

Section 1

The Movement Begins

Guide to Reading

Big Ideas

Struggles for Rights In the 1950s, African Americans began a movement to win greater legal and social equality.

Content Vocabulary

- “separate but equal” (p. 622)
- de facto segregation (p. 623)
- sit-in (p. 624)

Academic Vocabulary

- facility (p. 622)

People and Events to Identify

- Rosa Parks (p. 622)
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (p. 622)
- Thurgood Marshall (p. 624)
- Linda Brown (p. 624)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (p. 626)
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (p. 627)

Reading Strategy

Organizing Complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the causes of the civil rights movement.



After World War II, African Americans and other civil rights supporters challenged segregation in the United States. Their efforts were vigorously opposed by Southern segregationists, but the federal government began to take a firmer stand for civil rights.

The Origins of the Movement

MAIN Idea African Americans won court victories, increased their voting power, and began using “sit-ins” to desegregate public places.

HISTORY AND YOU Are you registered to vote, or do you plan to register when you are 18? Read on to learn how African Americans increased their voting power and worked to desegregate public places.

On December 1, 1955, **Rosa Parks** left her job as a seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama, and boarded a bus to go home. In 1955 buses in Montgomery reserved seats in the front for whites and seats in the rear for African Americans. Seats in the middle were open to African Americans, but only if there were few whites on the bus.

Rosa Parks took a seat just behind the white section. Soon, all of the seats on the bus were filled. When the bus driver noticed a white man standing, he told Parks and three other African Americans in her row to get up and let the white man sit down. The other three African Americans rose, but Rosa Parks did not. The driver then called the Montgomery police, who took Parks into custody.

News of the arrest soon reached E. D. Nixon, a former president of the local chapter of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**. Nixon, who wanted to challenge bus segregation in court, told Parks, “With your permission we can break down segregation on the bus with your case.” Parks replied, “If you think it will mean something to Montgomery and do some good, I’ll be happy to go along with it.”

When Rosa Parks agreed to challenge segregation in court, she did not know that her decision would spark a new era in the civil rights movement. Within days of her arrest, African Americans in Montgomery had organized a boycott of the bus system. Mass protests soon began across the nation. After decades of segregation and inequality, many African Americans had decided the time had come to demand equal rights.

The struggle would not be easy. The Supreme Court had declared segregation to be constitutional in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The ruling had established the “**separate but equal**” doctrine. Laws that segregated African Americans were permitted as long as equal **facilities** were provided for them.

People IN HISTORY

Thurgood Marshall

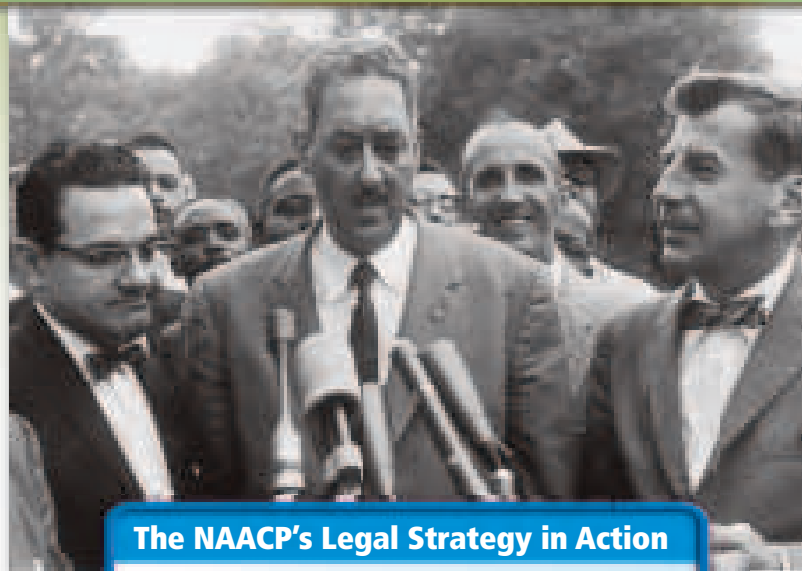
1908–1993

Over his lifetime, Thurgood Marshall made many contributions to the civil rights movement. Perhaps his most famous accomplishment was representing the NAACP in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Marshall's speaking style was simple and direct. During the *Brown* case, Justice Frankfurter asked Marshall for a definition of *equal*. Marshall replied: "Equal means getting the same thing, at the same time and in the same place."

