

# 7

## The Civil Rights Movement in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s

### KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts relevant to this chapter are:

- ▶ **democracy** ▶ **racism**
- ▶ **self-determination**

### KEY DATES

#### 1954

- ▼ US Supreme Court orders schools to desegregate

#### 1955–56

- ▼ Montgomery Bus Boycott

#### 1957

- ▼ **27 September** US Army protects African American students entering Central High School, Little Rock
- ▼ President Eisenhower initiates 1957 *Civil Rights Act*

#### 1960–61

- ▼ Campaign of 'sit-ins' against segregation

#### 1960s

- ▼ Growing influence of Malcolm X, Black Power and Black Panthers

#### 1963

- ▼ Protest marches in Birmingham, Alabama
- ▼ **August** March on Washington

### The areas of focus of this case study are:

- ▶ Segregation in the USA in the 1950s
- ▶ Martin Luther King and the use of non-violence to achieve civil rights objectives
- ▶ The development of more radical methods and individuals in the 1960s, for example, Malcolm X and the Black Panthers
- ▶ Achievements of the Civil Rights Movement



#### Source 7.1

A photograph showing US Democratic hopefuls, Barack Obama (third from left) and Hillary Clinton (fourth from right) participating in a march on 4 March 2007 commemorating 'Bloody Sunday', the 1965 voting rights campaign march from Selma to Montgomery.

#### 1964

- ▶ 'Freedom Summer' volunteers murdered
- ▶ **4 July** Civil Rights bill becomes law

#### 1965

- ▶ **March** 'Bloody Sunday' and Selma to Montgomery march
- ▶ **August** President Johnson signs *Voting Rights Act*

#### 1968

- ▶ **4 April** Martin Luther King assassinated
- ▶ *Civil Rights Act* makes discrimination illegal

## Introduction

### Civil Rights Movement

a program of protest and civil disobedience undertaken by African Americans and their supporters in the 1950s and 1960s to overcome racist policies that denied them their civil rights

In mid January 2007, Democratic Party Senator Barack Obama embarked on a campaign to gain his party's nomination for the United States 2008 presidential election. This was newsworthy because Obama was an African American, a member of a group within the United States that, at the time of his birth, was struggling to even exercise voting rights. It was also significant because Obama's considerable popularity led many to believe that the United States, a nation with a long history of racial discrimination, was ready, in the early twenty-first century, to elect an African American president. The **Civil Rights Movement** of the 1950s and 1960s helped lay the groundwork for this change.

### Source 7.2

Extracts from a news report on 16 January 2007 commenting on Barack Obama seeking the Democratic Party's nomination in the 2008 presidential elections

#### OBAMA: DEMOCRATIC STAR WHO COULD BECOME FIRST BLACK US PRESIDENT

By Paul Handley

Democratic Senator Barack Obama, who has rocketed to national political stardom in only two years, stands a good chance to become the first African-American president in United States history ...

Only two years into his first six-year term in the Senate, with easy oratorical skills and a brilliant smile, Obama is a phenomenon unseen in US politics some say, since John F. Kennedy burst onto the scene and captured the presidency in 1960.

Advertising himself as the voice of a new post-baby-boom generation, Obama is the son of a black Kenyan father and a white American mother from the US heartland state of Kansas. He identifies himself as African-American and is seen by most Americans as such ...

After graduating from high school, Obama attended Columbia University and then went to ultra-competitive Harvard Law School, where he was the first black American to hold the prestigious post as president of the influential *Harvard Law Review* ...

He exploded onto the national scene that summer [2004] with an electrifying speech at the Democratic National Convention in Boston.

'There is not a black America, and a white America, a Latino America, and Asian America — we are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America,' he declared to roaring applause ...

After winning the Senate he has proved himself an agile legislator working with members of both parties while maintaining a steady profile as a moderate liberal ...

*Yahoo! News, 16 January 2007.*

### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. What is the main content of source 7.2?
2. What do you think was the journalist's motive for writing this article?

## Segregation in the USA in the 1950s

**segregation** ▶ the policy of separating racial groups in all aspects of their lives to ensure that whites maintained supremacy over African Americans

**Jim Crow laws** ▶ state laws, dating back to the 1880s, aimed at enforcing segregation between whites and blacks in the use of transport and public facilities and in the outlawing of marriage between the two racial groups

### Source 7.3

Photograph showing the scene at the lynching of two African Americans in Indiana in 1930. The young men had been accused of the murder of a white man and the assault of his girlfriend.

### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. Describe what is happening in the source 7.3 photograph.
2. What appears to be the attitude of the crowd witnessing the lynching?

**racist** ▶ the attitude that people of a different race/colour are inferior to those of one's own race/colour

**democracy** ▶ government by elected representatives of the people

Despite having gained their emancipation from slavery in 1865, African Americans faced discrimination in every aspect of their lives until at least the 1950s. The 14th amendment (1868) to the United States Constitution promised 'the equal protection of the laws' to all the nation's citizens. In practice, many US lawmakers, law courts and law enforcers approved a systematic **segregation** according to race. This resulted in African Americans being forced to use separate entrances to buildings; separated in theatres and on buses; and denied access to 'whites only' swimming pools, hospitals, schools, housing and even cemeteries. They had to endure inadequate and sub-standard facilities; were intimidated into not exercising their voting rights; were referred to by the derogatory terms 'nigger' and 'coon'; and were at risk of becoming victims of mob rule, horrific violence and even lynchings.

Laws known as the **Jim Crow laws** enforced this segregation and the unequal distribution of the nation's resources that accompanied it. Segregation and racial intolerance were worse in the southern states, where over 50 per cent of African Americans lived.



In the early 1950s, US President Harry Truman, despite his own long-held **racist** attitudes, made some symbolic acts to address this situation, including ordering an end to discrimination in the armed forces and the civil service. He recognised that discrimination damaged the United States' international reputation. His leadership in this area helped to bring the issue of civil rights for African Americans to national attention.

