



Moments and Movers in the Civil Rights Movement

Thurgood Marshall, Man of Law

Thurgood Marshall graduated from Howard University School of Law and soon became a lawyer working for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1935, he won a decision allowing an African American to enter the University of Maryland School of Law. In 1940, he argued his first decision before the United States Supreme Court. He would eventually win twenty-nine of thirty-two cases he argued before the highest court in the land. His greatest legal achievement was his successful challenge to segregation in public schools when he won the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, in 1954. This unanimous decision was the first crack in the system of segregation imposed in many Southern states. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Thurgood Marshall as the first African American justice on the Supreme Court.

Rosa Parks and The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Rosa Parks was tired—in body, mind, and spirit—as she left her work as a seamstress on December 1, 1955, and boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa gave her money to the driver, got off the bus, as African Americans were required to do, and then reentered at the back of the bus. She hoped the rear section reserved for African American customers would have a free seat. It was always crowded, while the white section was often empty or had few patrons.

On entering the bus, it was obvious that all the “colored” seats were occupied, but there was a free seat in the “neutral” section, a middle part of the bus that anyone could use. She was seated and resting when the bus driver screamed at her to leave her seat for a white man who wanted to sit there. The other African Americans in the neutral seats had already moved.

Rosa was tired of deferring to whites—tired of segregated restrooms, separate drinking fountains, different parks, second-rate schools, and segregated buses. She refused to move, despite the driver’s threats. He called the police, and she was arrested, tried, convicted of her “crime.” She was fined \$10 plus \$4 in court costs. At the time, Rosa only earned \$23 a week as a seamstress.





Reading
Passages

Moments and Movers in the Civil Rights Movement *(cont.)*

Dr. King Leads the Boycott

Parks' actions served as the flash point of a determined drive by the African American citizens of Montgomery to force a change in policy. They organized in their churches and communities and decided to boycott the buses in the city until the law was changed. They got the brilliant and charismatic preacher, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to lead the boycott. African American citizens altered their transportation routines. Most walked—from Dec. 2, 1955 until November 13, 1956—while Parks' conviction was appealed through the court system. On November 13, 1956, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Parks' favor. It said the Constitution of the United States makes no provision for second-class status and that all Americans are equal under the law. Rosa Parks continued her involvement in civil rights for the rest of her life.

Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Champion

Martin Luther King Jr. was born into a family active in Baptist church ministry. Dr. King entered Morehouse College at the age of fifteen and was ordained at the age of nineteen. He received a B.A. in Divinity at Crozer Theological Seminary.

During his years at Crozer, Dr. King studied the philosophy of nonviolent protest used by Mohandas Gandhi.

Dr. King was the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Atlanta when he was asked to organize and lead the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. His extraordinary eloquence and ability to mobilize the community thrust him into the forefront of the civil rights movement. He became a national symbol of

African American hopes—both hated by his enemies and admired by those who supported his goals.

Ralph Abernathy, Freedom's Preacher

The Reverend Ralph Abernathy was a major figure in the civil rights movement, and he was, in a sense, present to help light the fuse of the movement. Ralph Abernathy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were the men who organized the Montgomery bus boycott and kept it going for a year. After the successful bus boycott, Dr. Abernathy led marches aimed at ending discrimination and securing voting rights for African Americans in Selma and Birmingham, Alabama; Albany, Georgia; and Washington, D.C. He was with Dr. King when King was shot, and he continued his work after King's murder. "You can kill the dreamer," he said, "but you cannot kill the dream."

The Little Rock Nine

On September 4, 1957, six African American girls and three boys tried to legally attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. They were met by an angry white mob and the Arkansas National Guard armed with guns. The nine African American students were turned away while the nation watched on television. Three weeks later, they entered the school protected by federal troops ordered there by President Eisenhower. In the next few years, the nine graduated from Central High. Their names were Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Thelma Mothershed, Gloria Ray, Carlotta Walls, Melba Pattillo, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Ernest Green.



