

#18. TRACE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THIS COUNTRY AFTER WW II.

World War II

During WW II American blacks gained some hope that change was in the air, due to job shortages, blacks gained access to higher pay and more skilled positions. When black GI's returned home there was an expectation that this might continue.

1950's

Unfortunately for black Americans things could not be further from the truth. In 1950 the black population stood at approx. 15 million, 2/3's lived in the south bound by antiquated **Jim Crow Laws** which required separate drinking fountains, toilets, restaurant tables, train seating accommodations and waiting areas. Only 20% of eligible black voters could exercise their right to vote due to poll taxes, literacy tests and grandfather clauses. (and intimidation)

Civil Rights a serious controversy after WW II.

Black Americans were aware that the centennial of their emancipation approached, yet they were still 2nd class citizens.

While some progress had been made in the late 40's when President Truman had created a Committee On Civil Rights, it was largely successful in desegregation of the armed forces. The committee failed to obtain

- Federal anti-poll tax laws
- Anti-lynching legislation
- A permanent fair employment practices commission.

Overall the nation had little to cheer about as it passed the mid-century mark.

Supreme Court Spearhead Civil Rights Effort:

1953 NAACP plans major effort to push its civil rights agenda.

Pres. Eisenhower appoints former California Gov. Earl Warren as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Warren is convinced that the Supreme Court must take the offensive on the civil rights issue. He succeeded in uniting his fellow justices on the subject.

- 1954 Brown vs The Board of Education of Topeka Kansas Case.
"separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal"
not only physically but psychologically as well.

Rosa Parks a NAACP secretary is arrested for refusing to relinquish her seat on a municipal bus. (test case for Brown ruling) NAACP begins to encourage parents and students to enroll in white schools and to disregard "Jim Crow".

South reacts: In Jacksonian style: the court has made its decision, now let them enforce it.

- 1955 Declaration of Constitutional Principles: signed by 81 southern members of Congress and 19 Senators in an effort to resist the Brown ruling which was forced integration.

Southern legislatures, the KKK and White Citizens Councils defend segregation as the southern way of life. Using publicity, economic pressure and often times violence, the South resisted the Courts decision.

- 1955-66 Non-violent Black Protests

In Montgomery Alabama, Black citizens began to request the end of segregation. Centered on economic issues, they used such techniques as bus boycotts, lunch counter sit-ins and peaceful marches.

(SNCC) Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.)

(CORE) Congress for Racial Equality.)

- 1957 Crisis in Little Rock Arkansas

Gov. Orval Faubus uses the Arkansas National Guard to keep 9 black children from attending Little Rock schools. Pres. Eisenhower persuaded the governor to withdraw the troops which he did, replacing them with uniformed police officers. Little Rock citizens stepped in to block the students with taunts and threats. President Eisenhower sent in troops. (101st Airborne) to restore order and the students were escorted to class. Some city schools were burned by residents to stop the forced integration.

Thoughts to ponder: What if Eisenhower had ignored the Supreme Court?

1963 March on Washington

200,000 citizens participated in an orderly and peaceful march to demand desegregation. Reverend Martin Luther King of the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Congress) led the way. His "I Have A Dream" speech was one of the most eloquent delivered in the history of this nation.

1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964

Signed by President Johnson it prohibited voting officials from applying different standards, forbade discrimination in public places. (motels, restaurants, stores, gas stations, theatres, stadiums etc.)
Authorized Federal authorities to withhold federal funds from state and local organizations that promote discrimination. Prohibited discrimination in the workplace.

1964 Twentyfourth Amendment

Prohibited the use of the Poll Tax in a federal election.

1965 Voting Rights Act

Wiped out discrimination in voting, Black Americans ran successfully for office and white politicians began to actively seek the black vote.
1957 25% black vote 1970 65% black participation

1968 Martin Luther King assassinated

The movement takes a violent turn and fragments;
Black Panthers and black power. Black separatism
Malcolm X and Nation of Islam (aggressive agitation)
(assassinated)

Cities begin to burn- Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and Philadelphia.

President Johnson dramatic TV address- will not seek another term.
Robert Kennedy assassinated during 1968 presidential campaign.

Kerner Commission - found the nation moving towards two separate Societies, rioting in the cities due to conditions of "white racism", discrimination for jobs, housing and education.

Recommendations: on the job training, better housing, improved schools.

Supreme Court: Affirmative Action; end employment discrimination by balancing racial numbers on the job.