



Glossary of terms / Key Historical Figures

Glossary of terms

CORE

Congress of Racial Equality

Constitution

The U.S. Constitution established America's national government and fundamental laws, and guaranteed certain basic rights for its citizens. It was signed on September 17, 1787, by delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, presided over by George Washington.

Jim Crow Laws

After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, legislation was passed to end slavery. For the first time since their transportation to the nation, black Americans were legally free. Most white people in the South, however, believed that blacks were inferior in every way and that politically, socially, and economically, black Americans were second-class citizens and needed to be kept in their place.

As Slavery was far more prevalent in the South – mainly due to the “one crop economy” and the need for free labour in the cotton fields – post-slavery integration was far more problematic in the Southern states. The discrimination towards black people was not only common place, it was legal. States such as Alabama introduced a series of laws to keep the races separated and the black population under control.

These measures were nicknamed the 'Jim Crow' laws, after a fictional character in the popular minstrel shows that made fun of black people. These laws enforced the strict segregation of the races and rigidly maintained the inferior status of black citizens. Typical laws included:

- Public transport waiting rooms were strictly segregated.
- Places open to the public such as shops, hotels, cinemas, theatres and libraries had to provide separate rooms and facilities for the different races.
- Legally, black children could be educated in separate schools, so long as the schooling was of an equal educational standard. In reality, schools for black Americans were far from equal, and the quality of education provided was inferior. In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld that this policy was legal and fair.
- In most of the Southern states, inter-marriage between blacks and whites was illegal.
- In employment, blacks received lower pay than whites and they were restricted to work of lower status, such as janitors, cleaners, and porters.
- Southern towns were strictly segregated into black and white residential areas.

Ku Klux Klan

Founded in 1866, the Ku Klux Klan extended into almost every southern state by 1870 and became a vehicle for white southern resistance to the Republican Party's Reconstruction-era policies, aimed at establishing political and economic equality for blacks.

Passive Resistance

Commonly refers to actions of nonviolent protest or resistance to authority. The central feature is the choice to abstain from a violent response in the face of violent aggression.

Segregation

Separation of humans into racial groups in daily life. It may apply to activities such as eating in a restaurant, drinking from a water fountain, using a public toilet, attending school, going to the movies, riding on a bus, or in the rental or purchase of a home.

Key Historical Figures

Bull Connor

Theophilus Eugene Connor, known as Bull Connor (July 11, 1897 – March 10, 1973), served as a Commissioner of Public Safety for the city of Birmingham, Alabama, during the American Civil Rights Movement.

James Farmer, Jr.

James Farmer (January 12, 1920 – July 9, 1999) was a civil rights activist and leader in the American Civil Rights Movement. He was the initiator and organizer of the 1961 Freedom Ride, which eventually led to the desegregation of inter-state transportation in the United States. In 1942, Farmer co-founded the Committee of Racial Equality in Chicago, which was later renamed

CORE – the Congress of Racial Equality. Farmer served as the national chairman from 1942 to 1944.

John F Kennedy

John F Kennedy (May 29, 1917 – November 22, 1963), commonly known as Jack Kennedy or by his initials JFK, was an American politician who served as the 35th President of the US from January 1961 until his assassination in November 1963. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, developments in the Space Race, the building of the Berlin Wall and the Civil Rights Movement, and all took place during his presidency.

Robert F Kennedy

Robert Francis "Bobby" Kennedy (November 20, 1925 – June 6, 1968) was an American politician from Massachusetts. He served as a Senator for New York from 1965 until his assassination in 1968. He was previously the 64th U.S. Attorney General from 1961 to 1964, serving under his older brother, President John F. Kennedy and his successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968), was an American Baptist minister, activist, humanitarian, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs.

Diane Nash

Diane Judith Nash (born May 15, 1938) is an American retired civil rights activist, and a leader and strategist of the student wing of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Nash's campaigns were among the most successful of the era. Her efforts included the first successful civil rights campaign to integrate lunch counters (Nashville) and the Freedom Riders.

Governor Patterson

John Malcolm Patterson (born September 27, 1921) is a retired American politician who was the 44th Governor of the U.S. state of Alabama, having served a single term from 1959 to 1963. Previously, from 1955 to 1959, he was his state's attorney general.

Jim Peck

Jim Peck (December 19, 1914 – July 12, 1993) was an American activist who practiced nonviolent resistance during World War II and in the Civil Rights movement. In 1946 – after the war - he joined the Congress of Racial Equality. He is the only person who participated in both the Journey of Reconciliation (1947) and the first Freedom Ride of 1961 and has been called a white civil rights hero.