Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ HW#11 – Civil Rights

**Taking on Segregation**

***MAIN IDEA*** *Activism and a series of Supreme Court*

*decisions advanced equal rights for African Americans*

*in the 1960s.*

In the 1950s, social changes begun by World War

II set the stage for overturning the laws that

forced separate, or segregated, facilities for African

Americans and whites in the South. Many African

Americans had enjoyed expanded job opportunities

in defense industries in the 1940s. Many more had

fought in the war. They returned home determined

to fight for their own freedom.

Lawyers for the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) won

cases that weakened segregation. The biggest victory

came in the 1954 school desegregation case

*Brown* v. *Board of Education.* The Supreme Court

ruled that separate educational facilities were

“inherently unequal.” The segregated schools were

declared unconstitutional.

Within a year after *Brown,* more than 500

school districts had desegregated. But in some

areas, leaders vowed resistance. The issue reached

a crisis in Arkansas. The governor ordered the

National Guard to prevent nine African-American

students from enrolling at Little Rock’s Central

High School. A federal judge ordered the governor

to admit the students. When he refused, President

Eisenhower sent federal troops to allow the students

to enter the school. Meanwhile, Congress

passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957. It gave the

attorney general greater power to push desegregation

in schools.

Another drive had arisen over segregation of city

buses. An African-American woman named Rosa

Parks had refused to yield her seat to a white man,

as the laws of Montgomery, Alabama, required.

After her arrest, African Americans in that city organized a yearlong boycott of the city’s bus system.

The crisis ended when a Supreme Court ruling

ruled segregated buses illegal.

Helping lead the Montgomery bus boycott was

Martin Luther King, Jr., who rose to prominence in

the civil rights movement. He joined with other

ministers to form the Southern Christian Leadership

Council (SCLC), which taught the techniques

of nonviolent resistance to unjust laws. By 1960,

there was another influential civil rights group—

the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

(SNCC). It was formed mostly of college students

who felt that the pace of change was too slow. They

staged sit-ins, in which African Americans sat in

protest at segregated lunch counters, forcing

restaurants and stores to desegregate.

**The Triumphs of a Crusade**

***MAIN IDEA*** *Civil Rights activists broke down racial barriers*

*through social protest. Their activism prompted*

*landmark legislation.*

In the Freedom Rides, African Americans tested

the Supreme Court ruling that banned segregation

in interstate bus transportation by riding on

buses into the South. Many were met by angry

mobs that attacked and beat them. As more incidents

occurred, the Kennedy administration

stepped in. U.S. marshals were sent to protect the

last group of Freedom Riders and the Interstate

Commerce Commission, which regulated bus companies, issued orders banning segregation.

In 1962, a federal court ruled that an African

American could enter the all-white University of

Mississippi. The state’s governor refused to admit

him, however. The Kennedy administration sent

U.S. marshals to force the governor to yield.

Another confrontation occurred in 1963 in

Birmingham, Alabama, where King and other civil

rights leaders led an effort to desegregate the city.

The city police attacked marchers—including children— with dogs and water hoses. Many people

across the country were outraged by these attacks.

President Kennedy became convinced that the

nation needed a new civil rights law. His bill guaranteed African Americans equal rights in all public facilities. It also gave the government power to

push for school desegregation.

Civil rights leaders staged a massive march in

Washington in August of 1963. More than 250,000

people showed up, urging passage of the civil rights

bill. After Kennedy was assassinated, President

Johnson pushed Congress to act. The Civil Rights

Act was passed in 1964.

Civil rights workers next began a campaign to

register African-American voters in the South.

They called it Freedom Summer. They met opposition and some violence. At the Democratic convention that summer, only two African American delegates were seated, leading some of the delegates to feel betrayed.

In 1965, a harsh police response to a civil

rights march in Alabama led thousands from all

over the country to join the march. President

Johnson spurred Congress to pass the Voting

Rights Act. The law stripped away state laws that

had prevented African Americans from voting.

**Challenges and Changes**

**in the Movement**

***MAIN IDEA*** *Disagreements among civil rights groups*

*and the rise of black nationalism created a violent*

*period in the fight for civil rights.*

The civil rights movement met difficulties as it

moved North. In the South the problem had

been unfair laws, called de jure segregation. In the

North, the problem was de facto segregation, which

arises from racist attitudes. It is harder to change

attitudes than to overturn unjust laws.

The Great Migration had brought tens of thousands

of African Americans to Northern cities, but

“white flight” had left the cities poor and with few

jobs. African Americans were angered by these

conditions and by harsh treatment from largely

white police forces. This anger boiled over in several

riots that brought many deaths and much damage

to many cities from 1964 to 1968. President

Johnson had declared “war on poverty” to combat

some of the social ills that African Americans were

protesting. But the growing involvement in the

Vietnam War robbed the war on poverty of needed

resources.

New African-American leaders arose, many of

them boosting black nationalism. Malcolm X began

by telling his audiences to use armed self-defense

when unlawfully attacked. He later urged pursuit of

peaceful means—especially voting—to win equality.

He split with other leaders of his church. Then,

in 1965, he was assassinated.

Another split occurred between King and the

SCLC and other, younger, members of the movement. SNCC leaders began to use the slogan

“Black Power” to symbolize their call for African-

American pride and stronger resistance to racism.

The Black Panthers adopted military-style dress

and harsh words, raising fears among moderate

African Americans and many whites.

King objected to the fiery language of the Black

Power movement. He believed that it would have

evil consequences. It was he who suffered, however.

In April 1968, King was shot and killed. Many

cities erupted in riots caused by African-Americans’

anger and frustration.

A commission reported to President Johnson

that the urban riots were caused by white racism

and the lack of opportunities for African

Americans. But the administration did not act, fearing

the lack of white support for the sweeping

changes required. The civil rights movement had

achieved many triumphs, including the banning of

segregation in education, transportation, employment,

and housing and the winning of voting rights.

Many problems remained, however, and de facto

segregation has continued throughout America

even up to today.

**Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper**

1. How did the civil rights movement begin?

2. What events led Congress to pass the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts?

3. How did the civil rights movement change?

4. Why could the results of the movement be called mixed?