During the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans, along with people of other racial groups within the United States, embarked on the Civil Rights Movement to challenge discrimination and achieve the equality that the American Constitution promised for its entire people and which was part of its claim to being a **democracy**. One of the early actions of this movement was to challenge the education system.



#### Source 7.4

Photographs showing the difference in schools under the 'separate but equal' policy. On the left is the exterior of an African American school in Ruleville, Mississippi in 1949. On the right is a primary school for white students in Virginia in 1935.



## 'Separate but equal' in the education system

In the case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, the United States Supreme Court upheld the legality of separating races on the basis of the principle 'separate but equal'. As a result, in the 1950s, African American children attended schools that were lacking in toilets, running water and even desks. Local education authorities only purchased new books for the white students in their districts. In Alabama in 1949, the state's expenditure on African American students amounted to 27 per cent of its expenditure on white students.

#### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. What do the photographs in source 7.4 suggest about the differences in the facilities available to students attending each of these schools?
2. List two facts you could put forward to support the view that the schools available to African Americans were inferior to those available to white children.

#### Source 7.5

Extract from Dr Kenneth Clark's testimony in the Brown case. In his 'doll tests', Clark observed the reactions of African-American children to a pink doll and a brown doll.

#### SOURCE QUESTION

In your own words, explain what Dr Clark (source 7.5) considered to be the effect of segregation.

In 1950, eight-year-old Linda Brown became the centre of a Kansas court case demanding an end to segregated schools, which existed legally in 17 states. Spurred on by her father, she wanted to attend the well-equipped 'whites only' school six blocks from her home rather than the African American school at four times the distance. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) and its lawyer, Thurgood Marshall, brought the case to state and federal courts, and finally on appeal to the US Supreme Court. Throughout this process, supporters of segregation fought strongly to maintain separate schools for white children. They argued that the Constitution did not give the US federal government the power to overrule state law on education. Dr Kenneth Clark, a key witness for the NAACP, described the results of his investigations into the impact of segregation on African American children (see source 7.5).

I found that 10 of the 16 children between the ages of six and nine whom I tested chose the white doll as their preference. Eleven of the children chose the brown doll as the doll which looked 'bad' . . .

My opinion is that a fundamental effect of segregation is basic confusion in the individuals and their concepts about themselves . . . This is an example of how the pressures which these children sensed against being brown forced them to evade reality — to escape the reality which seems too burdening or threatening . . . These children in Clarendon County, like other human beings who are subjected to an inferior status, have been definitely harmed . . . the signs of instability are clear.

Quoted in Globe Fearon Historical Case Studies, *The Civil Rights Movement*, Globe Fearon Educational Publisher, New Jersey, 1997, p. 17.

On 17 May 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren handed down the unanimous decision of the nine Supreme Court justices (see source 7.6).

### Source 7.6

An extract from Chief Justice Earl Warren's speech handing down the Supreme Court's decision in the Brown case, 17 May 1954

To separate [the African American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority ... We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are ... unequal.

Chief Justice Earl Warren, quoted in Globe Fearon Historical Case Studies, *The Civil Rights Movement*, op. cit., p. 18.

### SOURCE QUESTION

What reasons does Chief Justice Warren give in source 7.6 for the Supreme Court's judgement overturning 'separate but equal'?

**desegregation** ▶ the policy of breaking down differences that have existed between racial groups

**Ku Klux Klan** ▶ an organisation, founded originally in 1865, whose members engaged in campaigns of terror and intimidation against African Americans and those who supported them

**integration** ▶ the policy of encouraging contact between different racial groups and ensuring that they share the use of facilities

The Supreme Court demanded the **desegregation** of schools. In 1955, it reinforced this decision by ordering officials to comply with its guidelines for bringing African and white American students together in schools.

In the South, many community leaders responded with plans to continue segregated education. Politicians gave their signatures in support of the Southern Manifesto, aimed at defeating the Brown decision. People formed Citizens' Councils to organise resistance to the ruling. Others supported the white supremacist group, the **Ku Klux Klan**. By late 1956, six southern states had not even attempted to integrate education. It was clearly going to be very difficult to enforce a Supreme Court decision that had so much organised opposition, especially considering that US President Eisenhower had no personal commitment to **integration**.

In 1957, nine African American students tried to attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. They had to endure threats and attempted violence from the racist crowds lining the streets that led to the school. Pro-segregation Arkansas governor, Faubus, sent in the Arkansas National Guard to 'preserve order'.

### Source 7.7

Extract from 14-year-old Elizabeth Eckford describing her attempts to reach Central High School

At the corner I tried to pass through the long line of guards around the school so as to enter the grounds behind them. One of the guards pointed across the street. So I pointed in the same direction and asked whether he meant for me to cross the street and walk down. He nodded 'yes.' So, I walked across the street conscious of the crowd that stood there, but they moved away from me ... Then someone shouted, 'Here she comes, get ready!' I moved away from the crowd on the sidewalk and into the street. If the mob came at me, I could then cross back over so the guards could protect me.

The crowd moved in closer and then began to follow me, called me names. I still wasn't afraid ... Then my knees started to shake and all of a sudden I wondered whether I could make it to the center entrance a block away. It was the longest block I ever walked in my whole life.

Even so, I still wasn't too scared because all the time I kept thinking that the guards would protect me ...

The crowd was quiet. I guess they were waiting to see what was going to happen. When I was able to steady my knees, I walked up to the guard who had let the white students in. He too didn't move. When I tried to squeeze past him, he raised his bayonet and then the other guards closed in and they raised their bayonets.

Elizabeth Eckford, quoted in Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, David McKay, New York, 1962, pp. 73–6.

