

# Birmingham church bombing 1963



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The 16th Street Baptist Church was a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham. From the steps of the church, several black marchers, most of them kids, encounter the extreme force of police, attack dogs, and high pressure fire hoses. The Church became a special target... There was a horrific incident that took place in 1963 at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. It has been proven that members of the Ku Klux Klan bombed the African American church, which was an organizational centre for Civil Rights groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

People such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy congregated there regularly. In April earlier that year, the SCLC had launched the Birmingham campaign, a well planned protest movement, which fought to desegregate the South's most segregated major city. They also fought against the injustice of the brutality by the Birmingham Police Dept. , which had very close ties to the KKK. The demonstrations and marches which involved thousands of African Americans eventually led to stores being desegregated.

Also, just days before the bombing, schools in Birmingham had been ordered by a federal court to integrate nearly ten years after the Brown v Topeka case (the court order for all schools to desegregate). But, because not everyone agreed to integration, this had created an even more poisoned atmosphere of racial hatred. On Sunday the 15th of September, a white man was seen getting out of a white and turquoise Chevrolet car and placing a box under the steps of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

This box was later found to have contained 19 sticks of dynamite. Inside the church, the Sunday school was preparing for their annual Youth Sunday service. At that time, several hundred adults including Father John Cross, whose own house had been bombed three times, were also in attendance. At 10: 22 am, when children were walking into the basement assembly room for closing prayers, the bomb exploded. The explosion blew a hole in the church's rear wall, destroyed the back steps, and left intact only the frames of all but one stained-glass window.

Even after the deaths of four innocent school girls (Denise McNair, 11, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson, all 14) and 20 injuries America was slow to react while at the same time acts of violence and discrimination continued with the aftermath of the bombing. The reason could be only simplified to a deep-rooted problem. African-Americans, up until that point continued to struggle in their fight for equality in a land that long considered this group as some sort of a sub-human species. They had to fight for what was right but they could not because of " the white man's rules".

They had to resist not with the use of weapons. But, with reason appealing to the white man's sense of right and wrong. Within days the police were almost certain that the people responsible were members of the KKK, the key suspect was Dynamite Bob Chambliss, A Klan suspected in many Birmingham Bombings. After a careless investigation Chambliss and two other Klan's were only convicted to the minor charge of dynamite possession. That finding was over turned on appeal. An FBI investigation resulted in no arrest, no charges.