilt or what-have-you suddenly left me, and I felt as though I had gained my manhood. . . . Not Franklin McCain only as an individual, but I felt as though the manhood of a number of other black persons had been restored and had gotten some respect from just that one day.

The movement started out as a movement of nonviolence and a Christian movement. . . . It was a movement that was seeking justice more than anything else and not a movement to start a war. . . .We knew that probably the most powerful and potent weapon that people have literally no defense for is love, kindness. That is, whip the enemy with something that he doesn't understand. . . . The individual who had probably the most influence on us was Gandhi. . . . Yes, Martin Luther King's name was well-known when the sit-in movement was in effect, but . . . no, he was not the individual we had upmost in mind when we started the sit-in movement.

Source: *My Soul Is Rested* by Howell Raines, copyright 1977 Howell Raines. Used by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. and Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

John McFerren

Demanding the Right to Vote

In this interview, given about ten years after the events he describes, John McFerren tells of the battle he undertook in 1959 to gain the vote for the blacks of Fayette County, Tennessee. By the time of the interview, McFerren had risen in life and become a grocery-store owner and property holder, thanks, he says, to the economic boycott imposed on him by angry whites. Unlike Greensboro, the struggle in Fayette County never made national headlines. It was just one of many local struggles that signaled the beginning of a new day in the South.

My name is John McFerren. I'm forty-six years old. I'm a Negro was born and raised in West Tennessee, the county of Fayette, District 1. My foreparents was brought here from North Carolina five years before the Civil War . . . because the rumor got out among the slaveholders that West Tennessee was still goin to be a slaveholdin state. And my people was brought over here and sold. And after the Civil War my people settled in West Tennessee. That's why Fayette and Haywood counties have a great number of Negroes.

Back in 1957 and '58 there was a Negro man accused of killin a deputy sheriff. This was Burton Dodson. He was brought back after he'd been gone twenty years. J. F. Estes was the lawyer defendin him. Myself and him both was in the army together. And the stimulation from the trial got me interested in the way justice was bein used. The only way to bring justice would be through the ballot box.

In 1959 we got out a charter called the Fayette County Civic and Welfare League. Fourteen of us started out in that charter. We tried to support a white liberal candidate that was named L. T. Redfearn in the sheriff election and the local Democrat party refused to let Negroes vote.

We brought a suit against the Democrat party and I went to Washington for a civil-rights hearing. Myself and Estes and Harpman Jameson made the trip. It took us twenty-two hours steady drivin. . . . I was lookin all up — lotsa big, tall buildins. I had never seen old, tall buildins like that before. After talkin to [John Doar] we come on back to the Justice Department building and we sat out in the hall while he had a meetin inside the attorney general's office. And when they come out they told us they was gonna indict the landowners who kept us from voting. . . .

Just after that, in 1960, in January, we organized a thousand Negroes to line up at the courthouse to register to vote. We started pourin in with big numbers — in this county it was 72 percent Negroes — when we started to register to vote to change the situation.

In the followin . . . October and November they started puttin our people offa the land. Once you registered you had to move. Once you registered they took your job. Then after they done that, in November, we had three hundred people forced to live in tents on Shepard Towles's land. And when we started puttin em in tents, then that's when the White Citizens Council and the Ku Klux Klan started shootin in the tents to run us out.

Tent City was parta an economic squeeze. The local merchants run me outa the stores and said I went to Washington and caused this mess to start. . . . They had a blacklist . . . And they had the list sent around to all merchants. Once you registered you couldn't buy for credit or cash. But the best thing in the world was when they run me outa them stores. It started me thinkin for myself. . . .

The southern white has a slogan: "Keep em niggers happy and keep em singin in the schools." And the biggest mistake of the past is that the Negro has not been teached economics and the value of a dollar. . . . Back at one time we had a teacher . . . from Mississippi — and he pulled up and left the county because he was teachin the Negroes to buy land, and own land, and work it for hisself, and the county Board of Education didn't want that taught in the county.

And they told him, "Keep em niggers singin and keep em happy and don't teach em nothin." . . . You cannot be free when you're beggin the man for bread. But when you've got the dollar in your pocket and then got the vote in your pocket, that's the only way to be free. . . . And I have been successful and made good progress because I could see the only way I could survive is to stay independent.

. . . The Negro is no longer goin back. He's goin forward.

Source: From *Looking for America*, second edition, 2 volumes, edited by Stanley I. Kutler (New York: Norton, 1979). Reprinted with permission of Stanley Kutler.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. McCain took a stand on segregated lunch counters. McFerren took a stand on the right to vote. How did these targets represent two different goals of the civil rights movement?
2. McCain speaks of the sense of "manhood" he felt as he sat at that Woolworth's counter. What does his personal feeling suggest about the civil rights movement as a whole?
3. Almost certainly, McCain and McFerren never met. Suppose they had. What would they have had in common? Would what they had in common have been more important than what separated them?
4. McCain speaks knowingly of the figures and ideas that influenced him. Why do you suppose McFerren is silent about such matters?