Born into a middle-class Baltimore family in 1908, Marshall earned a law degree from Howard University Law School. The school's dean, Charles Hamilton Houston, enlisted Marshall to work for the NAACP. Together, the two laid out the legal strategy for challenging discrimination in many areas of American life. In 1935 Marshall won his first case regarding segregation in state institutions. The decision forced the University of Maryland to integrate. Marshall went on to win 29 of the 32 cases he argued before the Supreme Court, and became known as "Mr. Civil Rights." In 1967 Marshall became the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court, where he continued to be a voice for civil rights. In his view, the Constitution was not perfect, because it had accepted slavery. "The true miracle of the Constitution," he once wrote, "was not the birth of the Constitution, but its life."

How did Thurgood Marshall contribute to the civil rights movement?



The NAACP's Legal Strategy in Action

Even before the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case, Thurgood Marshall had won several cases for the NAACP that chipped away at segregation in the South.

***Smith v. Allwright* (1944):** Political parties cannot deny voting rights in party primaries on the basis of race.

***Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948):** States cannot enforce private agreements to discriminate on the basis of race in the sale of property.

***Sweatt v. Painter* (1950):** Law schools segregated by race are inherently unequal.

After the *Plessy* decision, laws segregating African Americans and whites spread quickly. These laws, nicknamed "Jim Crow" laws, segregated buses, trains, schools, restaurants, pools, parks, and other public facilities. Usually the "Jim Crow" facilities provided for African Americans were of poorer quality than those provided for whites. Areas without laws requiring segregation often had **de facto segregation**—segregation by custom and tradition.

Court Challenges Begin

The civil rights movement had been building for a long time. Since 1909, the NAACP had supported court cases intended to overturn segregation. Over the years, the NAACP achieved some victories. In 1935, for example, the Supreme Court ruled in *Norris v. Alabama* that Alabama's exclusion of African Americans from juries violated their right to equal protection under the law. In 1946 the Court ruled in *Morgan v. Virginia* that segregation on interstate buses

was unconstitutional. In 1950 it ruled in *Sweatt v. Painter* that state law schools had to admit qualified African American applicants, even if parallel black law schools existed.

New Political Power

In addition to a string of court victories, African Americans enjoyed increased political power. Before World War I, most African Americans lived in the South, where they were largely excluded from voting. During the Great Migration, many moved to Northern cities, where they were allowed to vote. Increasingly, Northern politicians sought their votes and listened to their concerns.

During the 1930s, many African Americans benefited from FDR's New Deal programs and began supporting the Democratic Party. This gave the party new strength in the North. This wing of the party was now able to counter Southern Democrats, who often supported segregation.

The Push for Desegregation

During World War II, African American leaders began to use their political power to demand more rights. Their efforts helped end discrimination in wartime factories and increased opportunities for African Americans in the military.

D In Chicago in 1942, James Farmer and George Houser founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). CORE began using **sit-ins**, a form of protest first used by union workers in the 1930s. In 1943 CORE attempted to desegregate restaurants that refused to serve African Americans. Using the sit-in strategy, members of CORE went to segregated restaurants. If they were denied service, they sat down and refused to leave. The sit-ins were intended to shame restaurant managers into integrating their restaurants. Using these protests, CORE successfully integrated many restaurants, theaters, and other public facilities in Northern cities including Chicago, Detroit, Denver, and Syracuse.

Brown v. Board of Education

After World War II, the NAACP continued to challenge segregation in the courts. From 1939 to 1961, the NAACP's chief counsel and director of its Legal Defense and Education Fund was the brilliant African American attorney **Thurgood Marshall**. After the war, Marshall focused his efforts on ending segregation in public schools.

In 1954 the Supreme Court decided to combine several cases and issue a general ruling on segregation in schools. One of the cases involved a young African American girl named **Linda Brown**, who was denied admission to her neighborhood school in Topeka, Kansas, because of her race. She was told to attend an all-black school across town. With the help of the NAACP, her parents then sued the Topeka school board.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional and violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Chief Justice Earl Warren summed up the Court's decision, declaring: "In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate

but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Southern Resistance


The Brown decision marked a dramatic reversal of the precedent established in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. *Brown v. Board of Education* applied only to public schools, but the ruling threatened the entire system of segregation. Although it convinced many African Americans that the time had come to challenge segregation, it also angered many white Southerners, who became even more determined to defend segregation, regardless of what the Supreme Court ruled.

