

3. UPHEAVAL IN AMERICA

Post-war America was in **upheaval**, especially in the 1960s. African Americans, under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., demanded equal rights with white Americans. Ever since they had been freed from slavery, African Americans had never been treated fairly or given the same rights as white people. They staged protests, marches, and gave public speeches to push for change. Change came, but at a price.

In the meantime, the young people of America also rose in protest. These were “baby boomers,” a huge group of people born after World War II. They wanted to change all kinds of things about America, especially to end the Vietnam War. They protested in large, loud, and angry crowds for the changes they wanted. This section will discuss all this upheaval and how the government reacted.

Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

2. Describe the events and crises of the Cold War.
5. Describe the Civil Rights Movement.
6. Describe the protests and rebellions of the 1960s.
7. Name the presidents and describe their activities from 1945 to 1973.

Vocabulary

Study these new words. Learning the meanings of these words is a good study habit and will improve your understanding of this LIFE PAC.

character (kar' ik tər). Moral strength.

idealist (ī dē' ləst). A person who wants things to be perfect; to live up to a model of the very best.

immoral (i mōr' əl). Wrong, not right; wicked.

rebellious (ri bel' yəs). Defying authority; acting to resist or fight against law or authority (like rules of proper behavior).

upheaval (əp hē' vəl). A large amount of disorder; great changes.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /FH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ or /ə/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

Civil Rights

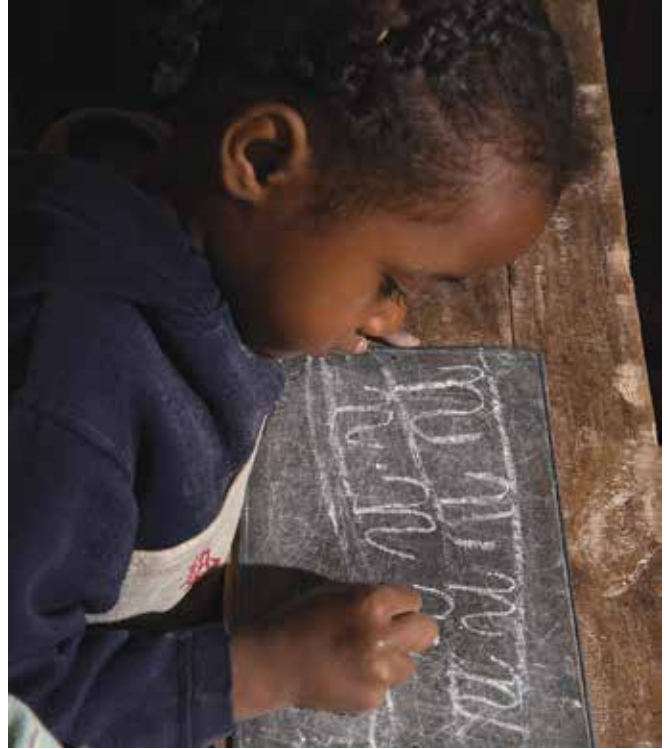
Background. *Civil rights* is a name for the rights we have as citizens. The Civil Rights Movement is a name for the effort by African Americans to receive equal and fair treatment in the United States. This movement began in 1955.

After the Civil War gave black people their freedom, all kinds of laws were passed in the South to make sure they were not equal with white people. “Jim Crow” laws required that black and white people have separate facilities, like parks, public bathrooms, drinking fountains, and schools. The facilities for white people were always better than those set aside for black people. Laws like poll taxes (a tax to vote), literacy tests (you had to read to vote, but most black people were unable to read because they were not provided with any opportunities for education), and grandfather clauses (you could not vote unless your ancestors had voted in 1860) kept black people from voting. Any black man who did try to change things was often beaten or killed, and the white police would not arrest people who did it. Thus, freedom was not very free for African Americans.

School desegregation. Schools in the South were *segregated* in the 1950s. That meant the white children went to one school and the black children to another. This was legal at the time because of a decision by the Supreme Court in 1896 called *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The Court said that “separate but equal” facilities (like schools) for white and black people were fine. However, the facilities were never equal. Schools for white students were often new with good textbooks and plenty of supplies. Black students would go to school in old, leaky buildings, use worn-out textbooks, and often had few supplies like chalk, paper, and desks. In the 1950s, another case reached the Supreme Court on the same issue.

This time, in 1954 the Supreme Court changed its mind. In the decision *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, the Court ruled that separate schools were always unequal just by the fact they were separate. It was not fair to send children to separate schools just because of their skin color. The Court ordered that all southern schools had to be desegregated. They had to admit both white and black students.

Many white people in the South did not want black people to have equal rights. It was very hard to desegregate the schools in the South. In 1957 following a court order, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, tried to admit nine African American students. Mobs gathered outside the school and the governor brought in the national guard to stop the black students.



| Black students had inferior school supplies.