The Battle of Birmingham

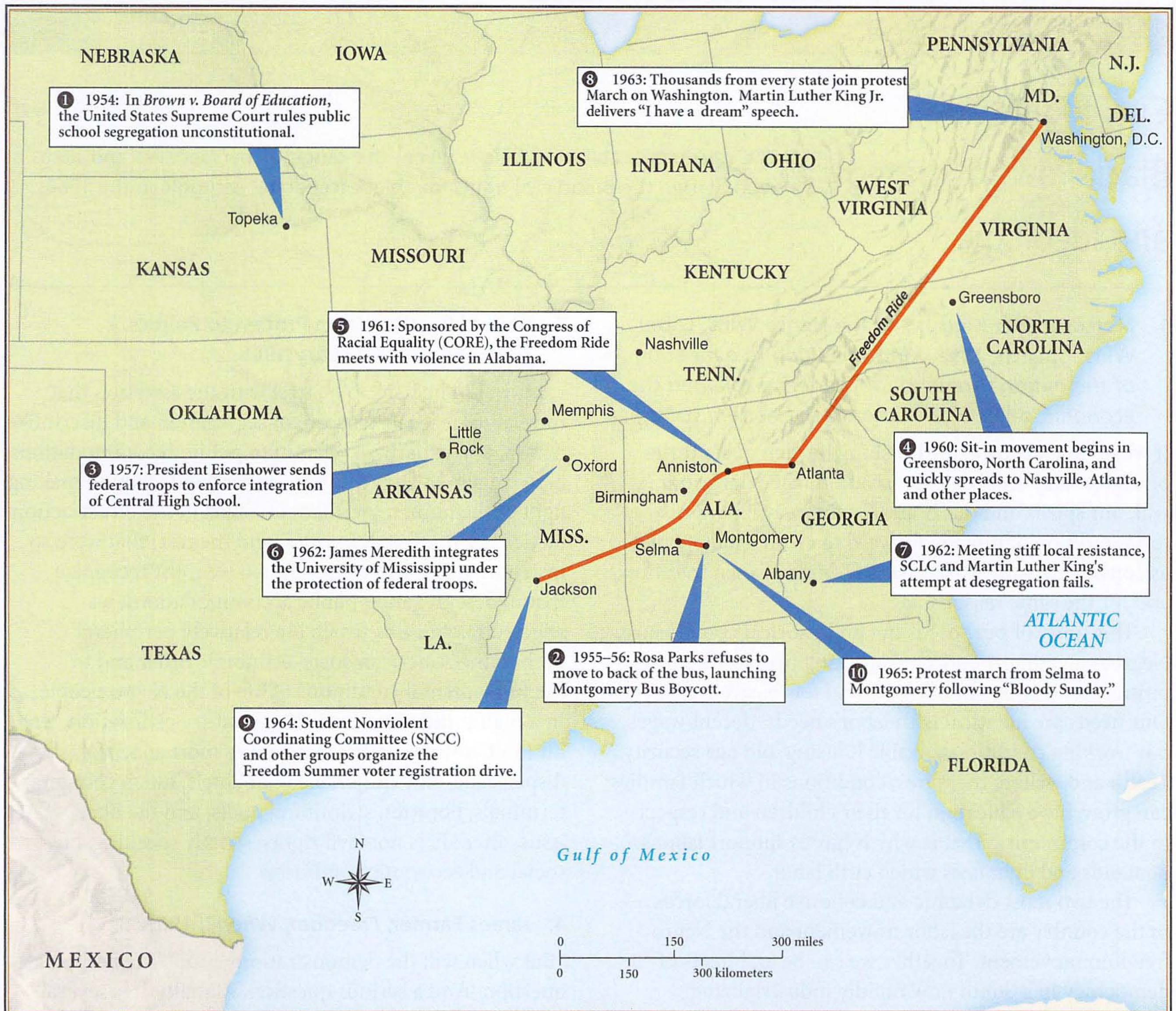
One of the hardest-fought desegregation struggles of the early 1960s took place in April and May 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama. In response to the daily rallies and peaceful protests, authorities cracked down, arresting hundreds. They also employed tactics such as those shown here, turning fire hoses on young, nonviolent student demonstrators and using police dogs to intimidate peaceful marchers. These protests, led by Martin Luther King Jr. and broadcast on television news, prompted President Kennedy to introduce a civil rights bill in Congress in June 1963. © Bob Adelman/Corbis.

Jackson by a white supremacist. Evers's martyrdom became a spur to further action (Map 27.3).

The March on Washington and the Civil Rights Act To marshal support for Kennedy's bill, civil rights leaders adopted a tactic that A. Philip Randolph had first advanced in 1941: a massive demonstration in Washington. Under the leadership of Randolph and Bayard Rustin, thousands of volunteers across the country coordinated car pools, "freedom buses," and "freedom trains," and on August 28, 1963, delivered a quarter of a million people to the Lincoln Memorial for the officially named **March on Washington** for Jobs and Freedom (Thinking Like a Historian, p. 888).

Although other people did the planning, Martin Luther King Jr. was the public face of the march. It was King's dramatic "I Have a Dream" speech, beginning with his admonition that too many black people lived "on a lonely island of poverty" and ending with the exclamation from a traditional black spiritual — "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!" — that captured the nation's imagination. The sight of 250,000 blacks and whites marching solemnly together marked the high point of the civil rights movement and confirmed King's position as the leading spokesperson for the cause.

To have any chance of getting the civil rights bill through Congress, King, Randolph, and Rustin knew they had to sustain this broad coalition of blacks and whites. They could afford to alienate no one. Reflecting a younger, more militant set of activists, however, SNCC member John Lewis had prepared a more provocative speech for that afternoon. Lewis wrote, "The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the Heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did." Signaling a growing restlessness among black youth, Lewis warned: "We shall fragment the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together again in the image of democracy." Fearing the speech would



MAP 27.3

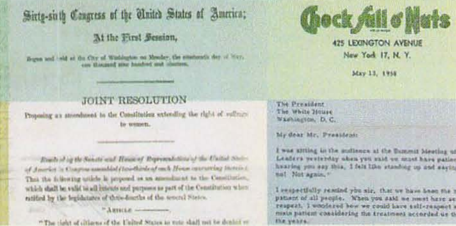
The Civil Rights Struggle, 1954–1965

In the postwar battle for black civil rights, the first major victory was the NAACP litigation of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared public school segregation unconstitutional. As indicated on this map, the struggle then quickly spread, raising other issues and seeding new organizations. Other organizations quickly joined the battle and shifted the focus away from the courts to mass action and organization. The year 1965 marked the high point, when violence against the Selma, Alabama, marchers spurred the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

alienate white supporters, Rustin and others implored Lewis to tone down his rhetoric. With only minutes to spare before he stepped up to the podium, Lewis agreed. He delivered a more conciliatory speech, but his conflict with march organizers signaled an emerging rift in the movement.

Although the March on Washington galvanized public opinion, it changed few congressional votes. Southern senators continued to block Kennedy's legislation. Georgia senator Richard Russell, a leader of the opposition, refused to support any bill that would "bring about social equality and intermingling and amalgamation of the races." Then, suddenly, tragedies piled up, one on another. In September, white supremacists bombed a Baptist church in Birmingham, killing four black girls in Sunday school. Less than two months later, Kennedy himself lay dead, the victim of assassination.

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN


Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;
At the First Session,
JOINT RESOLUTION
Chock full o'Nuts
425 LEXINGTON AVENUE
New York 17, N. Y.
The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Civil Rights and Black Power: Strategy and Ideology

The documents collected below reveal the range of perspectives and ideas at work within the broad civil rights, or "black freedom," struggle in the 1960s.

1. Martin Luther King Jr., "If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins" speech, 1962. *King, speaking to a meeting of the nation's trade union leaders, explained the economic objectives of the black freedom struggle.*

If we do not advance, the crushing burden of centuries of neglect and economic deprivation will destroy our will, our spirits and our hopes. In this way labor's historic tradition of moving forward to create vital people as consumers and citizens has become our own tradition, and for the same reasons.

This unity of purpose is not an historical coincidence. Negroes are almost entirely a working people. There are pitifully few Negro millionaires and few Negro employers. Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community. That is why Negroes support labor's demands and fight laws which curb labor. . . .

The two most dynamic and cohesive liberal forces in the country are the labor movement and the Negro freedom movement. Together we can be architects of democracy in a South now rapidly industrializing.

2. Police in Birmingham, Alabama, use trained German shepherds against peaceful African American protesters, 1963.

Bill Hudson / AP Images.

3. Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics," *Commentary*, February 1965.