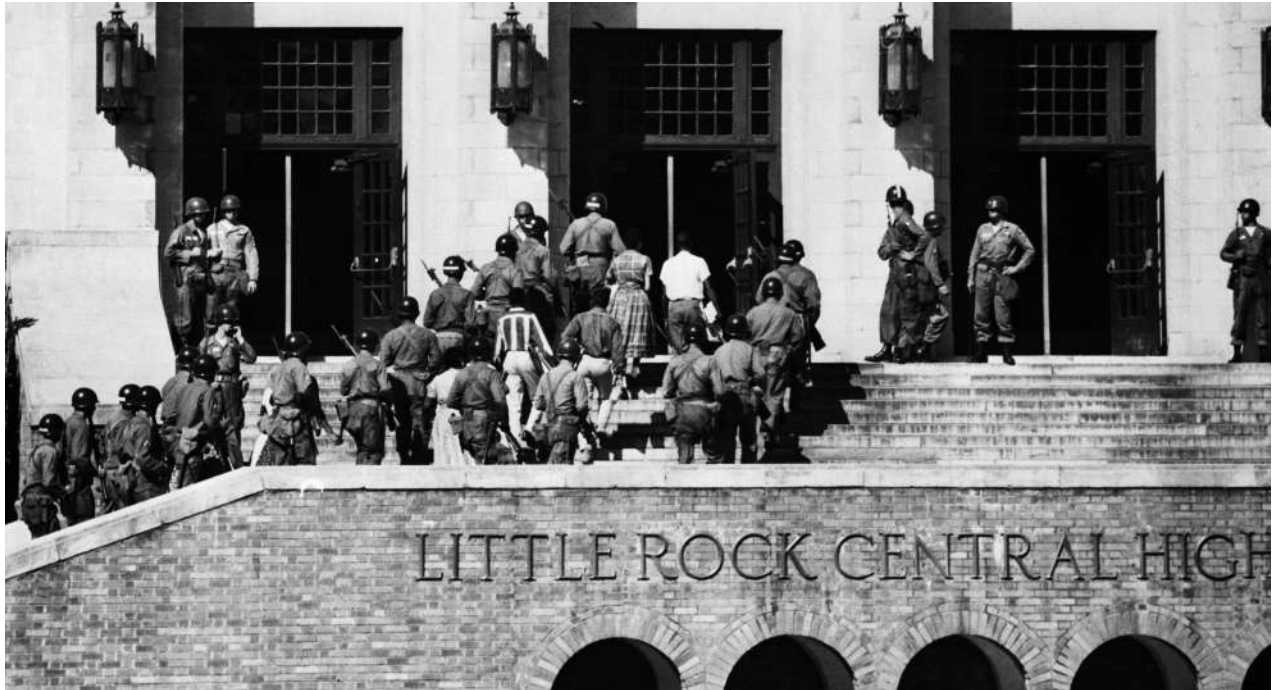
### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. Who are the 'guards' that Elizabeth Eckford was referring to in source 7.7? What does she expect them to do for her?
2. What does the source reveal of the guards' attitude towards her?

Little Rock degenerated into mob rule as pro-segregationists engaged in campaigns of hatred and violence against African Americans. African Americans suffered beatings, had their property attacked and lived under constant threat from the racist groups who controlled the city. Finally, President Eisenhower, more concerned to enforce the federal law on integration than committed to desegregation, ordered 1000 federal troops into Little Rock. Two days later, on 27 September 1957, the nine African American students entered Central High School under the protection of the United States army.

#### Source 7.8

A photograph showing President Eisenhower's National Guard escorting the nine students into Central High School at Little Rock, Arkansas, on 27 September 1957



#### Source 7.9

Extract from the *New York Times* report in September 1957, describing the crowd's response to the nine children's admission to the High School

A man yelled: 'Look, they're going into our school' ... The crowd now let out a roar of rage. 'They've gone in,' a man shouted.

'Oh God,' said a woman, 'the niggers are in school.'

A group of six girls, dressed in skirts and sweaters, hair in pony-tails, started to shriek and wail. 'The niggers are in our school,' they howled hysterically ...

Hysteria swept from the shrieking girls to members of the crowd. Women cried hysterically, tears running down their faces.

Extract from *New York Times*, September 1957, reproduced in N. Demarco, *The USA: a Divided Union*, Longman, UK, 1994, p. 82.

#### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the behaviour of the guards in source 7.8 different from that described by Elizabeth Eckford in source 7.7? What is the reason for this difference?
2. In what ways does the information provided in source 7.9 support the attitudes of the white onlookers that are evident in source 7.7?
3. What impression do sources 7.7 and 7.9 give of the African American students wanting to attend Central High School? How do you explain the differences in the two perspectives expressed?



When the Arkansas National Guard troops took over a month later, violence against the new students resumed. Governor Faubus used this as an excuse to close the high schools for a full year. The state then established 'private' schools, which excluded African Americans. Despite a court order that schools be reopened, desegregation lacked strong support from either state or federal governments and remained difficult to enforce. In 1960, only about 13 per cent of African American students in the southern states attended integrated schools. In 1964, the figure was 2 to 3 per cent for the nation as a whole.

## The Montgomery Bus Boycott

The campaign to enforce desegregation in schools began a series of small-scale protests aimed at the achievement of African American **civil rights**. On 1 December 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, 42-year-old Rosa Parks began another phase of this movement. Tired after a long day's work, she refused to give up her seat on the bus. The law reserved the front seats of the bus for whites. African Americans could sit in the back of the bus or in the middle if whites did not require these seats. Rosa Parks sat in the middle and refused to move when the 'whites only' section had filled up. The bus driver called the police, who arrested her.

Rosa Parks, a well-respected member of the NAACP, went to gaol for violating the law. In protest, the African American community, who comprised 75 per cent of bus users in Montgomery, began a **boycott** of the city's buses that continued for 382 days. This was in addition to African American demands for equal and polite treatment from bus drivers and the provision of jobs for African American drivers.

