

# CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS (RACE -1950's and 1960's)

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## CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS IN 1950's and 1960's

### The African-American Civil Rights Movement

- The African-American Civil Rights Movement was an ongoing fight for racial equality that took place for over 100 years after the Civil War. Leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks paved the way for non-violent protests which led to changes in the law.

# BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION - 1954

**On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously announced an end to public segregation in schools in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case.**

- Linda Brown was an African-American third-grader whose father, Oliver Brown, had sued the school system in Topeka, Kansas. He said that the school his daughter went to, which had only African-American students, was not equal to the school that only white Americans went to.
- Brown alleged, the school system was discriminating against African-American students in violation of the 14th Amendment, which granted all Americans the right to equal protection and, by extension, the right to an equal education.
- In 1951, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), helped the parents file the lawsuit
- Prior to this case, in 1896, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was legal, as long as separate places for blacks and whites were "separate but equal." (*Plessy vs. Ferguson*) The NAACP's lawyers argued that the white and black schools in Topeka were not "separate but equal."

## BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION – 1954 CONT...

- The Supreme Court has nine justices. The vote on Brown v. Board of Education was unanimous, meaning that all nine justices voted the same way.
- The ruling in the case was written by Earl Warren, who was Chief Justice. He said “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” This decision made the racial segregation of schools against the law in every US state.



## THE MURDER OF EMMETT TILL - 1955

- In 1955, fourteen-year-old Emmett Till from Chicago is brutally murdered by whites while visiting relatives in Mississippi. His alleged crime is saying “Bye, baby” to a white woman in a store as a dare.
- Roy Bryant, the owner of the store and the woman’s husband, returned from a business trip a few days later and heard how Emmett had allegedly spoken to his wife. Enraged, he went to the home of Till’s great uncle, Mose Wright, with his brother-in-law J.W. Milam in the early morning hours of August 28.
- They made Emmett carry a 75-pound cotton-gin fan to the bank of the Tallahatchie River and ordered him to take off his clothes. The two men then beat him nearly to death, gouged out his eye, shot him in the head and then threw his body, tied to the cotton-gin fan with barbed wire, into the river.



## THE MURDER OF EMMETT TILL – 1955 CONT...

- After Emmett's mother saw the mutilated remains of her son, she decided to have an open-casket funeral so that all the world could see what racist murderers had done to her only son.
- On September 23, the all-white jury deliberated for less than an hour before issuing a verdict of "not guilty," explaining that they believed the state had failed to prove the identity of the body.
- Many people around the country were outraged by the decision and also by the state's decision not to indict Milam and Bryant on the separate charge of kidnapping.



# THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT – 1955-56



- The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a civil-rights protest during which African Americans refused to ride city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, to protest segregated seating.
- The boycott took place from December 5, 1955, to December 20, 1956, and is regarded as the first large-scale U.S. demonstration against segregation.
- Four days before the boycott began, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested and fined for refusing to yield her bus seat to a white man.
- In 1955, African Americans were still required by a Montgomery, Alabama, city ordinance to sit in the back half of city buses and to yield their seats to white riders if the front half of the bus, reserved for whites, was full.
- She was arrested and fined \$10, plus \$4 in court fees.

## THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT – 1955-56 CONT...

- On June 5, 1956, a Montgomery federal court ruled that any law requiring racially segregated seating on buses violated the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That amendment, adopted in 1868 following the U.S. Civil War, guarantees all citizens—regardless of race—equal rights and equal protection under state and federal laws.





# THE LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL CRISIS - 1957



- The Little Rock Nine were a group of nine black students who enrolled at formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957.
- On September 4, 1957, the first day of classes at Central High, Governor Orval Faubus called in the Arkansas National Guard to block the black students' entry into the high school. Later that month, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent in federal troops to escort the Little Rock Nine into the school.



## 1960'S SIT-INS IN GREENSBORO

- The Greensboro sit-in was a civil rights protest that started in 1960, when young African-American students staged a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and refused to leave after being denied service. The African-American students were also known as the Greensboro Four.
- They were influenced by the non-violent protest techniques practiced by Gandhi.
- The official policy of the lunch counter was to refuse service to anyone but whites. Even when the four young men were denied service, they still refused to give up their seats.