. . . it would be hard to quarrel with the assertion that the elaborate legal structure of segregation and discrimination, particularly in relation to public accommodations, has virtually collapsed. On the other hand, without making light of the human sacrifices involved in the direct-action tactics (sit-ins, freedom rides, and the rest) that were so instrumental to this achievement, we must recognize that in desegregating public accommodations, we affected institutions which are relatively peripheral both to the American socio-economic order and to the fundamental conditions of life of the Negro people. In a highly-industrialized, 20th-century civilization, we hit Jim Crow precisely where it was most anachronistic, dispensable, and vulnerable — in hotels, lunch counters, terminals, libraries, swimming pools, and the like. . . . At issue, after all, is not civil rights, strictly speaking, but social and economic conditions.

4. James Farmer, *Freedom, When?*, 1965.

"But when will the demonstrations end?" The perpetual question. And a serious question. Actually, it is several questions, for the meaning of the question differs, depending upon who asks it.

Coming from those whose dominant consideration is peace — public peace and peace of mind — the question means: "When are you going to stop tempting violence and rioting?" Some put it more strongly: "When are you going to stop sponsoring violence?" Assumed is the necessary connection between demonstration and violence. . . .

"Isn't the patience of the white majority wearing thin? Why nourish the displeasure of 90 percent of the population with provocative demonstrations? Remember, you need allies." And the assumptions of these Cassandras of the backlash is that freedom and equality are, in the last analysis, wholly gifts in the white man's power to bestow. . . .

What the public must realize is that in a demonstration more things are happening, at more levels of human activity, than meets the eye. Demonstrations in the last

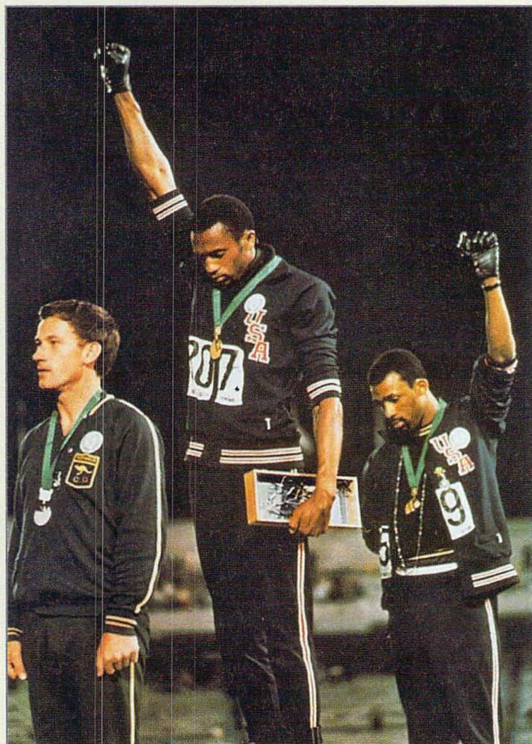
few years have provided literally millions of Negroes with their first taste of self-determination and political self-expression.

5. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, 1967.

Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness. There is a growing resentment of the word "Negro," for example, because this term is the invention of our oppressor; it is his image of us that he describes. . . .

The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks. By this we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society.

6. Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. *Tommie Smith and John Carlos (right) won gold and bronze medals in the 200 meters. The silver medalist, Australian Peter Norman (left), is wearing an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge to show his support.*



AP images.

Sources: (1) "If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins," by Martin Luther King delivered February 12, 1962. Reprinted by arrangement with the Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King Jr., c/o Writers House as agent for the proprietor, New York, NY. Copyright © 1962 Martin Luther King Jr. Copyright renewed 1991 Coretta Scott King; (3) *Commentary*, February 1965; (4) James Farmer, *Freedom, When?* (New York: Random House, 1965), 25–27, 42–47; (5) Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage, 1992, orig. 1967), 37, 44.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. Compare sources 1 and 3. What does Rustin mean when he says that ending segregation in public accommodations has not affected the "fundamental conditions" of African American life? How does King's point in document 1 address such issues?
2. Examine the two photographs. What do they reveal about different kinds of protest? About different perspectives among African Americans?
3. What does "self-determination" mean for Farmer and Carmichael and Hamilton?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Compose an essay in which you use the documents above, in addition to your reading of the chapter, to explore and explain different approaches to African American rights in the 1960s. In particular, think about how all of the documents come from a single movement, yet each expresses a distinct viewpoint and a distinct way of conceiving what "the struggle" is about. How do these approaches compare to the tactics of earlier struggles for civil rights?

COMPARE AND CONTRAST
In what ways did white resistance hinder the civil rights movement? In what ways did it help?

On assuming the presidency, Lyndon Johnson made passing the civil rights bill a priority. A southerner and former Senate majority leader, Johnson was renowned for his fierce persuasive style and tough political bargaining. Using equal parts moral leverage, the memory of the slain JFK, and his own brand of hardball politics, Johnson overcame the filibuster. In June 1964, Congress approved the most far-reaching civil rights law since Reconstruction. The keystone of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, Title VII, outlawed discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, national origin, and sex. Another section guaranteed equal access to public accommodations and schools. The law granted new enforcement powers to the U.S. attorney general and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to implement the prohibition against job discrimination.

Freedom Summer The Civil Rights Act was a law with real teeth, but it left untouched the obstacles to black voting rights. So protesters went back into the streets. In 1964, in what came to be known as Freedom Summer, black organizations mounted a major campaign in Mississippi. The effort drew several thousand volunteers from across the country, including nearly one thousand white college students from the North. Led by the charismatic SNCC activist Robert Moses, the four major civil rights organizations (SNCC, CORE, NAACP, and SCLC) spread out across the state. They established freedom schools for black children and conducted a major voter registration drive. Yet so determined was the opposition that only about twelve hundred black voters were registered that summer, at a cost of four murdered civil rights workers and thirty-seven black churches bombed or burned.

The murders strengthened the resolve of the **Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party** (MFDP), which had been founded during Freedom Summer. Banned

Women in the Movement

Though often overshadowed by men in the public spotlight, women were crucial to the black freedom movement. Here, protesting at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, are (left to right) Fannie Lou Hamer, Eleanor Holmes, and Ella Baker. The men are (left to right) Emory Harris, Stokely Carmichael, and Sam Block. Hamer had been a sharecropper before she became a leader under Baker's tutelage, and Holmes was a Yale University–trained lawyer who went on to become the first female chair of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. © 1976 George Ballis/Take Stock/The Image Works.

from the "whites only" Mississippi Democratic Party, MFDP leaders were determined to attend the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, as the legitimate representatives of their state. Inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer, a former sharecropper turned civil rights activist, the MFDP challenged the most powerful figures in the Democratic Party, including Lyndon Johnson, the Democrats' presidential nominee. "Is this America?" Hamer asked party officials when she demanded that the MFDP, and not the all-white Mississippi delegation, be recognized by the convention. Democratic leaders, however, seated the white Mississippi delegation and refused to recognize the MFDP. Demoralized and convinced that the Democratic Party would not change, Moses told television reporters: "I will have nothing to do with the political system any longer."

