**(6:42) African American Civil Rights Movement**

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| **Timeline of the Struggle for Civil Rights** | | |
| African Americans Struggle for Equality | Other Events in the United States |
| 1910. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is organized to struggle for civil rights. | 1910. William H. Taft is President. The Boy Scouts of America are founded. Women campaign for the right to vote. |
| 1948. Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP launches a legal attack on school segregation. | 1948. Harry S. Truman is elected President. Segregation ends in the American armed forces. |
| 1955. Start of the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott | 1955. Dwight Eisenhower is President. The Brooklyn Dodgers win the World Series. |
| 1960. Black students begin to “sit-in” at segregated lunch counters. | 1960. John F. Kennedy defeats Richard M. Nixon and is elected President. |
| 1961. Interracial teams of Freedom Riders challenge segregated buses and terminals | 1961. The U.S. supports an invasion of Cuba that fails. The Yankees win the World Series. |
| 1962. James Meredith integrates the University of Mississippi. | 1962. School prayers declared unconstitutional. U.S. blockades Cuba to block Soviet nuclear missiles. |
| 1963. Campaign to integrate Birmingham, Alabama. March on Washington for Civil Rights | 1963. President Kennedy is murdered in Texas. Lyndon Johnson is new President. |
| 1964. Freedom Summer. Student campaign to register black voters in the south. Martin Luther King, Jr. wins Nobel Peace Prize. | 1964. U.S. troops and war ships are in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Lyndon Johnson is elected President. |
| 1968. Martin Luther King, Jr. is murdered while organizing sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. | 1968. Richard M. Nixon is elected President. Many Americans protest against the War in Vietnam. |
| **Changes In The Law In The United States**  1896- In Plessy v. Ferguson decision the Supreme Court declares that segregation is legal. “Separate but Equal” becomes the law of the United States.  1954- In Brown v. the Topeka, Kansas Board of Education, the Supreme Court declares that segregated schools can never be equal.  1957- President Eisenhower sends federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas to protect black students integrating Central high School.  1957- The first Civil Rights law is passed since just after the Civil War. It sets up a commission to investigate violations of civil rights.  1961- Federal Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity will encourage companies that do business with the federal government to hire black employees.  1964- The 24th amendment to the Constitution outlaws poll taxes in federal elections. Taxes on voting was a way that southern states tried to prevent poor blacks from voting.  1964- Civil Rights Act prohibits (prevents) segregation in public accommodations and employment.  1965- Voting Rights Act: the federal government will protect the right of blacks and other minorities to register and vote. | | |

**Supreme Court Decision, Brown v. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education (1954)**

**Background:** The Supreme Court consolidated the NAACP legal challenges to racial segregation in public schools in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware into one case known as Brown v. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling overturning Plessy v. Ferguson and opposing legal, or de jure, racial segregation in public schools. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the Court and ordered the school districts and the states that were defendants in the case to return to the Supreme Court with proposals to eliminate racial segregation in their school systems.

A. Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

B. We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does . . .

C. To separate them [African American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone . . .

D. Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system . . . We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

**Questions**

1. What legal precedent was established by the Plessy v. Ferguson decision?

2. The Plessy decision referred specifically to segregated railway cars. Why did it have a major impact on education?

3. According to the unanimous opinion of the court in Brown v. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education, why is racial segregation in public schools such a pressing national issue?

4. According to the unanimous opinion of the court, what is the impact of racial segregation on African American children?

5. In your opinion, why was it important that Brown was a a unanimous opinion of the court?

**A Half-Million Whites Left City From 1960-1964, Figures Show,**

*New York Times, May 5, 1966*

An exodus of about half a million white persons from New York City between 1960 and 1964 was disclosed in population estimates released yesterday by the City Health Department. The exodus was only partly offset by an increase of less then 400,000 in non-whites and Puerto Ricans during the period. What actually is happening, population experts say, is that the middle-class fight to the suburbs is continuing and non-whites and Puerto Ricans are taking part in it. Similar movements are taking place in every metropolis and large city of the country.

**Great Society Speech by President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964**

http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/great.html

“The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in out time. But that is just the beginning. The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.”