

**Al – Quds University
Deanship of Graduate Studies**

**Changing Values & Attitudes Through Nonviolence:
"Case Study Martin Luther King"**

Abdul Hakim Odeh

M.A. Thesis

Jerusalem - Palestine

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"Case Study: Martin Luther King"**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for
the degree of Master of American Studies, Department of
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University.**

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Al-Quds University
Deanship of Graduate Studies
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Thesis Approval

Changing Values & Attitudes Through Nonviolence
"Case Study: Martin Luther King"

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Master thesis submitted and accepted, Date: June 13, 2006.

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| 2. Professor, Dr. Monique Taylor, Internal Examiner, | Signature: |
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Jerusalem - Palestine

1427 / 2006

Dedication

I dedicate this humble work of mine to my late father and my mother. As well as I dedicate it to my dear wife and children, whose understanding, support and continuous encouragement made this accomplishment possible.

Abdul Hakim Odeh.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

Signed:

Abdul Hakim Odeh

Date: June 13, 2006

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I pay special tribute to Professor, Dr. Monique Taylor, who provided me with support, assistance and encouragement from the beginning and who also assisted me in obtaining relevant books from the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem.

Abstract

The study tackles the modern black civil rights movement in the United States which took place between the early 1950s and late 1960s.

During that period African Americans were deprived from basic political and civil voting rights. They were racially segregated, politically disenfranchised and marginalized from an economic point view.

The study exhibits a detailed analysis of the nonviolent campaigns, marches, demonstrations being led by individual leaders like Martin Luther King and the organizations of the black civil rights movement, with the main goal of achieving social change.

These marches and campaigns were as follows: Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, the March on Washington in 1957, the Freedom Rides in 1961, the Freedom Project in 1962, the Birmingham Campaign in 1963, the March on Washington in 1963, St. Augustine Campaign in 1964 and Selma Campaign in 1965.

The justification for the eruption of the black civil rights movement is that the Declaration of Independence of 1776 declared that all people are born equal and stressed equality and human rights. The American principles of justice, liberty and equality were applied to the whites, while blacks were deprived from all rights. This appeared to be a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the American democracy.

Though slavery was abolished in 1865, but racial segregation remained legal until the 1960s and the increasing growth of racism and segregation against blacks, encouraged the creation of black civil rights organizations.

This research utilized a combination of methodological approach mainly internal historical methodology and the case study methodology.

Through the internal historical methodology I concentrated on the strategic events that attracted the attention of individuals and influenced their opinions, policies and strategies that they had followed during their struggle against discrimination and segregation.

From historical point view the black civil rights movement in 1960s had some external factors which helped it in achieving its goals: At the time the United States was in a conflict with the Communists. During that era the United States wanted to market the American way by making it more attractive to the outside world by implementing democracy, while the internal conflict was against its claim of democracy and thus contradicting its claim in the external conflict.

Therefore the external conflict with the Communists has paved the way for the eruption of the black civil rights movement.

The research took Martin Luther King as a case study in order to explain how he was able to convince the organizations of the civil rights movement to follow his nonviolent strategy.

The study concludes that during ten year period which extended from 1954 till 1965, the black civil rights movement, which had followed nonviolent direct action, managed to achieve social change and succeeded in breaking the back of racial segregation system and destroyed legal basis for denying blacks and other minorities' full access to education, employment, professions and opportunities of the private market place and public arena.

The strategy of nonviolent direct action proved to be the most effective generator of change and a very successful method, which enabled an oppressed people to fight their oppressors. Thus nonviolence represents a model to be followed by other oppressed groups through their struggle for freedom and equality.

It offered a unique weapon in which, without shooting a single bullet, the African Americans were able to disarm their opponents.

The study came out with the following recommendations: The American nonviolent struggle could be adopted by colonized people, such as the Palestinians in their struggle to gain their freedom and independence. It also recommended that the Palestinian Liberation Movement should be inspired by the black civil rights movement, and start thinking of establishing nonviolent liberation organizations. Also Palestinians should elect leaders for such organizations who believe in nonviolent struggles like that of Martin Luther King. In other words Palestinians need a Palestinian Martin Luther King.

ملخص

التغيير في الفكر والتوجه الاجتماعي الأمريكي بالاعنف، دراسة حالة مارتن لوثر

كنج.

تتناول الدراسة حركة الحقوق المدنية الحديثة للسود في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية للفترة الواقعة بين أوائل الخمسينات وأواخر الستينات من القرن العشرين، حيث أنه وخلال تلك الفترة كان الأمريكيان من أصل أفريقي محرومون من جميع حقوقهم الأساسية السياسية والمدنية، فقد كانوا يعانون من التمييز العنصري، الاضطهاد السياسي، كما أنهم كانوا مهمشين من الناحية الاقتصادية.

وتستعرض الدراسة بالتحليل المفصل مسيرات العصيان المدني السلمية التي قادها أفراد مثل مارتن لوثر كنج وكذلك منظمات الحقوق المدنية، والتي تمثلت بكونها بعيدة عن العنف، وكان هدفها الأساسي إحداث تغيير اجتماعي في المجتمع الأمريكي والحصول على الحقوق المدنية للمواطنين الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي. وقد ضمت تلك المسيرات ما يلي: مقاطعة حافلات النقل العام في مونتغمري عام 1955، مسيرة واشنطن الأولى عام 1957، مسيرات الحرية عام 1961، مشروع الحرية عام 1962، مسيرة بيرمنجهام عام 1963، مسيرة واشنطن الثانية عام 1963، مسيرة سانت اوغستين عام 1964 ومسيرة سلما عام 1965.

أما أهم المبررات الأساسية التي أدت إلى انطلاق حركة الحقوق المدنية للسود في أمريكا هي أن وثيقة إعلان الاستقلال الأمريكية التي صدرت عام 1776 نصت على أن جميع الناس ولدوا متساويين في الحقوق والواجبات، غير أن مبادئ العدل والحرية والمساواة في أمريكا كانت مطبقة على البيض فقط، في حين حرم السود من تلك الحقوق، وكان هذا في حد ذاته تناقض مع جوهر الديمقراطية التي تنادي بها أمريكا.

وعلى الرغم من إنهاء العبودية عام 1865 لكن التمييز العنصري ضد السود في أمريكا استمر حتى الستينات من القرن العشرين، مما حدا بالسود للعمل على تأسيس منظمات الحقوق المدنية للمطالبة بحقوقهم الأساسية كمواطنين من الدرجة الأولى.

فيما يتعلق بالمنهجية فان هذا البحث اتبع كلا من المنهجية التاريخية التحليلية للأحداث ومنهجية دراسة حالة مارتن لوثر كنج.

حيث أنه من خلال المنهجية التاريخية تم التركيز على الأحداث الإستراتيجية الداخلية التي عملت على جلب اهتمام الأفراد من القياديين وأثرت في أرائهم وسياساتهم التي اتبعوها لاحقاً في صراعهم ضد التمييز والفصل العنصري.

من وجهة النظر التاريخية فإن حركة الحقوق المدنية في أمريكا وفي فترة الستينات من القرن الماضي بالذات قد تأثرت بالأحداث الخارجية العالمية والتي ساعدت الحركة على تحقيق أهدافها، حيث إن تلك الفترة عاصرت صراع أمريكا ضد الشيوعية، فقد كانت أمريكا تحاول تسويق الديمقراطية الأمريكية على الصعيد الدولي، إلا أن الصراع الداخلي مع السود على حقوقهم كان يتنافى مع مبادئ الديمقراطية، لذا فإن الصراع مع الشيوعية قد مهد الطريق أمام الحركة وسهل عملية الوصول إلى أهدافها.

واعتمدت الدراسة دراسة حالة مارتن لوثر كنج من أجل شرح نجاعة سياسة اللاعنف التي آمن بها كنج والتي أصبحت فيما بعد الإستراتيجية الأساسية للحركة التي أوصلتها إلى أهدافها.

وخلصت الدراسة إلا أن حركة الحقوق المدنية والتي استمرت حوالي أكثر من عشر سنوات للفترة الواقعة بين 1954 و 1965 والتي اتبعت سياسة اللاعنف استطاعت إحداث تغيير اجتماعي والقضاء على نظام التمييز العنصري والعنصرية ضد السود والأقليات الأخرى في أمريكا، ومكنتهم من الحصول على حقوقهم الأساسية في التعليم، العمل والخدمات العامة الأخرى بالإضافة إلى حق الانتخاب.

كما أن الدراسة أثبتت أن سياسة اللاعنف هي الإستراتيجية الأكثر نجاعة لإحداث تغيير اجتماعي سياسي حيث أنها مكنت الجماعات المضطهدة من مواجهة مضطهديهم، وبينت كذلك بان تلك السياسة يمكن إتباعها من قبل الشعوب المضطهدة للحصول على حقوقهم، أنها أسلوب فريد مكنت السود في أمريكا من الحصول على حقوقهم دون إطلاق أية رصاصة.

وخرجت الدراسة بعدة توصيات أهمها: إن تجربة اللاعنف الأمريكية يمكن اعتمادها من قبل الشعوب المستعمرة، مثل الشعب الفلسطيني والذي يمكن أن ينتهجها في نضاله من أجل الحصول على حريته واستقلاله.

كما أوصت الدراسة بان تفكر منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية بتأسيس منظمة تحرير فلسطينية استراتيجيتها الأساسية هي النضال السلمي بعيداً عن العنف من أجل تحرير فلسطين، وكذلك أن يقوم الفلسطينيون باختيار قادة سياسيون يؤمنون بسياسة اللاعنف كما فعل مارتن لوثر كنج، بمعنى آخر فإننا في فلسطين بحاجة إلى مارتن لوثر كنج فلسطيني.

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Bibliography

- A. Books Sources
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Acronyms

ACMHR: Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.

BSCP: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

CIO: Congress of Industrial Organizations.

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality.

EEOC: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

FEPC: Fair Employment Practices Committee.

ICC: Interstate Commerce Commission.

MIA: Montgomery Improvement Association.

NCLC: Nashville Christian Leadership Council.

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

SCLC: Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

SNCC: Students Nonviolent Coordination Committee.

Definitions

Black Civil Rights Movement: The movement which erupted in the 1950's. It aimed at securing equal protection of the laws for blacks and minorities. Its main goal was creating new laws, for the purpose of outlawing discrimination. African Americans and their allies were seeking to end segregation and create the atmosphere for the beginning of full equal opportunity for colored people.

Brown v. Board of Education: The U. S. Supreme Court decision, issued on May 17, 1954. It desegregated the U.S. education system "public schools". It abolished the Separate but Equal doctrine which was established in 1896.

Civil Disobedience: Is the open public violation of a law or laws in the service of some moral or political goal. It is a logical extension of the belief that since social change is desirable and since the states functions to uphold the state quo, then disobeying the laws of the state is an appropriate tactic for promoting social change.

Civil Rights Act of 1964: The well-known piece of civil rights legislation since reconstruction. It has banned discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in public establishments that had connection to interstate commerce or were supported by the state.

Discrimination: Action or policy that is unfair to a particular group. It is the denial of justice and fair treatment in many arenas including employment, housing and political rights.

Dred Scott Decision: The United States Supreme Court decision, issued in 1857, ruling that African Americans were not citizens of the United States; it gave constitutional validity for the system of slavery.

Fifteenth Amendment: The amendment to the United States Constitution adopted in 1870 that protected the right of black males to vote.

Fourteenth Amendment: The amendment to the United States Constitution adopted on July 9, 1868. It overturned the Dred Scott Decision by establishing that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States" enjoy the same citizenship rights of due process and equal protection under the law. The 14th Amendment granted African Americans citizenship in the United States.

Integration: A term meaning intermixing or made part of the whole, often used to refer to the process of bringing black and white people together in schools, jobs and public accommodations.

Jim Crow Laws: These laws were given validity when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1896, in the Plessey v. Ferguson case, that separate facilities for whites and blacks were constitutional. The term was used to describe a period in the United States history, enacted by the southern states and municipalities in the 1880s, which legalized segregation of blacks in all public facilities. By these laws African Americans were prevented from voting.

