

Early Foundations (Pre-1940s)

1865	The Thirteenth Amendment is ratified, abolishing slavery in the United States.
1868	The Fourteenth Amendment is ratified, granting citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States and guaranteeing equal protection under the law.
1870	The Fifteenth Amendment is ratified, prohibiting states from denying the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
1896	Plessy v. Ferguson: The Supreme Court upholds "separate but equal" segregation laws in public facilities.

1940s: Early Activism and Legal Challenges

1941	A. Philip Randolph organizes a March on Washington to protest racial discrimination in defense industries, leading President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802, banning discrimination in defense jobs.
1942	The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) is founded in Chicago to challenge segregation through nonviolent direct action.
1948	President Harry S. Truman issues Executive Order 9981, desegregating the armed forces.

1950s: Legal Victories & Mass Mobilisation

1954	Brown v. Board of Education: The Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional, overturning Plessy v. Ferguson.
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1950s: Legal Victories & Mass Mobilisation (cont)

1955	Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American, is brutally murdered in Mississippi, galvanizing national attention to racial violence.
1 December	Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery, Alabama bus, leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
1955-1956	Montgomery Bus Boycott: Led by Martin Luther King Jr. and the Montgomery Improvement Association, the boycott successfully ends with the Supreme Court ruling that bus segregation is unconstitutional.
1957	The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is founded by Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders to coordinate nonviolent protests.
1957	The Little Rock Nine integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, under federal trooper protection following resistance from the state governor.
1957	The Civil Rights Act of 1957 is signed into law, establishing the Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice and the Commission on Civil Rights.

1960s: Height of the Movement

1960	The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded in Raleigh, North Carolina, emphasizing youth-led, grassroots activism.
1	Greensboro sit-ins begin as four African American college students sit at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter, sparking similar protests across the South.
1960	February
1960	Woolworth's lunch counter, sparking similar protests across the South.
1961	Freedom Rides: CORE and SNCC activists ride interstate buses into the segregated South to challenge non-enforcement of Supreme Court rulings against segregation.
1962	James Meredith enrolls at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), facing violent resistance; federal marshals are deployed to ensure his admission.
1963	Birmingham Campaign: Led by the SCLC, protests in Birmingham, Alabama, confront segregation, resulting in police violence and mass arrests; media coverage shocks the nation.
28 August	March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom: Over 250,000 people gather at the Lincoln Memorial, where Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech.
1963	1963



1960s: Height of the Movement (cont)

1964 Freedom Summer: A campaign to register African American voters in Mississippi, marked by the murders of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner.

2 July The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, banning discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and education.

1965 Selma to Montgomery Marches: Highlighting voting rights issues, the marches lead to "Bloody Sunday" when state troopers attack marchers; widespread outrage follows.

6 August The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is signed into law, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting practices and enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment.

1966 The Black Panther Party is founded in Oakland, California, by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, advocating for armed self-defense and community programs.

1967 Loving v. Virginia: The Supreme Court rules that state bans on interracial marriage are unconstitutional.

Late 1960s: Continuing Struggle

1967 Thurgood Marshall is appointed as the first African American Supreme Court Justice.

1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike: African American sanitation workers strike for better wages and working conditions; Martin Luther King Jr. supports the strike.

4 April Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, 1968 sparking riots in cities across the country.

11 April The Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act) is signed into law, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.

1970s: Continuing Activism & Changes

1971 Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education: The Supreme Court upholds the use of busing to achieve school desegregation.

1972 The Equal Employment Opportunity Act strengthens the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1978 Regents of the University of California v. Bakke: The Supreme Court rules that racial quotas in college admissions are unconstitutional but affirms the use of race as one factor in admissions decisions.

1980s-2000s: Ongoing Struggles & Progress

1982 The Voting Rights Act is extended for 25 years.

1983 Martin Luther King Jr. Day is established as a federal holiday.

1980s-2000s: Ongoing Struggles & Progress (cont)

1991 The Civil Rights Act of 1991 is passed, strengthening existing civil rights laws and providing for damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination.

2003 Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger: The Supreme Court upholds affirmative action in college admissions at the University of Michigan, allowing race to be considered as one factor.

2010s-Present: Renewed Movements

2010 The Affordable Care Act is signed into law, expanding healthcare access and including provisions addressing health disparities.

2013 Shelby County v. Holder: The Supreme Court invalidates key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, leading to new voting restrictions in several states.

2014 The Black Lives Matter movement gains national prominence following the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City.

2020 Nationwide protests occur following the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, leading to renewed calls for police reform and racial justice.

2021 Juneteenth is established as a federal holiday, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

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