

Civil Rights & Race Relations in America: A Concise Chronology

1865. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery

1868. The 14th Amendment guaranteed citizenship and civil rights to all persons born in the United States, prohibiting any government from depriving any person of “life, liberty or property, without the due process of law.”

1870. The 15th Amendment guaranteed all adult male citizens the right to vote, stating that this right “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

1875. Civil Rights Act stated: “All persons within a jurisdiction of the U.S. shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances...applicable alike to citizens of every race and color.”

1881. Tennessee passed the first Jim Crow (segregation) laws.

1883. Supreme Court ruled against 1875 Civil Rights Act on the grounds that the 14th Amendment forbade only states – not individuals or corporations – from discriminating.

1909. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded under the leadership of W.E.B. DuBois, beginning the use of governmental legal systems to advance civil-rights causes.

1911. The National Urban League was founded, seeking new industrial opportunities for blacks through alliances with businesses.

1919. Red Summer of 1919, so named because of 25 race riots, involving sometimes brutal treatment of black soldiers who returned from fighting to “make the world safe for democracy.” They found a larger Ku Klux Klan than ever before or since in US History and lynchings (1,100 from 1900-1917, more than 70 in 1918).-A. Phillip Randolph

1942. Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded, advocating nonviolent methods of working for civil rights.

1948. Democratic candidate Harry Truman’s strong civil-rights platform prompted Southern Democrats to split from part and form Dixiecrats – a separate states’ rights party led by Strom Thurmond.

1948. President Truman abolished racial segregation in the armed services.

1954. In *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in public schools – a major breakthrough for blacks, opening the way for far-reaching changes. Warren Court.

1955. For 380 days, blacks in Montgomery, Alabama, successfully boycotted a city bus line to protest segregation – Rosa Parks.

1956. In a “Southern Manifesto,” more than 90 Southern senators and representatives protested school desegregation decisions on the grounds of “states’ rights.”

1957. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., advocating nonviolent mass direct action to achieve full citizenship rights, equality and integration.

1957. President Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to maintain order in newly integrated Central High School.

1957. Congress adopted a Civil Rights Act designed to secure voting rights for black citizens.

1959. Public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, were closed for five years to oppose integration.

1960 Four black students in Greensboro, NC, refused to leave a “white” lunch counter, establishing sit-ins as another nonviolent way to press for integration.

1961 Executive Order 10925, issued by President Kennedy, required companies to increase the employment of blacks and other minorities. It applied only to private firms directly involved in work on federal contracts

1961 “Freedom Riders” traveling from the North into the South by bus were attacked by whites in Alabama.

1962 US Marshals and federal troops protected James Meredith, the first black to attend the University of Mississippi.

1963 march on Washington, culminating in a gathering of 250,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his “I have a dream” speech.

1964 The Civil Rights Act barred racial segregation in public accommodations and speeded school desegregation by authorizing the cutoff of federal funds to discriminatory programs. The act also required equal employment opportunities for women as well as for blacks and other minority groups in any business with 25 or more employees. Ends Jim Crow.

1965 State troopers used clubs and tear gas against blacks marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, touching off a nationwide explosion of protest.

1965 The Voting Rights Act called for registration by US examiners of blacks whom state officials had turned away and suspended literacy tests in states where less than half the voting-age population was registered.

1965 This year marked the beginning of urban violence – “race riots” – in major US cities, resuming in 1968 after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated. Watts in L.A. Detroit

1967. The Kerner Commission Report, called for response to riots, showed that very little progress had been accomplished in housing, jobs, economic security or educational opportunities, and recommended a “massive national commitment” to action.

1968 The Open Housing Act prohibited racial discrimination in the sale or rental of most housing.

1969 School integration at a “snail’s pace” led the Supreme Court to order an end to all racially segregated schools “at once.”

1972 The Equal Opportunity Act extended antidiscriminatory provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights act to include businesses with 15 or more employees, and to include employees of state and local governments and educational institutions. In addition, the act gave the EEOC power to sue employers over discrimination and authorized courts to require remedial action by employers to overcome the effects of past discrimination

1975 The Civil Rights Commission issued a report stating that many minorities were still being prevented from voting.

1978 The Supreme Court approved the principle of affirmative action in its ruling in the Allan Bakke case, holding that race may be a factor in granting admission to colleges and universities. But the court held that the method of the medical school at the University of California at Davis, which had reserved 16 spaces in each class for members of minority groups, was an illegal classification of applicants by race.

1981 The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was extended by the house for a decade or more.

1983 Congress declared that the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – January 15, 1929 – will be celebrated as a national holiday.

1983 Jesse Jackson, founder of PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity), sought the nomination of the Democratic Party for the 1984 presidential election

1984 The Supreme Court ruled that seniority takes priority over minority preferences and that racial preference in layoffs are proper only if past employer bias is proved.

1986 The Supreme Court handed down two affirmative-action decisions that upheld numerical guidelines, declaring that affirmative-action plans may be used to help minority members who are not themselves the victims of bias. The Court invalidated a plan to preserve the jobs of nonwhites by laying off teachers with tenure. Racist incidents at The Citadel, in Howard Beach, NY, and at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, renewed concerns of many Americans about race relations.

1987 A mob of brick-throwing whites led by Ku Klux Klansmen assaulted an interracial march in all-white Forsyth County, Georgia. Los Angeles Dodgers Vice President Al Campanis ignited debates about racism in executives. In the *Johnson* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that employers can voluntarily adopt hiring and promotion goals for underrepresented women and minorities, in order to remedy “a conspicuous imbalance in traditionally segregated job categories. “ The Court also upheld promotion quotes in a case involving Alabama state troopers. Jesse Jackson led contenders for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency after Gary Hart temporarily withdrew from the contest.

1991 Clarence Thomas replaces Thurgood Marshall on Supreme Court

1997 Million Man March