Nonviolent Civil Disobedience: A moral obligation to refuse to cooperate with an unjust social system. Open public violation to a law or laws in the service of some moral or political goal.

Plessey v. Ferguson: The United States Supreme Court decision issued in 1896. The decision validated the second class citizenship for blacks and established segregation between the African Americans and whites in all public facilities through the doctrine of "Separate but Equal".

Prejudice: It is an attitude in which people make a negative decision about a person or a group of people without sufficient knowledge.

Protest Activity: Is a mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions, and undertaken to obtain rewards from political or economic systems while working within the systems.

Racism: Is prejudice and discrimination based on the myth of race, color and national origin.

Segregation: Literally separation refers to the primarily southern system of law and customs that kept African Americans and other colored people separate from whites in employment, schools and public accommodations.

Separate but Equal: The principle established in 1896 by the United States Supreme Court decision on Plessey v. Ferguson, asserting that blacks could be segregated into separate schools and public accommodations as long as those separate institutions were equal to those of white people.

Social Movement: An organization constituting a large number of people, who engage in spontaneous supportive behavior. It attempts to achieve social change by networks of civil activities and employing extra institutional tactics.

Thirteenth Amendment: The amendment to the United States Constitution adopted on December 6, 1865. It abolished slavery in all American states and territories.

Voting Rights Act of 1965: The legislation passed by the United States Congress in 1965. It came as an indirect response to the march of Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in March 1965, to dramatize the problem of the African American voting deprivation in the south.

Chapter One

Introduction

I. Introduction

A. Research Problem Statement

The Declaration of Independence of 1776 declared that all people are born equal and stressed equality and human rights. The American principles of justice, liberty and equality were applied to the whites. While this appears to be a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the American democracy, it raises the question how is this democratic framework and set of ideas being turned to achieve civil rights in American Society?

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was supposed to dismantle the institution of American slavery, making blacks free citizens of America, but after President Lincoln had signed it into law in 1863, blacks were not free.

Though slavery was abolished in 1865, but racial segregation remained legal until the 1960s, underpinning a system in which blacks faced discrimination at work, at school and at the hands of police and within the criminal justice system.

After emancipation, the hopes of blacks were betrayed again. They were pushed down into second ~ class status. It appeared that democracy was for whites only. The increasing growth of segregation and racism directly led to the development of opposition groups bent on eliminating this discrimination.

In 1896 the United States Supreme Court issued the famous Plessey v. Ferguson ruling which set the doctrine of "Separate but Equal". This decision validated and institutionalized second class citizenship for blacks, as it segregated blacks in all facilities and public accommodations. It became the law of the land. It justified carefree and inferior separate facilities for blacks. Plessey legitimized racial attitudes and ideologies that stressed the inferiority of the African Americans.

Plessey was a symbol of the fundamental contradictions at the heart of the American Democracy. It violated "WE the People of the United States". As a result, African Americans were deprived from basic political, civil and voting rights. They were racially segregated, politically disenfranchised and marginalized from an economic point of view.

Slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder, the most inferior in a hierarchically organized society of unequal. Because the federal government did nothing to end racism, African Americans decided to fight Jim Crow Laws in their own way.

During the 1950s American racial attitudes grew more extreme. Blacks were physically freed from bondage, but they still faced injustice. They gained neither economic advancement nor political rights and social acceptance was nonexistent.

The growth of racism and segregation against blacks at the turn of the 20th century encouraged the development of a new sense of solidarity among African Americans. As a group they were forced to develop a strong sense of group coordination which took shape in new institutions.

The main purpose of these groups was putting an end to the discrimination. Blacks were trying to put American ideals into practice within the country.

The modern civil rights movement rose as social protest to challenge the inferior status of blacks in American society.

B. Research Significance

In general, this research topic holds importance for oppressed people all over the world.

The rich experience of African Americans to achieve their civil rights provides a model for other peoples struggling for freedom and independence

The research carries special significance for me as a Palestinian student interested in the path of a nonviolent struggle to win civil rights and freedom. Such an experience could be taken by our society as an example of an alternative strategy for our struggle against the Israelis.

C. Research Objectives

In this research I pursue the following objectives:

1. To understand the rich experience and struggle of African Americans, during the period between the 1950's – 1960, to achieve their civil rights.
2. To review the speeches, letters and sermons of Martin Luther King and study his role in giving form and substance to the African American civil rights movement, through the nonviolent direct action strategy.
3. To evaluate the tactics and procedures of nonviolent direct action adopted by the American civil rights organizations.

D. Research Problem

This research attempts to answer for the following questions:

Given the fact that the United States was founded in the name of democracy, political and legal equality and individual freedom, the question why it has failed to deliver these fundamental promises to all?

Why were blacks as a minority excluded from these rights?

Why is there a persistent pattern of human rights violation in the USA?

How was the same democratic framework and set of ideas being turned to achieve civil rights in the American Society?

Given that African Americans had other options to follow in their struggle, as King clarified many times in his speeches. The question remains why was nonviolence was chosen as suitable tool for their struggle?

The black civil rights movement was a collective struggle articulated through one person King. The question is how did King managed to convince individuals and institutions to follow his nonviolent strategy?

Could the use of nonviolence experience be adopted by Palestinians as an alternative strategy in the struggle against the Israeli Occupation to the Palestinian Territories?

E. Research Hypothesis

The use of the nonviolent civil disobedience through collaboration between black civil rights organizations and individuals during the era of the modern black civil rights movement was the only viable strategy that enabled African Americans to achieve their civil rights and freedom.

Staged nonviolent events that transcend geography implemented by institutions and groups, as well as King's ideas of nonviolence captured public opinion and proved to be more efficient than violence were due to the democratic ideals embedded in the American Society.

F. Research Theoretical Framework

This research uses conflict resolution theory as a theoretical framework to explain the usage of nonviolent struggle for social change.

The usage of the nonviolent struggle for social change is a technique to appeal to the conscience and the reason of the opponent by inviting suffering on oneself.

The hoped outcome is that the opponent would be converted and become a friend and ally.

It aims at settlement of issues with the opponent without causing him injury but it implies soul force, courage and determination.

The moral appeal to the heart and mind of the opponent is both more effective and more morally acceptable than the exercise of violence.

Thus the usage of disciplined civil disobedience aims to broaden the scope of political and racial conflict and engaging other people from inside and outside of government in the struggle for civil rights.

The tactical use of civil disobedience, based on predicted response of both local and national audiences works on escalating the conflict and polarizing supporters and opponents, while the violent response from local authorities generate the publicity and outside pressure for legislation.

G. Research Limitation

A major limitation to this research is being as Palestinian student living in the Palestinian Occupied Territories without much access to raw materials, books and documents. For example, there is no available American Cultural Center in the West Bank.

A second limitation to the research stems from the fact that the Palestinian universities don't have many references and books on American topics, so I was limited to resources available.

A third limitation is not being able to conduct interviews with involved Americans since the research was done in Palestine.

I have tried to overcome these limitations, though I admit my efforts may not have been totally successful.

H. Research Methodology

In this research I will utilize a combination of methodological approach mainly historical method and the case study methodology. I will basically conduct an internal historical study for the purpose of following the historical events from inside.

I will try to understand the main players in the movement, find out who they were?

What was their main strategy in resisting discrimination and racism? Because there is

great similarity between the black civil rights movement and the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Through the internal study I will concentrate on the strategic events that attracted the attention of individuals and influenced their opinions, policies and strategies that they had followed during their struggle against discrimination and segregation.

From historical point view the black civil rights movement in 1960s had some external factors which helped it in achieving its goals: The eruption of the civil rights movement in the 1960s was a strategic. At the time the United States was in a conflict with the Communists. During that era the United States wanted to market the American way by making it more attractive to the outside world by implementing democracy, while the internal conflict was against its claim of democracy and thus contradicting its claim in the external conflict.

The American government was thus pressured to grant blacks some of their rights in order to resolve its internal conflict and regain a strong position in its external conflict with the Communists.

Therefore the external conflict with the Communists has paved the way for the eruption of the black civil rights movement and gave the advantage for issuing civil rights legislations such as the civil rights act 1964 and the voting rights act of 1965.

I decided to take Martin Luther King as a case study in order to explain how he was able to convince the civil rights movement and the civil rights organizations to follow his nonviolent strategy, as well as to explain how that strategy became the main strategy for the civil rights movement during the 1960s and directed all the nonviolent events, marches, campaigns and protests that followed.

In general I meant to make an internal study because I tried to understand how the black civil rights movement has succeeded in changing attitudes towards its interest.

I. Research Tools and Requirements

I have had access to the Martin Luther King papers archive at Stanford University, through the internet, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/king/publications/> , and I made use of this primary source material in order to carry out a close analysis of King's ideas and beliefs. The site is a rich resource for primary and secondary materials, as it has full text documents of King's letters, sermons and speeches. The site also has good background reading on Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. Some of its articles also explore the relationship between King and NAACP, SNCC and SCLC in organizing protest campaigns against segregation and discrimination.

J. Review of Literature

Here is an overreaching general introduction to the entire reviewed books, related to Martin Luther King and the black civil rights organizations such as NAACP, SNCC, and SCLC.

David J. Garrow. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York: William and Company, Inc., 1986.¹

Aldon D. Morris, Ed. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1984.²

The above mentioned books are talking about different issues related to the black civil rights movement including the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, The Montgomery Bus Boycott, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference "SCLC" Crusader of Citizenship, The Sit-ins Movement, Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee "SNCC", the Black Church and the Birmingham Campaign.

¹ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986).

² Aldon D. Morris, ed., *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1984).

James Melvin Washington, ed. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986.³

John J. Ansbro. *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Nonviolent Strategies and Tactics for Social Change.* Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 2000.⁴

Lawrence Dunbar Reddick. *Crusader Without Violence: A Bibliography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959.⁵

Marshall Frady. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2002.⁶

These books are giving a brief Biography of Martin Luther King, Nonviolent Strategy, Agape Love, the social mission of the Black Church, Sit-ins Movement, Birmingham Campaign and the Voting Rights.

Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, ed. *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2001.⁷

Sanford Wexler. *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History.* New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1993.⁸

Taylor Branch. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954 – 1963.* New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1988.⁹

The above listed books are talking about: The Brown Board of Education Decision of 1954, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Sit-ins Movement, the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington and the Birmingham Campaign.

³ James Melvin Washington, ed, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986).

⁴John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Strategies and Tactics for Social Change* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books 2000).

⁵ Lawrence Dunbar Reddick, *Crusader Without Violence: A Bibliography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959).

⁶ Marshall Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2002).

⁷ Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, ed., *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 2001).

⁸ Sanford Wexler, *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2001).

⁹ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954 – 1963* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988).

August Meier and Elliot Rudwick. *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1942 – 1968*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1973.¹⁰

Taylor Branch. *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963 – 1965*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1998.¹¹

The above couple of books are narrating details of the Freedom Rides, Freedom Project, March on Washington, St. Augustine Campaign and Selma Campaign.

Mary King. *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action*. Paris: Editions due Mouflon, 1999.¹²

In this Book Mary King is forwarding a short narrative about the African Americans Civil Rights Movement. Then she gives a short biography on King's life, details about Gandhi's Nonviolent Campaigns and makes a comparison on Gandhi's and King's Nonviolent Strategies.

John D'Emilio. *The Civil Rights Struggle: Leaders in Profile*. New York, Facts on File, Inc., 1979.¹³

Peter B. Levy. *The Civil Rights Movement*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998.¹⁴

The above books are talking about the Black History, Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, American Civil Rights Movement and Modern Civil Rights Movement.

Donald Thomas Phillips. *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership: Inspiration & Wisdom for Challenging Times*. New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1998.¹⁵

¹⁰ August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1942 – 1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1973).

¹¹ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1963 – 1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1998).

¹² Mary King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action* (Paris: Editions due Mouflon, 1999).

¹³ John D'Emilio, *The Civil Rights Struggle: Leaders in Profile* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1979).

