

Chapter 4

Student Activism and the Emergence of a Mass Movement, 1960–1965

During the early 1960s, the struggle against racism and discrimination developed new strategies and revitalized old ones. The involvement of college students brought enthusiasm and optimism to the movement—younger, more impatient activists who escalated the civil rights struggle and broadened its base. Creating a spiral of activity, they were involved throughout the Southern states, and their tactics spread in several directions, encompassing sit-ins, freedom rides, jail-ins, boycotts, voter registration drives, and marches. This was the beginning of a new phase of the movement. With the encouragement of Ella Baker, students formed their own, separate organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which, along with the NAACP, SCLC, and CORE, dominated the civil rights movement. Beyond this, in local communities groups of civil rights workers joined together during these years to desegregate century-old segregated institutions.

By this time, civil rights activities had become a media staple and the issue acquired national significance. National newspaper coverage along with the increasingly sophisticated use of television news reporting brought the movement into most American households, and the appalling segregated conditions throughout the South presented the media with images that dramatized the movement. Violence and tragedy stemming from the Southern reaction to 1960s civil rights activities became a national concern. With federal laws and Supreme Court decisions beginning to disassemble segregation, the civil rights movement saw the government as an ally, but segregated conditions remained in the South, and massive resistance to change developed.

The period from 1960 to 1965, from the sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee, to the now-famous Selma-to-Montgomery march, was well documented by the media. The front-page coverage of confrontation made civil rights more of a national issue; a sense of national crisis, far beyond the Jim Crow communities of the South, was demonstrated by movement leaders and communicated by the media. Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (Reading 4.4), which reiterates that the goal of America is freedom, conveys the moral sentiment of the movement. While in jail without paper, King wrote the letter in the margins of an old copy of the *New York Times*; it was to become the most widely reprinted document of the civil rights movement. The confrontations between the young students and blacks on one hand and opposition Southern whites backed by the local politicians and police on the other framed a clear picture of injustice, but new federal legislation needed the support of legislators outside the South.

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"I'm sorry, we don't serve you here." This response from the waitress at the F. W. Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, to the four black college freshmen from North Carolina A & T who ordered coffee and doughnuts affirmed the lingering Southern way of selective segregation. The black customers showed the waitress their Woolworth's receipts from shopping at other counters in the store. But, in 1960, North Carolina lunch counters remained segregated. Although the four students, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond, were members of NAACP Youth Councils, their action was not sponsored by any organization. The news of the sit-in spread throughout the 10 black colleges in the Greensboro area. Within a few days, students from those colleges and the local black churches had organized sit-ins at other segregated lunch counters, and the action spread to cities, primarily, across the South. Chain stores—like Woolworth's—that practiced selective segregation and discrimination were also subject to pickets in New York City and other Northern cities.

The Reverend James Lawson of Nashville, who had been planning sit-ins in that city, was contacted by one of the sit-in leaders from North Carolina. A pacifist who was imprisoned for refusing to serve in the military during the Korean War, Lawson was interested in the nonviolent approach to social change. He ran a series of workshops in nonviolence for students who wanted to challenge segregation. Lawson's teachings were extremely influential with the students, who learned nonviolence and discipline, both cornerstones to effective social change in this period of the civil rights movement. The Nashville Student Movement that arose from those workshops made plans to challenge department store lunch counters in Nashville. The students from the historically black colleges in the Nashville area were motivated by reports of the Greensboro sit-ins. These student sit-ins demonstrated the dissatisfaction of young blacks with the culture of segregation in the South.

Two months after the sit-ins, on Easter weekend, the student leaders were invited to a meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate future civil rights action. Executive director of SCLC, Ella Baker, gave the opening address, "More than a Hamburger." "Political Mama," by Joanne Grant (Reading 4.1), examines that weekend when the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born. The leaders of SCLC wanted the students to follow them as the youth arm of the organization. The students, however, wanted to be more independent. They, instead, followed the advice of Baker to create an independent organization. In her speech, Baker argued that the lunch counter sit-ins were about larger issues of civil and human rights, issues "bigger than a hamburger." She gave the students a strong sense of purpose encouraging them to be democratic and independent. Although SNCC challenged the existing movement leadership, the NAACP and local organizations supported the students with money, legal aid, and advice.

