

Civil rights movement: key players essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



The Civil Rights movement was the national effort in the 50s and 60s to eliminate segregation to gain equal rights. Many individuals and organizations challenged segregation and discrimination with a variety of activities, including protest marches, boycotts, and refusal to abide by segregation laws. My project is on the key players of the Civil Rights Movement.

Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was an American clergyman and civil-rights leader. He was born in Atlanta, GA January 16, 1929. He was a Morehouse College In 1951 he received a degree from Crozer Theological Seminary and enrolled in Boston University Ph. D program. In 1954, King became minister of the Dexter Ave. Baptist Church in Montgomery, AL. He began leading the black boycott in 1955 of segregated city bus lines and in 1956 gained a major victory and stature as a civil-rights leader when Montgomery buses began to run desegregated. King organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which gave him a pedestal to pursue further civil-rights activities. Despite his philosophy of nonviolent resistance, He was arrested on numerous occasions in the 1950s and 60s. His campaigns had mixed success, but the protest he led in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963 brought him worldwide attention. He organized the August 1963, March on Washington, which brought together more than 200, 000 people. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and in 1958 he was assassinated.

Black Panthers

The militant Black Panthers were founded in 1966 in Oakland, CA, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. They were originally advocating violent revolution as their means of achieving black liberation, and they called on blacks to prepare themselves for the liberation struggle. In the late 1960s many members became involved in a numbers of violent controversies confrontations with the police and court cases, some resulting from direct shoot-outs with the police and some from independent charges. While controversy raged over the civil liberties issue, the Panthers themselves were torn apart with internal disputes. A major split took place, with Newton and Seale, who in 1972 decided to abandon their violent methods, on the one side and Eldridge Cleaver, the former chief publicist for the party, who continued to preach violent revolution. Cleaver headed the so-called international headquarters of the party until 1973 in Algeria. In 1974 both Seale and Newton left the party and the latter fled to Cuba to avoid drug charges. During the late 1970s the party slowly but surely lost most of its power and important force within the black community came to an end.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X was a militant black leader in the United States. Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, NB, X was introduced to the Black Muslims while serving a prison term and became a Muslim minister upon his release in 1952. He quickly became very influential in the movement with an audience almost equivalent to that of its leader, Elijah Muhammad. In 1963, Malcolm was suspended by Elijah after a speech in which Malcolm suggested that President Kennedy's assassination was a matter of the " chickens coming

home to roost.” He then formed a rival organization of his own, the Muslim Mosque, Inc. In 1964, after a crusade to Mecca, he converted to orthodox Islam and his new belief that there could be brotherhood between black and white. In his Organization of Afro-American Unity, his tone was still that of militant black nationalism but no longer of separation. In Feb., 1965, he was shot and killed in a public auditorium in New York City. His assassins were indistinctly identified as Black Muslims, but it is still not quite confirmed.

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks, also known as the “ Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” was born in 1913 in Tuskegee, AL as Rosa Louise McCauley. She was a seamstress and long-time member of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. Her Dec. 1, 1955, arrest for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This successful protest marked the surfacing of Martin Luther King, Jr., to national status as a civil-rights leader and provided the model for future nonviolent movement actions. Fired from her job and unable to find work, Parks moved in 1957 to Detroit, where she remained active in the civil-rights movement and worked as an aide to Congressman John Conyers. She was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress’s highest honor, in 1999. She died in 2005.

Little Rock Nine

The Little Rock Nine were the first blacks to attend all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. These notable young students

challenged the system and won. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed segregation in schools, many racist school systems defied the law by intimidating and threatening black students, but the Little Rock Nine were determined to attend the school and receive the same education offered to white students, no matter what. Things grew ugly and frightening right away. On the first day of school, the governor of Arkansas ordered the state's National Guard to block the black students from entering the school. President Eisenhower had to send in federal troops to protect the students. The students referred to as the Little Rock Nine were Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls Lanier, Minnijean Brown-Trickey, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed-Wair, and Melba Pattillo Beals.

KKK

The KKK was a secret society of white Southerners in the United States. It was formed in the 19th century to resist the emancipation of slaves and used terrorist tactics to suppress Black people. The first Ku Klux Klan was an organization that thrived in the South during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. The second was a nationwide organization that flourished after World War I. Subsequent groups calling themselves the Ku Klux Klan sprang up in much of the South after World War II and in response to civil-rights activity during the 1960s.

Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall was a U. S. lawyer and Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. He was born in Baltimore, MD in 1908. He received his law degree from Howard University in 1933. In 1936 he joined the legal staff of the NAACP. As its chief counsel, he disputed more than 30 cases before the U. S. Supreme Court, successfully challenging racial segregation, most outstandingly in higher education. His presentation of the argument against the “ separate but equal” doctrine achieved its greatest impact with the landmark decision handed down in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954) His appointment to the U. S. Court of Appeals in 1961 was opposed by some Southern senators and was not confirmed until 1962. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him to the Supreme Court two years later; he was the first black to sit on the high court, where he consistently supported the position taken by those challenging discrimination based on race or sex, opposed the death penalty, and supported the rights of criminal defendants. As appointments by Presidents Nixon and Reagan changed the outlook of the Court, Marshall found himself increasingly in the minority; in retirement he was outspoken in his criticism of the court. He died in 1993.

Jesse Jackson

Jesse Jackson was an African-American political leader, clergyman, and civil-rights activist. He was born in Greenville, SC in 1941. Raised in poverty, he attended the Chicago Theological Seminary and was ordained a Baptist minister in 1968. Active in the civil-rights movement, he became a close associate of Martin Luther King, Jr. He was executive director of Operation Breadbasket, a program of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

that addressed the economic problems of African Americans in northern cities. In 1971 he founded Operation PUSH, or People United to Save Humanity, an organization to fight racism. Since 1986 he has been president of the National Rainbow Coalition, an independent political organization aimed at uniting disparate groups. In 1984 and 1988, Jackson, ran for the Democratic nomination for president, becoming the first African American to run for that position. He was elected as a nonvoting member of the Senate from Washington DC and has campaigned for its statehood.

Greensboro Four

On February 1, 1960 four black students at North Carolina A&T State University, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, Ezell Blair, Jr., and David Richmond, took seats at the segregated lunch counter of F. W. Woolworth's in Greensboro, N. C. They were refused service and sat peacefully until the store closed. They returned the next day, along with about 25 other students, and their requests were again denied. The Greensboro Four inspired numerous sit-ins across the state and by the end of February, protests were taking place across the South. Finally in July, Woolworth's integrated all of its stores.

NAACP

The NAACP is one of the oldest and most influential civil rights organizations in the United States. It was founded in 1909 to work on behalf of African Americans and the civil rights. Members of the NAACP have referred to it as The National Association, confirming NAACP's ascendancy among

organizations active in the Civil Rights Movement since its origins in the first years of the 20th century. Its name, retained in accord with tradition, is one of the last surviving uses of the term “colored people”, now generally viewed as dated and derogatory.