¹⁴ Peter B. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Donald Thomas Phillips, *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership: Inspiration & Wisdom for Challenging Times* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1998).

James A. Colaiaco, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Apostle of Militant Nonviolence*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.¹⁶

Martin Luther King, Jr. *Why We Can't Wait*. New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1964.¹⁷

These three sources are giving a detailed narrative about Negro Problem, Negro Revolution, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Nonviolent Direct Action, March on Washington, Birmingham Campaign, A Letter from Birmingham Jail, Selma Campaign and the Voting Rights.

Clayborne Carson, et al, ed. *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader, Documents, Speeches and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954 – 1990*. New York: Viking Penguin Group, 1991.¹⁸

In this book Carson is giving a background about NAACP, Rosa Parks, Mother of the Civil Rights Movement, Nonviolent Direct Action and the Sit-ins Movement.

Hugh Davis Graham. *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy 1960 – 1972*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990.¹⁹

Rachel Kranz. *Affirmative Action: Library in a Book*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2002.²⁰

These two books are dealing with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

¹⁶ James A. Colaiaco, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Apostle of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

¹⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1964).

¹⁸ Clayborne Carson, et al ed., *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader, Documents, Speeches and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954 – 1990* (New York: Viking Penguin Group, 1991).

¹⁹ Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy 1960 – 1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

²⁰ Rachel Kranz, *Affirmative Action: Library in a Book* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2002).

Chapter Two

Early Black Resistance

II. Early Black Resistance

This chapter is reviewing the history of the African Americans since the beginning of slave trade in 1619 and how those slaves have been kidnapped from Africa and brought to the United States.

It also relates how the slavery institution was established in America, and describes the suffering of the African slaves during the period extended from 1619 till 1954.

The chapter also presents a brief summary to the first black resistance in response to the bad treatment imposed on them by whites. This resistance covers the periods of slavery early stages, 1902s, the great depression era, the World War II era, 1940s era till the 1950s, where the modern black civil rights movement has started.

As well as it introduces the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People "NAACP" in 1910, which was considered to be the first black civil rights organization.

The chapter ends with broach the issue of Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 which outlawed segregation in schools in the United States.

A. Slavery in the United States

1. Historical Background

The first Africans to arrive an American shores in James Town, Virginia in 1619. They were brought as slaves against their will, and treated in an inhuman way; they were considered as a thing to be used, not as people to be respected.¹

All African slaves who were brought to America had been kidnapped from the west coast of Africa or were sold by neighboring tribes. They were then transported across the Atlantic Ocean in a savage way, chained together, taken aboard cargo ships and

¹ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

packed like animals into small spaces below deck for a two month trip to the New World. Disease and suicide led to high rates of death in some cases reaching around 25 percent.²

Upon arrival in America, Africans were sold into slavery at auctions in slave markets. Many were purchased in advance or sold on consignment.³

Africans were brought to America twelve years after the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, the first permanent British Colony. They became indentured servants and bondsmen for a period. They could look forward to freedom after a term of years. But by 1661, blacks were regarded as bondsmen for life. That was the beginning of slavery in the United States.⁴

During slavery, blacks were prevented by law from learning to read and write. They were forbidden to associate with other Negroes living on the same plantation. Punishment for any form of resistance or complaint about their situation could range from mutilation to death. Families were torn apart, friends were separated and fathers and mothers were sold from their children.⁵

The *Fugitive Slave Act*, passed in 1793, increased the power of the slaves owners. It allowed agents throughout the north to seize any African American they thought might be a slave. This law led to the widespread abuse of free people being captured in the north and then transported to the south to be sold into slavery.⁶

The act also required northern officials to cooperate with the process of capture and enslavement. African Americans who had been living in northern communities for years and were accepted as respected citizens were suddenly threatened with recapture

² Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://usinfo.state.gov>

⁵ King, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

⁶ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

by previous owners. Those recaptured as slaves had no right to appeal, no trial by jury, no witnesses were allowed to speak.

By 1820, around 99 percent of the one and half million slaves in the United States were concentrated in the American south. Such a huge percentage made slavery look like a specific geographic region than a national establishment.⁷

In 1830, segregation was formalized in nearly all public institutions including theaters, libraries, museums, schools and transportation, by what was known as Jim Crow Laws.⁸

Jim Crow Laws discriminated against black's attendance in public schools and the use of facilities such as restaurants, theaters, hotels, cinemas and public baths. Trains and buses were also segregated and in many states marriage between whites and blacks was prohibited too.⁹

Jim Crow thus developed two societies with two sets of institutions, separate rail roads cars, separate waiting rooms, drinking fountains, hospitals schools, restaurants, commentaries and even separate bibles for taking oaths.

2. Slavery Phases

Slavery institution passed through the following three important phases:

a) Phase I: "Slavery Period" (1619 – 1863)

Dred Scott: Dred Scott was a slave and property of an army doctor named James Emerson. He used to move around, living in both slave state of Illinois and free slave state of Wisconsin, free slave states meant that time limited freedom. In 1840, Scott

⁷ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

⁹ Ibid.

brought a lawsuit in a Missouri Court for his freedom and his wife's too, but the Supreme Court ruled in 1857 that Scott would still be a slave.¹⁰

In 1857, Roger Taney, Chief of Justice, wrote the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott v. Sandford Case, ruling that Scott, who was a slave and sued for his freedom based on the fact that he had been taken to a free territory and a free state, was still a slave. The decision also cancelled the Missouri Compromise, passed in 1820, which divided land bought from France into free and slave states.¹¹

The decision was based on the fact that blacks were inferior people with no rights, and whites were not bound to respect them as human beings. They were not considered as citizens of the United States; therefore, they had no constitutional rights and could not sue in the federal courts.¹²

In fact The American Constitution had a provision which counted slaves as only three fifths of a human being for the purpose of calculating taxes and government representation.¹³

The court also ruled that a slave is considered as an object to be used, not a person to be respected. He was merely a depersonalized cog in a vast plantation machine. The exact version of the decision stated that: "The Negro is not a citizen of the United States; he is merely property subject to the dictates of his owner".¹⁴

Through the Dred Scott Decision, the U. S. Supreme Court gave constitutional validity to the entire system of slavery.¹⁵

¹⁰ Francis Graham Lee, *Equal Protection: Rights and Liberties under the Law* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC – CLIO, Inc., 2003), pp. 8-9.

¹¹ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹² Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ Ansbrosio, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

Also, through the Dred Decision, the Supreme Court clarified the legal status of African Americans, calling them "Subordinate and Inferior Beings".¹⁶

b) Phase II "Segregation Period" (1863 – 1954)

After the emancipation proclamation in 1863, Negroes were physically freed, but they still faced injustice. This could be described as "physical freedom to the slaves". Or freedom from slavery, yet during this period, blacks still confronted oppression and inequality. They were accepted as citizens as a legal fact, but were refused acceptance as persons.¹⁷

In order to retain white hegemony, the southern states issued in late 1865 – 1866 a series of measures called the "Black Codes". Such regulations prohibited the freed slaves from voting, possessing firearms or working as domestic workers and agricultural labors. They were encouraged to return to their former masters and negotiate a wage. Blacks still were prohibited by law from learning how to read and write. Black children were forced to act like training objects for whites in Mississippi. Black Codes in Mississippi for instance legalized the arrest of blacks for vagrancy.¹⁸

By 1890, blacks had no political rights. Henry W. Grady, a newspaper reporter from Atlanta noted that: "The Negro as a political force has dropped out of serious consideration".¹⁹

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the landmark "Plessey v. Ferguson" ruling which set the doctrine of "Separate but Equal". On June 7, 1892. Homer Plessey, a 30 year old colored shoemaker, was jailed for sitting in a white car of the East Louisiana railroad. Plessey was one eighth black and seven eighths white, but in Louisiana law he was still considered black and therefore had to sit in the car reserved for colored

¹⁶ Kranz, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

¹⁸ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁹ <http://usinfo.state.gov>

people only. As a result of his arrest, Plessey went to the U.S. District Court of Louisiana and argued that the separate car act violated the 13th and 14th Amendments of the Constitution.²⁰

But Judge John Howard Ferguson and the other eight members of the court ruled that separate but equal accommodation laws were constitutional. They decided that Plessey was guilty. Plessey appealed to the Supreme Court of Louisiana.²¹

In 1896, the Supreme Court of Louisiana upheld Ferguson's decision, and held the Separate but Equal doctrine to be constitutional. It ruled that as long as facilities were equal, the fact they are separated did not violate civil rights. This decision made the segregation of American institutions into a way of life imbedded in the law of the land.²²

Through the Plessey v. Ferguson decision, a new form of subordination came into being. The Plessey doctrine positioned blacks within a new era of oppression and injustice, which lasted for more than fifty years.²³

Plessey v. Ferguson of 1896 also validated a status known as the "second class citizens", where segregation was imposed on African Americans. A reign of terror and intimidation was directed against the black population by whites, which discouraged resistance.²⁴

After the "Separate but Equal" doctrine was issued all southern states enforced segregation in all facilities. Public accommodations were strictly segregated and blacks were barred from white hotels, restaurants and theaters.²⁵

²⁰ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²¹ Ibid. p. 15.

²² Ibid. p. 6.

²³ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁴ <http://www.kooriweb.org>

²⁵ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Through the ruling in the Plessey v. Ferguson case, the Supreme Court destroyed the promises of reconstruction and gave its blessing to the status of second class citizenship for African Americans. The "Separate but Equal" decision ruled that mandating separate facilities for blacks did not violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.²⁶

Through the Plessey decision the court had justified the separate and inferior facilities for blacks. It supported the spread of separate institutions into the west. The court ignored the constitutionally granted freedom of blacks by denying any political rights. Separate but Equal, became the cornerstone on which a whole dual society was built. The court had made no attempt to guarantee that these separate but equal institutions would be equal.²⁷

The Plessey doctrine had pushed African Americans into a new era of exploitation, where they experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice. Furthermore they were pushed into slavery, prejudice, deprived of freedom or any political, social and economic rights.²⁸

Plessey caused blacks to lose faith in themselves, as they submitted to the insult, injustices and exploitation in a new era of insubordination.

c) Phase III: Complete and Constructive Integration in 1954.

During the early 1950's, segregation in education was widespread. In 1953, for instance the NAACP filed five cases in the Supreme Court against segregation in elementary schools. This included the landmark Brown case.²⁹

²⁶ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ D' Emilio, *op. cit.*, p.8.

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation in education was unconstitutional. This struck at the underlying logic of Jim Crow Laws which were abolished.

Full details about the Brown v. Board of Education decision and its influence on the civil rights movement are presented in the following pages.

3. Conclusion

The Plessey decision kept blacks completely separated from every body else. All public facilities were segregated to blacks such as schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, churches, orphanages, cemeteries and all forms of public transportation.

Blacks were also pushed into a status of second class citizenship. This fact was accepted by Presidents, the U.S. Congress, the Supreme Court, business communities and labor unions.

Segregation became a matter of law in the south and separate facilities were in most cases inferior facilities. African Americans were deprived of their basic political and civil rights in almost every state.

Plessey created the existence of two Americas, one white and another black or "colored", using separate schools, restaurants, parks, and hospitals even separate cemeteries to give flesh and blood to the idea of Separate but Equal.

The Plessey decision had a profound and lasting effect on the American society. It legitimized racial attitudes and stressed the inferiority of African Americans.

Jim Crow Laws contributed to the break down of the American society through establishing two different systems for blacks and whites, destroyed the work of reconstruction in the south. They widened the racial gap and allowed states once again to brand blacks as inferior race.

During the period between 1900-1920 racial segregation was extended to all public transportation and education facilities, hospitals, churches and jails. The hopes of African Americans were betrayed. Blacks were lynched almost every two days.

By the middle of the twentieth century, segregation was accompanied by a new wave of race hatred. White Americans came to believe that all blacks were alike and therefore could be treated as a group.

African Americans were portrayed by whites as superstitious, stupid, lazy, liars, happy-go-lucky, thieves and drunkards. Additionally blacks were described as barbarians, Negro ruffians, coons and darkies.

