

Chapter Summary

The Civil Rights Movement, 1954–1968

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why do you think the civil rights movement made gains in postwar America? What motivates a society to make changes?

This chapter discusses how African Americans worked together to bring about social change and faced the challenges of segregation and discrimination with success amidst violence and murder.

The Movement Begins

- Wide-spread segregation and limited voting rights were prevalent in the South.
- Large numbers of African Americans migrating north increased political influence and voting power.
- NAACP used lawsuits to weaken segregation; a major victory was scored with *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat to a white man.
- African-American churches organized the base; pastors rallied and organized protests.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was established in 1957.
- African-American students were blocked from entering Little Rock High School.
- Eisenhower sent in federal troops and asked Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

Challenging Segregation

- In January 1960, four students staged a sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter.
- Sit-ins spread across the nation.
- The Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was established.

- Freedom Riders ended segregation on interstate bus travel.
- In September 1962, federal marshals escorted James Meredith to the University of Mississippi.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led marches in Birmingham and then Washington, D.C., to support the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led a march in Selma to pressure Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- The movement achieved its two major goals—prevent discrimination and protect voting rights.

New Civil Rights Issues

- Riots broke out throughout the country between 1965 and 1968.
- Black Power groups wanted to control the social, political, and economic direction of their struggle.
- Malcolm X became a symbol of the Black Panther movement.
- April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated; the movement lost unity and purpose.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed.
- The Black Panthers organized in 1966 and advocated revolution.