

# Civil rights movement essay examples

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



## **Business**

The baptism of the Civil Rights Movement in 1954 was initiated in the case of *Brown v. Board* when black children were not allowed to admission in the public schools where the white children were enrolled pursuant to the law which required the segregation based on the race of the students. The issue in this case was whether or not the separation of black students from white students in public schools on the basis of race is tantamount to deprive the minority children the equal protection of law in accordance to the Constitution (*Brown vs. Board 3*). The Supreme Court held that isolating white students from black students in a public school setting is equivalent to violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Aside from the detrimental effect that may be caused on the minority black children, it symbolizes inferiority of the black race. Hence, all forms of racial separation were thereafter prohibited based on the precedent well-established in this case.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is one of the leaders who made a difference during the Civil Rights Movement. He came from the African-American race and was motivated by his battles in life to promote equality and social justice using his speeches and letters. He was an advocate of peace and promoted the rights of black Americans during his time. He delivered the speech “I Have a Dream” in 1963 calling out to all Americans to unite and end all forms of racism in America. This became one of the defining moments that ignited the Civil Rights Movement when Luther King demanded to abolish slavery. In his speech, “I Have a Dream”, he was able to inspire America to work together for change to unite the nation and should judge based on the color of a

person's skin. It can be regarded as the personal glory for King because he was able to motivate America's conscience.

The rhetorical arguments in King's letters and speeches were influential in achieving justice and equality for the oppressed African-Americans. While he was in prison in 1963, he wrote the renowned letter entitled "Letter from Birmingham Jail" wherein he praised the birth of the civil rights movement to avoid bloodshed. His powerful words awakened the minds of the black Americans who were subjugated by corrupt religious leaders, who used their position and power to do injustice. In this letter, the appeals which he responded to involved the situation dealing with racial interaction which illustrates a response to rhetoric of non-violence. His strategy was to create spiritual unity among his readers by application of the philosophy of active non-violent resistance that transcends all forms of racial barriers (Mc Phail 53). He defied any form of aggression and brutality despite the injustice surrounding him and worked for the reconciliation of the white and black Americans. He resorted to non-argumentative discourse through his speeches and letters which were directed to the current situation his fellowmen.

In this particular letter, he addressed the white policemen who abused their power against black men in the passage of the letter which reads "But when you have seen vicious masses assassinate your parents brutally and sink your sisters and brothers at their caprice; when you see ill-stricken policemen who torment, strike out, assault and murder black men and with impunity; when several black and women who are suppressed by poverty despite the presence of an well-heeled society" (Sernett 523). King used

metaphorical war against racism and human conflict by addressing religious optimism in his battle against evil and prejudices committed against the African Americans. He also condemned the white church and its leadership for doing injustice to the black white and women who were denied of their rights. He used powerful words to reach out to the leaders of the church by expressing his disappointment to these people who urged Birmingham blacks to withdraw support from King and the civil rights activists (Sernett 519). The letter is considered as a rhetorical strategy of King using strong arguments to defeat all forms of injustice against his black brothers and sisters through appeals to higher spiritual principles. This is a method of a nonviolent protest as he worked for freedom and justice for all. King has transformed the rhetoric of the situation as the situation itself as an appeal to the same revolutionary principles which established the foundation of American democracy (Mc Phail 53).

The purpose of King's letter is to expose his sentiments against racism and human conflict. He expressed optimism in his battle despite the extreme prejudices committed against the blacks. He condemned the white church and its leadership for doing injustice. The focal point of this letter is to uplift the condition of blacks who were denied of their rights. He used powerful words to reach out to church leaders by venting out his disappointment for their actions. During that time, the clergy urged the Birmingham blacks to withdraw their support from civil rights activists including himself. His strong faith in God gave him continued positivity to work for peace. King's letter used strong arguments to defeat all forms of injustice against black Americans through appeals to higher spiritual principles. It is a method of a

non-violent protest without resorting to force.

Martin Luther King, as a greatest leader of civil rights movement used his gift of wisdom and resorted to non-violent metaphorical war to combat racism and human conflict through the use of rhetoric appeals. He was full of hope and optimism in his battle against evil and intolerance committed against his black brothers and sisters. He exerted every ounce of his energy and knowledge to break all barriers of racial discrimination. Since he belonged to the black race, he has experienced prejudices for being born a black American. He appeals to the church leaders and the people to unite to fight for the freedom of the oppressed. Such move causes a binding effect of humanity, both symbolically and spiritually, founded on principles of justice by finding similarity in divergence. Martin Luther King, Jr. should be admired for the advocacies contained in this letter. He was one of the greatest African-American leaders who went through personal struggles in life to promote social justice.

Another incident that strengthened the Civil Rights Movement was during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. It was during 1955 in the city of Montgomery in Alabama, where one of the most important protests began (Weidt 5). This was the time when Rosa Parks, who was a black woman did not to offer her seat inside the bus to a white passenger that was in accordance with the segregation laws of the city (Weidt 5). The act of Parks was considered a defiant and courageous action by many but was arrested. Parks was an operational member of the civil rights movement. The arrest of Park opened the privilege to question the segregation laws in the U. S. It was an event where the black political and religious leaders from Montgomery to stage a

one-day boycott to defy the arrest of Parks (Weidt 6). During that time, majority of the African American community used the bus system daily. During the actual boycott, there were only eight black passengers who rode buses driven around Montgomery. The successful one-day boycott has inspired the black leaders to start a prolonged boycott where there was a public condemnation to abolish the segregation of the buses within the city. The blacks made an active part by refusing to take the buses in Montgomery as public transportation. Martin Luther King Jr., who was then a young Baptist minister, became the leader of the boycott. It was King who used the strategy of non-violence and civil disobedience (Weidt 6).