Blacks were also depicted negatively in cartoons and stereotypes presented them with thick lips, flat noses, big ears, big feet and kinky wooly hair.

During the 1940's, legal and racial segregation in public places continued throughout the south, where seventy percent of blacks lived. As of 1944 only five percent of adult blacks in the south were registered to vote.

By 1940, nearly every southern city and town was segregated. Signs marked as "White" and "Colored" were fixed everywhere on bathrooms, water fountains, telephone booths, restaurants and hotels.

We can conclude that by the 1950's blacks were racially segregated, politically disenfranchised and marginalized from an economic point view.

It became universally accepted that the American principles of justice, liberty and equality were applied to whites only.

The African American community decided to fight Jim Crow Laws in their own way, because the federal government did nothing to end this institutionalized form of racism.

Decades of segregation resulted in economic deprivation, social isolation and psychological alienation of blacks.

The strict racial segregation experienced by black students caused African Americans to launch campaigns against the principle of Separate but Equal.

In response to Jim Crow, blacks fought back for their rights where they could. They responded by staging protests, filing law suits and forming new organizations to combat racism. At the beginning they formed organized labor unions and other organizations such as the National Afro-American League which was later called the Afro-American Council.

Racism and segregation led to the development of opposition groups aimed at destroying discrimination. Segregation promoted the creation of black institutions, which were known later as the center of the counter attack.

B. First Organized Black Resistance

1. Historical Background

African Americans started their struggle against slavery since the beginnings. They started demanding freedom once they were locked in the slave ships. Rebellion was manifested as well in the refusal to take slave names and through uprisings and escapes.³⁰

a) Early Phases

During the early periods of slavery, black slaves had struck against slavery in one way or another. The first slave resistances took the shape of insurrections. There were around one hundred insurrections. These insurrections were small and unsuccessful. Three examples of the most well known insurrections which took place between 1800 and 1831 are: Gabriel Prosser Insurrection which took place on August, 1800. Gabriel

³⁰ King, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Prosser led a slave attack on Richmond, Virginia. His purpose was to force whites to come to terms with blacks.³¹

The other two insurrections were: Nat Turner revolt which took place in 1831 and the rebellion of Denmark Vesey which took place in 1882.

The abolition of slavery in 1863 was an important step toward freedom for African Americans. But being freed from slavery in the nineteenth century did not mean that blacks were granted all their rights like whites. On the contrary, during the twentieth century, they were pushed to second class status.³²

It seemed that the practice of democracy was for whites only, as racism and segregation against blacks increased during the twentieth century. Segregation was prominent in all institutions, churches, schools and businesses. In addition African Americans were not allowed to vote and they faced a savage wave of lynching.³³

b) New Negro

Upon the eruption of the World War I, black soldiers who were enlisted to fight for their country were segregated, denied the opportunity to become leaders and subjected to racism within the armed forces.

During the 20th Century circumstances changed. Several factors came together which made blacks take a new look at themselves. They began to re-evaluate themselves with new self-respect and a sense of dignity.³⁴

As a result of the continuing violence and segregation in the south drove many poor, black farmers to leave their homes and friends and started looking or seeking other means of livelihood else where.³⁵

³¹ <http://toptags.com>

³² Ibid.

³³ <http://lib.luksian.com/text/fict/036>

³⁴ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁵ <http://www.bralyn.net/etext/litreture/norman.coombs/blackexp.txt>

As well as during the World War I the northern industrial center, created the need for more unskilled labor in the factories. Thus northern industry continued to draw black labor from the southern rural pockets of poverty.³⁶

During war hundreds of thousands of southern blacks migrated northward to take advantage of job openings in northern cities created by war.

The opportunity for industrial employment in the north which had resulted from the World War I and the increase of racism and segregation in the south opened the way for the development of the growing spirit of determination.³⁷

After World War I and during the twentieth century period, the black civil rights movement was led by individuals such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King through from vastly different philosophical, moral and practical standpoints.³⁸

During the 1920s as south moved from slavery into segregation thousands of African American moved from rural south into the urban north and west.

Blacks attempting to escape southern oppression during the 1920s began a mass migration to New York, Chicago and other Mid-Western cities.

The migration indicates that blacks refused to remain victims of an impersonal and oppressive system, they decided to leave their friends and neighbors and move to the north "the promised land", from this emerged the New Negro.³⁹

Harlem became the center of the "promised land". James Johnson described the Harlem of 1920s as the "culture capitol of the Negro world". Famous personalities

³⁶ <http://www.bralyn.net/etext/literature/norman.coombs/blackexp.txt>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <http://lib.luksian.com/text/fict/036>

³⁹ <http://www.bralyn.net/etext/literature/norman.coombs/blackexp.txt>

such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, James Weldon Johnson, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong were there.⁴⁰

Harlem drew a bewildering and energizing diversity of people: students, peasants, artists, businessmen, professional men, poets, musicians and workers.

Harlem renaissance of the 1920s and thirties was an example of black self-improvement. A great number of blacks in New York, Washington D. C., Boston and Philadelphia axis were able to gain education and became creative in both art and music.⁴¹

The creative movement of Harlem renaissance awakened the African American artistic spirit. This spirit was manifested by a creative outburst of art, music and literature and by a new mood of self-consciousness within that community. Harlem renaissance became associated with the New Negro movement that was developed by Alain Locke.⁴²

This movement which recruited young, politically aware African American artists was associated with the black pride. The affirmative attitude of black pride was necessary to the civil rights movement.⁴³

Harlem renaissance was significant because it high lightened a positive shift in the attitude of the black community from self-awareness to self-assertion.⁴⁴

The racist attitudes in American south made African American Community to develop a new sense of solidarity and strong sense of group cooperation. The idealism of New Negro was still based on the American idealism of democracy.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ <http://www.civilrights.africanamericanartist.com>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ <http://www.bralyn.net/etext/literature/norman.coombs/blackexp.txt>

c) Great Depression

The great depression of the 1930 increased black protests against discrimination.

Blacks protested the refusal of white-owned businesses in all black neighborhoods to hire black sales persons, using the slogan "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work".⁴⁶

These campaigns persuaded blacks to boycott these businesses and revealed a new militancy, during the same years (1930s) blacks organized school boycotts in northern cities to protest discriminatory treatment of black children.⁴⁷

d) World War II

When the World War II began in 1939 blacks demanded better treatment than they had experienced in the World War I. Black newspaper editors insisted during 1939 and 1940 that black support for this war effort would depend on fair treatment.⁴⁸

They demanded that black soldiers be trained in all military roles and that black civilians have equal opportunities to work in war industries at home.⁴⁹

After the World War II the momentum for racial change continued. Black veterans returned home with determination to have full civil rights. They were unwilling to tolerate the indignities of Jim Crow any longer.⁵⁰

In the meanwhile the political and economic situations of blacks improved as a result of the migration of millions of southern blacks from rural plantations to the industrial centers in the north and the west. Colonized people around the globe started to dream of freedom, and the black civil rights movement can be seen as part of this world wide movement.⁵¹

⁴⁶ <http://www.termpapersmadeeasy.com>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.271.

e) Resistance During 1940s

When America decided to enter the World War II, military industries were built across America. Blacks did not have equal opportunities for employment, as these industries were barred to blacks.⁵²

A. Philip Randolph, who founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1925, and other black leaders pleaded with officials in Washington to allow blacks to take part in defense industries. But the federal government ignored their appeals. For the purpose of ending discrimination in the defense industries, Randolph decided to organize a mass march of around 50,000 blacks to Washington in order to protest discrimination in employment and demand more jobs for blacks in the defense industries.⁵³

Randolph's call of 1941 has been described as the milestone of the civil rights movement. The call mobilized thousands of blacks to create a "Negro March on Washington" to protest against segregation in the defense industry. But the march was cancelled when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Executive Order no: 8802 prohibiting segregation by government defense contractors.⁵⁴

Executive Order: 8022 signed on June 25, 1941 stated that: "There shall be no discrimination, because of race, creed, color or national origin". This order was considered the *strongest civil rights directive* since the reconstruction period. In return Randolph agreed to cancel the planned march on Washington.⁵⁵

⁵² Gerstle, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Kranz, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Roosevelt also agreed to form the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to investigate the hiring policies and enforce the program, which succeeded later on in providing job opportunities for two million blacks in the munitions factories.⁵⁶

Roosevelt declared: "The policy of the United States is to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin".⁵⁷

It is worth mentioning that BSCP, founded in 1925, was a Union of Black Porters. They worked on the American railroad cars, as there were no railroad unions for blacks at that time. BSCP members traveled throughout the country and were involved in labor issues as well as in the civil rights movement. Many blacks considered them to be "Civil Rights Missionaries on Wheels".⁵⁸

The porters spread the news that segregation and racial oppression of the south was not a norm to which African Americans must submit.⁵⁹

f) American Dilemma

The American Dilemma was a study conducted by Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish Sociologist, in 1944. Through the study he challenged the United States to get rid of its racial bias.⁶⁰

According to Myrdal, the American Dilemma of his time referred to the co-existence of American liberal ideals of democracy and equality and the miserable situation of blacks. On one hand, the American Creed is the belief that people are created equal and have human rights. On the other hand, blacks were treated as an inferior race and were denied numerous civil and political rights.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P.177.

⁵⁹ <http://www.awiannaonline.com>

⁶⁰ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 93.

The work of Myrdal depicted the ever-widening gap between the American principle of equality and the reality of African American life. Myrdal's encyclopedic study covered every aspect of black-white relations in the United States.

He coupled his indictment with a helpful prognosis for the future:

"Not since reconstruction, has there been more reason to anticipate fundamental changes in American race relations, changes which will involve a development towards American ideals".⁶²

Myrdal stated that "the problem of race is America's greatest moral dilemma. This tragic dilemma presents the church with a great challenge. The broad universalism standing at the center of the gospel makes segregation morally unjustifiable. Racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity, which we have in Christ".⁶³

He concluded that what was needed in America was to change the basis of society by both whites and blacks. He also concluded that the black's problem is a white man's problem. That meant that whites as a collective group were responsible for the disadvantageous situation in which blacks were trapped.

Myrdal stated that: "The treatment of the Negroes in America's is the greatest and most conspicuous scandal".⁶⁴

g) Blacks during Early 1950s

By the mid of 1950's a number of factors participated in the emergence of the self-respect of Blacks. Many of these factors were developments of the 1940's:

The decline of cotton agriculture in the south and the development of industries in the north both of which encouraged blacks to migrate to the cities in the south and north.

This migration from rural plantations to urban industries helped blacks to politicize

⁶² D'Emilio, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁶³ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

⁶⁴ D'Emilio, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

themselves. Also the period of migration witnessed the creation of the black middle class.⁶⁵

Rapid educational advances, the gradual improvement of the economic status of blacks, the awareness that the black struggle for freedom was a part of a world wide struggle, were also factors in a changing consciousness.⁶⁶

2. The National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP)

NAACP is the strongest and most powerful civil rights organization, established to fight race prejudice, lynching and segregation on behalf of African Americans.

a) Establishment

In 1908 a white woman in Springfield claimed to have been raped by a Negro. Although the woman later admitted that she had been assaulted by a white man, for two days a mob of some of Springfield's "best citizens" killed and wounded a large a number of blacks.⁶⁷

The violence that was committed against blacks at the race riots in Springfield, the capital of Illinois and the birthplace of President Abraham Lincoln, stunned even white liberals.⁶⁸

Spurred on by the race riots that took place in Springfield in 1908, and the violence committed against blacks, a group of 60 people issued a call for a meeting to discuss racial justice. This group comprised of two distinct types of intellectuals: the black elite, including Mary White Ovington, W.E.B.Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Oswald Garrison Villard, and the white liberals.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

⁶⁷ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and its Challengers: F.D.R. to Reagan* (New York: Oxford University press, Inc., 1985), p.141.

