

The Road to Civil Rights

Name: _____

Isn't That Discrimination?

Discrimination happens when one group is treated differently from another. *Segregation* happens when one group is kept separate from another group. Both of these happen when there is *prejudice* or intolerance. You will often hear these words when people talk about the way African Americans have been treated in our country.



Separate drinking fountains for 'Colored' and 'White' people.



A nonviolent sit-in at a 'whites only' lunch counter in Greensboro, NC.

We Shall Overcome

The Jim Crow laws that discriminated against African Americans might still exist today if it wasn't for the hard work of people in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. There had always been resistance to the discrimination that blacks faced, but during that time people joined together, organized, and protested more than ever before. New laws were passed, other laws were declared unconstitutional, and things started to change in people's everyday lives.

The People Who Changed Things: Civil Rights Movers and Shakers

The civil rights movement was made up of many well-known people as well as political groups and ordinary citizens. They all stood up to intimidation, violence and threat of arrest. Even kids got involved!

Martin Luther King, Jr. helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington.

Malcolm X promoted black independence, self-defense, and human rights. He often disagreed with the non-violent methods of King.

Medgar Evers was a civil rights activist who investigated cases for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) and helped *James Meredith* integrate the University of Mississippi.

The *Little Rock Nine* integrated their all white high school in 1957. A third grader named *Linda Brown* helped change the laws about school segregation.



Two of the Little Rock Nine leaving school with a troop escort.

Change Starts with Forcing People to Pay Attention

Activists used a variety of strategies to end racial discrimination. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., many activists chose to use peaceful or *nonviolent* methods to call attention to the problem and pressure the government to change. Other people, like Malcolm X, thought civil rights would have to be gained through any means necessary—even violence. Both approaches influenced the civil rights movement by calling attention to the discrimination African Americans faced on a daily basis.

Marches involved large groups of protestors taking to the streets with signs, banners, songs, and chants.

Sit-ins were a way to *integrate* (bring the races together) a business or public area. African Americans would sit at 'whites only' areas and wait to be served.

Boycotts called for consumers to avoid a product or service that discriminated against African Americans.

Court cases challenged unfair laws.

Change in the White House

It took the work of all three branches to protect the civil rights of African Americans and other minority groups in the United States. As the leader of the nation and the executive branch, the president holds an important role in bringing about change.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy asked for legislation "giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments," as well as "greater protection for the right to vote." He was assassinated that same year, but the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, helped push the bill through Congress. Finally, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* became law. Both men used their power and influence to enforce major political and social change.



President John Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon Johnson



Change in the Laws

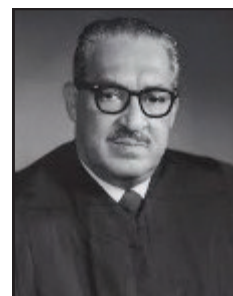
Other changes came about when new laws were passed through Congress:

- The **Civil Rights Act of 1964** prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, and national origin. This includes discrimination in the workplace, public places, schools, and in voting.
- The **24th Amendment** ended the practice of poll taxes in 1964. States and local governments could no longer charge citizens for the right to vote.
- The **Voting Rights Act of 1965** prohibits any restriction on the right to vote. This included poll tests and voter intimidation. It followed through on the promise of the 15th Amendment.

Change in the Courts

Many changes came when the Jim Crow laws that limited the freedoms and rights of African Americans were challenged in the courts:

- **Brown v. Board of Education** In 1954, the Supreme Court said racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.
- **Bailey v. Patterson** In 1962, the Supreme Court decided that it was unconstitutional for transportation facilities like bus and train stations to be racially segregated.
- **Loving v. Virginia** In 1967, the Supreme Court decided that any state law that prohibits interracial marriage is unconstitutional.



Thurgood Marshall represented the Brown family in *Brown V. Board of Education* in 1954. He became the first African American Justice on the Supreme Court in 1967.



Pro-Segregation protest, 1959

Did Anyone Oppose the Civil Rights Movement?

YES! There were many different groups that fought the changes brought on by the civil rights movement. In politics, a group called the *Dixiecrats* worked to keep racial segregation and Jim Crow laws in the South. Many southern towns had *white citizen councils* that also fought to keep segregation by creating all white schools and pushing black civil rights activists out of jobs. The most well-known group was the *Ku Klux Klan*, which met secretly and was responsible for acts of violence and terrorism against African Americans and white people who supported the fight for civil rights. These groups, and others, made even speaking out a very dangerous activity.

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Vocabulary. Match the word with its definition.

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|-----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. activist | A) when one group is treated differently than another group |
| ___ 2. segregation | B) intolerance of a person or group based on their race |
| ___ 3. nonviolent | C) people who protest to call attention to a cause, like civil rights |
| ___ 4. discrimination | D) peaceful |
| ___ 5. integration | E) keeping things or people separate |
| ___ 6. prejudice | F) bringing separate groups together |

Name That Protest! Take a look at the diary entries of these young civil rights activists and decide which type of protest they participated in. Check the action the each story describes.

7. I walk to my summer job with my brother six days a week. Last summer, we rode the bus and it only took us 15 minutes. Now we walk 5 miles each way! It takes over an hour, but it is important for us all to send a message. The bus company needs to know that we do not support segregated seating and discrimination.

March Voter Registration Drive
 Boycott Sit-In

8. It was scary, but we sat down at the lunch counter and waited to be served. It wasn't fair that this diner refused to serve blacks, and we decided to sit at that counter until they did serve us. We didn't make a scene, didn't yell, didn't break stuff. We just sat there and waited. Angry people came up and hit us, yelled in our faces, and even dumped a milkshake on my friend's head! But we stayed. After three straight days, the diner finally decided to serve us!

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7. My feet hurt! We are on day three of our four day walk from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. We travel about 12 miles a day and sleep in the fields along side the road. It isn't easy, but we sing songs and meet other people as we walk. Our goal is to get the state and federal politicians to help blacks vote in the South. We hope that having over 25,000 in our group will get their attention and make change!

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10. A bunch of my friends from college and I joined other students and drove to the South to get African Americans to register to vote. Many were scared because groups like the KKK had been beating up people when they went to the polling places. If a boss found out that his black employee was registered to vote, he'd fire him! We went down to educate them about their rights and support them so they would get out and vote!

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Alphabet Soup. The civil rights movement was made up of many different groups and organizations, and most were known by their acronyms. Fill in the blanks using the word bank to discover what these letters mean!

- Organizations
- Student
- Christian
- Racial
- Advancement

11. SNCC: _____ Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
12. CORE: Congress on _____ Equality
13. SCLC: Southern _____ Leadership Conference
14. NAACP: National Association for the _____ of Colored People
15. COFO: Council of Federated _____ (combination of the groups above)