

# Civil rights secret life of bees

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



Bridget Baker Mrs. McQuade Period 2 4/10/12 Racial Discrimination and Segregation In 1619 the very first African Americans arrived in America, coming over for the purpose of forced slavery. It's been nearly four hundred years since then and African Americans are still not treated completely equal. But throughout the years major steps toward equality have been made and as a whole the United States is close to reaching this goal. The first key action taken was abolishing slavery in 1865, but African Americans didn't start gaining equal rights until 1955 during the Civil Rights Movement.

The African American Civil Rights Movement aimed to eliminate all racial discrimination and segregation in America and demonstrated throughout Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of the Bees*. In America, African Americans were not only treated unequal, but looked down upon to the majority of whites. The Civil Rights Movement was from 1955 all through 1968 and was carried out through both violent and non-violent acts with the support of leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. MLK Jr. took on the side of non-violence, believing that by getting the public's attention to how blacks were being treated there would be a sense of sympathy and change of heart towards African Americans. During one of the non-violent protests, March on Washington, MLK Jr. gave the famous "I Have a Dream" speech to 200,000 civil rights supporters who were gathered at the front of the Lincoln Memorial, stretched past the reflecting pool. In this speech he said, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. " These were some of the most powerful words during the Civil Rights Movement and exposed to the people the true hurt blacks felt. MLK Jr. s approach was very successful in the gaining freedom from oppression by white Americans, but Malcolm X also contributed to the movement. Malcolm X believed more in black supremacy and not as strongly about white and black integration.

Though some views were different than MLK Jr. 's, the overall idea was the same, which was shown in his famous " The Ballot or the Bullet" speech saying, " Human rights are something you were born with. Human rights are your God-given rights. Human rights are the rights that are recognized by all nations of this earth. Malcolm X talks about the human rights, which includes all races. With the help of leaders like MLK Jr. and Malcolm X, the nation focused on civil rights for African Americans, and slowly began to improve. With each year more rights, such as voting, were given to all blacks and the amount of segregation rapidly decreased. Some racial discrimination still exists, but has reduced majorly since the African American Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement is such a significant part of America's history that it has been an influence in books, movies, and much more.

For example, in the novel *The Secret Life of the Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd black racial discrimination and segregation are exposed. The story is about a young white girl, Lily, who is raised mostly by her nanny and housekeeper,

Rosaleen, who is African American. The first obstacle of racism that is shown is when Rosaleen is finally given the opportunity to vote after new law changes, but is taunted by white men on her way and is thrown in jail when she retaliates. Next, Lily finds herself in the house of three African American sisters, seeking a place to live her.

While contemplating letting her stay, one of the sisters says, “ But she’s white... ” (Kidd 87). Though it seems as if it’s the white girl being discriminated against, but in reality blacks know the trouble that this gives themselves and how much trouble they could get in for this. The integration of blacks and whites was not only rare because it was looked down upon, but also because consequences would be given. Lily grows more than a friendship with a young African American and regardless of their feelings it’s nearly impossible for them to become anything more because of the fear of him getting in trouble for it.

He explains this to her as, “ Lily, I like you better than any girl I’ve ever known, but you have to understand, there are people who would kill boys like me for even looking at girls like you,” (135). Even those whites willing to integrate could not do it by themselves and during the Civil Rights Movement it brought everyone together willing to desegregate races. It was not immediate, but racial discrimination and segregation have extremely lessened. From the beginning of America an ongoing battle with African American discrimination has occurred.

In the Declaration of Independence written in 1776 it states, “ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. ” The fight for equality of blacks still is present, even though they are citizens of the United

States of America. The Civil Rights Movement was a fight for African Americans to receive the rights and equality they should have been given since day one. Racial discrimination and segregation are what America claims to be against, and it was the Civil Rights Movement that slowly gave the equality to African Americans, as they deserve along with all Americans.