

Civil Rights**Section 1**

Taking on Segregation

Terms and Names

Thurgood Marshall African-American lawyer who led the legal challenge against segregation

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Supreme Court case in which segregated schools were ruled unconstitutional

Rosa Parks Woman who helped start Montgomery bus boycott

Martin Luther King, Jr. Leader of the civil rights movement

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Civil rights organization

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Civil rights organization formed by students

sit-in Protest tactic in which blacks occupied whites-only seats at lunch counters

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about President Johnson's Great Society.

In this section, you will read how African Americans challenged the nation's policies of segregation and racial inequality.

As You Read

Use a spider diagram to take notes on the tactics, organizations, leaders, and Supreme Court decisions of the civil rights movement up to 1960.

THE SEGREGATION SYSTEM

(Pages 700–702)

How did World War II help start the civil rights movement?

By 1950, most African Americans were still considered second-class citizens. Throughout the South, Jim Crow laws remained in place. These were laws aimed at keeping blacks separate from whites.

During the 1950s, however, a civil rights movement began. This was a movement by blacks to gain greater equality in American society.

In several ways, World War II helped set the stage for this movement. First, the demand for soldiers during the war had

created a shortage of white male workers. This opened up many new jobs for African Americans.

Second, about 700,000 African Americans had served in the armed forces. These soldiers helped free Europe. Many returned from the war ready to fight for their own freedom.

Third, during the war, President Franklin Roosevelt outlawed racial discrimination in all federal agencies and war-related companies.

World War II had given American blacks a taste of equality and respectability. When the war ended, many African Americans were more determined than ever to improve their status.

Section 1, *continued*

1. Name two ways in which World War II helped set the stage for the civil rights movement.

CHALLENGING SEGREGATION IN COURT (Pages 702–703)

What was important in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*?

Even before the civil rights movement began, African-American lawyers had been challenging racial discrimination in court. Beginning in 1938, a team of lawyers led by **Thurgood Marshall** began arguing several cases before the Supreme Court.

Their biggest victory came in the 1954 case known as ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka***, Kansas. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that separate schools for whites and blacks were unequal—and thus unconstitutional.

2. What did the Supreme Court rule about separate schools for whites and blacks?

REACTION TO THE *BROWN* DECISION; THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT (Pages 703–705)

Where did African Americans fight racial segregation?

Some Southern communities refused to accept the *Brown* decision. In 1955, the Supreme Court handed down a second *Brown* ruling. It ordered schools to desegregate more quickly.

The school desegregation issue reached a crisis in 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas. The state’s governor, Orval Faubus, refused to let nine African-American students attend Little Rock’s Central High

School. President Eisenhower sent in federal troops to allow the students to enter the school.

School was just one place where African Americans challenged segregation. They also battled discrimination on city buses. In Montgomery, Alabama, a local law required that blacks give up their bus seats to whites. In December 1955, Montgomery resident **Rosa Parks** refused to give her seat to a white man. Parks was arrested.

After her arrest, African Americans in Montgomery organized a yearlong boycott of the city’s bus system. The protesters looked for a person to lead the bus boycott. They chose **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, the pastor of a Baptist Church.

The boycott lasted 381 days. Finally, in late 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated buses were illegal.

3. Name two places that African Americans targeted for racial desegregation.

MARTIN LUTHER KING AND THE SCLC; THE MOVEMENT SPREADS

(Pages 705–707)

Where did King get his ideas?

Martin Luther King, Jr. preached nonviolent resistance. He termed it “soul force.” He based his ideas on the teachings of several people. From Jesus, he learned to love one’s enemies. From the writer Henry David Thoreau, King took the idea of civil disobedience. This was the refusal to obey an unjust law. From labor organizer A. Philip Randolph, he learned how to organize huge demonstrations. From Mohandas Gandhi, King learned that a person could resist oppression without using violence.

Section 1, *continued*

King joined with other ministers and civil rights leaders in 1957. They formed the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**. By 1960, another influential civil rights group emerged. The **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** was formed mostly by college students. Members of this group felt that change for African Americans was occurring too slowly.

One protest strategy that SNCC (“snick”) used was the **sit-in**. During a sit-in, blacks sat at whites-only lunch counters. They refused to leave until they

were served. In February 1960, African-American students staged a sit-in at a lunch counter at a Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, North Carolina. The students sat there as whites hit them and poured food over their heads. By late 1960, students had desegregated lunch counters in 48 cities in 11 states.

4. Name two people from whom Martin Luther King, Jr. drew his ideas.

Section 1, *continued*

As you read, answer questions about important events in the civil rights movement.

1875	Civil Rights Act is passed.	→	1. What did the Civil Rights Act of 1875 do?	
1883	Supreme Court rules 1875 Civil Rights Act unconstitutional.	→	2. How did the Court rule in <i>Plessy</i> ?	
1896	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>			
1945	World War II ends.	→	3. In what three ways did World War II help set the stage for the modern civil rights movement?	
1946	<i>Morgan v. Virginia</i> outlaws mandatory segregation on interstate buses.			
1950	<i>Sweatt v. Painter</i> declares that state law schools must admit black applicants.	→	4. Who argued <i>Brown's</i> case?	5. What did the <i>Brown</i> ruling declare?
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>			
1955	Supreme Court orders school desegregation.	→	6. What organization was formed to support Rosa Parks?	
	Emmett Till is murdered.			7. What did it do?
	Rosa Parks is arrested.			
1956	Supreme Court outlaws bus segregation.			
1957	Little Rock faces school desegregation crisis.	→	8. How did President Eisenhower respond to the Little Rock crisis?	
	Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is formed.	→	9. Who was the president of SCLC?	10. What was SCLC's purpose?
1960	Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) is formed.	→	11. What did SNCC accomplish, and how?	