

VulaLearn NSC Notes - Civil Rights Movement (USA)

VULALEARN NSC HISTORY NOTES: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (USA)

1. ORIGINS OF THE CRM

- The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) arose in the 1950s-1960s to challenge racial segregation and systemic inequality in the USA.
- Key contributing factors:
 - * Post-WWII Black veterans demanded equal rights.
 - * The Great Migration increased Black urban populations.
 - * The NAACP's legal victories (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).
 - * Global pressure during the Cold War to address racial injustice at home.

2. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.: ROLE AND INFLUENCE

- A Baptist minister and president of the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference).
- Advocated nonviolent resistance inspired by Gandhi's philosophy.
- Led major campaigns (e.g., Montgomery Bus Boycott, Birmingham Campaign).
- Emphasized moral authority and peaceful protest.
- "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington symbolized hopes of racial equality.
- Won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

3. FORMS OF RESISTANCE (CASE STUDIES)

(a) Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956)

- Sparked by Rosa Parks' arrest.

- Lasted over a year, organized by the Montgomery Improvement Association.
- Led to the Supreme Court ruling bus segregation unconstitutional.

(b) Greensboro Sit-in (1960)

- Started by four Black students in North Carolina.
- Sat at a whites-only lunch counter; refused to leave.
- Spread to other cities; showed youth leadership and nonviolent resistance.

(c) Freedom Rides (1961)

- Integrated bus rides across Southern states to test desegregation laws.
- Riders were beaten and buses firebombed.
- Forced federal government to enforce integration of interstate travel.

(d) Birmingham Campaign (1963)

- SCLC targeted Birmingham as one of the most segregated cities.
- Nonviolent protests met with violent police repression (fire hoses, dogs).
- Media coverage shocked the nation and led to negotiations and desegregation.

(e) March on Washington (28 August 1963)

- Over 250,000 participants marched for jobs and freedom.
- Major pressure point for civil rights legislation.
- MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech became iconic.

(f) Freedom Summer (1964)

- Aimed to register Black voters in Mississippi.
- Volunteers (Black and white) faced violence, arson, and murder.
- Increased national awareness of voter suppression.

(g) Selma to Montgomery Marches (1965)

- Protested barriers to Black voter registration.
- "Bloody Sunday" (March 7) saw marchers brutally attacked on Edmund Pettus Bridge.
- Resulted in national outrage and pushed Congress to act.

4. CIVIL RIGHTS ACT (1964) & VOTING RIGHTS ACT (1965)

Civil Rights Act (1964):

- Banned segregation in public spaces.
- Outlawed employment discrimination based on race, religion, or gender.
- Enforced desegregation of schools and public facilities.

Voting Rights Act (1965):

- Banned literacy tests and other discriminatory practices.
- Gave federal government power to oversee voter registration.
- Dramatically increased Black voter registration in the South.

Significance:

- Short-term: Ended legal segregation and voter discrimination.
- Long-term: Empowered Black Americans politically and socially; laid foundation for future reforms.

5. LITTLE ROCK NINE (1957)

- Nine Black students integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- Faced violent mobs and resistance from state officials.
- President Eisenhower sent federal troops to enforce integration.
- Became a national symbol of the federal government upholding civil rights.