African Americans wanted recognition of their equal rights to bus seats. Bus companies faced massive financial losses but refused to give in. The bus companies had the support of large sections of the white community, especially people who belonged to the Ku Klux Klan and the Citizens' Councils formed to resist integration.

**civil rights** ▶ rights that anyone in a given society is entitled to as a member of that society; the rights that the US Constitution gives to its citizens

**boycott** ▶ the policy of refusing to use or purchase the goods or services provided by an individual or group. The purpose is to bring pressure on the individual/group to engage in different behaviour.

### Source 7.10

A photograph showing members of Ku Klux Klan walking the streets of Montgomery at the time of the bus boycott



### ☞ SOURCE QUESTION

What do you think these Ku Klux Klan members would have hoped to achieve by appearing like this at the time of the Montgomery bus boycott?

The boycott demonstrated African Americans' determination to take unified action in the fight for their rights; the value of economic power as a weapon; the extent of racism that existed within many southern communities; and the changed attitudes of many whites. The African American slogan was 'People don't ride the bus today. Don't ride it for freedom'. Montgomery's African American residents walked or gained transport through car pools, often with the help of sympathetic members of the white community.

Martin Luther King, a young Baptist minister working in Montgomery, took on an important role as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), the organisation directing the bus boycott. His church became a centre for planning tactics and for providing inspiration and emotional support to help make the boycott unanimous.

In November 1956, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the MIA's case for desegregation. The boycott ended on 20 December 1956, when the bus companies agreed to allow all bus travellers the same rights to any vacant seats.

## Civil Rights Acts in 1957 and 1960

The bus boycott and moves towards desegregation in schools made President Eisenhower conscious of the need to gain support from potential African American voters. In the United States, people have to register in order to vote and at this time only about 20 per cent of African Americans had done so. Eisenhower initiated the 1957 *Civil Rights Act*, significant as the first civil rights legislation in 82 years, although limited in scope. It declared **discrimination** to be illegal and established the Federal Civil Rights Commission to prosecute anyone in breach of this law. While technically it provided improved opportunities for African Americans to register to vote, it provided only weak sanctions for anyone trying to prevent them from doing so.

Increased violence against African Americans, including bombings of churches and schools, led to Eisenhower putting forward a new bill, which became the 1960 *Civil Rights Act*. It created penalties for anyone violating a court order to integrate a school or preventing someone either voting or registering to vote. An additional 3 per cent of African Americans registered for the 1960 elections.

**discrimination** ▶ treating an individual or a group differently on the basis of race, age, religion, sex or some other factor

## 🕒 Martin Luther King and the use of non-violence to achieve civil rights objectives

Martin Luther King (1929–1968) admired the example of non-violent protest that Mohandas K. Gandhi had used in India in the 1920s. Gandhi had encouraged Indian people to practise non-violent non-cooperation in their protest against British rule of their country. Like Gandhi, King advocated a program of **civil disobedience** that used non-violent methods.

In 1957, King joined with other members of the clergy to establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The SCLC began a campaign of 'direct action', that was a dramatic change from the NAACP's focus on court battles. The campaign involved non-violent protest in the form of boycotts, demonstrations and marches to increase national consciousness of the denial of civil rights to African Americans. While many of these were successful, the harder thing was to establish and maintain the organisation that would inspire ongoing effort for the cause.

**civil disobedience** ▶ a campaign in which participants refuse to obey laws that they believe to be unjust



## Sit-ins

In February 1960, in North Carolina, four African American college students refused to leave the seats they had taken at the local 'whites only' Woolworth's cafeteria. With other students supporting them, they maintained a presence on the seats for the entire day, forcing cafeteria business to a standstill. Martin Luther King encouraged this non-violent initiative. In 1960–61, over 70 000 people took part in 'sit-ins' which succeeded in integrating public eating areas and also in desegregating other public facilities in 150 cities.

### Source 7.11

Photograph from February 1960 showing the first lunch counter sit-in at Woolworth's in Charlotte, North Carolina



### Source 7.12

A photograph showing civil rights supporters at a 'sit-in' in May 1963. They are seated at Woolworth's 'whites only' lunch counter in Jacksonville Mississippi. All three had sauce, mustard and paint thrown at them. Some hours later, the man was beaten up.



### SOURCE QUESTION

What do source 7.11 and source 7.12 indicate about:

- supporters of the Civil Rights Movement
- the attitudes of those who supported segregation?

**SNCC** ▶ Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, established in response to the success of the 'sit-ins'

Read the letter by going to the website for this book and clicking on the Letter from Birmingham Gaol weblink for this chapter (see 'Weblinks', page viii).

King's work in the early 1960s gained increasing national and international support for desegregation in all areas of American life. In 1961, he led demonstrations (organised by the **SNCC**) in Albany, Georgia, protesting against segregation in hotels, housing and restaurants. The 'Albany Movement' achieved some integration of facilities but local authorities took their revenge by closing the parks, selling the swimming pool and removing the seats from the newly integrated public library. This led King to believe that it was better to pressure authorities into ending discrimination, not negotiate with them.

In early 1963, Martin Luther King and the SCLC began a series of protest marches in Birmingham, Alabama — a city renowned for its racism. King increased publicity for the movement by encouraging children and teenagers to participate as well. King was arrested and imprisoned for eight days. While there, he wrote his 'Letter from Birmingham Gaol', arguing that people were right to disobey unjust laws but must be willing to endure imprisonment. He described himself as standing between two distinct forces that characterised the black community at the time:

- ▶ those whose self-respect had been so worn-down by years of oppression that they were now complacent about the injustices of segregation
- ▶ those who harboured a growing bitterness and hatred of white people and had lost all faith in God and their country.

Following King's release, 1000 school students of Birmingham walked and sang in protest against segregation. Police arrested 90 per cent of these students aged between six and 16. King organised another march for the following day. Two thousand five hundred people of all age groups marched. The local police responded with clubs, attack dogs and electric cattle prods. Firefighters turned their high-pressure hoses on the demonstrators, knocking them into the walls of buildings or onto the pavements. Dogs attacked the protestors' arms and legs. Newspapers published dramatic photos of these events all over the world. President Kennedy sent federal troops to restore order in Birmingham.

