

The status of the black population

The US Constitution supported equality, but racial inequality was rampant.

Most blacks were unskilled labourers. Had worse jobs, houses, were poorer.

Segregation:

Jim Crow laws were passed in most southern states.

Enforced segregation, banned intermarriage.

The case Plessy v. Ferguson ruled that segregation was legal as long as the facilities provided for each race were of equal standard.

Poll tax had to be paid to vote – most blacks couldn't afford it. There was a literacy test before voting, and blacks were often given more difficult tests than whites.

Ku Klux Klan terrorised blacks and intimidated whites who tried to help.

More than 100 lynchings a year were reported in the 1880s.

It was founded in 1886, died out, but resurfaced during civil rights movement.

World War II

Nearly 1 million blacks served in the army, in segregated units with white officers.

The need for military efficiency led to changes.

Following black protests against discrimination, Fair Employment Practice Committee was set up.

As numbers needed in the army grew, southern blacks were employed in northern states – this led to mass emigration, housing problems, and tension between blacks and whites.

The war highlighted blacks' place as second class citizens. They began to seek change.

Post-war social and economic changes

Massive movement of blacks to urban areas, which made it easier to organise and address discrimination.

Economic boom: blacks got jobs and better wages.

Improvements in roads and communications: ended isolation of the south.

Growth of suburbs: Whites moved to suburbs, black ghettos emerged with over-crowding and poor housing.

Better educational opportunities: Educated black leadership emerged.

Development of mass media: Exposed racial discrimination.

The Cold War highlighted hypocrisy of the US – they accused communist governments of denying human rights while they had racial inequality at home.

Desegregation

Truman desegregated the army. He tried to do more, but was blocked by southern opposition. Eisenhower completed this process.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was set up.

It worked through the courts to fight racial discrimination.

It appealed to the Supreme Court that segregated education was unconstitutional (by Plessy v. Ferguson) because black and white schools were not equal.

Linda Brown's father and the NAACP appealed against the Topeka Board of Education because Linda was forced to attend an under-funded black school rather than a white one.

Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka thus got segregation in education banned - however, it was left to lower courts to enforce it.

It was involved in Montgomery bus boycott.

The process of integration.

Southern congressmen and senators signed a 'southern manifesto' condemning Brown decision, Governor of Virginia stopped aid to schools planning to desegregate, etc.

Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock, Arkansas when the governor tried to prevent black students from attending a white school.

James Meredith tried to enrol in University of Mississippi. Governor and mobs tried to stop him. NAACP brought it to court, won. Kennedy sent troops to enforce it, but riots broke out – 2 dead and 375 injured.

Bussing was brought in – bringing black students to suburban schools, and white students to ghetto schools.

It was unpopular, and was eventually stopped.

Public facilities:

Montgomery Bus Boycott set off black activism.

4 black students sat at a white-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. They were not served, and they began a 'sit-in' (refused to leave).

Other students copied them all over the south.

These campaigns succeeded.

Freedom Riders travelled around the south to test the ban on segregation. They were assaulted and intimidated by whites. The Justice Department sent in federal marshals to escort them.

Voting:

Poll tax, literacy test, economic pressure by employers were used to stop blacks voting.

Martin Luther King organised peaceful protests throughout the south. Whites liked him, as the non-violence was safe.

They marched through Birmingham, Alabama, and many were arrested (incl. King).

In jail, King wrote his 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', a very influential document.

Children then marched in protest – they were arrested.

Later, waterhoses, electric cattle prods and dogs were used against the protestors. The events were broadcast, gaining support for King.

Kennedy brought in a Civil Rights Bill banning discrimination and extending voting rights for blacks, but it was delayed by Congress.

King organised a rally in Washington DC to show support for the bill. Over 200 000 people showed up. This was when he gave his 'I Have a Dream' speech.

This succeeded in getting the bill passed by LBJ in 1964, despite Kennedy's worries that it would exacerbate the situation.

An amendment to the Constitution was passed, banning non-payment of poll tax as a method of blocking people from voting.

These reforms drew hostility – KKK burning churches, Governor of Alabama trying to stop blacks from registering, murders of civil rights workers. King held a protest – police used tear gas and clubs against them, which drew more support for King.

Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which gave full voting rights to blacks.

The rise of black militancy

People saw the reforms as too little, too late. Discrimination still existed although there was no longer a legal basis. They rejected King's campaign.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was openly critical of interracial cooperation and thought there was no room for white involvement – 'Black Power' became their slogan.

The Black Panthers was set up – a paramilitary group which collected weapons.

Black Muslims called Christianity a slave religion and proclaimed black superiority.

Cassius Clay joined, changing his name to Muhammad Ali.

Malcolm X was the leader, very popular, but he was assassinated and became a martyr.

Racial violence:

Small-scale riots in Harlem, New York in 1964.

After Civil Rights Bill was signed in 1965, huge riots broke out in Watts, Los Angeles. 28 blacks were killed, \$30 million in damage to property.

King was shocked and moved to Chicago to focus on northern ghettos.

In 1966 and 1967, there was more rioting in New York, Detroit, Chicago, and other cities.

Moderate black leaders condemned violence, many whites saw it as envy of white prosperity.

When King was assassinated, many riots broke out.

Post-militancy:

Many positive changes: new black middle class, more blacks in university, black vote was important. But some things stayed bad: still on average poorer, higher unemployment rates.

Affirmative action was called for, and Nixon introduced quotas for blacks in companies with government contracts. This was helpful, but then Supreme Court restricted it.

Nixon tried to cut welfare, he shifted responsibility for social issues onto state and local authorities. He appointed a conservative Chief Justice. Reagan cut welfare more, forcing blacks further into poverty.

Results of racial conflict

The violence and rejection of cooperation turned many whites against civil reforms.

Other racial and minority groups and women began to demonstrate.

Black nationalism influenced other ethnic groups to take pride in their culture.

It also led to an increase in pride for being black.

Focus of racism moved from south to north.

Brutality of police turned blacks and whites against the police. America's image suffered.