The meeting resulted in the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP) on February 12th, 1909. The establishment of the NAACP on that date was no coincidence. February 12th happened to be President Lincoln's birthday.⁷⁰

The stated goal of the NAACP was to secure the rights guaranteed for all people by the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments of the United States Constitution. These amendments promised an end to slavery, the equal protection of the law and universal adult male suffrage.⁷¹

The NAACP concentrated on legislative lobbying and court action. Theirs was a strategy aimed at gaining blacks full enjoyment of the fundamental rights of citizenship. The organization struggled for anti-lynching legislation, equal employment opportunities, the abolition of segregation and outlawing devices that restricted the right to vote through peaceful and lawful means.⁷²

b) Mission

The mission of the NAACP was to insure political, educational, social and economic equality for minority groups and citizens. To achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States. It aimed at removing racial discrimination through the democratic process, and to work on enacting and enforcing federal, state and local laws that would secure civil rights. It also aimed at educating the public and informing them about the effects of racial discrimination and working on eliminating it. Another one of its goals was to educate people about their constitutional rights, including voting rights, citizenship and equality.⁷³

⁷⁰ <http://si.umich.edu>

⁷¹ <http://africana.com/tt193.htm>

⁷² Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁷³ http://naacp.org/past_future/naacptimelines.shtml

c) Goals & Objectives

The NAACP was founded to pursue these main objectives: To achieve freedom of speech, eliminate black suffrage, the abolition of social, political and economic distinctions based simply on race and color, the recognition of the principle of human brotherhood. To uphold a belief in dignity of labor, to address matters concerning black political rights, mainly voting rights and to push matters of civil rights.⁷⁴

d) Earlier Victories

During the first 15 years of its establishment, the NAACP managed to achieve three major court victories:

a. In 1910 the Supreme Court of the United States struck down the discriminatory clauses of Oklahoma law which regulated voting by means of grandfather clauses. Such clauses that kept blacks from voting in several states considered as an unconstitutional barrier to voting rights under the 15th amendment.⁷⁵

b. In 1917 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the municipal ordinance of Louisville Segregation Case (Kentucky) which required blacks to live in certain sections of towns. The Louisville segregation case was the first victory in reaffirming the Negro's constitutional rights. It declared that laws which established residential segregation by race were unconstitutional.⁷⁶

c. In 1923, the court overturned murder conviction against a black man, because blacks had been excluded from the jury that had convicted him.⁷⁷

e) Battles

The earliest battles for civil rights were led by the NAACP, which resorted to a combination of public education, legislative lobbying and court petition in an effort to

⁷⁴ Stephen J. Herzog, *Minority Group Politics: A Reader* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971) p. 249.

⁷⁵ <http://www.africana.com/tt193.htm>

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

attain equality for African Americans. Its main strategy was to undermine the legal basis of segregation, through the courts. During the 1940's and 1950's the NAACP won a series of important victories.⁷⁸

i. The Fight for Racial Justice

In its fight for racial justice, the NAACP concentrated on the democratic process. The legal defense fund of the NAACP and the black lawyers who worked with them started the battle against racism in courts. It wanted to guarantee the civil rights of African Americans legally through the court system. In the southern states, racism was given legal support, which made many American citizens uncomfortable.⁷⁹

During the cold war era many groups and organizations wanted to put the democratic ideals into practice, especially in the competition against Communism. They wanted to show that the American way of life was superior, and this meant that segregation was destroying the image of American democracy.⁸⁰

The first legal battle to be conducted by the NAACP was the case of Pink Franklin in 1910. Franklin was a black farmhand who killed a policeman in self-defense when the officer broke into his home at 3 a.m. to arrest him on civil charges. The case was lost in the Supreme Court, but NAACP lawyers were dedicated to fight such cases.⁸¹

The second incident was the official introduction of segregation into the federal government by President Woodrow Wilson. The NAACP launched a public protest against this policy, angered at the idea that the President would support it.⁸²

The NAACP led a campaign against D.W.Griffith's inflammatory Birth of A Nation in 1915. The film portrayed the Ku Klux Klan and African Americans in a racist

⁷⁸ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷⁹ <http://lib.luksian.com/text/fict/036>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ <http://www.naacp.org/work/index.html>

⁸² Ibid.

manner. It perpetuated stereotypes of African Americans and glorified the Ku Klux Klan. Despite the campaign, the film was very successful at the box office.⁸³

ii. Lynching

The focus of the NAACP at the beginning of its establishment was the lynching. It aimed at decreasing the number of lynching, educating and informing the public about these incidents.⁸⁴

In 1916, the NAACP developed a program to get rid of lynching. The Anti-Lynching Committee developed an awareness campaign. A report entitled "Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States; 1889-1918" was published by the organization. It was reported that within this 30-year period, 3,224 people were lynched of whom 2,522 were blacks. The lynching occurred for minor offenses such as using offensive language or refusal to give up land.⁸⁵

In 1921, the committee gathered lynching statistics, which were published in the New York Times, the Atlanta Constitution and other major newspapers.

Ida Wells-Barnett, one of the founders of the NAACP, was a journalist, lecturer and civil rights activist. She led the campaign against lynching and the effort to expose violence against blacks.⁸⁶

Throughout the 1920s, the fight against lynching was one of the NAACP's top priorities. The NAACP strongly supported the federal Dyer Bill although it was never passed by the Congress.⁸⁷

The bill called for the punishment of those who participated in or failed to prosecute lynch mobs. In 1930, Walter F. White became Secretary of the NAACP. He was

⁸³ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>

⁸⁴ <http://www.san.beck.org>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ <http://www.africana.com/tt193.thm>

instrumental in research on lynching and also achieved success in blocking the nomination of the segregationist Judge John J. Parker to the Supreme Court.⁸⁸

We can conclude that NAACP instead of dealing with lynching in a violent way, they decided to face white violence in a nonviolent legal struggle.

iii. Economic Justice

The NAACP began to focus on economic justice in the 1930s, at the time of the Great Depression. The Great Depression was disastrous especially to African Americans. Because the association had experienced great tension with white labor unions it decided to cooperate with the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), in order to win jobs for blacks.⁸⁹

The advisor of the first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter White, was sympathetic to civil rights. He met with her in order to convince Roosevelt to outlaw job discrimination in the armed forces.⁹⁰

iv. Desegregation in Schools

After the increase in NAACP membership in the 1940s, the organization shifted its concentration to fighting legal battles against segregation. The number of middle-class black and white supporters for the organization had increased, and thus the treasury prospered.⁹¹

This would help the organization in fighting its legal battles against segregation in the courts, as court battles required large funds. One of the master strategists in the school desegregation campaign was Thurgood Marshall. He decided that the attack should be a slow and indirect one to prove powerful. Most southern states developed segregated

⁸⁸ <http://www.africana.com/tt193.htm>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ <http://lib.luksian.com/text/fict/036>

schools, but they had not developed separate graduate and professional schools. Thurgood Marshall decided to attack these facilities first.⁹²

The first case successful case of Marshall's strategy was when the Supreme Court ruled against the Missouri state law school for its failure to admit a black student in 1938 as it did not have a separate but equal facility.⁹³

In 1948, in a similar case in Oklahoma, the Supreme Court ruled against the state for not permitting a Negro to enroll in its state law school. This led to the decision that blacks would be permitted to enroll in programs of study that are not provided by the state college for blacks. This was a major improvement and a big step forward in the efforts of the NAACP to eliminate segregation in education.⁹⁴

A similar case was taken to the Supreme Court in 1950 in Texas. The court insisted that the institution, which the State of Texas had tried to enroll a law student in, was not equal. It argued that an equal institution meant an equal faculty, an equal library and equal prestige. It also declared that it was unconstitutional for a university to segregate a black student within its premises.⁹⁵

The second step in the desegregation campaign by the NAACP lawyers was to attack the quality of education in primary and secondary schools. The campaign against these separate schools was started by the NAACP in 1950 and was handed over to the Supreme Court. The NAACP lawyers charged that these separate schools were inferior and were a violation of the equal-protection clause of the fourteenth amendment. All the cases that were made had been defeated in local courts, but the NAACP lawyers appealed the decisions.⁹⁶

⁹² http://www.lib.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Although the Supreme Court had been making decisions based on the "Separate but Equal" clause, it made no effort to guarantee that these separate institutions were in fact equal. In the latest cases of 1950, the court was examining the equality of the schools in prestige.⁹⁷

The greatest victory for NAACP was in 1954, when the United States Supreme Court ruled in the *Brown v. Board of Education* that the racial discrimination in public schools was unconstitutional. This decision overturned the Separate but Equal doctrine formulated by *Plessey v. Ferguson* in 1896.⁹⁸

3. Brown v. Board of Education

a) Brown v. Board of Education I.

The Brown case involved Linda Brown, a seven year old black third grader. Brown had to cross a dangerous set of railroad tracks at a switching yard, and then board a rundown bus on a daily basis to attend her segregated elementary school in Topeka, Kansas. While there was a school very close to her home, it was a white school which she was not allowed to attend. This situation encouraged Mr. Oliver Brown, Linda's father, with the aid of NAACP to sue the Board of Education of Topeka over separate facilities. His aim was to spare his daughter the need to travel to a far away school and attend the closer white school.⁹⁹

In the 1950's, the Brown case was strengthened by Kenneth B. Clark, a Black Sociologist, conducted a research on how black children felt about white dolls. He used his social science knowledge for the cause of racial justice.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ http://www.lib.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036

⁹⁸ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.loe.gov/exhibit/brown-brown.html>

Clarke conducted research on the self-image of black children. He studied the response of more than 200 black children between 3-7 years old. The children were given the choice of white or brown dolls. The black children in the study showed a preference for white dolls.¹⁰¹

He concluded from their reaction to white dolls that black children regarded themselves as inferior. He believed that this inferiority was a result of Plessey. He concluded that segregation was psychologically damaging.¹⁰²

Clark concluded that prejudice, discrimination and segregation caused black children to develop a sense of inferiority and self-hatred.

He determined that segregated public schools generated a feeling of inferiority for black children. He provided his conclusions to the Supreme Court and these ideas were influential in the Brown decision of 1954. For that reason the court ruled that segregated public schools "are unequal" and violate the fourteenth amendment which guaranteed equal protection of laws.¹⁰³

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice, Earl Warren, read the decision of the Supreme Court in the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Case: "We conclude, unanimously, that in the field of public education the doctrine of "Separate but Equal" has no place, separate educational facilities are inherently unequal".¹⁰⁴

The Brown decision marked a turning point in which America was finally willing to face the consequences of racial discrimination being imposed for centuries.¹⁰⁵

The 1954 case of Brown v. Board of Education was considered by Anthony Lewis, a journalist at The New York Times, as the beginning of the "Second American

¹⁰¹ <http://www.loe.gov/exhibit/brown-brown.html>

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 39.

Revolution, in which the Supreme Court declared that discrimination in education based on race was a violation to the constitution of prohibition".¹⁰⁶

b) Brown V. Board of Education II

In May 3, 1955, the Supreme Court handed down its implementation decision, ordering desegregation in schools to proceed "with all deliberate speed", but left responsibility for compliance with local school boards and the federal district court judges in the south. This strategy relieved southern segregationists, who believed that local judges and school officials would resist the Supreme Court, which was in fact the case.¹⁰⁷

When the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Case in 1954, it did not set a deadline for an end to segregation in public schools. The court requested the interested parties to provide suggestions on how the order could be enforced.¹⁰⁸

Once the Supreme Court handed down the Brown II decision standards were set out for guiding the lower federal courts in implementing school desegregation. White opposition to the program quickly surfaced, especially in the southern states, which tried to bypass the court's decision.¹⁰⁹

By issuing the Brown v. Board of Education II decision, the Supreme Court allowed for a policy of gradual implementation which would make it responsive to local conditions and problems. For most white southerners Brown v. Board of Education II was a license to resist. During the following period less than one percent of black children attended white schools in the south.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Herzog, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ D' Emilio, *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹⁰⁸ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 531.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 88.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.mlk-hawaii.org/civilrightsmovement.htm>

When the decision was met with southern opposition to desegregate, the Supreme Court itself appeared as if it was working to weaken the effectiveness of the *Brown v. Board of Education*.¹¹¹

This ruling known as *Brown v. Board of Education II* provided an excuse for southern segregationists, who responded with a policy of deliberate delay and resistance.¹¹²

By issuing *Brown v. Board of Education II* they gave the green light to southern segregationists to obstruct the implementation of the decision. This was clear after a decade as in 1964 only 1.2 percent of black children attended schools with white students in the south.

