Demands for Civil Rights

Chapter 21, Section 1

Setting the Scene

August 1945, Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers asked Jackie Robinson to join his team.

Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play in Major League Baseball.

He played for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Robinson paved the way for other African Americans to follow him into professional sports.

Jim Crow must go!

“Jim Crow must go! A cry of the American Negro for justice and freedom.”

• After WWII, millions of people in the US believed the time had come to demand all be treated equally.
  – Aided by:
    • African American migration to the cities
    • WWII
    • NAACP
• During the 1950’s African Americans began to fight against Jim Crow laws in an organized manner.
The Rise of African American Influence

The NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, worked to challenge segregation laws.

NAACP's greatest assets were its legal team.

Lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall and Oliver Hill fought segregation in the courts.

Oliver Hill's team of lawyer's won more than $50 million in higher pay and better educational facilities for black students and teachers.

Yet, schools were still separate until...

Brown v. Board of Education

In 1951, Oliver Brown sued the Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education to allow his daughter to attend a nearby school that was for "whites only.

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court declared the "separate but equal" doctrine was unconstitutional and could not be applied to public education.

In 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the decision of the unanimous Court:

"We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does... We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the decision of the unanimous Court.

This was a major victory for Civil Rights.

African Americans and many white Americans supported the ruling.

The decision was strongly resisted in the South.

Many in the South reacted with fear and angry resistance.

The Ku Klux Klan became more active threatening those who spoke in favor of the Brown decision.

More than 90 members of Congress expressed their opposition in the Southern Manifesto.

Congress felt the Supreme Court had overstepped their bounds.

They felt there was "no legal basis for the action.

They felt that desegregation would lead to violence and chaos in several southern states.

Reaction to Brown v. Board of Education

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- They felt that desegregation would lead to violence and chaos in several southern states.
In 1957, nine black students met intense opposition when they tried to enroll at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Outside the school, mobs of angry protesters gathered to prevent the entry of the black students. Students were yelled at, spit on, pushed, and threatened. President Eisenhower called in over 10,000 national guardsmen to escort and protect the students. The students became an inspiration to others. Desegregation slowly spread throughout the south.

In 1955, Rosa Parks and the city of Montgomery, Alabama were the center of the nation’s attention. In December, Rosa Parks took an empty seat in the middle of the bus. However, she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. She was arrested and tried for violating the segregation laws. Boycott was led by JoAnn Robinson, head of the Women’s Political Council, printed leaflets and circulated them throughout Montgomery’s black community calling for a boycott. The plan called for African-Americans to refuse to use the entire bus system until the bus company agreed to change its segregation policy. In 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation, like school segregation, was unconstitutional.

This is when you might want to read the small print!