

Summary: Civil Rights

The Movement Begins

Nearly 100 years after the Civil War, the civil rights of African Americans were limited by state laws and discrimination. Some civil rights are the right to vote, the right to equal treatment, and the right to speak out.

In the early 1950s, segregation was legal. Many Americans believed it should not be. African Americans went to court to end segregation. In 1954, the Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of public schools.

An Alabama law said that African Americans had to sit at the back of the bus. In 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a bus. She was arrested. Her church organized a protest. African Americans boycotted the buses until buses were desegregated. This was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Martin Luther King Jr. helped lead the boycott. He believed in nonviolent protest. He wanted people to fight back using peaceful actions. In 1956, the Supreme Court said that segregation on buses was illegal.

Civil Rights Victories

In 1960, African Americans held sit-ins in 54 cities. They sat at lunch counters that only served food to white people. They would not leave until they were served. In 1963, Congress was discussing a bill to end segregation. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders organized a protest march in Washington, D.C., to show support for the bill. The march on Washington got Americans to pay attention to the civil rights movement.

President Lyndon Johnson worked with Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It banned segregation in schools, at work, and in public places. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteed citizens of all races and ethnic backgrounds the right to vote.

In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot. People from all backgrounds continued the struggle for civil rights.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

civil rights *noun*, the rights and freedoms that countries guarantee their citizens

desegregation *noun*, ending the separation of people by racial or ethnic group

nonviolent protest *noun*, a way of bringing change without using violence



After You Read

REVIEW What was the goal of the Montgomery Bus Boycott? Underline the sentence that tells about the boycott.

REVIEW What did the march on Washington do to help the civil rights movement? Draw a box around the sentence that tells how the march on Washington affected people in America.