We can conclude that the law is one thing and the reality on the ground is another.

c) Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*

Brown v. Board of Education led to different reactions by both blacks and whites in the southern and northern states.

i. Blacks Response

The African American response to *Brown* decision was articulated throughout the black press and in editorials published in official publications of national black organizations.¹¹³

On the night of May 17, 1954 NAACP Lawyers in Washington D. C., including Thurgood Marshall, James Nabrit, and Constance Baker Motley made a victory celebration in the presence of several other members of the legal defense fund.¹¹⁴

The Crisis, the magazine of the NAACP, in response to the decision, issued a special issue that included the complete text of the Supreme Court decision, the history of the

¹¹¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 39.

five schools cases, excerpts from the nation's press on segregation ruling and a text of the Atlanta declaration.¹¹⁵

Carl Rowan, a black journalist, who was the face of the state department abroad, traveled far and wide to convince the third world that America was making progress.

ii. Whites Response

The passionate belief in white superiority and the desperate fear of black retaliation caused many whites to resort to physical intimidation. The Ku Klux Klan was the most famous organization which spread throughout the south.¹¹⁶

Due to the Brown v. Board of Education the Klan renewed its activities in cooperation with new groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of White People.¹¹⁷

The Ku Klux Klan, with the support of police, terrorized anyone who tried to implement the Brown decision.

The Klan believed that violence was necessary to protect democracy, which sprang from the virtue of white, Anglo Saxon, and Protestant Civilization. They believed in white superiority and the inferiority of blacks. For the Klan the end justified the means. Thus they got involved in a new wave of violence and murder against blacks.¹¹⁸

The popular reaction of southerners to Brown v. Board of Education was defiance. Many opposed the federal government's intervention in their affairs, especially because they described Brown as unconstitutional. Southerners believed that the

¹¹⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁶ http://lib.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036/

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Brown v. Board of Education was oppressive and unjust. The legislative halls of the south rang loud with words like "interposition and nullification".¹¹⁹

The immediate effect of the decision in the south was the formation of the White Citizens Council in July 1954. This group was made up of businessmen and professionals, whose main goal was to preserve segregation. They then started a wave of lynching similarly done by the Ku Klux Klan.¹²⁰

In July 1954, Robert Patterson, a plantation manager in Indiana, Mississippi, formed the first citizen's council, a grass roots organization composed mostly of middle – class whites determined to resist the implementation of school integration.¹²¹

The citizen's council grew slowly. Local leaders met in New Orleans and formed the Citizens Council of America to coordinate resistance to the Brown decision.

John P. Brady, Leader of the White Citizens Council stated "The illegality and immorality of the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education was so great, every patriotic American has a duty to resist".¹²²

By 1955, as a result of Brown v. Board of Education, white violence against blacks increased. Lynching that had been on the decline returned to the south. In Mississippi there were three reported murders:

In 1955 the Reverend George W. Lee an NAACP Organizer and Baptist Minister, was lynched while he was driving home after a voter registration at Delta town of Belzoni.

Lamar Smith another NAACP organizer was killed in front of the courthouse of Larne in Brookhaven.

¹¹⁹ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹²⁰ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹²¹ D' Emilio, *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹²² Gerstle, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

On August 1955 Emmett Louis Till, 14 years old, was killed in Leflore County, while he was visiting his uncle Mose Wright in Delta, Mississippi.¹²³

In addition to lynching, integration was fought in a variety of ways:

1. In 1956 a black woman named Autherine Lucy tried to get admission to Atlantic University. She was called ugly names and was pelted with rotten eggs by angry whites. She was thrown away from her campus and expelled.

2. In 1960 armed marshals in New Orleans shielded six year old Ruby Bridges as she passed an angry crowd of 150 whites who threw tomatoes and eggs.¹²⁴

By 1956 every southern state had enacted legislation to the effect that the Brown v. Board of Education ruling is "Null and Void". U.S. Solicitor General Simon Sobeloff forwarded to chief Justice Earl Warren a letter from an official of the New York Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. The official believed that imputes behind the court's action was "the worldwide Communist conspiracy" and claimed that the NAACP had been funded by "a Communist Front".¹²⁵

On January 1956, four southern governors endorsed the doctrine of "Interposition". They promised to use the power of the state government to resist desegregation by placing the sovereignty of the state between local school board officials and the Supreme Court. The four states proclaimed open resistance and imposed legal penalties for compliance with the brown decision.¹²⁶

Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi declared: "The south will not abide by or obey this legislative decision by a political court".¹²⁷

On March 12, 1956 one hundred and one southern congressmen challenged the authority of the Supreme Court by signing the "Southern Manifesto". They believed

¹²³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 54.

¹²⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹²⁶ D'Emilio, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

that *Brown v. Board of Education* was a clear abuse of judicial power and contrary to the constitution. The manifesto offered praise to the states which declared the intention to resist forced integration by any lawful means. It attacked the Supreme Court for its use of "Naked Power" to overturn the local law of "Plessey". The manifesto provided massive support to a resistance movement.¹²⁸

Various forms of violence and intimidation became common. Bombings, beatings and murders increased sharply across the South.¹²⁹

Black schools and churches were bombed, children and civil rights workers were murdered.

A federal court had approved a desegregation proposal that would allow nine black students to enroll in Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas in the fall of 1957. The Little Rock School Board had previously announced their support for the decision. Virgil T. Blossom, Little Rock's Superintendent of the school, drafted a plan for desegregation of the school on a gradual basis. The plan was called the Blossom Plan. It comprised the integration of two high schools.¹³⁰

On May 1955 a few days after the Supreme Court issued *Brown v. Board of Education II*, the Little Rock School Board adopted a new plan for school desegregation that was different from the Blossom plan. The new plan was called "Little Rock Phase Program". It provided limited integration for only one high school "Little Rock Central".¹³¹

But Arkansas segregationists called for a state constitutional amendment to bypass the *Brown* decision. Orval Faubus, Governor of Arkansas, supported the hard line of segregationists in order to be reelected.

¹²⁸ D'Emilio, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹³⁰ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

On September 2, 1957, Governor, Faubus announced that the integration plan endangered public order. He mobilized the National Guard to prevent integration. Two days later when the nine black students attempted to enter the school, guardsmen stopped them. The NAACP obtained a federal court order to remove the troops.¹³²

On September 4, 1957 Faubus surrounded Central High School to prevent the nine black students from entering. Through this action Faubus challenged the federal government's authority.

On September 20, Judge Davis ordered Faubus to stop interfering with school desegregation at Little Rock and to remove the national guards surrounding the school.

But when the students tried again to enter the school on September 23, they were faced by a hysterical hostile white mob. The defiance of Faubus and other Arkansas officials forced the federal government to take action.¹³³

After the failing to persuade Faubus to obey the ruling of the Supreme Court, President Eisenhower decided to send Federal Troops in order to enforce the court decision.¹³⁴

On September 24, Eisenhower called the National Guard to protect the rights of black students. Thus on September 25, the black students attended the school with the protection of soldiers until the end of the school year.¹³⁵

Segregationists from across the south had flocked to Little Rock, as white students sang "two, four, six, we ain't gonna integrate". Mobs chanted "Niggers, keep away from our schools".¹³⁶

¹³² D'Emilio, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹³³ Ibid. p. 10.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

President Eisenhower described events outside Central High as a "Disgraceful Occurrence". President Eisenhower then went on television and addressed Americans: "At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that Communism bears towards a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence and indeed to the safety of our nation and the world. Our enemies are gloating over this incident and using it everywhere to misrepresent our whole nation. We are portrayed as a violator of those standards which the peoples of the world united to proclaim in the Charter of the United Nations."¹³⁷

5) Conclusion

People used to believe that democracy was the greatest form of government, but western democracy has failed to live up to the noble ideals and principles inherent in its system, because it has perpetuated colonialism and imperialism.

All these were found in a nation declared that all men are equal, promised freedom and equal protection for all and called itself as the hope for the oppressed of the world. Such nation had built its wealth upon the backs of the slaves.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's sought to reaffirm the basic American values such as equal rights and individual dignity.

The idealism of New Negro was based on the American idealism of democracy. His goal was to share fully in the American life and institutions. The racial self-consciousness gave blacks strength to face injustices which confronted him on daily basis and it provided him with faith in himself and hope in the future. Their goals were identical with the expressed ideals of the country.

¹³⁷ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

The nine black students who were admitted to the school in Little Rock faced physical violence and constant racial abuse. Despite the pressures to leave the school, these children decided to stay and show the country how determined African Americans were in their struggle for equality. Little Rock was a spark of the African American nonviolent struggle for justice.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* proved that African Americans were determined to demand their rights as guaranteed by the constitution.

Although it was made about schools, it also implied that segregation anywhere else was also unconstitutional. This case marked the success of the legal battles that were led by NAACP lawyers against segregation. It was a big step forward in guaranteeing African Americans their rights.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 stood at a key moment in the history of the civil rights movement, putting the law of the land on the side of those who sought to eradicate racial inequality.

It had two main effects. It encouraged civil rights activists to expand their attacks on other aspects of segregation. The other effect it had inspired northern liberals and black political activists to press more strongly for racial integration in the south and the Border States.

As a result of the concerted effort to delay the *Brown v. Board of Education*, blacks lost faith in legislation and court action as the means to achieve full citizenship. They became confident that the law merely declares and define rights, but does not fulfill them.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 was a turning point in US history. It reversed the "Separate but Equal" doctrine that had justified official racism for the past half century. It was the first step toward school integration in the south.

It also gave the Civil Rights Movement the added legitimacy of a Supreme Court decision declaring that state-sponsored segregation was both unjustifiable and terribly wrong.

Brown v. Board of Education was the stimulus for renewed efforts to ensure democratic rights for the blacks. It gave Blacks new hope.

It has set the stage for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, as blacks gained new confidence feeling the winds of change. As well it signaled the beginning of the modern civil rights movement.

Also it had demolished the constitutional approval of segregation in America. It provided a popular example that African American assertiveness could triumph in American politics.

Chapter Three

Modern Civil Rights Movement

III. Modern Civil Rights Movement

This chapter covers the Montgomery Buss Boycott of 1955, which was considered to be the first nonviolent boycott that sparked the modern black civil rights movement in 1950s.

The boycott was sparked by Mrs. Rosa Parks, a 42, year old black seamstress who refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger on December 1, 1955.

The chapter also discusses the impact and gains of the bus boycott on the African Americans and the civil rights movement.

A. Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth century was a low point for African Americans. After the emancipation proclamation in 1863 the hopes of blacks had been betrayed, as they were pushed into second class status, they faced oppression in the main three dimensions of life, economic, political and personal oppression.

The civil rights movement in the 1950's grew out of the conditions generated by Jim Crow Laws, such as segregation statutes, lynching and extra legal intimidation. African Americans were controlled completely.

By the 1950's, and through Jim Crow Laws, every southern state was segregated. Schools were segregated, restaurants were off limits to the blacks and hotels had no vacancies when a black face appeared. Theaters, waiting rooms, lavatories, drinking fountains and public accommodations were segregated as well.

The civil rights movement and mass demonstrations were needed as a social protest movement to challenge the status quo.

From an economic point of view, blacks were getting the lowest paying and dirtiest jobs. Around seventy percent of black men were employed in unskilled jobs, such as

janitors, porters, cooks, machine operators and common labors. Black females worked as domestic servants.

Blacks also suffered from political oppression. They were excluded from the political process. There were no black officials in the city or state governments. Law and order in black communities was maintained by white police forces. Courts were controlled by white judges and juries.