#### Source 7.13

A photograph showing police using fire hoses against civil rights demonstrators during the 1963 civil rights marches in Birmingham, Alabama

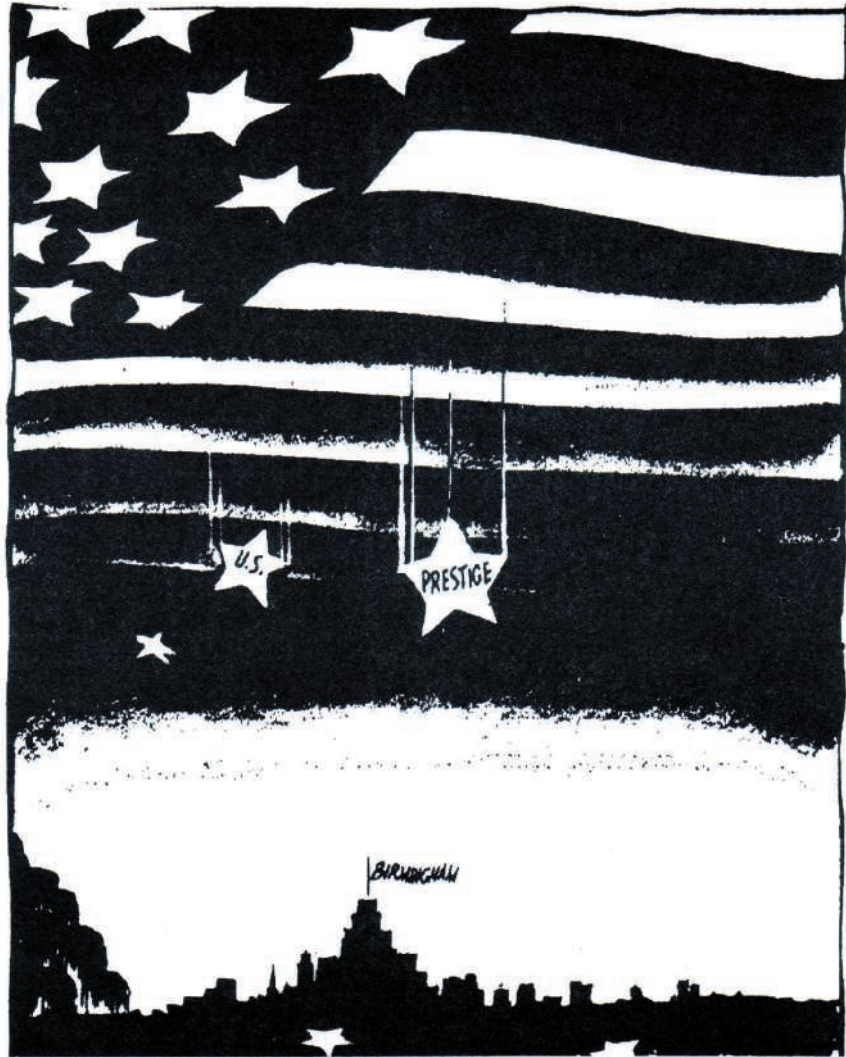
#### ☞ SOURCE QUESTION

What information does source 7.13 provide? What do you think was the photographer's purpose in taking this photo?



**Source 7.14**

Cartoon entitled 'Stars fell on Alabama', by Thomas F. Flannery, published in the *Baltimore Evening Sun*



**SOURCE QUESTIONS**

1. What is the message of the cartoonist who created source 7.14? Who would be its likely audience?
2. What does the cartoon suggest about the impact of events in Birmingham on the United States?

Police brutality in Birmingham provided a marked contrast to King's leadership and tactics and encouraged Americans to support calls for anti-discrimination laws. When African Americans staged another march a few days later, the police refused to obey the order of Police Chief 'Bull' Connor to again turn fire hoses on the demonstrators.

On 10 June 1963, President John Kennedy called on Congress to pass more civil rights laws. Two nights later, NAACP activist, Medgar Evers, was shot dead outside his home in Jackson, Mississippi. African Americans, shocked and outraged at the circumstances of Evers' death, decided to organise a march to Washington DC, the seat of American government.



## The 1963 March on Washington

For African Americans, the goals of the March on Washington in August 1963 were:

- ▶ to pressure the government into passing the proposed new Bill on civil rights and improving employment prospects for African Americans
- ▶ to stage an event that would attract worldwide media attention and demonstrate the success of non-violent tactics, especially among those angered by the slow pace of change.

The march, orchestrated by long-term activist A. Philip Randolph, was a huge demonstration in favour of civil rights for African Americans. On 28 August 1963, Martin Luther King faced a crowd of over 200 000 civil rights supporters crammed in between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. It was the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation that ended slavery. King spoke of his dream for a different America: 'Those who hope that the Negro ... will now be content will have a rude awakening if the Nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquillity in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights'.

### Source 7.15

A photograph of the March on Washington in 1963. Martin Luther King is third from the right in the front row. It was at this march that he gave his famous 'I have a dream' speech.

### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. What does source 7.15 indicate about the strength of this protest and the types of people who supported it?
2. What do the placards indicate about the demands of the protesters?
3. Access the website for this book and click on the 'I have a dream' weblink for this chapter. Listen to or read the full speech.
  - (a) What are the key elements of King's dream as indicated in the speech?
  - (b) How might different groups have felt about this speech?



The *Civil Rights* Bill became law when the new president, Lyndon Baines Johnson (installed after Kennedy's assassination in November 1963), signed it on 4 July 1964. Johnson had pushed the Bill through Congress partly out of a sense of obligation to Kennedy and, more significantly, because he believed discrimination to be morally wrong. Martin Luther King was present at the signing ceremony. In late 1964, The Swedish Academy awarded King the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in the Civil Rights Movement. However, his influence in the movement was already diminishing.

