

Important Dates in Civil Rights History- Teacher's Guide to Timeline

Date	media type	length	Description of Event
1620-1865	video	10:59	An introduction to slavery in America
1849	video	7:27	Harriet Tubman Escapes and the Underground Railroad Leads Slaves to Freedom
1/1/1863	video	2:29	President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the Confederate states "are, and henceforward shall be free."
12/06/1865	wiki		Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, prohibiting slavery (Dec. 6).
7/9/1868	wiki		Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, defining citizenship. Individuals born or naturalized in the United States are American citizens, including those born as slaves. This nullifies the Dred Scott Case (1857), which had ruled that blacks were not citizens.
1870	wiki		Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, giving blacks the right to vote
1896	video	2:03	Plessy v. Ferguson: This landmark Supreme Court decision holds that racial segregation is constitutional, paving the way for the repressive Jim Crow laws in the South.
1954	video	4:54	The Supreme Court rules on the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kans., unanimously agreeing that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.
1955	video	10:29	Fourteen-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till is visiting family in Mississippi when he is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Two white men, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury. They later boast about committing the murder in a Look magazine interview. The case becomes a cause célèbre of the civil rights movement.
1955	video	2:54	NAACP member Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat at the front of the "colored section" of a bus to a white passenger, defying a southern custom of the time. In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott, which will last for more than a year, until the buses are desegregated Dec. 21, 1956. As newly elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is instrumental in leading the boycott.
1957	image		(Little Rock, Ark.) Formerly all-white Central High School learns that integration is easier said than done. Nine black students are blocked from entering the school on the orders of Governor Orval Faubus. President Eisenhower sends federal troops and the National Guard to intervene on behalf of the students, who become known as the "Little Rock Nine."
1957	video	3:12	Jackie Robinson Joins the Brooklyn Dodgers and Breaks the Color Barrier in Baseball

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1960	video	2:44	(Greensboro, N.C.) Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South. Six months later the original four protesters are served lunch at the same Woolworth's counter. Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theaters, libraries, and other public facilities.
1961	video	4:09:00	Over the spring and summer, student volunteers begin taking bus trips through the South to test out new laws that prohibit segregation in interstate travel facilities, which includes bus and railway stations. Several of the groups of "freedom riders," as they are called, are attacked by angry mobs along the way.
1963	video	2:42	During civil rights protests in Birmingham, Ala., Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor uses fire hoses and police dogs on black demonstrators. These images of brutality, which are televised and published widely, are instrumental in gaining sympathy for the civil rights movement around the world.
1963	video	3:22	Washington, D.C.) About 200,000 people join the March on Washington. Congregating at the Lincoln Memorial, participants listen as Martin Luther King delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.
1963	video	17:29	"I Have a Dream" Speech
1963	video	3:54	(Birmingham, Ala.) Four young girls (Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins) attending Sunday school are killed when a bomb explodes at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a popular location for civil rights meetings. Riots erupt in Birmingham, leading to the deaths of two more black youths.
1964	wiki		The 24th Amendment abolishes the poll tax, which originally had been instituted in 11 southern states after Reconstruction to make it difficult for poor blacks to vote.
1964	video	2:18	President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The most sweeping civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the powers to enforce desegregation.
1964	video	5:11	Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it easier for Southern blacks to register to vote. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and other such requirements that were used to restrict black voting are made illegal.

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1965	wiki		Asserting that civil rights laws alone are not enough to remedy discrimination, President Johnson issues Executive Order 11246, which enforces affirmative action for the first time. It requires government contractors to "take affirmative action" toward prospective minority employees in all aspects of hiring and employment.
1967	video	4:03	In <i>Loving v. Virginia</i> , the Supreme Court rules that prohibiting interracial marriage is unconstitutional. Sixteen states that still banned interracial marriage at the time are forced to revise their laws.
1968	video	9:17	(Memphis, Tenn.) Martin Luther King, at age 39, is shot as he stands on the balcony outside his hotel room. Escaped convict and committed racist James Earl Ray is convicted of the crime.
1968	wiki		President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.