Although some school districts in border states integrated their schools, anger and opposition was a far more common reaction. In Washington, D.C., Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia called on Southerners to adopt "massive resistance" against the ruling. Across the South, hundreds of thousands of white Americans joined citizens' councils to pressure their local governments and school boards into defying the Supreme Court. Many states adopted pupil assignment laws. These laws established elaborate requirements other than race that schools could use to prevent African Americans from attending white schools.

The Supreme Court inadvertently encouraged white resistance when it followed up its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* a year later. The Court ordered school districts to proceed "with all deliberate speed" to end school segregation. The wording was vague enough that many districts were able to keep their schools segregated for many more years.

Massive resistance also appeared in the halls of Congress. In 1956 a group of 101 Southern members of Congress signed the "Southern Manifesto," which denounced the Supreme Court's ruling as "a clear abuse of judicial power" and pledged to use "all lawful means" to reverse the decision. Although the "Southern Manifesto" had no legal standing, the statement encouraged white Southerners to defy the Supreme Court. Not until 1969 did the Supreme Court order all school systems to desegregate "at once" and operate integrated schools "now and hereafter."

 **Examining** Why was the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* so important?

 To better understand the court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, read an excerpt from the Court's ruling on page R55 in **Documents in American History**.



ANALYZING SUPREME COURT CASES

Is Segregation Unconstitutional?

★ *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954

Background to the Cases

One of the most important Supreme Court cases in American history began in 1952, when the Supreme Court agreed to hear the NAACP's case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, along with three other cases. They all dealt with the question of whether the principle "separate but equal" established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was constitutional with regard to public schools.

How the Court Ruled

In a unanimous decision in 1954, the Court ruled in favor of Linda Brown and the other plaintiffs. In doing so, it overruled *Plessy v. Ferguson* and rejected the idea that equivalent but separate schools for African American and white students were constitutional. The Court held that racial segregation in public schools violates the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause because "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The Court's rejection of "separate but equal" was a major victory for the civil rights movement and led to the overturning of laws requiring segregation in other public places.

PRIMARY SOURCE

The Court's Opinion

"In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."

—Chief Justice Earl Warren writing for the Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*



▲ The children involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case are shown in this 1953 photograph. They are, from front to back, Vicki Henderson, Donald Henderson, Linda Brown (of the case title), James Emanuel, Nancy Todd, and Katherine Carper. Together, their cases led to the Supreme Court decreeing that public schools could not be segregated on the basis of race.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Dissenting Views

"We regard the decisions of the Supreme Court in the school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power. . . . In the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 the Supreme Court expressly declared that under the 14th Amendment no person was denied any of his rights if the States provided separate but equal facilities. . . . This interpretation, restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the States and confirmed their habits, traditions, and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and commonsense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children."

—from the "Southern Manifesto"

DBQ

Document-Based Questions

- 1. Explaining** Why did the Supreme Court find in favor of Linda Brown?
- 2. Drawing Conclusions** What is the main argument against the *Brown* decision in the excerpt from the "Southern Manifesto"?
- 3. Making Inferences** Do you think that the authors of the "Southern Manifesto" were including African Americans in the last sentence of the excerpt? Why or why not?

The Civil Rights Movement Begins

MAIN Idea The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling ignited protest and encouraged African Americans to challenge other forms of segregation.

HISTORY AND YOU Do you think that one person has the power to change things for the better? Read on to learn how the courage and hard work of individuals helped reform society.

In the midst of the uproar over the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, Rosa Parks made her decision to challenge segregation of public transportation. Outraged by Parks's arrest, Jo Ann Robinson, head of a local organization called the Women's Political Council, called on African Americans to boycott Montgomery's buses on the day Rosa Parks appeared in court.

R The boycott marked the start of a new era of the civil rights movement among African Americans. Instead of limiting the fight for their rights to court cases, African Americans in large numbers began organizing protests, defying laws that required segregation, and demanding they be treated as equal to whites.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

The Montgomery bus boycott was a dramatic success. On the afternoon of Rosa Parks's court appearance, several African American leaders formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to run the boycott and to negotiate with city leaders for an end to segregation. They elected a 26-year-old pastor named **Martin Luther King, Jr.** to lead them.

On the evening of December 5, 1955, a meeting was held at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where Dr. King was the pastor. In the deep, resonant tones and powerful phrases that characterized his speaking style, King encouraged the people to continue their protest. "There comes a time, my friends," he said, "when people get tired of being thrown into the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair." He cautioned, however, that the protest had to be peaceful:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"Now let us say that we are not advocating violence. . . . The only weapon we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a communistic nation—we couldn't do this. If we were trapped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime—we couldn't do this. But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right!"