## 1960'S SIT-INS IN GREENSBORO CONT...

- Due to heavy television coverage of the Greensboro sit-ins, the sit-in movement spread quickly to college towns throughout the South and into the North.
- Young blacks and whites participated in various forms of peaceful protest against segregation in libraries, beaches, hotels and other establishments.
- Training was given to students on how to participate in the sit-ins and not react to violence.





# THE FREEDOM RIDERS - 1961

- Freedom Riders were groups of white and African American civil rights activists who participated in Freedom Rides, bus trips through the American South in 1961 to protest segregated bus terminals.
- The groups were confronted by arresting police officers—as well as horrific violence from white protestors—along their routes.
- The 1961 Freedom Rides sought to test a 1960 decision by the Supreme Court in *Boynton vs. Virginia* that segregation of interstate transportation facilities, including bus terminals.



# THE BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN - 1963

- In the spring of 1963, activists in Birmingham, Alabama launched one of the most influential campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement: Project C, better known as The Birmingham Campaign.
- It was a series of lunch counter sit-ins, marches on City Hall and boycotts on downtown merchants to protest segregation laws in the city.
- The peaceful demonstrations were met with violent attacks using high-pressure fire hoses and police dogs on men, women and children.



# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

- In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and sent to jail because he and others were protesting the treatment of blacks in Birmingham, Alabama. A court ordered that King could not hold protests in Birmingham.
- On April 16, 1963, while in jail, MLK wrote an open letter defending the strategy of nonviolent resistance to racism. He said that people have a moral responsibility to break unjust laws and to take direct action rather than waiting potentially forever for justice to come through the courts. The letter was known as “**Letter From Birmingham Jail.**”



## **EXCERPTS FROM *LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL***

- **“I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends.”**
- **“More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”**
- **“Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded him that he can gain it.”**



# THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON - 1963

- The March on Washington was a massive protest march that occurred in August 1963.
- 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. and aimed to draw attention to continuing challenges and inequalities faced by African Americans a century after emancipation.
- It was the same place where Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his “I Have A Dream” speech.



## SELMA – THE FILM (2014)

***Selma* is a historical drama film based on the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches led by James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lewis.**

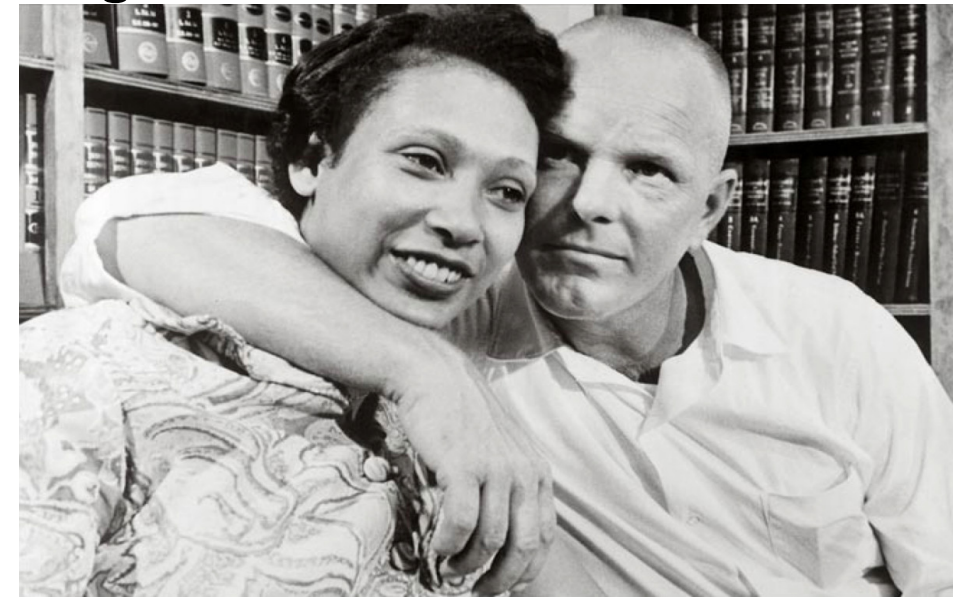


## 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT AND THE 1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT

- **US Congress passes the 1964 Civil Rights Act forbidding segregation in public facilities and accommodations.**
- **After demonstrations in Selma, Alabama, the 1965 Voting Rights Act follows, containing provisions for the federal protection of black voters.**

## LOVING-THE FILM (2016)

**Loving is biographical romantic drama film which tells the story of Richard and Mildred Loving, the plaintiffs in the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia*, which invalidated state laws prohibiting interracial marriage.**



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