Blacks faced personal oppression as well. Segregation denied blacks personal freedom. Blacks were labeled as an inferior race. Jim Crow forced them to use different toilets, drinking fountains, waiting rooms, parks, hospitals and schools. The colored and white signs marked almost all public places and buildings in the southern cities. These signs expressed the reality of a social system committed to the segregation of blacks from whites and the denial of their human rights and self respect. It appeared that democracy was for whites only.

The increasing growth of racism at the turn of the century encouraged the development of a new sense of solidarity among African American community. Blacks were forced develop a strong sense of group coordination in the shape of new institutions.

The Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 was a turning point in the struggle for the civil rights movement. The period followed Brown was marked as the beginning of the civil rights movement. That period had witnessed great struggle, massive confrontations between blacks who were seeking their civil rights and their oppressors the whites.

Thus the coordination of a new movement needed the creation of new organizations. A movement had to be created to work for broad social change.

B. Montgomery Bus Boycott

1. Historical Background

By the 1950's, southern whites established a comprehensive system of domination over blacks. Blacks were controlled economically, politically and personally. These three dimensions could be described as a tripartite system of racial domination.¹

In Montgomery, the capital of Alabama and the cradle of the old confederacy, all public accommodation such as schools, restaurants, movies theaters, public water fountains and the city's buses were segregated.²

According to Montgomery's city bus laws, black users of the Alabama capital's public transportation system were required to pay their fare at the front of the bus and then step back out into the street and re-board through the rear door.³

The first four rows of seats were reserved for whites only, while the last ten seats were for blacks. The middle seats were considered a "no man's land". Even if the front seats were empty, and black seats were full, blacks were ordered to keep standing. If a black person was sitting in one of the middle rows, he or she could be ordered by the driver to get up and give the seat to a white passenger.⁴

Montgomery bus segregation laws also forbade whites and blacks sitting in the same row.⁵

The racial rules on Montgomery's buses in the 1950's were humiliating to black passengers.⁶

¹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p.1.

² Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

³ Ibid. p. 88.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. p. 68.

⁶ Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 – 1970* (New York: Scribner, Inc., 2001), p.87.

2. Rosa Parks

On the cold late afternoon of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a 42, year old black seamstress who worked at the men's alteration shop of a department store, left her work and boarded one of Cleveland Avenue route buses, on her way home. She sat down with three other blacks in the 5th row next to the aisle, which was the row just behind the front section reserved for whites.⁷

On the third stop, the first four rows of the bus were filled with white passengers. A white passenger was left standing. J. F. Blake, the bus driver, asked Parks and the other three blacks, who were sitting on the aisle to give up their seats. The other three blacks moved. But Parks refused to give up her seat. The driver called the police and had Parks arrested. She was jailed, when Edgar D. Nixon arrived at the jail house to pay her bond.⁸

The claim that Rosa Parks did not give up her seat because she was tired was a false claim. Evidence shows that she did this for political and organizational reasons.

Parks had been involved in the struggle to overcome racial inequality before she was arrested. Parks worked for the Montgomery Voters Registration League, which sought to register blacks for vote.

In 1932 Parks joined the campaign to save the "Scottsboro Boys". The story was that nine young black men were accused of raping two white teenagers near Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931. Despite strong evidence that black men were innocent, the white jury convicted the boys of the crime and eight of them were sentenced to death. Eventually "Scottsboro Boys" gained their freedom after a long process lasted for more than 20 years.⁹

⁷ Frady, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁸ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁹ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

When the two police men who arrested Rosa asked her why she did not move she replied "I didn't think I should have to stand up".¹⁰

When Parks was asked why she had refused to move to the rear of the bus, she said: "It was a matter of dignity; I could not have faced myself and my people if I had moved."¹¹

Rosa added "I remained where I was. When the driver saw that I was still sitting there, he asked if I was going to stand up. I told him, no, I wasn't. He said, "Well, if *you* don't stand up, I'm going to have you arrested". I told him to go on and have me arrested".¹²

She added: "I had felt for a long time that if I was ever told to get up so a white person could set, that I would refuse to do so".¹³

Parks was a civil rights activists and local NAACP official in Montgomery, Alabama for over a decade before her refusal to abide by the segregated bus seating practices on December 1, 1955.¹⁴

Parks was deeply rooted in the black protest tradition. In the 1940's she had refused several times to comply with segregation rules on buses. In the early 1940's she was ejected from a bus for failing to comply by the same bus driver, Blake, who had arrested her on December 1, 1955.

Parks stated: "My resistance to being mistreated on the buses and anywhere else was just a regular thing with me and not just that day".¹⁵

Rosa recalled: "I had problems with bus drivers over the years, because I didn't see fit to pay my money in the front and then go around to the back. Sometimes bus drivers

¹⁰ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹¹ <http://www.stanford.edu/King/publications/papers>

¹² King, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹³ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁴ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

wouldn't permit me to get on the bus, and I had been ejected from the bus... There had been incidents over the years."¹⁶

Parks action was an individual heroic initiative which reflected an organizational point of view and training. She had been an active member and occasional officer of Montgomery's NAACP Chapter since 1943. She also had worked with E. D. Nixon on a number of voter registration efforts.¹⁷

Parks action showed a political cognizance. She had a long history of involvement with protest organizations. In the early 1940's she organized the Local NAACP youth council. She also served as First Secretary for Alabama State Conference of NAACP branches, which was organized in the late 1940's. That position provided her with the opportunity to contact important civil rights activists like Ella Baker and A. Philip Randolph operating on the national level.¹⁸

In 1954-1955 Parks in cooperation with other local women, reorganized the council and became its adult adviser.¹⁹

In the summer of 1955, Parks had attended "a human relations workshop at the Highlander Folk School, a training institute for labor unions organized in Monteagle, Tennessee."²⁰

The Highlander Folk School of Tennessee was founded in 1930s by Myles Horton, Don West, Elizabeth Haws, James Dombrowski and others committed to establishing a progressive labor education center in the south. They aimed at helping workers and organized labor in the south. It sponsored retreats, training sessions and symposia, which gave a wide variety of activists to interact. For more than 20 years the school

¹⁶ King, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁷ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁰ Ibid.

had provided a unique forum for international dialogue in the rigidly segregated south.²¹

At Highlander, veteran activists introduced a generation of younger men and women to organize skills and tools which they then taught to others. It was designed to educate rural and industrial leaders for a new social order, particularly in union organizing efforts that would advance what Horton called "Conscious class action".²²

West explained that Highlander "educates for a socialized nation" in which human justice, cooperation of a live hood for every man and a fair distribution of wealth would replace the system of "graft, exploitation and private profit".²³

By 1950, Highlander shifted to extend its activities into wider fields of democratization.

In the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education of 1954, Highlander became center for education and training to assist the civil rights movement.²⁴

At Highlander Parks got introduced to policies and teachings related to the civil rights and freedom. She also learned theories and techniques for nonviolent direct action from the full-time professional organizers at the school and found herself in contact with a group of enlightened southern whites who wanted to end segregation.²⁵

There she had learned the tune "we shall overcome", the school's official anthem and an assortment of other freedom songs, most of them collected by Zilphia Horton, the wife of Myles Horton, Highlander's founder and director.²⁶

²¹ King, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

²² Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²³ <http://www.solidarity-us.org/atc/96MLK.html>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ King, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²⁶ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Mrs. Park's arrest triggered the mass movement not only because she was a quite, dignified woman of high morals, but because she was an integral member of the civil rights organizations capable of mobilizing a social movement.²⁷

Additionally Parks was anchored in the church community of Montgomery, where she belonged to the St. Paul AME Church and served as a stewardess.²⁸

We can conclude that Rosa's action was a result of her nonviolent training at the Highlander school and because of her association with the civil rights organization for a long period prior to her refusal to give up her seat for a white passenger.

Parks's action was not purely an individual initiative. Her behavior showed the influence of organizational training in the nonviolent resistance against segregation. She was a member of the NAACP and was trained very well about how to face injustice and white prejudice with nonviolence.

The arrest and conviction of Rosa Parks had a double impact. On one hand, it was an accelerating factor to arouse blacks to take positive action. On the other hand, it was a test of the validity of the segregation law itself.

The action taken by Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955 gave birth to a form of protest that would become an integral part of the civil rights movement, that why Parks was called "The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement".²⁹

Parks action was an individual heroic initiative which reflected an organizational point of view and training.

Parks act was a turning point in American history. Her arrest had sparked the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott and the modern civil rights movement in the 1950's which grew in intensity over the course of the next 15 years.

²⁷ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ <http://www.solidarity-us.org>

3. Bus Boycott

The Montgomery bus boycott grew out of many humiliating practices such as having to stand over empty seats, having to pay fares at the front door and going out to the back and being arrested for refusing to get up and give a seat to a white passenger. These conditions caused blacks to grow tired and fed up. This was given expression on December 5, 1955 when 99 percent of blacks decided to walk instead of riding segregated buses.³⁰

The boycott initiative came from Jo Ann Robinson, President of the Woman's Political Council and an English Teacher at Alabama State College, and E. D. Nixon, President of the local NAACP. He also had started the local branch of Montgomery Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.³¹

The Woman's Political Council had been pressuring the city to reform its segregated transportation system since 1953.³²

The Woman's Political Council and NAACP, both local black organizations, had been waiting for an opportunity to strike a blow against segregation.³³

Upon the news of the arrest of Rosa Parks, E. D. Nixon, Jo Ann Robinson, and Rufus Lewis, a local businessman, decided to seize the opportunity of Parks' act and discussed the possibility of using a boycott as a means of resistance against the city's bus system in protest of the discriminatory policies.³⁴

Nixon thought that the bus boycott, which the Women's Council was discussing, could work because every place in the city could be walked to if they decided to go

³⁰ King, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³³ Hampy, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

³⁴ King, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

ahead with the plan. He requested that all black pastors in the city to convene for a meeting the next night to discuss the boycott.³⁵

On Friday, December 2, 1955, more than 40 prominent black ministers and civic leaders of Montgomery, including Ralph Abernathy, H.H. Hubbard and Martin Luther King, met at the basement of the red brick Dexter Avenue Baptist church of Martin Luther King to discuss the arrest of Rosa Parks.³⁶

The meeting was chaired by Mr. L. Roy Bennet, President of the International Minister's Alliance. The convened leaders planned a one day boycott to take place on Monday, December 5, 1955, the day of Rosa Park's trial, to protest the bus segregation system.³⁷

December 5, 1955 marked the first day of the Montgomery bus boycott. Upon hearing the call of the black leaders for one day bus boycott thousands of Montgomery blacks did not ride the city buses that day.³⁸

They mostly walked, joined car pools, drove wagons, even rode mules, took cabs, or used private cars and others went by horse-drawn wagons rather than ride the city segregated buses. The Boycott that day was 99% effective.³⁹

4. Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

After the success of the first day of the boycott and after Parks had been convicted of violating the city-wide segregation system, eighteen black leaders, including Nixon, Ralph Abernathy and E. N. French, met to organize for a mass meeting which was scheduled for that evening at the Holt Street Baptist Church. In order to direct the

³⁵ King, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid. pp. 112-113.

