

Name: _____ Date: _____

Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement in America happened primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, but really began about 100 years earlier, after the American Civil War. The Civil Rights Movement occurred because of the desire for racial equality after the end of slavery in America.

After the Civil War, the Jim Crow laws were created. These laws enforced segregation, which means black people and white people were kept separate. These laws segregated blacks and whites in public places such as schools, restaurants. These laws even dictated where people could sit on a bus or which bathrooms they could use.

In 1954, segregation began to break down when the Supreme Court ruled on the *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Every day, a black third-grader, Linda Brown, had to walk more than a mile to her school only for black children, despite a white school being close to her home. The case ended in the Supreme Court ruling segregation within schools unconstitutional.

Ruby Bridges was one of the first black children to desegregate schools in the south. She was the first African-American to desegregate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Although six black students were eligible to attend all-white schools based on a test, six-year-old Ruby was the only one who went into the school. On her first day of school, little Ruby and her mother were escorted by federal marshals. Only one white teacher, Mrs. Henry, agreed to teach Ruby.

Rosa Parks was also a main figure during the Civil Rights Movement. She has been nicknamed "the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement." On December 1, 1955, she refused to give up her spot on a bus - which was already labeled as a spot for black people - up for a white passenger. She was arrested and bailed out of jail the same evening. Her defiance started the Montgomery bus boycott, which began a few days after her arrest and lasted one year.

The most famous Civil Rights activist was Martin Luther King Jr. King emerged after Rosa's arrest and King worked as a pastor and leader of the movement. King was known for his peaceful protests and powerful speeches, such as the famous "I Have a Dream" speech which was given at the March on Washington in Washington D.C. in 1963. On April 4, 1968, King was shot. After emergency surgery, King died an hour later.

Because of the March on Washington and the many protests leading up to that, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed. It outlawed Jim Crow Laws, segregation, and discrimination based on race, color, religion, and gender. This Act was originally proposed by President John F. Kennedy but was passed by President Lyndon Johnson. In the beginning, the laws were not always enforced, as shown in Ruby Bridges story.

Despite the difficulties, brave men, women, and children like Ruby, Martin, and Rosa continued to fight for justice and racial equality across America and beyond.



Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington / Public Domain

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Civil Rights Movement Quiz

1. Although the Civil Rights Movement actually began after the American Civil War, when did the Civil Rights Movement, as it is most commonly referred to today, begin?

- A. 1920s and 1930s
- B. 1940s and 1950s
- C. 1950s and 1960s
- D. 1960s and 1970s

2. What were Jim Crow Laws?

3. What was the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling?

4. Who was Mrs. Henry?

5. What is Rosa Parks best known for?

6. What was Martin Luther King Jr.'s most famous speech?

- A. Emancipation Proclamation
- B. Gettysburg Address
- C. The Great Debate
- D. I Have a Dream

7. How did Martin Luther King Jr. die?

- A. He was poisoned.
- B. He was shot.
- C. He had a heart attack.
- D. He had cancer.

8. Who proposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

- A. Harry S. Truman
- B. Franklin D. Roosevelt
- C. John F. Kennedy
- D. Dwight D. Eisenhower

9. What did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declare?
