

1954 Brown vs Board of Education

The US Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

1955 Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

This woman refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger. Her subsequent arrest initiated a sustained bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. The protest began on December 5, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., then a young local pastor, and was so successful that it was extended until, finally, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court's ruling that segregated seating was unconstitutional, and the federal decision went into effect on December 20, 1956.

1960: Ruby Bridges and the New Orleans School Integration

On November 14, **a six-year-old black girl was escorted to her first day at the previously all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans by four armed federal marshals.** They were met with angry mobs shouting their disapproval, and, throughout the day, parents marched in to remove their children from the school as a protest to desegregation. Every subsequent day of that academic year Bridges was escorted to school, enduring insults and threats on her way, and then learning her lessons from her young teacher, Barbara Henry, in an otherwise empty classroom.

1963: March on Washington

On August 28, a crowd of about 250,000 individuals **gathered peacefully on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.,** to listen to speeches by civil rights leaders, notably Martin Luther King, Jr. He addressed the crowd with an eloquent and uplifting message that famously became known as the **"I Have a Dream"** speech.

1964: Civil Rights Act

On July 2, President Johnson, signed the Civil Rights Act into law, a stronger version of what his predecessor, President Kennedy, had proposed the previous summer before his assassination in November 1963. **The act authorized the federal government to prevent racial discrimination in employment, voting, and the use of public facilities.** Although controversial, the legislation was a victory for the civil rights movement.

1965: Assassination of Malcolm X

On February 21, the prominent African American leader was assassinated while lecturing at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, New York. An eloquent orator, his speeches and ideas contributed to the development of black nationalist ideology and the Black Power movement.

1965: Watts Riots

A series of violent confrontations between the city police and residents of Watts and other predominantly African American neighborhoods of Los Angeles began on August 11, after a white police officer arrested an African American man, Marquette Frye, on suspicion of driving while intoxicated. Violence, fires, and looting broke out over the next six days. The disturbance resulted in 34 deaths, more than 1,000 injuries, and \$40 million in property damage. The violence likely exploded from the great economic challenges that African Americans in urban centers faced. They contended with poor housing, schools, and job prospects, despite the passage of civil rights legislation.

1966: Black Panther Party founded

In the wake of the assassination of Malcolm X and urban uprisings, this part was founded in Oakland, California, to protect African American neighborhoods from police brutality. **The Black Panthers launched numerous community programs** that offered such services as tuberculosis testing, legal aid, transportation assistance, and free shoes to poor people. The programs confronted the economic problems of African Americans, which the Party argued that the civil rights reforms did not do enough to address.

1967: *Loving v. Virginia*

On June 12, 1967, the U.S. **Supreme Court declared the Virginia statutes prohibiting interracial marriage unconstitutional**. The case was decided nine years after Richard Loving, a white man, and Mildred Jeter, a woman of mixed African American and Native American ancestry, had pleaded guilty to having violated Virginia state law prohibiting a white person and a "colored" person from leaving the state to be married and returning to live as man and wife.

1967: Detroit Riot

A series of violent confrontations between residents of predominantly African American neighborhoods and city police in Detroit began on July 23, 1967, after a raid at an illegal drinking club where police arrested everyone inside, including 82 African Americans. Nearby residents protested, and several began to vandalize property, loot businesses, and start fires for the next five days. Although police set up blockades, the violence spread to other parts of the city and resulted in 43 deaths, hundreds of injuries, more than 7,000 arrests, and 1,000 burned buildings.

1968: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed by a sniper while standing on the second-floor balcony at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. He had been staying at the hotel after leading a nonviolent demonstration in support of striking sanitation workers in that city. His murder set off riots in hundreds of cities across the country, and it also pushed [Congress](#) to pass the stalled [Fair Housing Act](#) in King's honor on April 11. The legislation made it unlawful for sellers, landlords, and financial institutions to refuse to rent, sell,

or provide financing for a dwelling based on factors other than an individual's financial resources.