President Eisenhower, however, was not going to stand for that! He ordered the army to Little Rock to escort the students to class. Every day, the nine black teenagers would be picked up by army cars and taken to school. A group of soldiers with guns would surround them and march them into school. They often had to pass through a mob of angry people yelling and cursing at them. Inside the school, a soldier would stay with each student to make sure they were not hurt. It was an awful experience for those nine young people. However, those brave students began the change that finally gave African Americans the right to go to any school in the United States.

Montgomery Bus Boycott. Most historians say that the Civil Rights Movement began in 1955 with the *Montgomery Bus Boycott*. The buses in Montgomery, Alabama were segregated. Black people were supposed to sit in the back of the bus and leave the front seats for white people. One day in 1955, a black woman named Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus and refused to move. She was arrested. The black people of Alabama decided to do something to stop this.



| Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott eventually led to desegregation.

A local pastor named Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the community in organizing to fight the bus segregation. He led a peaceful bus boycott. For months, black people refused to ride the buses. The bus companies lost money, and the boycott attracted attention all over the nation. Finally, the courts agreed that segregation was illegal and the buses were desegregated. That victory was the beginning of the work of Martin Luther King for full and equal rights for African Americans.

Peaceful protest. King's method was peaceful protest. He and his people were determined not to fight. They would simply and peacefully do what they were not allowed to do by the Jim Crow laws. They would, for example, go into restaurants that did not serve black people. They would sit down and refuse to move until they were served. Often they were arrested and sometimes beaten up. However, they never fought back or did anything violent in return. The courts began to side with them, ordering the states to stop segregation. Also, the press wrote about all of this and showed it on TV. Many Americans realized that black people were being treated unfairly and began to support the Civil Rights Movement.

King also organized marches to protest segregation and laws that kept black people from voting. When he and his supporters tried to march peacefully through Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, they were attacked by the police. The unarmed people were knocked against the walls by water from fire hoses, attacked by police dogs, and shocked with cattle prods. The whole thing was seen on national television and caused an outcry of support for King and his marchers.

In August of that same year, King led his most famous march, the March on Washington. Thousands of people marched to the Lincoln Memorial to show their support for a new Civil Rights Act to protect the rights of African Americans. There, Martin Luther King gave his most famous speech called "I Have a Dream." It was all about how he dreamed of a nation of freedom and equality. He dreamed of having his children judged by their **character**, not their skin color. He dreamed of real freedom for all Americans, including black people.



| Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement to success.

The Civil Rights Movement almost created a war in the South. Crowds of black people who protested were often attacked by crowds of angry white people. The first black man to attend the University of Mississippi had to have an army escort. Civil rights workers were often shot down in cold blood. The nation was torn between those wanting to make things right and those who refused to consider it.

The Civil Rights Act was finally passed in 1964. It forbade any kind of segregation in public and protected the rights of black people to vote. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 ended literacy tests and put the federal government in charge of registering voters in several southern states. Court decisions all over the South also forced segregation to end and gave black people a chance to enjoy the rights of American citizens. Rev. King continued to preach and work for equality until he was assassinated in 1968.

It took years of protests, court decisions, arrests, and violence, but the Civil Rights Movement was a huge success. It forced America to live up to its own claim to be the "land of the free." As a result of the work of Martin Luther King and those who dared to protest with him, African Americans were finally given full and equal legal rights in the United States.



Complete these sentences.

- 3.1** The leader of the Civil Rights Movement was _____
_____.
- 3.2** The way Rev. Martin Luther King worked was using _____ protests.
- 3.3** The event that started the Civil Rights Movement was the _____
_____ in 1955.
- 3.4** Martin Luther King's most famous speech was _____
which he gave at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on _____
in 1963.
- 3.5** _____ Laws in the South required separate facilities for white and
black people.
- 3.6** The _____ Act of 1964 forbade segregation and the
_____ Act of 1965 ended literacy tests for voting.

- 3.7** The Supreme Court decision that allowed segregation in 1896, _____, was changed by another decision, _____, that forbade it in 1954.
- 3.8** The first nine black students to attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas got in only with an escort of _____.
- 3.9** The woman who started the Montgomery Bus Boycott by refusing to move to the back of the bus was _____.
- 3.10** Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in _____.

Protests and Politics

Protests. Because the Civil Rights Movement worked, many people tried protesting to change other things. Thousands of babies had been born after World War II. These “baby boomers” became restless teenagers in the 1960s. They led protests all over the nation on many subjects. They protested mainly at universities, where large groups of young adults lived. They protested for changes in college classes, for women’s rights, against pollution, against poverty, and in favor of illegal drugs.

These young adults also rebelled against all of the rules they could find. They began to use illegal drugs and try out all kinds of **immoral** things. They wanted loud music and wild art. They disliked marriage and families. Their new outlook on life impacted and still impacts American culture as a whole.

Some of these people became known as “hippies.” Hippies rebelled against everything. They grew their hair long, seldom worked, used drugs, were often homeless, and claimed to be at peace with the world. They wandered around the country in groups or gathered on farms where they worked together to raise food to eat, sharing everything. In time, however, most of them realized they could not live like that forever. They got jobs and became a part of regular American life.



| The peace sign and flowers were symbols of hippies.