



Opposing Segregation

“We have a society where . . . Negroes, solely because they are Negroes, are segregated, ostracized, and set apart from all other Americans. This discrimination extends from the cradle to the graveyard.”

—Thurgood Marshall, civil rights lawyer, in a speech on racial segregation, 1954

◀ Jackie Robinson helped end segregation in baseball.

Beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement

Objectives

- Learn how the campaign for civil rights picked up pace after World War II.
- Discover how the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in the nation's schools.
- Find out why African Americans boycotted the buses in Montgomery, Alabama.

Reading Skill

Make Inferences History textbooks may not directly state the views of people. Instead, the text may describe people's actions and leave the reader to figure out, or infer, the views and attitudes behind those actions. To make an inference, look at the actions people took and think about the attitudes that most likely produced those actions.

Key Terms and People

Thurgood Marshall	boycott
integration	Martin Luther King, Jr.
Jackie Robinson	
Rosa Parks	

Why It Matters African Americans made important gains after the Civil War. But when Reconstruction ended, most of these gains were lost and many years of inequality and injustice followed. Finally, after decades of little progress, the struggle for equality and civil rights picked up strength after World War II.

Section Focus Question: What key events marked the beginning of the civil rights movement in the 1950s?

Separate but Unequal

Racial barriers existed in all parts of the country. However, they took different forms in the North and the South.

In the North Generally, there were no official segregation laws in the North. African Americans could vote and had legal access to jobs and colleges. Still, African Americans and whites rarely mixed. They tended to live in different communities. As a result, their children usually attended different schools.

African Americans in the North often faced prejudice in hiring and housing. Many qualified African Americans could not get high-paying jobs. Homeowners in white neighborhoods would often refuse to sell homes to African Americans. Other groups, such as Jews or immigrants, frequently faced similar forms of discrimination.

In the South In the South, segregation was a way of life supported by law. By the early 1900s, segregation was firmly in place in all southern states. The so-called Jim Crow laws enforced separation of races in schools and hospitals, on public transportation, and in theaters and restaurants. Even drinking fountains were for “whites only” or “colored only.”

As you have learned, the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* **reinforced** segregation. The Court ruled that segregation was legal as long as “separate-but-equal” facilities were provided. In fact, separate schools and other facilities for African Americans were rarely, if ever, equal to those for white southerners.

The NAACP Leads the Fight During the Progressive Era, reformers such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Jane Addams had founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Its goals were to “eradicate . . . race prejudice” and to secure “complete equality before the law.”

The NAACP challenged laws that prevented African Americans from exercising their full rights as citizens. It won its first major victory in 1915, when the Supreme Court declared grandfather clauses unconstitutional. As you learned, grandfather clauses had been used in the South to ensure that only whites voted. In the 1920s and 1930s, the NAACP won court victories in the areas of housing, employment, and education.

Thurgood Marshall In 1938, Thurgood Marshall became head of the NAACP’s legal section. A brilliant lawyer, Marshall used his knowledge of the Constitution to attack the foundations of segregation. His legal strategy was largely based on the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees all citizens “equal protection of the laws.”

It also forbids any state from making laws that interfere with the rights of U.S. citizens. Marshall argued that this meant that all rights in the federal Constitution applied to the states as well. Marshall’s ultimate goal was **integration**, or an end to racial segregation. As you will see, his most important victory would come in 1954.

✓Checkpoint Describe one accomplishment of the NAACP.

Vocabulary Builder

reinforce (ree ihn FORS) **v.** to strengthen; to make more effective



Make Inferences

Why do you think NAACP members went to court to fight against segregation? What do you think was their long-term goal?

Segregation in the South

Legal segregation was a way of life in southern states. The white man and black man at left were forbidden by law from drinking from the same water fountain.

Critical Thinking: Link Past and Present Would you see a road sign like the one shown here today? Why or why not?



Barriers Begin to Crumble

The campaign for equal rights gained speed after World War II. During the war, African Americans and other minorities had served with distinction in the armed forces. Returning home, they sought an end to discrimination in American society.



Postage stamp honoring Jackie Robinson

Integrating Baseball One of the first barriers to fall was in sports. Professional baseball had long been segregated into the all-white Major Leagues and the Negro League. Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, wanted to break the "color line" and tap into the vast pool of talent in the Negro League.

In 1947, Rickey signed an African American army veteran named Jackie Robinson. Robinson's first years in the majors were a test of endurance. While some teammates welcomed him, he was ignored by other players and jeered at by fans. Soon, however, his skill and daring on the field won him huge numbers of fans, both white and African American. At the end of his first season, Robinson was named Rookie of the Year. More important, he paved the way for other African American athletes to compete in professional sports.

Integrating the Military President Harry Truman was committed to civil rights. He proposed laws to make lynching a federal crime, to protect the rights of African American voters, and to ban discrimination in hiring. Because of southern opposition, though, not one of these laws was passed.

Still, as commander in chief, Truman did not need congressional approval to end segregation in the military. In 1948, he ordered the integration of all units of the armed forces. As a result, African American and white soldiers fought side by side in the Korean War.

✓Checkpoint What actions did Truman take to further civil rights?

Desegregating the Schools

Spurred on by small victories, African Americans and their white supporters stepped up the struggle for equal rights. In 1954, the growing civil rights movement achieved a major triumph.

Brown v. Board of Education In 1951, Oliver Brown sued the board of education of Topeka, Kansas. Under Topeka's segregation laws, Brown's daughter Linda had to travel a great distance to a run-down school for African Americans. Brown wanted Linda to attend a school closer to her home, which also had better facilities. But the principal refused, saying that the school was for whites only.