Selma and the Voting Rights Act Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC did not share Moses's skepticism. They believed that another confrontation with southern injustice could provoke further congressional action. In March 1965, James Bevel of the SCLC called for a march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital, Montgomery, to protest the murder of a voting-rights activist. As soon as the six hundred marchers left Selma, crossing over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, mounted state troopers attacked them with tear gas and clubs. The scene was shown on national television that night, and the day became known as Bloody Sunday. Calling the episode "an American tragedy," President Johnson went back to Congress.

The **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, which was signed by President Johnson on August 6, outlawed the literacy tests and other devices that prevented African Americans from registering to vote, and authorized the attorney general to send federal examiners to register voters in any county where registration was less than 50 percent. Together with the Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964), which outlawed the poll tax in federal elections, the Voting Rights Act enabled millions of African Americans to vote for the first time since the Reconstruction era.

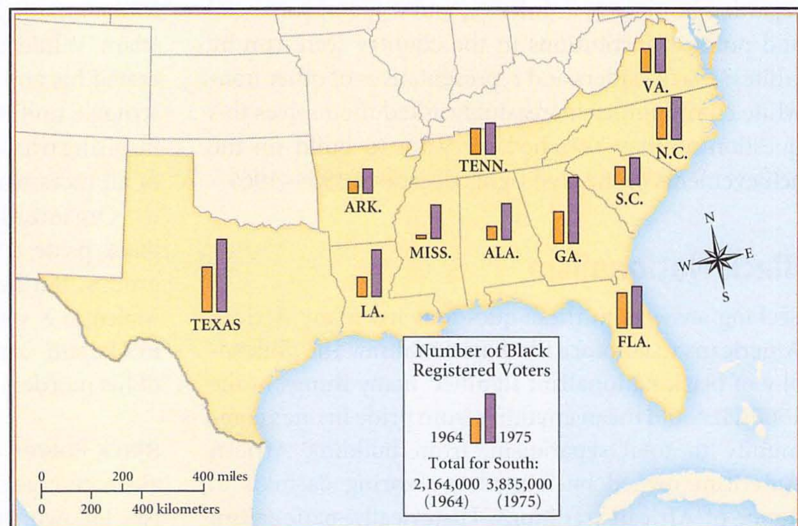
In the South, the results were stunning. In 1960, only 20 percent of black citizens had been registered to vote; by 1971, registration reached 62 percent (Map 27.4). Moreover, across the nation the number of black elected officials began to climb, quadrupling from 1,400 to 4,900 between 1970 and 1980 and doubling again by the early 1990s. Most of those elected held local offices — from sheriff to county commissioner — but nonetheless embodied a shift in political representation nearly unimaginable a generation earlier. As Hartman Turnbow, a Mississippi farmer who risked his life to register in 1964, later declared, "It won't never go back where it was."

Something else would never go back either: the liberal New Deal coalition. By the second half of the 1960s, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party had won its battle with the conservative, segregationist wing. Democrats had embraced the civil rights movement and made African American equality a cornerstone of a new "rights" liberalism. But over the next generation, between the 1960s and the 1980s, southern whites and many conservative northern whites would respond by switching to the Republican Party. Strom Thurmond, the segregationist senator from South Carolina, symbolically led the revolt by renouncing the

MAP 27.4

Black Voter Registration in the South, 1964 and 1975

After passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black registration in the South increased dramatically. The bars on the map show the number of African Americans registered in 1964, before the act was passed, and in 1975, after it had been in effect for ten years. States in the Deep South, such as Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, had the biggest increases.



Democrats and becoming a Republican in 1964. The New Deal coalition — which had joined working-class whites, northern African Americans, urban professionals, and white southern segregationists together in a fragile political alliance since the 1930s — was beginning to crumble.

Beyond Civil Rights, 1966–1973

Activists had long known that Supreme Court decisions and new laws do not automatically produce changes in society. But in the mid-1960s, civil rights advocates confronted a more profound issue: perhaps even protests were not enough. In 1965, Bayard Rustin wrote of the need to move "from protest to politics" in order to build institutional black power. Some black leaders, such as the young SNCC activists Stokely Carmichael, Frances Beal, and John Lewis, grew frustrated with the slow pace of reform and the stubborn resistance of whites. Still others believed that addressing black poverty and economic disadvantage remained the most important objective. Neither new laws nor long marches appeared capable of meeting these varied and complex challenges.

The conviction that civil rights alone were incapable of guaranteeing equality took hold in many minority communities in this period. African Americans were joined by Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. They came at the problem of inequality from different perspectives, but each group asked a similar question: As crucial as legal equality was, how much did it matter if most people of color remained in or close to poverty, if white society still regarded nonwhites as inferior, and if the major social and political institutions in the country were run by whites? Black leaders and representatives of other nonwhite communities increasingly asked themselves this question as they searched for ways to build on the achievements of the civil rights decade of 1954–1965.

Black Nationalism

Seeking answers to these questions led many African Americans to embrace **black nationalism**. The philosophy of black nationalism signified many things in the 1960s. It could mean anything from pride in one's community to total separatism, from building African American–owned businesses to wearing dashikis in honor of African traditions. Historically, nationalism had emphasized the differences between blacks and whites as well as black people's power (and right) to shape their own destiny. In the late nineteenth century, nationalists founded the Back to Africa movement, and in the 1920s the nationalist Marcus Garvey inspired African Americans to take pride in their racial heritage (Chapter 22).

In the early 1960s, the leading exponent of black nationalism was the **Nation of Islam**, which fused a rejection of Christianity with a strong philosophy of self-improvement. Black Muslims, as they were known, adhered to a strict code of personal behavior; men were recognizable by their dark suits, white shirts, and ties, women by their long dresses and head coverings. Black Muslims preached an apocalyptic brand of Islam, anticipating the day when Allah would banish the white "devils" and give the black nation justice. Although its full converts numbered only about ten thousand, the Nation of Islam had a wide popular following among African Americans in northern cities.

Malcolm X The most charismatic Black Muslim was Malcolm X (the *X* stood for his African family name, lost under slavery). A spellbinding speaker, Malcolm X preached a philosophy of militant separatism, although he advocated violence only for self-defense. Hostile to mainstream civil rights organizations, he caustically referred to the 1963 March on Washington as the "Farce on Washington." Malcolm X said plainly, "I believe in the brotherhood of man, all men, but I don't believe in brotherhood with anybody who doesn't want brotherhood with me." Malcolm X had little interest in changing the minds of hostile whites. Strengthening the black community, he believed, represented a surer path to freedom and equality.