## Freedom Summer: Mississippi 1964

In 1964, the SNCC called on young volunteers — both black and white and from all over the United States — to devote their summer holidays to help end segregation in Mississippi. One thousand volunteers came to help run Freedom Schools, teach typing and reading and provide general information about US laws and African Americans who had fought for civil rights. They also assisted 17 000 African Americans to complete voter registration forms, although the lack of cooperation from officials meant that less than 10 per cent succeeded in actually registering.

On 21 June 1964, civil rights workers James Earl Chaney (19), Andrew Goodman (20) and Michael Schwerner (24) disappeared while driving between Meridian and Philadelphia in Mississippi. They were on their way to investigate the burning of an African American church. Police arrested them just outside Philadelphia for a minor driving offence and later said that the three were released from gaol a few hours later. FBI agents found their car in a swamp two days later and six weeks later located the activists' bodies. They had been beaten and shot. Of the 18 white men accused of the murders, 11 were acquitted and seven were found guilty of lesser charges. The murders highlighted:

- ▶ the dangers of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement
- ▶ the law's failure to uphold the rights of its citizens.

The 'Freedom Summer' volunteers were under constant threat of violence. Whites burned 37 churches, bombed 30 houses and buildings, beat up 80 people involved in the project, arrested over 1000 and murdered Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner. The failure of the newly established Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to gain full representation at the Democratic Party Convention supported the view of many African Americans that integration was unrealistic and non-violence was ineffective.

## Bloody Sunday: Selma 1965

On 7 March 1965, 600 SCLC activists embarked on an 80-kilometre march from Selma to Montgomery to highlight the cause of voting rights. Only 23 of Selma's 19 000 African Americans were registered to vote and King's campaign to change this had led to police violence but no progress. Police waited for the marchers at Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge. They attacked the crowd with clubs and tear gas. People called the day 'Bloody Sunday'.

Two days later, Martin Luther King led a second protest march to the bridge and, on Sunday 21 March, 3200 protesters — this time with court protection — began the walk to Montgomery. By the time they got there, on 25 March 1965, the crowd had grown to 25 000. Similar marches in key US cities highlighted the growing popular support for this issue.

Following decades of public pressure, the Mississippi government re-opened the case in 2005 and, with new evidence, re-tried and convicted Edgar Ray Killen, a local minister.

#### Source 7.16

A photograph of Martin Luther King and his wife Coretta Scott King (wearing bonnet) leading protesters on 24 March 1965, the fourth day of their march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama



#### SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. Describe the event that is taking place in source 7.16 and explain its significance for the Civil Rights Movement.
2. Look back at source 7.1 (page 125). In what ways does the photograph provide evidence of the ongoing importance of the 1960s civil rights campaign?

In August 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the *Voting Rights Act* into law. The protest march from Selma to Montgomery contributed to its successful passage through Congress. By the late 1960s, voter registration in the South had increased by over 200 per cent.

## The development of more radical methods and individuals in the 1960s

While King inspired many individual initiatives and provided leadership for a number of individual events, he never managed to unite all civil rights activists behind his vision. King's campaign for civil rights became less influential as:

- ▶ many activists, including King himself, devoted their energies to anti-war protests against US involvement in Vietnam
- ▶ younger and more radical supporters of the Civil Rights Movement began to openly question the effectiveness of King's use of non-violent protest.

Members of groups such as the SNCC felt King gained credit for a lot of their hard work.



**Black Power** ▶ a movement from the 1960s onwards promoting African Americans' control of their own political and cultural organisations with the goals of promoting pride in their race and achieving equality

**self-determination** ▶ a people's right to exercise independent control of its own destiny

## Black Power

By the late 1960s, the words **Black Power** had come to dominate the Civil Rights Movement. The two words were coined by Stokely Carmichael, a leading supporter of the Black Power movement. The words encouraged African Americans to pursue **self-determination** and to take control of their own communities. Civil rights' campaigns had focused mainly on discrimination in the South. The 50 per cent of African Americans who lived in the North also suffered inadequate housing, poor access to facilities, high unemployment and white control of government and law enforcement. Stokely Carmichael argued that many whites remained violently opposed to civil rights despite King's appeals to their consciences and morality. Some Black Power supporters saw their goal as supremacy over whites; others aimed at improved conditions for workers. Some interpreted it as political and economic power.

### Source 7.17

Photograph showing two African American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, at their medal ceremony at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. After receiving their medals, they gave the Black Power salute and refused to acknowledge the US flag when it was raised for the anthem. Smith's right-handed salute expressed 'Black Power' and Carlos' left-handed salute symbolised black unity. The white silver medallist, Melbournian Peter Norman, showed his support by wearing an OPHR (Olympic Project for Human Rights) badge. (Smith and Carlos were both pallbearers at Norman's funeral in October 2006.)



### SOURCE QUESTION

What message were these athletes intending to convey at this Olympic Games medal ceremony?

**militant** ▶ wanting to take aggressive action in support of a cause

**Nation of Islam** ▶ an organisation founded in 1930 and led by Elijah Mohammed from 1934 until 1975

Another prominent African American leader, Malcolm X, also believed that African Americans needed to become **militant** in order to defeat white racism. While serving a prison sentence for burglary, Malcolm X had become interested in a religious group known as the **Nation of Islam**. Its teachings incorporated the goal of a separate African American state as well as concern to promote economic self-help for African Americans. While mainstream Islamic teaching was non-racist, the Nation of Islam preached the opposite view — that whites were 'devils' who would soon be destroyed, thus enabling black rule.

### Source 7.18

Malcolm X's view on the best means of achieving freedom for African Americans

### SOURCE QUESTION

List the three main ideas that Malcolm X was putting forward with his words in source 7.18.