Sitting down to have a cup of coffee or occupying any seat in a movie theater may be taken for granted today, but in 1960 lunch counter segregation epitomized the humiliation of blacks. Demonstrators carried signs that read, "We do not picket just because we want to eat. We can eat at home or walking down the street. We picket to protest the lack of dignity and respect shown us

as human beings." The sit-ins sparked a parallel movement against segregation in interstate transportation, the Freedom Rides, where interracial students traveled on interstate buses (Wexler, 1993:114).

Student protests were having an effect in breaking down segregation. Civil rights activities attracted the attention of the presidential campaigns of John Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Both candidates needed the Southern vote and were careful when dealing with civil rights issues, so the movement played a key role in the election. When Martin Luther King was placed in a Georgia jail, people from the Kennedy campaign influenced a Georgia judge from behind the scenes to release him. Taylor Branch (1988:374) points out how the news of King's release spread throughout the black community:

Far removed from these twin storms of political attention, beneath the notice of campaign professionals, the Kennedy campaign's "blue bomb" was spreading through the Negro culture by means of the most effective private communications medium since the Underground Railroad—the church. Nearly two million copies were being shipped by bus, train, and airplane—duplicated and bundled, picked up and unbundled, praised from ten thousand pulpits and handed out.

Kennedy went on to win the closest election in American history with the help of the black vote.

In spring 1961, student activism took form in Jackson, Mississippi, when black students from Tougaloo College held a sit-in at the segregated public library. A few days later sympathetic white students joined them in a protest march. This example of local activism demonstrates the indigenous character of the civil rights struggle. Taylor Branch (1988:485) describes the building of a social movement:

From the Montgomery bus boycott to the confrontations of the sit-ins, then on to the Rock Hill jail-in and now to the mass assault on the Mississippi prisons, there was a "movement" in both senses of the word—a moving spiritual experience, and a steady expansion of scope. The theater was spreading through the entire South. One isolated battle had given way to many scattered ones, and now in the Mississippi jails they were moving from similar experiences to a common experience.

Freedom Rides

Late in 1960, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Boynton v. Virginia*, extended its prohibition against segregation on buses and trains to terminals. Early in 1961 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) planned to have black and white "freedom riders" ride through the South and challenge interstate transportation segregation. James Farmer, the national director of CORE, modeled the Freedom Rides after the little-publicized 1947 "Journey of Reconciliation," when integrated CORE volunteers defied segregation in the upper Southern states. Since federal law was on their side, the 1961 CORE plan was to get arrested, stay in jail ("jail-no-bail"), attract national publicity, and then get the Justice Department to enforce the law.

Howell Raines's "Freedom Riders" (Reading 4.2) illustrates James Farmer's strategy for CORE to force the South to comply with federal interstate transportation law. In that reading, fellow rider John Lewis describes his experiences of being beaten and put in jail in Birmingham and Montgomery. The attorney general of Alabama obtained an injunction saying that it was unlawful for interracial groups to travel in that state. Both Alabama and Mississippi, defying federal law, imposed old state segregation statutes, so that traveling through those states carried the risk of violence and death. The riders' fear was heightened when a Freedom Riders' bus was firebombed outside Anniston, Alabama, and the rides almost ended after a mob attacked a bus arriving in Birmingham. However, a group of students mostly from the Nashville sit-ins, in the face of increasing threats of violence, pressed on to Jackson, Mississippi, where over 300 were arrested. Finally, in late September 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) issued regulations banning all segregated seating in interstate vehicles and terminals.

Mass Demonstrations, Albany, Georgia (1961–62)

The southwestern Georgia town of Albany was a segregationist stronghold. SNCC, under direction of field secretary Charles Sherrod, came to help the black community organize against segregation and formed the Albany Movement, an umbrella organization that coordinated all the civil rights groups in the community. The Albany Movement involved mass demonstrations whose participants for the first time included untrained protesters and even mothers and children. The fervor of freedom songs was important to the demonstrators in Albany, as they were to the entire movement, providing unity and popular appeal. Martin Luther King, who initially was not involved in the desegregation effort in Albany, was eventually invited to speak there. The presence of King and SCLC offended members of SNCC who had begun to view King's strategies as too slow and conciliatory. Media attention centered on King and the tactics of Albany's police chief, Laurie Prichett. Prichett planned to defeat the "jail-no-bail" strategy of the Albany Movement. Having read King's *Stride toward Freedom*, he tried to restrain the police from being violent even while they arrested the civil rights demonstrators. Prichett was successful. In July, King and SCLC's Ralph Abernathy were jailed. For the federal government, however, King in jail meant bad publicity, and bail for his release was paid anonymously. Later that month, a federal judge issued a restraining order to end the nine-month civil rights demonstration, but one week later, an appeals judge set aside the injunction.