In 1964, after a power struggle with founder Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X broke with the Nation of Islam. While he remained a black nationalist, he moderated his antiwhite views and began to talk of a class struggle uniting poor whites and blacks. Following an inspiring trip to the Middle East, where he saw Muslims of all races worshipping together, Malcolm X formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity to promote black pride and to work with traditional civil rights groups. But he got no further. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated while delivering a speech in Harlem. Three Black Muslims were later convicted of his murder.

Black Power A more secular brand of black nationalism emerged in 1966 when SNCC and CORE activists, following the lead of Stokely Carmichael, began to

Malcolm X

Until his murder in 1965, Malcolm X was the leading proponent of black nationalism in the United States. A brilliant and dynamic orator, Malcolm had been a minister in the Nation of Islam for nearly thirteen years, until he broke with the Nation in 1964. His emphasis on black pride and self-help and his unrelenting criticism of white supremacy made him one of the freedom movement's most inspirational figures, both in life and well after his death. ©Topham/The Image Works.

call for black self-reliance under the banner of Black Power. Advocates of Black Power asked fundamental questions: If alliances with whites were necessary to achieve racial justice, as King believed they were, did that make African Americans dependent on the good intentions of whites? If so, could black people trust those good intentions in the long run? Increasingly, those inclined toward Black Power believed that African Americans should build economic and political power in their own communities. Such power would translate into a less dependent relationship with white America. "For once," Carmichael wrote, "black people are going to use the words they want to use — not the words whites want to hear."

Spurred by the Black Power slogan, African American activists turned their attention to the poverty and social injustice faced by so many black people. President Johnson had declared the War on Poverty, and black organizers joined, setting up day care centers, running community job training programs, and working to improve housing and health care in urban neighborhoods. In major cities such as Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, activists sought to open jobs in police and fire departments and in construction and transportation to black workers, who had been excluded from these occupations for decades. Others worked to end police harassment — a major problem in urban black communities — and to help black entrepreneurs to receive small-business loans. CORE leader Floyd McKissick explained, "Black Power is not Black Supremacy; it is a united Black Voice reflecting racial pride."

UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

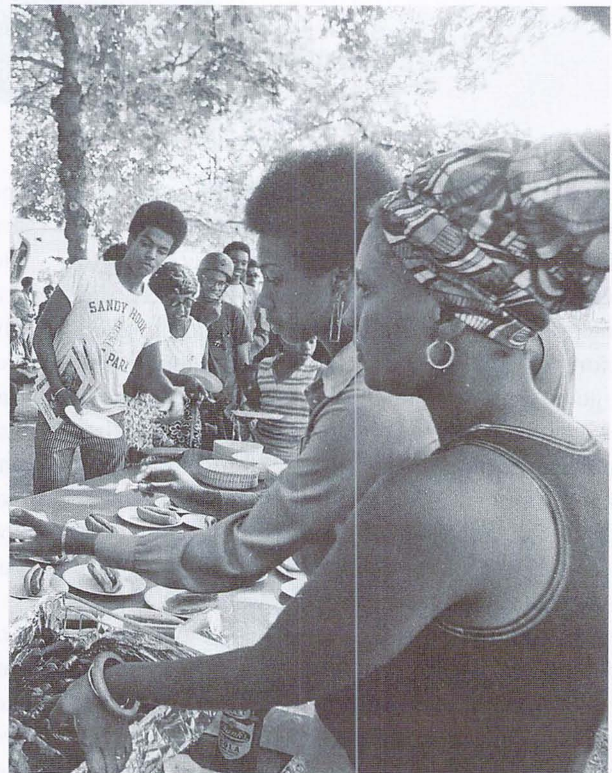
Why were Black Power and black nationalism compelling to many African Americans?

The attention to racial pride led some African Americans to reject white society and to pursue more authentic cultural forms. In addition to focusing on economic disadvantage, Black Power emphasized black pride and self-determination. Those subscribing to these beliefs wore African clothing, chose natural hairstyles, and celebrated black history, art, and literature. The Black Arts movement thrived, and musical tastes shifted from the crossover sounds of Motown to the soul music of Philadelphia, Memphis, and Chicago.

Black Panther Party One of the most radical nationalist groups was the **Black Panther Party**, founded in Oakland, California, in 1966 by two college students, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. A militant organization dedicated to protecting African Americans from police violence, the Panthers took their cue from the slain Malcolm X. They vehemently opposed the Vietnam War and declared their affinity for Third World revolutionary movements and armed struggle (Map 27.5). In their manifesto, "What We Want, What We Believe," the Panthers outlined their Ten Point Program for black liberation.

The Panthers' organization spread to other cities in the late 1960s, where members undertook a wide range of community-organizing projects. Their free breakfast program for children and their testing program for sickle-cell anemia, an inherited disease with a high incidence among African Americans, were especially popular. However, the Panthers' radicalism and belief in armed self-defense resulted in violent clashes with police. Newton was charged with murdering a police officer, several Panthers were killed by police, and dozens went to prison. Moreover, under its domestic counterintelligence program, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had begun disrupting party activities.

Young Lords Among those inspired by the Black Panthers were Puerto Ricans in New York. Their vehicle was the **Young Lords Organization** (YLO), later renamed the Young Lords Party. Like the Black Panthers, YLO activists sought self-determination for Puerto Ricans, both those in the United States and those on the island in the Caribbean. In practical terms, the YLO focused on improving neighborhood conditions: city garbage collection was notoriously poor in East Harlem, where most Puerto Ricans lived, and slumlords had allowed the housing to become squalid. Women in the YLO were especially active, protesting sterilization campaigns against Puerto Rican women and fighting to improve access to health care. As was true of so many nationalist groups, immediate victories for the YLO were few, but their dedicated community



The Black Panther Party

One of the most radical organizations of the 1960s, the Black Panther Party was founded in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton (shown together in the photograph on the left) in Oakland, California. Its members carried weapons, advocated socialism, and fought police brutality in black communities, but they also ran into their own trouble with the law. Nevertheless, the party had great success in reaching ordinary people, often with programs targeted at the poor. On the right, party members distribute free hot dogs to the public in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1969. LEFT: Bruno Barbey/Magnum Photos. RIGHT: Photo by David Fenton/Getty Images.

MAP 27.5

Decolonization and the Third World, 1943–1990

In the decades after World War II, African nations threw off the yoke of European colonialism. Some new nations, such as Ghana, the former British colony of Gold Coast, achieved independence rather peacefully. Others, such as Algeria and Mozambique, did so only after bloody anticolonial wars. American civil rights activists watched African decolonization with great enthusiasm, seeing the two struggles as linked. "Sure we identified with the blacks in Africa," civil rights leader John Lewis said. "Here were black people, talking of freedom and liberation and independence thousands of miles away." In 1960 alone, the year that student sit-ins swept across the American South, more than a dozen African nations gained independence.

organizing produced a generation of leaders (many of whom later went into politics) and awakened community consciousness.