**Black Panthers** ▶ a militant political party established by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966 with the goal of gaining equality for African Americans. Its members dressed in black trousers, black leather jackets, black berets and blue shirts.

**ghetto** ▶ an area of a city where a minority group lives

When released from gaol in 1952, Malcolm took the symbol 'X' to signify the absence of an inherited African name and worked to spread both the religious and the political goals of Islam throughout the United States. He was a powerful speaker and succeeded in recruiting thousands of young African Americans to the Nation of Islam. By 1963, around 30000 African Americans had joined the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X had become its best-known spokesperson.

... I don't go along with any kind of non-violence unless everybody's going to be non-violent. If they make the Ku Klux Klan non-violent, I'll be non-violent, if they make the White Citizens' Council non-violent, I'll be non-violent. But as long as you've got somebody else not being non-violent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any non-violent talk ...

You get freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom, then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it ... fight them, and you'll get your freedom ...

Malcolm X, quoted in N. Smith, *The USA 1917–1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 83.

Initially, Malcolm X's views differed markedly from those of Martin Luther King. Malcolm X wanted the separation of races, not integration. He spoke of King's non-violence as 'the philosophy of the fool' and called for a 'black revolution' to overthrow white power. Malcolm X made fun of King's famous 'I have a dream' speech, with the line, 'While King was having a dream, the rest of us Negroes are having a nightmare'.

The **Black Panthers** was another militant political group. Founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in October 1965, it produced a ten-point program advocating the restructuring of American society to achieve social, political and economic equality for African Americans. The Black Panthers patrolled black communities to protect their residents from abuses of police power. However, by the late 1970s, problems and divisions within the party had eroded its political force.

## Violence and frustration

In the mid to late 1960s, riots broke out in many United States' cities. Malcolm X was assassinated in New York on 21 February 1965. This provoked riots in over 100 cities.

On 11 August 1965, two weeks after President Johnson had signed the *Voting Rights Act*, Los Angeles police arrested Marquette Frye, an African American, for drink driving. During the arrest, in the black **ghetto** area of Watts, one of the police officers aimed a gun at Frye, as if to shoot him. This event provoked six days of rioting as African Americans gave vent to their outrage at the ongoing injustices they had to face. Rioters burned cars and shopping areas and shot police and firefighters. The Watts riots led to 34 deaths, hundreds of people injured and thousands arrested. When asked what Martin Luther King would think of their actions, one of the rioters replied 'Martin Luther Who?'

In 1966, riots broke out in Chicago, Cleveland, Dayton, Milwaukee and San Francisco. The government sent in the National Guard to restore order in all of those cities. In 1967, African American frustration exploded in even more violent riots in Newark and Detroit resulting in the shooting of nearly 83 African Americans.

### Source 7.19

Extract from a speech made by Stokely Carmichael on 28 July 1966

### SOURCE QUESTION

How did the views put forward by Carmichael in source 7.19 differ from those of Martin Luther King? What would they have agreed on?

Now, let's get to what the white press has been calling riots. In the first place, don't get confused with the words they use like 'anti-white', 'hate', 'militant', and all that nonsense like 'radical' and 'riots'. What's happening is rebellion not riots ... The extremists in this country are the white people who force us to live the way we live. We have to define our own ethic. We don't have to (and don't make any apologies about it) obey any law that we didn't have a part to make, especially if that law was made to keep us where we are. We have the right to break it.

Published in *Notes and Comment*, a newsletter by the SNCC, Chicago; reproduced in Globe Fearon Historical Case Studies, *The Civil Rights Movement*, op. cit., p. 109.

### SOURCE QUESTION

How did the views put forward by Carmichael in source 7.19 differ from those of Martin Luther King? What would they have agreed on?

On 4 April 1968, an assassin killed Martin Luther King in Memphis, Tennessee, where King had gone to support a strike by African American garbage collectors. The riots in 100 American cities in response to his shooting reflected the attitude that non-violence was ineffective.

## Achievements of the Civil Rights Movement

Martin Luther King's birthday — 15 January — is now a national holiday in the United States on the third Monday of January each year. This is indicative of a number of successes in the Civil Rights Movement.

- ▶ By the early 1960s, few Americans could ignore the injustices committed against the African American population.
- ▶ The civil rights activism of the 1950s and 1960s brought about increasingly more meaningful and effective civil rights legislation. The 1968 *Civil Rights Act* made it illegal to discriminate, on the basis of race, religion, sex and national origin, against anyone trying to finance, rent or purchase accommodation. It also provided protection for civil rights activists. It was President Johnson's third piece of civil rights legislation and demonstrated his commitment to this issue.
- ▶ In 1967, the United States Supreme Court overruled state laws forbidding inter-racial marriages. In the following year, Columbia Pictures released *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*. The film starred three major Hollywood actors and dealt sympathetically with the romance between an African American doctor and the daughter of an upper middle-class white couple. It was an indicator of a changed outlook on race relations.
- ▶ In 1965, only 100 African Americans had been elected to public office. By 1989, 7200 African Americans had been elected to public positions as sheriffs, mayors and members of Congress.

By the end of the Civil Rights Movement, significant numbers of the United States' white population accepted the idea of equal political and legal rights for African Americans. They were slower to accept their rights to social and economic equality, especially if it came at the cost of higher taxation. Segregated neighbourhoods continued to be a feature of American cities. Integrated public schools saw many whites seek private schooling. In the 1970s, membership of the Ku Klux Klan increased by 300 per cent.



Thirty years later, African Americans continued to experience disadvantage, resulting from poverty and discrimination. The average wage for an African American was just over half the average for a white person. Nearly three times as many African Americans lived below the poverty line. African American men received prison sentences at seven times the rate of white men. Fifteen states denied ex-offenders the vote, thus disenfranchising 13 per cent of African American men nationwide, and nearly 40 per cent in some states.