When the opportunity arose, the federal government did not enforce the ICC desegregation ruling. Tensions between SNCC and King began to surface. Dubbing King "de Lawd," SNCC activists viewed him as an uninvited guest. The initial squabbling between SNCC, SCLC, and local civil rights organizations came to the attention of the city commissioners who played on the division and made a deal with local black organizations to desegregate the train and bus terminals if the demonstrations were stopped. King left Albany in August, and the Albany Movement continued to mobilize an entire community without him. Adam Fairclough, in "Confrontation: Albany and Birmingham" (Reading 4.3), depicts the failure of Albany and the success of Birmingham's "Project C" confrontation.

Mass Demonstrations, Birmingham, Alabama (1963)

Pat Watters, a white Southern reporter who was drawn into the movement after hearing the freedom riders singing on a passing bus, wrote (1993:233):

"There wasn't any real strategy in Albany," Andy Young recalled in 1970. "I remember being around and not knowing what to do . . . We didn't know then how to mobilize people in masses. We learned in Albany. We put together the team of SCLC staff people there that later won the victories. They hadn't even known each other before . . . There's always tension between the analytical and the religious in these circumstances. But they came together in Birmingham."

Hardened by defeat, King decided to explode the political equivalent of a bomb under the federal government. At the invitation of the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, he went to Birmingham, Alabama (Fairclough, 1990:71). Fairclough points out that in 1963, Birmingham exemplified all that was extreme, vicious, and violent in Southern racism. The segregated city was rife with political conflict, and two city governments—one headed by Eugene "Bull" Connor and the other by a newly elected mayor—made the city vulnerable. Despite public opinion urging black leaders to hold off in their actions and demands, the protests as planned in Project C started.

The civil rights demonstrations, including economic boycotts, affected businesses. The federal government thought the protests were ill timed, and there was pressure on SCLC to call off demonstrations and get out of town. SCLC, however, decided to stay on and push for its demands that Birmingham desegregate. Black school children volunteered and generated the movement's creative tension to push the white power structure into negotiations on racial discrimination (Eskew, 1997:337). This strategy was employed because adults, who were connected to the system, risked their jobs and housing by participating in the protests. Hundreds of children were arrested, and on a Friday when one thousand children lined up to march, Connor brought out dogs and fire hoses.

Live coverage of police dogs and fire hoses turned on black children shocked the nation. These photos provided a lasting image of brutality in Birmingham, and the *New York Times* headlines of May 13 read "U.S. Sends Troops into Alabama after Riots Sweep Birmingham; Kennedy Alerts State's Guard." The American public was witness to the serious gap between equality and discrimination, and Birmingham business leaders, who disapproved of the confrontational police tactics, agreed to desegregate lunch counters and to hire black workers. This outraged the white community. At a night rally, one thousand white-robed Ku Klux Klansmen denounced the businessmen's agreement, and the hotel where King stayed was bombed, leading to a riot. Soon Kennedy sent in federal troops. The agreement was eventually implemented, but more bombings would occur in Birmingham. Most tragically, in September 1963, Klansmen bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four little black girls and wounding many more people. In the weeks preceding the blast, Governor George Wallace encouraged massive white resistance against desegregation and the same month made his stand at the schoolhouse door to prevent the integration of the University of Alabama.

Birmingham became a symbol of victory and success for the national civil rights movement. The vicious tactics of Bull Connor against demonstrators, especially children, provoked national outrage. Indeed, this contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The wheels of change, beginning with the New Deal and continuing through the *Brown* decision, found triumph in the act. Birmingham desegregated, and the movement achieved its goals of gaining access to public accommodations and equal employment opportunities. Later, with the implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Birmingham's black population was registered. In essence, the demonstrations brought Birmingham to the nation's attention and forced a resolution of racial issues (Eskew, 1977:338). During the Birmingham demonstrations, King was arrested and placed in solitary confinement. It was during this time that he composed the famous "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." Considered by some the moral high-point of the movement, the letter from prison marked a turning point in his life as a leader. He rebounded from failure in Albany to emerge as the national leader of the civil rights movement.