—quoted in *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years*

King had earned a Ph.D. in theology from Boston University. He believed that the only moral way to end segregation and racism was through nonviolent passive resistance. He told his followers, "We must use the weapon of love. We must realize that so many people are taught to hate us that they are not totally responsible for their hate." African Americans, he urged, must say to racists: "We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process."

Turning Point

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

The act of one tired woman on a bus and the subsequent bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, brought civil rights out of the legal arena and turned it into a struggle in which ordinary Americans realized that they could make a difference. Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on the bus to a white man showed that even small acts of defiance could empower people to create change.

The Montgomery bus boycott, which was begun to show support for Parks, became a huge success. It started a chain reaction—the beginning of a mass movement that would dramatically change American society over the next 20 years, and bring to prominence many influential African American leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr.

ANALYZING HISTORY Drawing

Conclusions How did the bus boycott create a mass movement for change?

King drew upon the philosophy and techniques of Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi, who had used nonviolent resistance effectively to challenge British rule in India. Believing in people's ability to transform themselves, King was certain that public opinion would eventually force the government to end segregation.

Stirred by King's powerful words, African Americans in Montgomery continued their boycott for over a year. Instead of riding the bus, they organized car pools or walked to work. Meanwhile, Rosa Parks's legal challenge to bus segregation worked its way through the courts. In November 1956, the Supreme Court affirmed the decision of a special three-judge panel declaring Alabama's laws requiring segregation on buses unconstitutional.

African American Churches

W Martin Luther King, Jr., was not the only prominent minister in the bus boycott. Many of the other leaders were African American ministers. The boycott could not have suc-

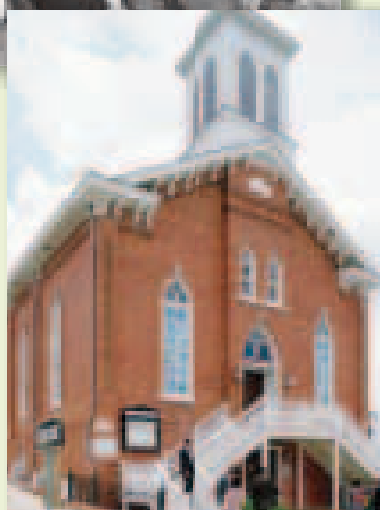
ceeded without the support of the African American churches in the city. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, African American churches continued to play a critical role. They served as forums for many of the protests and planning meetings, and mobilized many of the volunteers for specific civil rights campaigns.

After the Montgomery bus boycott demonstrated that nonviolent protest could be successful, African American ministers led by King established the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)** in 1957. The SCLC set out to eliminate segregation from American society and to encourage African Americans to register to vote. Dr. King served as the SCLC's first president. Under his leadership, the organization challenged segregation at voting booths and in public transportation, housing, and accommodations.

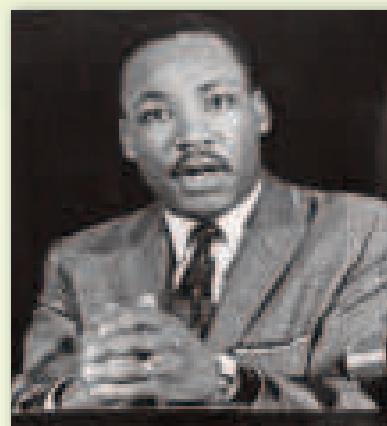
✓ Reading Check Summarizing What role did African American churches play in the civil rights movement?



▲ African Americans walk to work during the third month of the Montgomery bus boycott (above). The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama (right), was the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, first church as a minister and headquarters for the organizers of the bus boycott.



▲ Rosa Parks rides a newly integrated bus after the successful boycott.



Eisenhower Responds

MAIN Idea President Eisenhower sent the U.S. Army to enforce integration in Arkansas.

HISTORY AND YOU Do you believe that the president should uphold Supreme Court rulings? Read to learn how Eisenhower responded to events in Little Rock, Arkansas.

W President Eisenhower sympathized with the civil rights movement and personally disagreed with segregation. Following the precedent set by President Truman, he ordered navy shipyards and veterans' hospitals to desegregate. At the same time, however, Eisenhower disagreed with those who wanted to end segregation through protests and court rulings. He believed segregation and racism would end gradually, as values changed. With the nation in the midst of the Cold War, he worried that challenging white Southerners might divide the nation at a time when the country needed to pull together. Publicly, he refused to endorse the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Privately, he

remarked, "I don't believe you can change the hearts of men with laws or decisions."