The New Urban Politics

Black Power also inspired African Americans to work within the political system. By the mid-1960s, black residents neared 50 percent of the population in several major American cities — such as Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. Black Power in these cities was not abstract; it counted in real votes. Residents of Gary, Indiana, and Cleveland, Ohio, elected the first black mayors of large cities in 1967. Richard Hatcher in Gary and Carl Stokes in Cleveland helped forge a new urban politics in the United States. Their campaign teams registered thousands of black voters and made alliances with enough whites to create a working majority. Many saw Stokes's victory, in particular, as heralding a new day. As one of Stokes's campaign staffers said: "If Carl Stokes could run for mayor in the eighth largest city in America, then maybe who knows. We could be senators. We could be anything we wanted."

Having met with some political success, black leaders gathered in Gary for the 1972 National Black Political Convention. In a meeting that brought together radicals, liberals, and centrists, debate centered on whether to form a third political party. Hatcher recalled that many in attendance believed that "there was going to be a black third party." In the end, however, delegates decided to "give the Democratic Party one more chance." Instead of creating a third party, the convention issued the National Black Political Agenda, which included calls for community control of schools in black neighborhoods, national health insurance, and the elimination of the death penalty.

Democrats failed to enact the National Black Political Agenda, but African Americans were increasingly integrated into American political institutions. By the end of the century, black elected officials had become commonplace in major American cities. There were forty-seven African American big-city mayors by the 1990s, and blacks had led most of the nation's most prominent cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

These politicians had translated black power not into a wholesale rejection of white society but into a revitalized liberalism that would remain an indelible feature of urban politics for the rest of the century.

Poverty and Urban Violence

Black Power was not, fundamentally, a violent political ideology. But violence did play a decisive role in the politics of black liberation in the mid-1960s. Too many Americans, white and black, had little knowledge or understanding of the rage that existed just below the surface in many poor northern black neighborhoods. That rage boiled over in a wave of riots that struck the nation's cities in mid-decade. The first "long hot summer" began in July 1964 in New York City when police shot a black criminal suspect in Harlem. Angry youths looted and rioted there for a week. Over the next four years, the volatile issue of police brutality set off riots in dozens of cities.

In August 1965, the arrest of a young black motorist in the Watts section of Los Angeles sparked six days of rioting that left thirty-four people dead. "There is a different type of Negro emerging," one riot participant told investigators. "They are not going to wait for the evolutionary process for their rights to be a man." The riots of 1967, however, were the most serious, engulfing twenty-two cities in July and August. Forty-three people were killed in Detroit alone, nearly all of them black, and $50 million worth of property was destroyed. President Johnson called in the National Guard and U.S. Army troops, many of them having just returned from Vietnam, to restore order.

Johnson, who believed that the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act had immeasurably helped African Americans, was stunned by the rioting. Despondent at the news from Watts, "he refused to look at the cables from Los Angeles," recalled one aide. Virtually all black leaders condemned the rioting, though they understood its origins in poverty and deprivation. At a meeting in Watts, Martin Luther King Jr. admitted that he had "failed to take the civil rights movement to the masses of the people," such as those in the Los Angeles ghetto. His appearance appeased few. "We don't need your dreams; we need jobs!" one heckler shouted at King.

Following the gut-wrenching riots in Detroit and Newark in 1967, Johnson appointed a presidential commission, headed by Illinois governor Otto Kerner, to investigate the causes of the violence. Released in 1968, the Kerner Commission Report was a searing look at race in America, the most honest and forthright government document about race since the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights' 1947 report "To Secure These Rights." "Our nation is moving toward two societies," the Kerner Commission Report concluded, "one black, one white — separate and unequal." The report did not excuse the brick-throwing, firebombing, and looting of the previous summers, but it placed the riots in sociological context. Shut out of white-dominated society, impoverished African Americans felt they had no stake in the social order.

Stirred by turmoil in the cities, and seeing the limitations of his civil rights achievements, Martin Luther King Jr. began to expand his vision beyond civil rights to confront the deep-seated problems of poverty and racism in America as a whole. He criticized President Johnson and Congress for prioritizing the war in Vietnam over the fight against poverty at home, and he planned a massive movement called the Poor People's Campaign to fight economic injustice. To advance that cause, he went to Memphis, Tennessee, to support a strike by predominantly black sanitation workers. There, on April 4, 1968, he was assassinated by escaped white convict James Earl Ray. King's death set off a further round of urban rioting, with major violence breaking out in more than a hundred cities.

Tragically, King was murdered before achieving the transformations he sought: an end to racial injustice and a solution to poverty. The civil rights movement had helped set in motion permanent, indeed revolutionary, changes in American race relations. Jim Crow segregation ended, federal legislation ensured black Americans' most basic civil rights, and the white monopoly on political power in the South was broken. However, by 1968, the fight over civil rights had also divided the nation. The Democratic Party was splitting, and a new conservatism was gaining strength. Many whites felt that the issue of civil rights was receiving too much attention, to the detriment of other national concerns. The riots of 1965, 1967, and 1968 further alienated many whites, who blamed the violence on the inability of Democratic officials to maintain law and order.

Rise of the Chicano Movement

Mexican Americans had something of a counterpart to Martin Luther King: Cesar Chavez. In Chavez's case, however, economic struggle in community organizations and the labor movement had shaped his approach to mobilizing society's disadvantaged. He and Dolores Huerta had worked for the Community Service Organization (CSO), a California group founded in the 1950s to promote Mexican political participation and civil rights. Leaving that organization in 1962, Chavez concentrated on the agricultural region around Delano,

California. With Huerta, he organized the **United Farm Workers (UFW)**, a union for migrant workers.

Huerta was a brilliant organizer, but the deeply spiritual and ascetic Chavez embodied the moral force behind what was popularly called La Causa. A 1965 grape pickers' strike led the UFW to call a nationwide boycott of table grapes, bringing Chavez huge publicity and backing from the AFL-CIO. In a bid for attention to the struggle, Chavez staged a hunger strike in 1968, which ended dramatically after twenty-eight days with Senator Robert F. Kennedy at his side to break the fast. Victory came in 1970 when California grape growers signed contracts recognizing the UFW.

Mexican Americans shared some civil rights concerns with African Americans — especially access to jobs — but they also had unique concerns: the status of the Spanish language in schools, for instance, and immigration policy. Mexican Americans had been politically active since the 1940s, aiming to surmount factors that obstructed their political involvement: poverty, language barriers, and discrimination. Their efforts began to pay off in the 1960s, when the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) mobilized support for John F. Kennedy and worked successfully with other organizations to elect Mexican American candidates such as Edward Roybal of California and Henry González of Texas to Congress. Two other organizations, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDF) and the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, carried the fight against discrimination to Washington, D.C., and mobilized Mexican Americans into an increasingly powerful voting bloc.

