

## **Civil Rights Timeline: Jan. 15, 1929 - Dec. 21, 1956**

Jan. 15, 1929 - Dr. King is born - Born on Jan. 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Ga., he was the second of three children of the Rev. Michael (later Martin) and Alberta Williams King.

Sept. 1, 1954 - Dr. King becomes pastor - In 1954, King accepted his first pastorate--the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala. He and his wife, Coretta Scott King, whom he had met and married (June 1953) while at Boston University.

Dec. 1, 1955 - Rosa Parks defies city segregation - Often called "the mother of the civil rights movement," Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, b. Tuskegee, Ala., Feb. 4, 1913, sparked the 381-day Montgomery bus boycott that led to a 1956 Supreme Court order outlawing discriminatory practices on Montgomery buses. In December 1955, returning home from her assistant tailor job in Montgomery, Parks refused a bus driver's order to surrender her seat to a white man. She was jailed and fined \$14.

Dec. 5, 1955 - Montgomery bus boycott- Although precipitated by the arrest of Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56 was actually a collective response to decades of intimidation, harassment and discrimination of Alabama's African American population. By 1955, judicial decisions were still the principal means of struggle for civil rights, even though picketing, marches and boycotts sometimes punctuated the litigation. The boycott, which lasted for more than a year, was almost 100 percent effective.

Dec. 21, 1956 - Bus segregation declared illegal - The boycott's succeeded in desegregating public facilities in the South and also in obtaining civil rights legislation from Congress.

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Sept. 24, 1957 - May 2, 1963

Sept. 24, 1957 - School integration - In September 1957 the state received national attention when Gov. Orval E. Faubus (in office 1955-67) tried to prevent

the integration of Little Rock Central High School. President Dwight D. Eisenhower quickly intervened, in part by sending federal troops to Little Rock, and several black students were enrolled at Central High School.

Aug. 19, 1958 - Student sit-ins - In spite of the events in Little Rock or Montgomery, or Supreme Court decisions, segregation still pervaded American society by 1960. While protests and boycotts achieved moderate successes in desegregating aspects of education and transportation, other facilities such as restaurants, theaters, libraries, amusement parks and churches either barred or limited access to African Americans, or maintained separate, invariably inferior, facilities for black patrons. Nowhere was the contradiction of accepting money with one hand while withholding service with the other so glaring as the lunch counters of five-and-ten cent stores and department stores. This situation coincided with a growing dissatisfaction among the young black population. Although many of them enjoyed political, education and economic rights undreamed of by their elders, the remaining barriers seemed as high as ever. Often violence, threats and political machinations, such as token integration maintained the status quo. This exhibit features a restored dime store lunch counter, populated with student protesters, and includes audio visual segments of the events.

May 3, 1961 - "Freedom Riders" - The Congress of Racial Equality organizes the "Freedom Riders."

Sept. 30, 1962 - University Riot - During the 1960s, Mississippi was a center of the Civil Rights movement. Despite the 1954 Supreme Court decision making segregated schools illegal, the state did not quickly institute racial integration. In 1962 a black student, James Meredith, attempted to attend the University of Mississippi law school. His admission was blocked, and during the subsequent violence, federal troops were sent to restore order to a 15 hour riot. Violent incidents against blacks took place as the struggle for integration continued.

May 2, 1963 - Youth Marches - Youth Marches occur at City Hall.

## Civil Rights Timeline

Aug. 28, 1963 - May 7, 1965

Aug. 28, 1963 - King delivers his "I have a dream" speech - King organized the massive March on Washington (Aug. 28, 1963) where, in his brilliant "I Have a Dream" speech, he "subpoenaed the conscience of the nation before the judgment seat of morality."

Jan. 23, 1964 - 24th Amendment ratified - The 24th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, proposed by Congress on Aug. 27, 1962, and ratified Jan. 23, 1964, bans the use of poll taxes in federal elections (a device imposed by some states to circumvent the 15th Amendment's guarantee of equal voting rights). Intended to alleviate the burdens of black and poor citizens, it states that in any presidential or congressional election, no citizen can be denied, by the state or federal government, the right to vote because of failure to pay either a poll tax or any other tax.

Jul. 2, 1964 - Civil Rights Act - Congress enacted new legislation in an attempt to overcome local and state obstruction to the exercise of citizenship rights by blacks. These efforts culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in employment and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This major piece of legislation also banned discrimination in public accommodations connected with interstate commerce, including restaurants, hotels, and theaters.

Dec. 10, 1964 - Nobel Peace Prize - In January 1964, Time magazine chose King Man of the Year, the first black American so honored. Later that year he became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mar. 7, 1965 - Montgomery March - After supporting desegregation efforts in Saint Augustine, Fla., in 1964, King concentrated his efforts on the voter-registration drive in Selma, Ala., leading a harrowing march from Selma to Montgomery in March 1965. Soon after, a tour of the northern cities led him to assail the conditions of economic as well as social

discrimination.

This marked a shift in SCLC strategy, one intended to "bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible."

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Aug. 6, 1965 - Jun. 12, 1966

Aug. 6, 1965 - Voting Rights Act - The Voting Rights Act authorized the U.S. attorney general to send federal examiners to register black voters under certain circumstances. It also suspended all literacy tests in states in which less than 50% of the voting-age population had been registered or had voted in the 1964 election. The law had an immediate impact. By the end of 1965 a quarter of a million new black voters had been registered, one third by federal examiners. The Voting Rights Act was readopted and strengthened in 1970, 1975, and 1982.

Aug. 11, 1965 - Rioting in Watts - As desegregation progressed in the South, attention began to shift northward. Targets in the North, however, were more elusive. Segregation in the northern cities did not rest on laws so much as on attitudes, customs, and economic relationships. These were more difficult to confront with the tactics of nonviolent protest. Frustration and resentment grew in the black ghettos. In 1965 the Watts area of Los Angeles erupted into a riot that lasted for several days and left 34 dead. For three successive summers, outbursts of rebellion occurred in cities across the country.

Jan. 7, 1966 - "Open City" - King announces the "Open City" campaign to fight problems in the North.

June 6, 1966 - Meredith Shot - James Meredith is shot shortly after he begins a voting rights march.

June 12, 1966 - Chicago Riot - Rioting breaks out in Chicago.

#### Civil Rights Timeline

Jun. 23, 1967- Apr. 9, 1968

Jun. 23, 1967 - Detroit Riot - The most massive was the Detroit riot of 1967, which lasted nearly a week, claimed 40 lives, and destroyed property worth \$250

million. The passions and upheavals of the 1960s gave way to at least the appearance of calm in the 1970s and '80s. Protests became less frequent and widespread as blacks and whites alike took stock of the gains of one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. history.

Mar. 2 1968, - Separate and Unequal - A report is released that the Nation is divided into groups of Blacks and whites.

Apr. 4, 1968 - Dr. King is assassinated - On Apr. 4, 1968, King was felled by an assassin's bullet. The violent death of this man of peace brought an immediate reaction of rioting in black ghettos around the country. Although one man, James Earl Ray, was convicted of King's murder, the question of whether he was the paid agent of conspirators has not been conclusively resolved. It is clear only that the United States was deprived of a towering symbol of moral and social progress. King's birthday was declared a federal holiday in 1983.

Apr. 8, 1968 - City Hall March - Coretta King leads a march of 42,000 to city hall to mourn her husband's death.

Apr. 9, 1968 - Dr. King is buried - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is buried at South View Cemetery. A crowd of 50,000 to 100,000 is present as they mourn the death of a towering symbol of moral and social progress for Black Americans.