Moments and Movers in the Civil Rights Movement *(cont.)*

The Greensboro Four

On February 1, 1960, four freshmen students at an all-African American college in Greensboro, North Carolina, staged a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in a Woolworth store in the same city. They were refused service, and they peacefully refused to leave. News of this quiet and peaceful protest soon spread throughout many states, and sit-ins were staged at segregated lunch counters in many cities.

The peaceful protesters were attacked, spit upon, cursed, insulted, and some were even burned with cigarettes. Food and soda were spilled on them, and they were forcibly removed. Other protesters took their places. Some lunch counters were soon integrated, and the movement to desegregate all counters spread. The four men in the very first sit-in were Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond. By the summer of 1962, the first lunch counter where they began their protest was integrated.



Medgar Evers Wanted to Vote

Medgar Evers had far-reaching memories of discrimination and brutality toward African Americans in his native Mississippi. After serving in France and Germany during World War II, he returned to Mississippi determined to vote on Election Day. He and his friends ignored threats by whites to stay out of town and were met by a mob of armed men who stopped them from voting. Evers became a leader in the Mississippi chapter of the NAACP and led meetings, marches, boycotts, and other demonstrations for civil rights and equal education for African Americans in Mississippi. He was beaten by white gangs, and his home was firebombed. On June 12, 1963, he was murdered by a gunman after a church meeting. His example and influence, however, led other African Americans in Mississippi to continue the struggle.

Fannie Lou Hamer and the Right to Vote

Fannie Lou Hamer was born the youngest of twenty children in a sharecropper family in rural Mississippi. Her family all worked on white-owned plantations picking cotton and doing farm work from daybreak to dark just to get enough to eat. When she grew up and married a sharecropper, Fannie became determined to do something to break the system of degradation, humiliation, and poverty that plagued all African Americans, especially those in Mississippi.



Reading
Passages

Moments and Movers in the Civil Rights Movement *(cont.)*

Fannie Lou Hamer and the Right to Vote *(cont.)*

In 1962, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee visited Mississippi to encourage African Americans to register to vote. Fannie became convinced that voting was the key needed to open the door to equal rights. She was turned down three times when the white registrar of elections claimed she failed a literacy test. When Fannie did finally pass the test, they refused to let her vote because she had no money to pay a poll tax, another obstacle used by the white authorities to prevent African Americans from voting.

Fannie was ordered off the plantation where she and her husband were sharecropping. She hid in a neighbor's home that was shot at by angry whites. Fannie became involved in organizing African Americans in rural Mississippi. She held meetings, preached in churches, and led voter registration marches. She and members of her group were arrested and brutally beaten in jail. Fannie helped create the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to help African Americans be represented in Mississippi politics because the regular Democratic party would not admit African Americans.

Fannie managed to register 63,000 African Americans in the MFDP. She and the new party gained national attention in 1964 when they tried to be represented in the National Democratic Presidential Convention. Fannie gave a dramatic speech at the convention describing the dreams and hopes of African Americans and the many obstacles her people had overcome to be represented.



She and the new party lost at that convention, but when they returned to the party convention in 1968 with even greater support in Mississippi, they were finally seated.

Many Leaders

Many other leaders helped propel the civil rights movement. John Lewis led freedom rides throughout the South and was at the front of the march in Selma. He became a U.S. Congressman, representing Georgia, in 1987. James Meredith successfully appealed to the Supreme Court to force the University of Mississippi Law School to accept him. The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth led a movement to desegregate buses and schools in Birmingham, Alabama, despite having his home firebombed and his wife struck with a knife. Six-year-old Ruby Bridges was escorted to a New Orleans school by federal marshals. The list of civil rights heroes, many little known, is long and includes people of many faiths and backgrounds.

Moments and Movers in the Civil Rights Movement Quiz

Directions: Read pages 32–35 about special people and events in the civil rights movement. Answer these questions based on the information in the selection. Circle the correct answer to each question below. Underline the sentence in the selection where the answer is found.