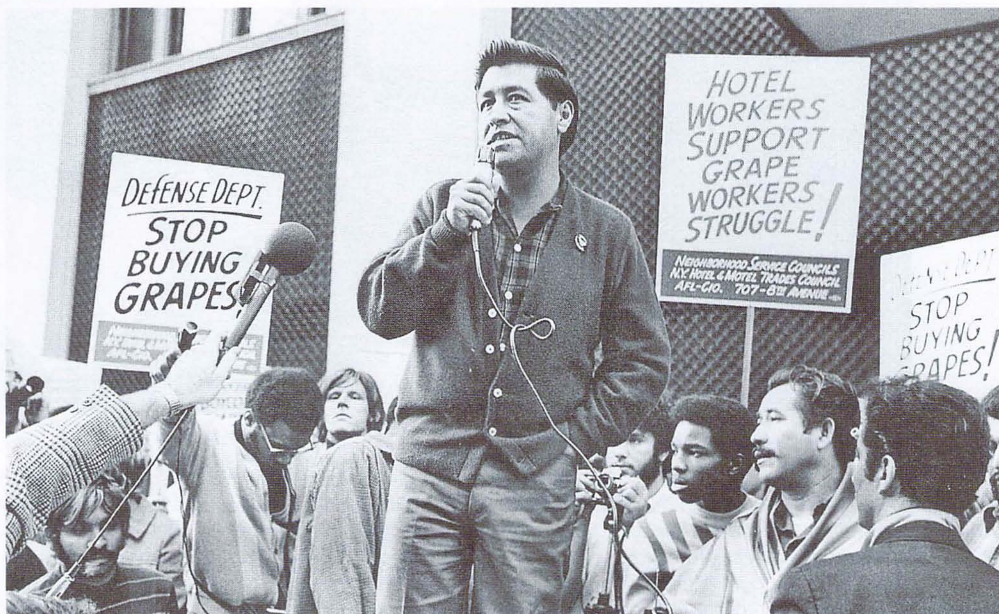
Younger Mexican Americans grew impatient with civil rights groups such as MAPA and MALDF, however. The barrios of Los Angeles and other western cities produced the militant Brown Berets, modeled on the Black Panthers (who wore black berets). Rejecting their elders' assimilationist approach (that is, a belief in adapting to Anglo society), fifteen hundred Mexican American students met in Denver in 1969 to hammer out a new political and cultural agenda. They proclaimed a new term, *Chicano* (and its feminine form, *Chicana*), to replace *Mexican American*, and later organized a political party, La Raza Unida (The United Race), to promote Chicano interests. Young Chicana feminists formed a number of organizations, including Las Hijas (The Daughters), which organized women both on college campuses and in the barrios. In California and many southwestern states, students staged demonstrations to press for bilingual education, the hiring of more Chicano teachers, and the creation of Chicano studies programs. By the 1970s, dozens of such programs were offered at universities throughout the region.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

What did the Chicano and American Indian movements have in common with the black freedom movement?

The American Indian Movement

American Indians, inspired by the Black Power and Chicano movements, organized to address their unique circumstances. Numbering nearly 800,000 in the 1960s, native people were exceedingly diverse — divided by



Cesar Chavez

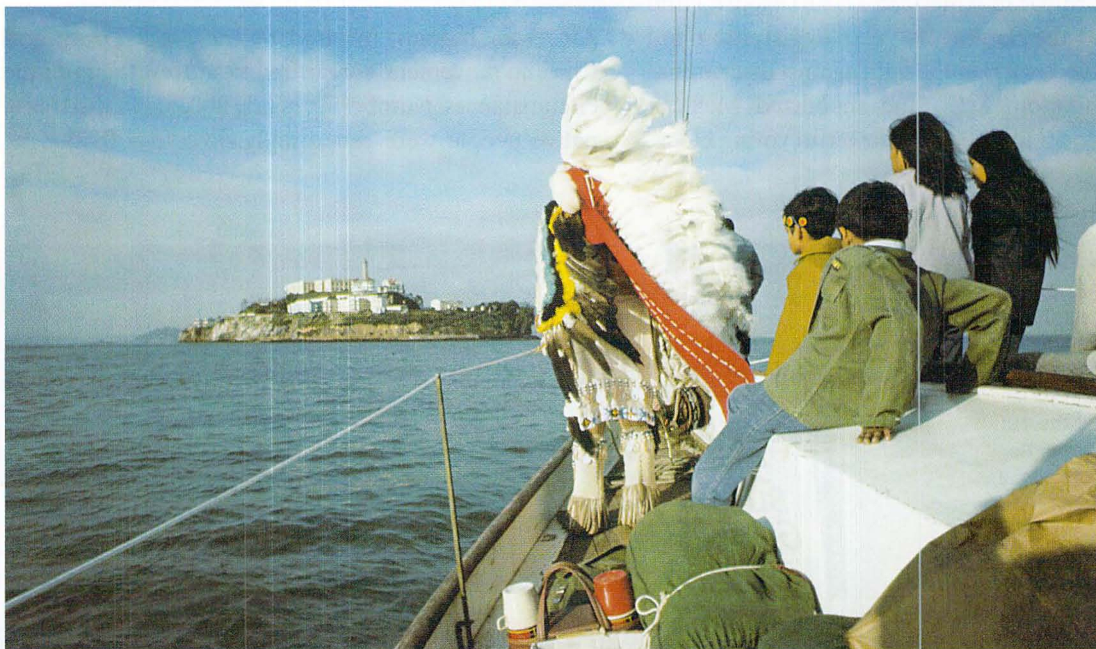
Influenced equally by the Catholic Church and Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez was one of the leading Mexican American civil rights and social justice activists of the 1960s. With Dolores Huerta, he cofounded the United Farm Workers (UFW), a union of primarily Mexican American agricultural laborers in California. Here he speaks at a rally in support of the grape boycott, an attempt by the UFW to force the nation's grape growers — and, by extension, the larger agriculture industry — to improve wages and working conditions and to bargain in good faith with the union. © Jason Laure/The Image Works.

language, tribal history, region, and degree of integration into American life. As a group, they shared a staggering unemployment rate—ten times the national average—and were the worst off in housing, disease rates, and access to education. Native people also had an often troubling relationship with the federal government. In the 1960s, the prevailing spirit of protest swept through Indian communities. Young militants challenged their elders in the National Congress of American Indians. Beginning in 1960, the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), under the slogan "For a Greater Indian America," promoted the ideal of Native Americans as a single ethnic group. The effort to both unite Indians and celebrate individual tribal culture proved a difficult balancing act.