Although he believed that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was wrong, Eisenhower knew he had to uphold the authority of the federal government. As a result, he became the first president since Reconstruction to send troops into the South to protect the rights of African Americans.

Crisis in Little Rock

In September 1957, the school board in Little Rock, Arkansas, won a court order requiring that nine African American students be admitted to Central High, a school with 2,000 white students. The governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, was known as a moderate on racial issues, but he was determined to win reelection and began to campaign as a defender of white supremacy. He ordered troops from the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the nine students from entering the school. The next day, as the National Guard troops sur-

PRIMARY SOURCE

Little Rock School Crisis, Arkansas, 1957



▲ In 1957 Elizabeth Eckford (left center) was one of nine courageous African American students determined to integrate Central High School in Little Rock.

Analyzing VISUALS

1. **Explaining** Why do you think the white people are shouting at Elizabeth Eckford?
2. **Identifying Central Issues** Why did President Eisenhower send troops to Little Rock?

► Federal troops protect African American students at Central High.



▲ Arkansas governor Orval Faubus sought to block the school's integration. He is shown holding up a paper making his argument that the federal government was abusing its power in forcibly integrating Central High in Little Rock.



rounded the school, an angry white mob joined the troops to protest and to intimidate the students trying to register.

Faubus had used the armed forces of a state to oppose the federal government—the first such challenge to the Constitution since the Civil War. Eisenhower knew that he could not allow Faubus to defy the federal government. After a conference between Eisenhower and Faubus proved fruitless, the district court ordered the governor to remove the troops. Instead of ending the crisis, however, Faubus simply left the school to the mob. After the African American students entered the building, angry whites beat at least two African American reporters and broke many of the school's windows.

The violence finally convinced President Eisenhower that he had to act. Federal authority had to be upheld. He immediately ordered the Army to send troops to Little Rock. In addition, he federalized the Arkansas National Guard. By nightfall, 1,000 soldiers of the elite 101st Airborne Division had arrived. By 5:00 A.M., the troops had encircled the school, bayonets ready. A few hours later, the nine African American students arrived in an army station wagon and walked into the high school. Federal authority had been upheld, but the troops had to stay in Little Rock for the rest of the school year.

Officials in Little Rock, however, continued to resist integration. Before the start of the following school year, Governor Faubus ordered the three public high schools in Little Rock closed. Steps to integrate the schools in Little Rock resumed only in 1959.

New Civil Rights Legislation

In the same year that the Little Rock crisis began, Congress passed the first civil rights law since Reconstruction. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was intended to protect the right of African Americans to vote. Eisenhower believed firmly in the right to vote, and he viewed it as his responsibility to protect voting rights. He also knew that if he sent a civil rights bill to Congress, conservative Southern Democrats would try to block the legislation. In 1956 he did send the bill to Congress, hoping not only to split the Democratic Party but also to convince more African Americans to vote Republican.

Several Southern senators did try to stop the Civil Rights Act of 1957, but the Senate majority leader, Democrat Lyndon Johnson, put together a compromise that enabled the act to pass. Although its final form was much weaker than originally intended, the act still brought the power of the federal government into the civil rights debate. It created a civil rights division within the Department of Justice and gave it the authority to seek court injunctions against anyone interfering with the right to vote. It also created the United States Commission on Civil Rights to investigate allegations of denial of voting rights. After the bill passed, the SCLC announced a campaign to register 2 million new African American voters.



Explaining Why did Eisenhower intervene in the Little Rock controversy?

Section 1 REVIEW

Vocabulary

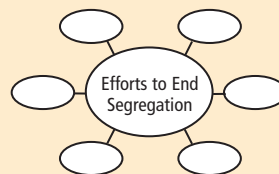
1. **Explain** the significance of: Rosa Parks, NAACP, "separate but equal," de facto segregation, sit-in, Thurgood Marshall, Linda Brown, Martin Luther King, Jr., Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Main Ideas

2. **Explaining** What was CORE and what were some of its tactics?
3. **Identifying** What event set off the civil rights movement of the 1950s?
4. **Summarizing** Why did Eisenhower send the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock, Arkansas?

Critical Thinking

5. **Big Ideas** Why did the role of the federal government in civil rights enforcement change?
6. **Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the efforts made to end segregation.



7. **Analyzing Visuals** Study the photograph of Elizabeth Eckford on page 628. Describe Eckford's demeanor compared to those around her. What might this indicate about her character?

Writing About History

8. **Expository Writing** Assume the role of an African American soldier returning from World War II. Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper describing your expectations of civil rights.



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