

MLK DAY

Freedom's Feast **MLK DAY**

On-line resources to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday Celebrations.

Martin Luther King Timeline 1951-1968

Highlighting the Role of Children & Young Adults in the Civil Rights Movement

1951

16-year old [Barbara Johns](#), tired of her tar paper shack school, organizes a campaign for the integration of Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia and convinces NAACP lawyers to take her case to the courts.

1954

[Brown v. Board of Education](#) combines the cases of Johns and nearly 200 other children and their families. The Supreme Court decision abolishes racial segregation in public schools.

1955

In August, [Emmett Till](#), a 14-year-old teenager from Chicago, is brutally lynched by two white men in Mississippi because he whistles at the wife of one of the men. His mother chooses an open casket funeral, explaining: "The murder of my son has shown me that what happens to any of us, anywhere in the world, had better be the business of us all."

In December, [Rosa Parks](#) refuses to give up her seat at the front of the "colored" section of a municipal bus to a white male passenger. Her arrest sparks a 381-day Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott championed by a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. The city's buses are desegregated on December 21, 1956.

1957

In early September, Governor Orval Faubus orders state police to block nine black students from entering the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas during the first day of school. President Eisenhower calls out federal troops to intervene on behalf of the students, who become known as the "Little Rock Nine." Despite continuous verbal threats and physical abuse by white students, all members of the [Little Rock Nine](#) graduate from Central High School at the end of the academic year.

1960

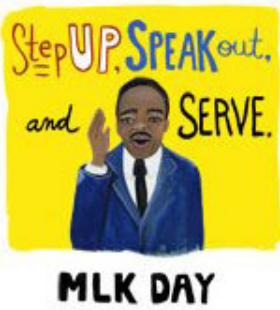
In February, four black college students hold a sit-in to integrate a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., launching a series of youth-sponsored counter [sit-ins](#) throughout the South.

These sons and daughters of share-croppers, school teachers, preachers, and small business owners no longer wanted to wait to sit at a counter to eat like anyone else. Though segregationists abuse them they succeed in getting some counters integrated.

In November, six year-old [Ruby Bridges](#), the first student to integrate the New Orleans schools, arrives at William Frantz Elementary School, escorted by federal marshals. She courageously marches past jeering adults to an empty classroom, day after day, for one whole year.

1961

A group of black and white student volunteers called the [Freedom Riders](#) begins to ride interstate buses into the segregated South, to integrate public transportation. John Lewis, one of the young leaders who later becomes a US congressman says, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when? Will there be a better day for it tomorrow or next year? Will it be less dangerous then? Will someone else's children have to risk their lives instead of us risking ours?"



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1963

On May 2, Eugene "Bull" Connor, the [Birmingham](#), Alabama Commissioner of Public Safety, and his men arrest and jail over 900 black children ages 6 to 18. The next day, another 1,000 gather and begin to march. Connor turns fire hoses on them and calls out police attack dogs. Blasts of water slam children up against buildings or throw them to the ground. Three teenagers go to the hospital with bite wounds. The nation is horrified as the major networks broadcast the images.

On August 28, over 250,000 people (instead of the 100,000 expected) gather on the national mall for the [March on Washington](#). King electrifies the crowd with his dream of the future: "[I have a dream](#) that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character..."

Not all Americans embrace his vision. Eighteen days later, four young girls are murdered in the Sunday morning firebombing of [The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church](#) in Birmingham. A local Klanswoman declares: "[They] weren't children. Children are little people, little human beings and that means white people." Riots in Birmingham result in the death of two more black youth.

America is watching it all on their televisions.

1964

On July 2, the [Civil Rights Act](#) passes. A little more than 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation outlaws slavery, businesses and public facilities are now open to African Americans who can no longer be denied a job because of race. Many unjust laws are instantly struck down.

Martin Luther King is awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#).

1965

Five hundred African American children march in Selma, Alabama in 1965 for a federal law to assure their 15th amendment right to vote. Jimmy Lee Jackson is shot to death while trying to protect his mother and grandfather during a demonstration and an integrated group of 600 men, women and children begin a 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery. State troopers on horseback meet them within 6 blocks and attack them with clubs, whips and tear gas. The Pettus Bridge "[Bloody Sunday](#)" assault is broadcast on national TV.

On August 6, the [President Lyndon B. Johnson](#) signs the [Voting Rights Act](#), outlawing practices used in the South to disenfranchise black voters.

1968

Martin Luther King is [assassinated](#). Dr. King believes that each day matters when we have big dreams. Only 39 when he is killed, the civil rights movement that he leads for 13 years transforms our nation.

Timeline Resources:

- <http://naacplegaldefensefund.org/landing/support/join-us.php?track=gcrht>
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/eyesontheprize-timeline-eyes-prize/>