- How much did Rosa Parks pay in fines and court costs?
 - \$23
 - \$4
 - \$10
 - \$14
- Which lawyer won the *Brown* decision?
 - Thurgood Marshall
 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
 - Medgar Evers
 - John Lewis
- Who led the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party?
 - Rosa Parks
 - John Lewis
 - Fannie Lou Hamer
 - Medgar Evers
- When was Medgar Evers murdered?
 - September 2, 1957
 - February 1, 1960
 - December 1, 1955
 - June 12, 1963
- What did the Little Rock Nine try to integrate?
 - lunch counters
 - interstate buses
 - a high school
 - a law school
- Which of these people tried to desegregate a lunch counter?
 - Elizabeth Eckford
 - James Meredith
 - Ezell Blair Jr.
 - Ruby Bridges
- Which minister organized boycotts in Montgomery and marches in Selma?
 - Rosa Parks
 - Medgar Evers
 - Ralph Abernathy
 - James Meredith
- Which of these was not a member of the Little Rock Nine?
 - David Richmond
 - Jefferson Thomas
 - Melba Pattillo
 - Carlotta Walls
- How did most African Americans boycotting Montgomery buses get to work?
 - They changed jobs.
 - They took the train.
 - They walked.
 - all of the above
- How did officials try to keep Fannie Lou Hamer from voting in Mississippi?
 - literacy test
 - poll tax
 - paying her money
 - both a and b

Answer Key

Page 36

1. c
2. c
3. b
4. d
5. a
6. b
7. b
8. d
9. b
10. d

Page 37

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. c
7. a
8. b
9. c
10. c

Page 38

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. b
8. d
9. a
10. c

Page 39

1. a
2. a
3. a
4. c
5. c
6. a
7. d
8. d
9. d
10. a

Page 40

1. c
2. d
3. d
4. c
5. b
6. d
7. d
8. b
9. a
10. d

Page 41

1. b
2. b
3. d
4. b
5. c
6. d
7. c
8. c
9. d
10. d

Page 42

1. d
2. a
3. c
4. d
5. c
6. c
7. c
8. a
9. c
10. d

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Discussion Starters

1. His brother is in the sixth grade, and he may get picked on or bothered by Byron and other sixth-grade boys who don't like him "showing them up."
2. The boys are very poor, have few clothes to wear, and do not have much to eat. They come from Arkansas, and their "country" speech patterns are different.
3. Kenny's mom sends extra food to share with the boys, and she helps them become friends again after Kenny hurts Rufus's feelings.
4. Answers will vary.
5. He defends Kenny against other bullies, recovers his stolen gloves, and comforts him after the bombing when they return home.
6. He's worried that his sister has been killed and later retreats into himself in reaction to what he sees in the bombed church.
7. She seems less strict and less "proper" to Mrs. Watson.
8. They took food because they couldn't stop easily at restaurants or find places that served African Americans. They also prepared for sleeping in the car and stopping for restroom needs in parks where they were allowed.

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Discussion Starters

1. Answers will vary.
2. They know that he is probably an orphan and surely homeless and want to make sure he has some food.
3. Bud and the other Hooverville residents are usually chased away or hassled by police because the nearby towns had so little money to support or feed the poor.
4. Three examples of kindness: the family who pretends Bud is their child in the breakfast line, the families who share with him at the Hooverville, and Lefty Lewis who helps him find his grandfather.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Most students will be opposed to the destruction of the Hooverville because the poor had no place to go, and they did not appear to cause any trouble. However, they were seen as an embarrassment to the town by some townspeople.
7. Answers will vary.
8. He probably doesn't want to be reminded of the long-ago conflict with Bud's mother or her death.
9. Answers will vary.
10. He quickly learns to play the recorder and the sax.
11. Herman is Bud's grandfather.
12. They argue, and Bud's mother leaves home.