Racial tensions and divisions continued. During their 1992 Los Angeles trial, video footage showed four police officers beating up African American Rodney King, whom they had stopped for a supposed traffic violation. When the jury acquitted the officers, Los Angeles erupted into days of rioting — resulting in deaths, injuries and destruction of property.

#### Source 7.20

Photograph showing part of the 1992 riots in Los Angeles



#### SOURCE QUESTION

How might each of the following groups have responded to the source 7.20 photograph?

- (a) the Los Angeles police
- (b) the jury
- (c) the African American community

In the 1950s and 1960s, African American Civil Rights activists pressured successive US governments and presidents to recognise and protect their rights. By the early twenty-first century, overt racism had become unacceptable and African Americans played increasingly significant roles in all aspects of US life. African American, Lieutenant-General Colin Powell was the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993. In 2001 he became US Secretary of State. His successor, in 2005, was Condoleezza Rice, an African American born in Birmingham, Alabama, who had previously held the position of National Security Adviser.

At the same time, the Civil Rights Movement has yet to eradicate prejudices built up across many generations. In late 2006, white students in Jena, Louisiana, hung nooses from an oak tree after another student had gained permission for black students to share with them its use as a meeting place.

## Meeting objectives and outcomes

### Key features, issues, individuals and events

P1.1 and P1.2

1. Choose one of the following individuals or groups who participated in the Civil Rights Movement. Carry out research into:
  - ▶ the individual's or group's attitude towards the Civil Rights Movement
  - ▶ the role played within this movement and methods used
  - ▶ the legacy of the individual/group in relation to achievements in civil rights.

Use desktop publishing to record your findings on an A4 sheet for display on the class noticeboard.

Ella Baker, Stokely Carmichael, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Angela Davies, Elizabeth Eckford, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP, Huey Newton, Rosa Parks, A. Philip Randolph, the SCLC, the SNCC

### Change and continuity over time

P2.1

2. Essay: Evaluate the extent to which African Americans overcame the inequities they faced in the period 1950–70. (P2.1)
3. View the 1968 film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*. What does this indicate about change or continuity in relation to attitudes towards civil rights for African Americans in the 1960s? (P2.1)
4. Find out how and why Malcolm X's attitudes and methods changed over the period 1963 to 1965. Summarise your findings in the form of an article suitable for publication in a magazine such as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'The Good Weekend'. Include a headline which will interest your readers and also highlight the nature of the change in Malcolm X's attitudes and methods. (P2.1)

### The process of historical inquiry

P3.1–P3.5

5. Class activity: Watch Richard Pearce's 1990 film *The Long Walk Home*.
  - (a) List the questions you would ask to consider the film's value as a historical source. (P3.1)
  - (b) Use the list of questions and your responses to questions (i)–(v) in preparation for the written task in part (c).
    - (i) What factual information does the film present? (P3.2)
    - (ii) What key themes does the film explore? How are these related to the Civil Rights Movement? (P3.2)
    - (iii) What does the film indicate about the cultural, economic, political and/or social ideas and beliefs that influenced people's different attitudes? (P3.2, P3.4)
    - (iv) What can you deduce about the filmmaker's perspective on and interpretation of the Civil Rights Movement? (P3.4)
    - (v) What are the strengths/weaknesses of this film for people wanting to understand civil rights issues in the 1950s? (P3.3)
  - (c) Write a two-page response to the following question: How useful and reliable is *The Long Walk Home* as a historical source on the Civil Rights Movement? (P3.3, P3.5)

6. Analyse the passage in source 7.21 by answering the following questions. **(P3.3, P3.4)**
- What is the writer's attitude to the Supreme Court's decision? Which words indicate this?
  - What do you think are the 'moral and ethical ... standards' that the writer is referring to?
  - Why do you think he makes reference to a 'well bred, cultured southern white woman and her blue-eyed golden-haired little girl'?
  - What does he intend to do in response to the ruling?
  - What other groups would be likely to support the viewpoint he expresses?

**Source 7.21**

Extract from *Black Monday*, written by Mississippi judge Tom Brady after the NAACP victory in the Brown case

... when a law transgresses the moral and ethical sanctions and standards of the mores [customs], invariably strife, bloodshed and revolution follow in the wake of its attempted enforcement. The loveliest and purest of God's creatures, the nearest thing to an angelic being that treads this terrestrial ball, is a well-bred, cultured southern white woman or her blue-eyed, golden-haired little girl ... We say to the Supreme Court and to the northern world, 'You shall not make us drink from this cup' ... We have, through our forefathers, died before for our sacred principles. We can, if necessary, die again.

Tom Brady, quoted in N. Smith, *The USA 1917-1980*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 69.

7. Research Claudette Colvin's story of the Montgomery bus boycott. How does it differ from the accepted version of this event? Visit the website for this book and click on the Claudette Colvin weblinks for this chapter for some sources of information.

**Communicating an understanding of history**

**P4.1 and P4.2**

- Group work: Divide into groups of three or four students. Use your knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement to create a roleplay illustrating one of the following ideas: boycott, civil disobedience, civil rights, democracy, militancy, racism, segregation. **(P4.1 and P4.2)**
- Your task is to write a speech to be given by a lawyer. Choose to be the lawyer who is prosecuting the perpetrator/s of the murder of one of the following:
  - ▶ Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner
  - ▶ Martin Luther King
  - ▶ Malcolm X.
 Your speech should outline the nature of the crime, the events and attitudes that led to its occurrence and some information about the significance of the victim/s. **(P4.2)**
- Group work: Create a poster encouraging university students to participate in one of the civil rights protests. You will need to consider the words and pictures that will motivate your audience to become involved. **(P4.2)**
- The traditional Negro spiritual, 'We shall overcome', became the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. Divide the class into groups and allocate each group one of its verses to perform, accompanied by a well-known recording of it, such as that of Joan Baez. **(P4.1)**