Mass March on Washington

King's leadership, symbolic or real, was further established with the mass March on Washington. Against the wishes of the Kennedy administration, black leaders A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin planned a "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." On August 28, 1963, the day after the death of W. E. B. Du Bois, over 200,000 demonstrated in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Keith Miller and Emily Lewis, in "Touchstones, Authorities and Marion Anderson: The Making of 'I Have a Dream,'" (Reading 4.5), trace the construction of King's historic speech, comparing the "Dream" speech to "The Negro and the Constitution," one that he gave in 1944 as a 15-year-old boy. In that early speech, King gave tribute to Marion Anderson and her 1939 Easter Sunday performance in front of the Lincoln Memorial where the NAACP head, Walter White, arranged for her to perform after Anderson had been prevented from singing at Constitution Hall. The similarities between the speeches are striking. King's "I Have A Dream" speech, with its emotional, moral tone, was visionary in that he spoke about freedom for all Americans. It projected hope and optimism. Though the effects of the historic March are difficult to measure, the event projected civil rights into American mainstream politics. King had the ability to arouse the human spirit and burden the consciences of white liberals. Clearly, he was becoming a national figure.

One of the March organizers, Bayard Rustin, saw the 1964 presidential election as a key point in the political future of civil rights. Rustin's platform for the future, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement" (Reading 4.6), urged blacks to engage in coalition politics within the Democratic Party. For him, political coalitions were inescapable.

One year later the most comprehensive civil rights legislation to date was passed by Congress. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination in public accommodations and provided for equal employment opportunity by declaring discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin an unlawful practice. In terms of voting, it banned the use of literacy tests as a requirement for voting, unless written tests were given to everyone. In effect,

the act abolished legal segregation and guaranteed a more favorable climate for civil rights legislation in the future.

Voter Registration and Freedom Summer

In the early 1960s SNCC began a voter registration project in Mississippi. Led by Robert Moses, young SNCC workers worked with the rural black community toward getting voters registered. This "direct action" method used by SNCC challenged the older, more established NAACP legal method of fighting segregation. The NAACP field secretary, Medgar Evers, tried to get SNCC, NAACP, CORE, and SCLC to work together. In an effort to focus on politics, especially registration of voters, an umbrella organization was formed, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO).

Following the assassination of Evers in June 1963, plans were made to bring hundreds of college students to Mississippi to register black voters for a real election, the 1964 presidential election. Bloom (1987:172-3) writes:

The movement of the early sixties passed largely into the hands of the newly mobilized students. Virtually all of these were middle-class. They did not necessarily come from the middle class; few did. But that they or their parents could provide the money necessary to put them through college was an important marker; and once through college, most were bound for a middle-class existence. Yet, they were faced with indignities that were incongruous with the status they expected in life. There was, moreover, in that, with the rigid structure of segregation and second-class citizenship, there were not sufficient opportunities to accommodate the expansion of this stratum. Unless these youth broke through the system, perhaps most, of them would be forever frustrated.

The student project run by SNCC, known as Freedom Summer, was to register blacks systematically in order to form the Freedom Democratic Party that would challenge the white-only Mississippi Democratic Party. The SNCC strategy was to bring whites to Mississippi for summer voter registration. Student volunteers were recruited from black colleges in the South as well as from Ivy League colleges in the Northeast and large universities in the Midwest. During the first week of the project, tragedy struck. Three civil rights workers, two white and one black, disappeared. Their bodies were eventually found buried on a farm near Philadelphia, Mississippi. A local policeman and Klansmen had shot them. The bodies were discovered in early August, three weeks before the Democratic Party National Convention to be held in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Again, national press coverage highlighted the dramatic images of racial injustice in the South with its ugly violent overtones, this time in Mississippi. The sense of fear and gloom did not prevent Freedom Summer from forging ahead.

After registering nearly 60,000 blacks, COFO set up a new political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Its goal was to challenge the state Democratic Party's delegation with regard to the seating of the regular Mississippi delegates at the Democratic Convention. Capturing the attention of the country was the powerful testimony of a black sharecropper, Fannie Lou Hamer. She spoke passionately about racial injustice in Mississippi, posing the profoundly troubling question, *Is this America?* in front of a national television

audience. Despite her emotional and riveting appeal, President Johnson opposed the MFDP challenge, but he offered a compromise of two at-large seats to the MFDP instead of the number requested. The compromise contained a provision that in 1968 the National Democratic Party would refuse to seat any state delegation that practiced discrimination. Although some black leaders such as King and Roy Wilkins favored the compromise as a symbolic victory, the MFDP rejected it. Jaded but not defeated, the group returned to Mississippi.