It was Henry David Thoreau who was known for his written works on civil disobedience that inspired King. Thoreau explains civil disobedience when he considered the government as a driving force of corruption. He acknowledges the right of the people to exercise civil disobedience when the corruption in the government is rampant and social justice has been violated. In this instance, the government now becomes an instrument to propagate injustice when the government officials abuse their power to promote their self-interest (Baym 207). He recognizes the right of revolution of the people and to refuse allegiance to the government when tyranny can no longer be endured. He disobeyed the government of America for condoning slavery and urged his fellowmen to fight for their rights and stand by their principles. He further calls on the people to take active participation in working for justice and change.

In 1957, another significant event in the rise of the Civil Rights Movement occurred during the desegregation at Little Rock Central High School, was

the reckoning year of the start of the school year desegregated. On the night before the first day in school which was on September 2, then Governor Faubus declared that he has ordered the Arkansas National Guard to oversee that desegregation was implemented during the first day of classes. On the first day of opening of classes, there were nine black students entered Little Rock High School but were prevented to set foot inside the building by the security guard (Gates & Brooks Higginbotham 58). Then Judge Davies has granted the injunction against the governor and after 3 days, the group of nine students went back to school. Despite the lack of physically violence, majority of the members of the community did not allow the students to return to school. It was through the order of former President Eisenhower who had ordered the designation of 1, 000 paratroopers and 10, 000 National Guardsmen to the school, which resulted to the desegregation of Little Rock (Gates & Brooks Higginbotham 58).

During the 1960s, another important even of the Civil Rights Movement is the Sit-in Campaign. This involves Joseph McNeill, a black college student who was denied of service at the lunch counter of a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina. McNeil came back the following day with three of his classmates to sit at the counter while waiting to be served, but they were refused of service (Herr 4). The four students decided to visit the lunch counter every single day waiting to be served. After their story was published in the New York Times, there were many students who supported the four black students that resulted to a collective students' protest including both black and white students (Herr 4). More students from different parts of the country launched the same protests. At least two weeks

after, there were sit-ins that occurred in identified 11 cities. The students were persistent to fight for their cause in spite of the beatings, arrests, imprisonment and fines, there were students who still appeared at lunch counters to carry on the worthy cause. Even the police declared orders of not arresting the student demonstrators since the sit-ins have generated national publicity (Herr 4). It was former senator John F. Kennedy, who expressed his admiration to sit-in students for being able to stand up for their rights through the literal meaning of sitting down.

In the year 1961, freedom rides have allowed volunteers who belong to combination of black and white races was launched and resulted to campaign from various parts of the U. S. to prevent the separation of black passengers from white passengers inside the bus terminals (Arsenault 1). The objective of giving out freedom rides to both the whites and the blacks is to comply with the Supreme Court decision that segregation of passengers based on race inside buses and trains dishonored the Constitution (Arsenault 1). The legal action that was carried out caused violence during the implementation. The policemen have arrested the protesters and to put the freedom riders on trial. Even though there were several protesters who were arrested, there were many of them who arrived replace them and continue their worthy cause. There were 300 Freedom Riders who exerted efforts to join in the bus terminals. However, the freedom riders were beaten up, and suffered cuts and bruises (Arsenault 1).

Under ideal circumstances, it is presumed that the law is supposed to be applied impartially to all persons without any qualifications. The equal protection principle under the criminal justice system continues to be an

ideal or a work in progress that has to be strived at and accomplished in all cases. In the decided cases, the Supreme Court has interpreted the equal protection clause based on the Fourteenth Amendment of the constitution to mean that all persons under like circumstances must essentially receive the same treatment in the criminal justice system. Therefore, a person should not be discriminated because of race or ethnicity, gender, minority status, disability, nationality, religion or sexual orientation (Samaha 134) This is in consonance with the due process concept under the constitution where in no person shall be deprived of life, liberty and property without reasonable and unlawful procedures. This was the primary objective of the Civil Rights Movement during this period. Hence, the Civil Rights movement has guaranteed that every citizen in the U. S. regardless of race will be given the same amount of opportunities and will be imposed equivalent punishment in accordance with the Constitution (Samaha 134).

## References

Arsenault, Raymond. Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice. New York: Oxford, 2006.

Baym, Nina. The Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume B. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U. S. 483 (1954)

Gates Henry Louis & Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. African American Lives. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.

Herr, Melody. *Sitting for Equal Service: Lunch Counter Sit-ins*. Minneapolis: Twenty First

Century, 2011. Print.

King, Martin Luther Jr. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. 1963. Web. 15 May 2013. [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html).

Mc Phail, Mark Lawrence. *The Rhetoric of Racism Revisited: Reparations or Separation?*

Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. Print.

MacCormick, Neil. H. L. A. Hart. California: Stanford University Press, 2008. Print.

Thomas, Edward Wilfrid. *The Judicial Process: Realism, Pragmatism, Practical Reasoning and*

*Principles*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

Samaha, Joel. *Criminal Procedure*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, 2011. Print.

Sernett, Milton C. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. USA: Duke

Weidt, Maryann N. *Rosa Parks*. Minneapolis: Learner, 2003. Print.