

The **Civil Rights Movement** was an era in US history between 1954-1968 during which African Americans ended segregation and successfully asserted their basic human rights through peaceful protest and community building.

The movement made tremendous strides and is a landmark, foundational moment in US history. In 1954, at the start of the movement, slavery had been abolished for nearly 100 years, but deep racial tensions and inequalities still separated white and black America.

Segregation, or the practice of having separate facilities for whites and African Americans, was the norm in the country. This meant that African Americans could not go to the same schools, live and work in the same places, or even serve in the same army units, as white Americans. Segregation was held up by the Supreme Court decision in the *Plessy v Ferguson* case of 1896, which decided that segregated facilities could be 'separate but equal.' The reality was, that facilities created for African Americans were vastly inferior than those created for white Americans.

In 1951, the African American students of Moton High School protested that their facilities were worse than those of white students. The issue reached the Supreme Court, who decided that 'separate but equal' facilities were not equal, and that segregation was unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court case of *Brown v Board of Education* of 1954 is seen today as the start of the Civil Rights movement. However, the case was not accepted easily. Many state officials, such as **Orval Faubus**, the governor of Arkansas, refused to desegregate schools in 1957. Due to the violent crowds who tried to harm nine African American high school students that wanted to exercise their right to attend integrated schools, the students had to travel to school under escort by the National Guard.

Another key turning point came in 1955, when **Rosa Parks**, an African American woman in Alabama, refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. For this 'crime' she was arrested, but this arrest received a national outcry. This outcry led to the **Montgomery Bus Boycott**, where 90% of the African Americans in the city of Montgomery, almost 50,000 people, boycotted-or refused to use-the bus system. Their objective was to aim for the desegregation of

public transit. The boycott caused the bus system to lose a large amount of money. After nearly a year of boycott, the federal government ordered that the bus system be desegregated.

The key figure of the Civil Rights movement was **Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.** He was an American Baptist minister who emphasized nonviolent, peaceful protest. He led many marches and protests, such as the **Selma Voting Rights Movement** in the mid 60's in Georgia, where **Jim Crow Laws**-laws which maintained segregation of all aspects of life, and limited the civil rights of African Americans-were strong, and where white police were not afraid to use violent force to arrest, wound, or even kill African Americans.

King's nonviolent civil resistance approach won him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He is most famous for his '**I Have a Dream Speech**,' of 1963, in which he called for an end to racism in the United States. King was assassinated for his work in a motel room in 1968, resulting in riots in several US cities.

1) What was the Civil Rights Movement?

- A: An African American movement pushing for the end of segregation in America
- B: A prelude to the Civil War
- C: A freedom march in Washington
- D: A boycott in Alabama

2) What did the Brown v. Board of Education case do?

- A: It decided that 'separate but equal' was unconstitutional, and desegregated schools
- B: It maintained that 'separate but equal' was constitutional
- C: It affirmed Jim Crow laws
- D: They were involved in organized crime

3) What did Orval Faubus do in response to the Brown v. Board of Education decision?

A: He complied and desegregated schools in his state

B: He refused to desegregate schools in his state

C: He sued the federal government

D: He didn't know anything about the decision

4) Who was arrested for refusing to give up their seat to a white person on a bus?

A: Plessy

B: Ferguson

C: Martin Luther King

D: Rosa Parks

5) What was the goal of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

A: To desegregate public transport by peaceful means

B: To desegregate public transport by violent means

C: To keep public transport segregated by peaceful means

D: To keep public transport segregated by violent means

6) Why was Martin Luther King Jr. so important?

A: He was a great public speaker

B: He was a brilliant strategist

C: He was well-connected

D: He emphasized peaceful, non-violent protest