The NIYC had substantial influence within tribal communities, but two other organizations, the militant Indians of All Tribes (IAT) and the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**, attracted more attention in the larger society. These groups embraced the concept of Red Power, and beginning in 1968 they staged escalating protests to draw attention to Indian concerns, especially the concerns of urban Indians, many of whom had been encouraged, or forced, to leave reservations by the federal government in earlier decades. In 1969, members of the IAT occupied the deserted federal penitentiary on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay and proclaimed: "We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for twenty-four dollars in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island [Manhattan] about 300 years ago." In 1972, AIM members joined the Trail of Broken Treaties, a march sponsored by a number of Indian groups. When AIM activists seized the headquarters of the hated Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., and ransacked the building, older tribal leaders denounced them.

To see a longer excerpt of the "Proclamation To the Great White Father and All His People," along with other primary sources from this period, see ***Sources for America's History***.

However, AIM managed to focus national media attention on Native American issues with a siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in February 1973. The site of the infamous 1890 massacre of the Sioux, Wounded Knee was situated on the Pine Ridge Reservation, where young AIM activists had cultivated ties to sympathetic elders. For more than two months, AIM members occupied a small collection of buildings, surrounded by a cordon of FBI agents and U.S. marshals. Several gun battles left two dead, and the siege was finally brought to a negotiated end. Although upsetting



Native American Activism

In November 1969, a group of Native Americans, united under the name *Indians of All Tribes*, occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. They claimed the land under a nineteenth-century treaty, but their larger objective was to force the federal government—which owned the island—to address the long-standing grievances of native peoples, including widespread poverty on reservations. Shown here is the view along the gunwale of the boat carrying Tim Williams, a chief of the Klamath River Hurek tribe in full ceremonial regalia, to the island. Ralph Crane/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images.

to many white onlookers and Indian elders alike, AIM protests attracted widespread mainstream media coverage and spurred government action on tribal issues.

SUMMARY

African Americans and others who fought for civil rights from World War II through the early 1970s sought equal rights and economic opportunity. That quest was also inspired by various forms of nationalism that called for self-determination for minority groups. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, African Americans faced a harsh Jim Crow system in the South and a segregated, though more open, society in the North. Segregation was maintained by a widespread belief in black inferiority and by a southern political system that denied African Americans the vote. In the Southwest and West, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Americans of Asian descent faced discriminatory laws and social practices that marginalized them.

The civil rights movement attacked racial inequality in three ways. First, the movement sought equality under the law for all Americans, regardless of race. This required patient work through the judicial system and the more arduous task of winning congressional legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Second, grassroots activists, using nonviolent protest, pushed all levels of government (from city to federal) to abide by Supreme Court decisions (such as *Brown v. Board of Education*) and civil rights laws. Third, the movement worked to open economic opportunity for minority populations. This was embodied in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Ultimately, the civil rights movement successfully established the principle of legal equality, but it faced more difficult problems in fighting poverty and creating widespread economic opportunity.

The limitations of the civil rights model led black activists — along with Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and others — to adopt a more nationalist stance after 1966. Nationalism stressed the creation of political and economic power in communities of color, the celebration of racial heritage, and the rejection of white cultural standards.

CHAPTER REVIEW

MAKE IT STICK Go to **LearningCurve** to retain what you've read.

TERMS TO KNOW

Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

Key Concepts and Events

rights liberalism (p. 868)
Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) (p. 870)
Jim Crow (p. 870)
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (p. 873)
"To Secure These Rights" (p. 875)
States' Rights Democratic Party (p. 875)
American GI Forum (p. 877)
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (p. 878)
Montgomery Bus Boycott (p. 881)
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (p. 882)
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (p. 882)
March on Washington (p. 886)
Civil Rights Act of 1964 (p. 890)
Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (p. 890)
Voting Rights Act of 1965 (p. 891)
black nationalism (p. 892)
Nation of Islam (p. 892)
Black Panther Party (p. 894)
Young Lords Organization (p. 894)
United Farm Workers (UFW) (p. 897)
American Indian Movement (AIM) (p. 898)

Key People

A. Philip Randolph (p. 873)
James Farmer (p. 873)
Cesar Chavez (p. 877)
Dolores Huerta (p. 877)
Thurgood Marshall (p. 877)
Rosa Parks (p. 881)
Martin Luther King Jr. (p. 881)
Malcolm X (p. 892)
Stokely Carmichael (p. 892)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter's main ideas.

1. Why did the civil rights movement begin when it did?
2. How would you explain the rise of the protest movement after 1955? How did nonviolent tactics help the movement?
3. How did the civil rights movement create a crisis in liberalism and in the Democratic Party?
4. How did the civil rights movement and other activist groups cause changes to government and society?
5. **THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** One of the most significant themes of the period from 1945 to the 1980s is the growth of the power of the federal government. (See "Politics and Power" and "American and National Identity" on the thematic timeline on p. 803.) In what ways is the civil rights movement also part of that story?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

1. **ACROSS TIME AND PLACE** Why is the decade of the 1960s often referred to as the "second Reconstruction"? Think broadly about the century between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. What are the key turning points in African American history in that long period?
2. **VISUAL EVIDENCE** Examine the photograph of a confrontation at North Little Rock High School on page 881. How does this photograph reveal the role that the media played in the civil rights struggle? Can you find similar evidence in other photographs from this chapter?

MORE TO EXPLORE

Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2006). An important history of Black Power.

Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (2003). An exceptional case study of the Chicano movement in Los Angeles.

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (1995). A detailed case study that provides a local view of movement activism.

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (2003). A powerful biography of a key activist.

Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (2008). A significant, readable overview of the civil rights movement.

The Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, at **digilib.usm.edu/crmda.php**, offers 150 oral histories relating to Mississippi.

TIMELINE

Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

Year	Events
1941	• A. Philip Randolph proposes march on Washington • Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802
1942	• Double V Campaign launched • Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded
1947	• "To Secure These Rights" published • Jackie Robinson integrates major league baseball • *Mendez v. Westminster School District*
1948	• States' Rights Democratic Party (Dixiecrats) founded
1954	• *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*
1955	• Emmett Till murdered (August) • Montgomery Bus Boycott (December)
1956	• Southern Manifesto issued against *Brown* ruling
1957	• Integration of Little Rock High School • Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) founded
1960	• Greensboro, North Carolina, sit-ins (February) • Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) founded
1961	• Freedom Rides (May)
1963	• Demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama • March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
1964	• Civil Rights Act passed by Congress • Freedom Summer
1965	• Voting Rights Act passed by Congress • Malcolm X assassinated (February 21) • Riot in Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles (August)
1966	• Black Panther Party founded
1967	• Riots in Detroit and Newark
1968	• Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated (April 4)
1969	• Young Lords founded • Occupation of Alcatraz
1972	• National Black Political Convention • "Trail of Broken Treaties" protest

KEY TURNING POINTS: The history of the civil rights movement is more than a list of significant events. Pick two or three events from this timeline and explain how their timing and the broader historical context contributed to the precise role each played in the movement as a whole.