Freedom Summer was important because it led to the creation of the MFDP. The civil rights movement reached a new level of success in voter registration. But the political maneuverings of the Democrats in Atlantic City alienated many in SNCC, some of whom moved in a radical direction that would become identified with black power. Many other Freedom Summer volunteers became activists for free speech, the women's movement, and demonstrated against the Vietnam War. In 1968, the MFDP was seated at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago with Fannie Lou Hamer as a delegate.

Selma and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

The civil rights movement achieved international recognition when Martin Luther King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, in 1964. Shortly after that, King spoke to blacks in Selma, Alabama, about using their right to vote to send representatives to the statehouse who would uphold equal justice for all, replacing those who stood in the doorways of universities to keep people out. In 1963 George Wallace personified Southern resistance. His schoolhouse stand to prevent blacks from enrolling and his slogan "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever" appealed to the Southern white uneasiness with civil rights. The Wallace appeal was especially dangerous to the movement because it sent a message to violent groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, that they had the support of Alabama's state government. The media captured the contrast between Nobel Peace prizewinner King and the sharp resistant tone of Wallace.

More than half of Dallas County, Alabama, where Selma is located, was black but less than one percent of the black citizens were registered to vote. For over a year, SNCC had worked unsuccessfully to register black voters. Selma's Sheriff James Clark had a history of resisting integration efforts by intimidation and harassment tactics. In 1963 he allowed whites to attack blacks trying to integrate lunch counters. Then he arrested the demonstrators for trespassing. In January 1965, SCLC began a campaign of daily marches to the courthouse. When one of the demonstrators, Amelia Boynton, chose not to move from the courthouse although ordered to do so by Sheriff Clark, he grabbed her by the coat and shoved her. The next morning newspapers around the country carried photographs of Clark's strong-arm tactics. Later that week, one hundred of Selma's black, middle-class teachers marched in protest of Boynton's treatment and arrest. Risking their jobs, the courageous Selma teachers' march inspired reluctant blacks to join the demonstrations and encouraged others to join the effort to register to vote. The following Monday, hundreds of demonstrators, including King, were arrested. The media covered the events, and President Johnson called a nationally televised press conference proclaiming that all Americans have the right to vote.

Police brutality in the nearby town of Marion became front-page news. State troopers and local police along with other angry whites attacked blacks leaving a church after a rally. Dozens were beaten and two blacks were killed.

Frustrated in their attempts to register voters, SCLC leader James Bevel proposed a march to Montgomery, the state capital, to make their case directly to Wallace. The 50-mile march along Route 80 to Montgomery was to take place on Sunday, March 7, now known as Bloody Sunday. Governor George Wallace signed an order to prevent the march and Alabama state troopers attacked the peaceful marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Networks interrupted their regular programming to broadcast vivid, live footage to millions of Americans. So shocking was the sight of troopers beating civilians that the national public became enraged. Later that week another attempt at a march, this time led by King, was turned around by King to avoid another violent conflict. Pressure continued to mount when a sympathetic white Unitarian minister, James Reeb, was beaten to death.

Federal Judge Frank Johnson ruled that SCLC had a legal and constitutional right to march from Selma to Montgomery. In response Governor Wallace announced that the state of Alabama could not protect the marchers or guarantee their safety. Asserting his support, President Johnson federalized the Alabama National Guard and sent FBI agents, federal troops, and federal marshals to protect the marchers. Finally, the march began on Sunday, March 21. National television recorded the drama. For the next five days the Selma-to-Montgomery march was front-page news in the United States and the world. (The photograph on the cover of this book is of the marchers along Route 80 walking to Montgomery.) The media captured the incredible symbolism of the end of the march: civil rights marchers carrying American flags arriving at the state capital with its Confederate flag flying overhead.

The night the march ended, Viola Liuzzo, a white housewife from Michigan, attempted to drive black marchers back to Selma. The Ku Klux Klan shot her dead. Once again, the nation was shocked and more insistent that Congress pass the Voting Rights Act.

After passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, President Lyndon Johnson continued to support civil rights by calling for the passage of new federal legislation to secure the voting rights of blacks. In the wake of the brutal events of Selma in 1965 Johnson pleaded with the nation for voting rights for blacks and an end to racism. Seen and heard by approximately 70 million Americans, Johnson's speech (Reading 4.7) adopted the civil rights slogan, "We shall overcome." Soon afterwards The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed. The act, which closed loopholes in the 1964 measure, abolished all remaining deterrents to exercising the right to vote. Further, it authorized federal supervision of voter registration where necessary. By taking registration out of the hands of local segregationists and putting it in the hands of federal officials, Johnson was able to ensure that blacks would be able to register to vote. This was a major victory for the movement. Racial justice was now a national priority, supported by the majority of Americans both black and white and backed by the federal government. Johnson called the act "one of the most monumental laws in the entire history of American freedom" when he signed it into law in August 1965.

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When a Trailways bus carrying the Freedom Riders arrived in Birmingham on Mother's Day in 1961, local thugs beat some riders. There was no local police protection. Birmingham's police commissioner, "Bull" Connor, told the local Ku Klux Klan that he would allow them about 15 minutes to attack the riders, and Alabama governor John Patterson advised the Freedom Riders to leave the state as quickly as possible. This incident was typical of the reaction to civil rights activities, where incidents of violence along with clever local political and legal maneuvering worked hand in hand to maintain segregation. Governor George Wallace continued this tradition of Southern racism by promoting resistance to change. Between 1963 and 1966, 12 people died in his state in civil rights slayings. Wallace went on to run for president in 1968 advocating, "states' rights," a code phrase for segregation.

In 1962, when James Meredith tried to integrate the University of Mississippi at Oxford, riots and opposition protests broke out. Southern resistance was quelled by the use of federal troops, a practice that became a common formula for civil rights activities in the South. The resistance to desegregation was widespread and often included local political and police authorities. The Ku Klux Klan was on the rise and White Citizens Councils planned resistance to desegregation.

Opposition to the movement was not limited to politics and people in the South. Douglas Blackmon, in "Silent Partner: How the South's Fight to Uphold Segregation Was Funded Up North" (Reading 4.8), demonstrates the financial path used by a New York millionaire, Wickliffe Preston Draper, to contribute large sums of money to the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, an agency created to fight the civil rights movement. The 1964 Republican presidential candidate, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, claimed to be in favor of civil rights but in the Senate he voted against the Civil Rights Act. Although he did not hold public office at the time, Ronald Reagan was opposed to both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Conclusion

Student activism of the early sixties energized and propelled the civil rights movement. Coalitions of civil rights organizations worked toward the common goal of desegregation whether the objective was voter registration or equal access to public facilities. Indeed, there was conflict between SNCC and the other, older rights organizations. Despite the SNCC belief that, "if we leave it to the adults, nothing will happen," the black community supported the students. SNCC worked to pressure mainstream Democratic Party politics in Mississippi, establishing a political party. SNCC volunteers labored in Selma to register blacks to vote before SCLC and other groups became involved. The march from Selma to Montgomery became a symbol of a successful civil rights campaign. It reflected the triumphs of the decade, especially the right to vote and access to public facilities. The coalition, which carried the movement through those years of change (1960–65), did not, however, last.

Often lost in the dramatic details of events and activities captured by the media is the long perspective or a more comprehensive analysis of movement. Constitutional giants like Thurgood Marshall (Reading 2.5) and Charles Hamilton

Houston (Reading 2.4), who established the NAACP legal program, created the legal means for change. A. Philip Randolph (Reading 1.5), the acknowledged "dean" of the movement, convinced Franklin Roosevelt to create the Fair Employment Practice Commission in 1941. The critical role of women in the black Baptist church (Reading 2.2) is sometimes lost in the media preoccupation with black "leaders." Finally, with the focus of study on key civil rights sites there is a tendency to overlook the struggle of hundreds of local civil rights groups contributing out of the limelight to the same goal of equality. The resulting broad-based support to ensure constitutional rights made the civil rights movement successful in the early years of the sixties.

Key Terms, Figures, and Concepts

Albany Movement
Marian Anderson
direct action
freedom riders
McCarthyism

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
(MFDP)
Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission
The Pioneer Fund
sit-in
Voting Rights Act of 1965

Important Questions to Consider

1. Was integration sufficient to deal with the problems of segregation faced by blacks? What other social issues were parts of the struggle for civil rights?
2. How was the strategy to integrate interstate bus transportation different from prior integration strategy?
3. What were the factors that enabled Martin Luther King and Project C to be successful in Birmingham in 1963? How and why did riots take place?
4. Explore the issue of nonviolence in Albany, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama.
5. What roles did white supporters play during the sit-ins, freedom rides, and voter registration drives?