The case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* reached the Supreme Court. Thurgood Marshall represented Brown. Marshall recognized that the moment had come to overthrow the doctrine of "separate but equal." He argued that segregation made equal education impossible. Segregation, he further stated, damaged African American youngsters by making them feel inferior.

The Court agreed. On May 17, 1954, the justices ruled that “in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.” A year later, the Court ordered local school boards to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.”

In a few places, schools were integrated smoothly. However, many white southerners were hostile to integration. The biggest battle over school integration took place in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Trouble in Little Rock The Little Rock school board approved a plan for gradual desegregation. According to the plan, nine African American students would attend the city’s Central High School. But Arkansas governor Orval Faubus vowed, “No school district will be forced to mix the races as long as I am governor.”

On September 4, 1957, Faubus called in the state’s National Guard to keep the nine students out of Central High. An angry mob gathered outside the school. A few blocks away, eight of the students met so that they could walk together, protected by a band of black and white ministers. But Elizabeth Eckford did not get the message. Instead, she faced the mob alone. She recalled:

“Somebody started yelling, ‘Lynch her! Lynch her!’ . . . I looked into the face of an old woman and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me.”

—Elizabeth Eckford, interview

After several weeks of turmoil, President Eisenhower stepped in. He sent in federal troops to enforce the Supreme Court’s ruling. Under their protection, the students finally entered Central High.

Checkpoint How did the Supreme Court rule in *Brown v. Board of Education*?

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka was a milestone in the civil rights movement. Another milestone took place a year later.

Rosa Parks On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, an African American seamstress, boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks was secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP. In accordance with local segregation laws, she sat in the first row for “coloreds.” As the bus filled up, the driver ordered her to give up her seat to a white rider. Parks refused. The driver then had her arrested.

News of the arrest spread quickly. Members of the Women’s Political Council of Montgomery then took a daring step. At the time, African Americans made up about 70 percent of the city’s bus riders. What would happen if they all boycotted, or refused to use, the buses on the day when Parks was brought to trial?



First Day of School

Elizabeth Eckford is taunted by a mob as she tries to attend school in Little Rock on September 4, 1957. Years later, the woman shown yelling at Eckford apologized to her and they became friends. **Critical Thinking: Evaluate**

Information The day after this photograph was taken, it appeared in newspapers all over the country. How do you think people reacted to it?

● INFOGRAPHIC

THE Montgomery Bus Boycott

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The Montgomery bus boycott began when Rosa Parks decided she was no longer going to accept discrimination. It ended with one of the great victories for civil rights.

Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions Why do you think the Montgomery bus boycott succeeded?

Rosa Parks is fingerprinted after her arrest. A longtime NAACP member, Parks later explained that she was "sick and tired of being sick and tired."

December 1, 1955

Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white rider.

December 5, 1955

Led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., African Americans begin boycott of Montgomery bus system.

January 30, 1956

King's house is bombed.

March 14, 1956

Day 100 of bus boycott

June 22, 1956

Day 200 of bus boycott

September 30, 1956

Day 300 of bus boycott

December 13, 1956

U.S. Supreme Court outlaws bus segregation.

December 21, 1956

Boycott ends as King and other African Americans board Montgomery buses.

As African Americans carpool to work, an empty city bus passes in the background.

With the success of the boycott, these two men no longer have to sit at the back of the bus.



Members of the Women's Political Council printed and distributed 52,000 fliers. On Monday morning, December 5, there was not a single African American passenger on the city's buses.

The Boycott Grows The protest was originally supposed to last a single day. But that night, some 7,000 people met at a local Baptist church. A young preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr., told the crowd, "There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression." At King's urging, the African American community agreed to continue the boycott until the bus segregation laws were taken off the books.

Montgomery's leaders responded to the boycott with outrage. King's home was bombed, and King and others were jailed several times on false charges. But the boycotters persisted. Volunteer drivers transported boycotters between work and home. African Americans walked miles to work or traveled by bicycle. Volunteer chauffeurs drove other protesters between work and home.

The Montgomery bus boycott lasted 381 days. At last, in November 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was unconstitutional. On December 21, King boarded a bus in Montgomery—and sat in the front seat.

 **Checkpoint** How did the Montgomery bus boycott end?

 **Looking Back and Ahead** One important result of the Montgomery bus boycott was the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a leader of the civil rights movement. Later, you will explore King's ideas and achievements in more detail.

Vocabulary Builder

persist (pehr SIHST) **v.** to continue in the face of opposition or difficulty

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Recall** How did the Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* support segregation laws?
(b) Analyze Cause and Effect What effect did the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* have on *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
- (a) Describe** What was the Montgomery bus boycott? How did it begin?
(b) Evaluate Information Why was a bus boycott an effective tool of protest in Montgomery?

Reading Skill

- 3. Make Inferences** Reread the text following the subheading "Trouble in Little Rock." What can you infer about President Eisenhower's attitude toward Faubus's use of state power to defy a Supreme Court decision?

Key Terms

- 4.** Draw a table with three rows and three columns. In the first column, list the following terms: *integration*, *boycott*. In the next column, write the definition of each term. In the last column, make a small illustration that shows the meaning of each term.

Writing

- 5.** Choose one of the photographs in this section. Imagine that you were either one of the people who is shown in the photograph or the photographer who took the picture. Write a few sentences describing the moment when the photograph was taken: what was happening, what you were doing, and how you felt at the time.