³⁷ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁸ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³⁹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

protest, the convened leaders decided to establish the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA).⁴⁰

The name of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was proposed by Ralph Abernathy. Martin Luther King was elected as President of the MIA. King would be responsible for the management of the organization and the boycott.⁴¹

The official slogan of the Montgomery Improvement Association was "Justice without Violence."⁴²

At the meeting held at the Holt Street Baptist church, the MIA specified the actual demands of the Montgomery bus boycott campaign as: Courteous treatment for blacks by bus drivers; blacks would be allowed to make applications, for employment as drivers on primarily black routes and passengers were to be seated on a first come first served basis; blacks sitting from the back of the bus toward the front and whites from the front toward the back.⁴³

During the first couple of weeks of December, 1955, MIA held three meetings with the Montgomery City Commission, where they presented their demands to W. A. Gayle, Mayor of Montgomery. The commissioners and the representatives of the bus company were also notified of these demands. But these demands were rejected completely, as whites refused to make any compromise.⁴⁴

Once their demands were rejected, black community became more determined to continue the boycott until the Montgomery city lines accepted their demands. For the purpose of planning and organizing, MIA created committees of strategy, finance, and transportation.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ King, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁴¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴² <http://www.stanford.edu/King/publications/papers>

⁴³ Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁴⁴ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

The most important committee was the committee of transportation which was necessary to provide alternative means of transportation. A carpool was formed and an elaborate system of dispatch and pick up with stations was set up.⁴⁶

The MIA organized these carpools in cooperation with eight black taxi companies which had a fleet of around 60-70 cars, to provide alternative services for cents only.⁴⁷

By the end of January, 1956, Montgomery's downtown store keepers claimed that they had lost around US \$1 million in sales due to the restricted travel of blacks. Also the bus company lost around 65 percent of its income and was forced to raise its fares and cut back its schedules.⁴⁸

The white community attempted a variety of methods to end the boycott: the police commissioner ordered taxi cab companies to charge the legal minimum of 45 cents for each rider. City policemen began harassing and dispersing groups of people waiting at pick up points for carpools. Police cancelled the insurance policies of the station wagons of MIA, which prevented the vehicles from being used in the carpool transport system. City attorneys petitioned the court to dissolve the MIA car pool system as a private enterprise operating without a permit.⁴⁹

On February 2, 1956, lawyers of the MIA and the NAACP filed a suit in the United States District Court in Montgomery representing five black women. The case was called "Browder v. Gayle", and requested that segregation on buses be declared unconstitutional in Alabama, as it violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ King, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁴⁸ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁴⁹ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

On the same day Montgomery officials arrested 24 black pastors. This incident solidified and strengthened black determination to continue the boycott.⁵¹

The mass arrests in Montgomery also cemented the boycott and drew national attention.⁵²

Blacks continued to walk. They were committed to the boycott. An elderly uneducated black woman named *Mother Pollard* embodied this commitment. When asked whether she was weary after several weeks of walking, she replied "My feet are tired, but my soul is at rest".⁵³

On June 4, 1956, a special three-judge panel of the United States District Court, headed by Judge Lynn of Birmingham, ruled on *Browder v. Gayle*. The court found that bus segregation in Montgomery was unconstitutional. The city commission immediately appealed to the Supreme Court.⁵⁴

The federal district court gave their decision on the Montgomery bus case and ordered an end to bus segregation in the city. Judge Lynn read the provision of the decision which stated:

"We hold that the statutes requiring segregation of the white and colored races on a common carrier violate the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment".⁵⁵

On Tuesday, November 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the U.S. District Court, in declaring Alabama's state and local laws of segregation on buses to be unconstitutional. The Montgomery bus boycott succeeded

⁵¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁵² Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁵³ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

in outlawing all forms of segregation on public transportation in America. On November 14, 1956, around 8000 Blacks in Montgomery celebrated their victory.⁵⁶

On December 20, 1956, the Supreme Court notification arrived at the federal courthouse in Montgomery and Deputy U. S. Marshals served notices to city officials that the Supreme Court's Bus Integration Order became legally effective. African Americans returned to use the city bus lines.⁵⁷

The next day on December 21, 1956, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, E.D. Nixon, Rosa Parks and Glenn Smiley, a White Minister, boarded the first integrated bus in Montgomery.⁵⁸

5. Gains of the Boycott

The Montgomery bus boycott achieved many gains for the civil rights movement. Among its achievements: Desegregation of the Montgomery transportation system, a full appreciation by blacks of themselves as first class citizens, the introduction of nonviolent direct action as a strategy for further protests and attention of national news media, which presented sympathetic coverage of the protest.⁵⁹

The Montgomery boycott had a major impact on the civil rights movement for several reasons: It marked the first successful instance of direct mass action by southern blacks. Also it marked up Martin Luther King as a major new leader, who received worldwide recognition. Finally it witnessed the emergence of Gandhi's nonviolence strategy as an ideological base of the movement and lastly it produced a new breed of civil rights leaders from among the southern black ministers.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Branch, *op. cit.*, p.196.

⁵⁸ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁶⁰ D' Emilio, *op. cit.*, p.12.

The success of the Montgomery bus boycott was the most sustained mass action of African Americans in the twentieth century.⁶¹

The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 has focused national attention on a wave of African American protests that rocked the south for a decade.⁶²

6. Conclusion

The racial rules on Montgomery's buses in the 1950's were obviously designed to inflict as much humiliation as possible on black riders, most of them female domestic workers.

The Montgomery bus boycott had served as a training ground where nonviolent direct action was systematically introduced and developed as a training tool for social change among the masses and local leadership of the boycott.

The boycott made it clear that black demands could not be easily ignored, because the black community mobilized in support of its leadership. Also it made it clear that power is created when protest masses act collectively.

The Montgomery movement introduced the nonviolent approach for social change to the black masses. Earlier to the boycott, blacks were unfamiliar with the principles and techniques of the nonviolent direct action, as well as it have sparked the following ten years of black struggle for freedom, justice and civil rights.

The Montgomery bus boycott was a victory, but it was limited. It did not raise the Negro standard of living. It did not mean better education for black children and it did not mean economic advances.

⁶¹ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁶² Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg. *Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Press, 2002), p.63.

Chapter Four

Martin Luther King

IV. Martin Luther King

This chapter presents a brief biography of Martin Luther King, as well as it gives a summary to King's doctoral dissertation which is titled:

"A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Henry Nelson Wieman and Paul Tillich".

The chapter also explains the nonviolent strategy of King and his beliefs about the Christian love, the beloved community and violence.

Then it deals with the establishment of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference "SCLC" with King as its president and it explains the collaboration between individuals like King and organizations like SCLC in leading the black civil rights movement in the 1960s for creating social change.

The chapter also clarifies the important role played by the black church in leading the civil rights movement during the same period.

A. Biographical Outline of King

Martin Luther King was born in January 15, 1929 at 501 Auburn Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, Georgia into a black middle class family. This was the year of the stock market crash.¹

As the son of Minister Reverend Martin Luther King Sr., the junior King grew up in the Ebenezer Baptist church. As a result, his life was entirely organized around the church.²

King began school at the age of five. At that age he was reciting stretches of biblical verse and had a vocabulary which one would expect from a child twice of his age.³

¹ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

² King, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³ *Ibid.* p. 88.

Martin Luther King skipped several grades in school. He entered Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta a full year ahead of other students his age.⁴

In the eleventh grade, he won an oratorical contest in Georgia Town for the delivery of a speech titled "The Negro and the Constitution". While returning home with his teacher Miss Sarah Bradley, the two were forced by the bus driver to give up their seats for white passengers. It was then thought that King experienced the angriest moment in his life.⁵

As King stated later: "It was the angriest I have ever been in my life". It was the most traumatic encounter with segregation that young King had suffered.⁶

In 1944 at the age of 15, King enrolled at Morehouse College as a freshman to study Sociology and English Literature. While at Morehouse, King expressed his belief in the ideals of American freedom, which he identified as "The Spirit of Lincoln". Four years later, at the age of 19, King graduated from Morehouse and got his Bachelors Degree in Sociology.⁷

In 1948, after his graduation from Morehouse, King entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, where he received his Bachelors Degree in Divinity in 1951. At Crozer he was chosen as valedictorian of his class.⁸

After receiving his degree at Crozer in 1951, he joined Boston University to study systematic theology, and wrote a theme titled: "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman". He completed his thesis in 1955 and got his Ph. D.⁹

⁴ King, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁷ Gerstle, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁹ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

In 1953, King married Coretta Scott, a native of Marion, Alabama. Scott was studying to be a concert singer at the New England Conservatory in Boston.¹⁰

King was appointed as Pastor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama on August, 1954.¹¹

On February 2, 1959, King, accompanied by his wife Coretta and Dr. Lawrence D. Reddick, a Black Professor of History at Montgomery's Alabama State University, left for India to look closely at "Satyagraha" Gandhi's nonviolent strategy.¹²

King's trip to India deepened his personal belief in the nonviolent struggle. The Satyagraha impressed him and he became utterly persuaded that nonviolent resistance had been the best course for the Indian struggle against Britain. He also concluded that nonviolent struggle was the only valid approach to be used by blacks in America to achieve major social and political change.¹³

During the 1950's and 1960's Martin Luther King participated in numerous civil rights demonstrations, he was the president of MIA, which was responsible for the management of the famous Montgomery bus boycott for 381 days.

He took part in the sit-ins, which were sparked by SNCC activists in Atlanta in 1960. In 1963, he organized protests in Birmingham and Atlanta, which attracted national attention and sympathy and helped to convince President John F. Kennedy to call for civil rights legislation.¹⁴

In 1965, King organized the Selma campaign in Alabama, which helped to produce the Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹⁵

¹⁰ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² King, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹³ Ibid. P.133.

¹⁴ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

¹⁵ Ibid.

King experienced numerous acts of discrimination in many situations through his life. As a child he lost white playmates. He was slapped by a white woman, who claimed that he had stepped on her toes in a crowded elevator. He was moved to the black section of a downtown shoe store. A traffic policeman addressed his father as "boy". He was insulted by a white supervisor on a summer job, he was forced to stand on a bus for 90 miles giving up his seat for a white passenger, and he was forced to eat in a segregated section behind a curtain in a train while he was traveling from Connecticut to Atlanta.¹⁶

These experiences in the segregated south influenced King and molded his own feelings and beliefs. He became outraged by injustice and refused to accept it.

Traveling alone in a train from Connecticut to Atlanta, King was escorted to a back table in the dining car where a curtain was pulled so white passengers would not have to look at him. About this incident King said: "I felt just as if a curtain had come down across my whole life" and added "The insult I will never forget".¹⁷

King listed four forces that would greatly help in removing racial segregation and discrimination from American Life:

World opinion, as a world leader, America is responsive to world opinion.

Industrialization of the South: Once the south became industrialized, business and modern living will have little place for the inefficiencies of antiquated Jim Crow Laws. The aroused moral conscience of the church.¹⁸

King wrote 6 books: *Stride Toward Freedom*, 1958, *The Measure of a Man*, 1959, *Why We Can't Wait*, 1963, *Strength to Love*, 1963, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, 1967 and *The Trumpet of Conscience*, 1968.¹⁹

¹⁶ Humpy, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁷ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁸ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁹ <http://www.thekingcenter.com>

Martin Luther King played a very important and central role in the Montgomery bus boycott, the struggle for integrated education, the destruction of racial barriers in public service, the fight for voter's rights, the movement of better housing and the rights of workers for decent wages.

King was an apostle of peace who had risen to great levels of spiritual awareness, a historical hero, whose mission was to serve others.

His vision and goals were the complete liberation of mankind and the elimination of injustices and change of laws which challenged western democracy.

King was shot by James Earl Ray while he was standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968.

B. King's Doctoral Dissertation

"A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Henry Nelson Wieman and Paul Tillich".

From King's papers we get a sense of the great significance of personalism to him. Personalism "human personality" means that all individual persons are the ultimate intrinsic value in the world.²⁰

Long before he was introduced to the term of personalism, King was introduced to some of its basic tenets by his parents and his grandparents.²¹

He identified personalism as his basic philosophical position. He indicated that personalism gave him the grounding for the idea of personal God and for the dignity and worth of all human personality.²²

King was influenced by four of personalism ideas mainly: reality "God" is personal; persons are the highest intrinsic values; reality is social and the existence of an object

²⁰ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²¹ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

²² Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

moral order is at the center of the universe. These ideas appealed to King in seminary and graduate school and helped him toward rational clarity of some of his fundamental faith claims and had important bearing on King's beloved community.²³

He was influenced by personalism's doctrine of the personal God of love and reason, the emphasis in personalistic ethics on moral law and the inherent sense of dignity and worth of persons as such.²⁴

King was strongly attracted to the personalism philosophy because he believed that if the dignity and worth of all human personalities was the ultimate value in the world, then racial segregation and discrimination were among the world's ultimate evils.²⁵

The main goal of King's doctoral dissertation was to highlight the importance of personalism. He decided to write on the doctrine of God because he believed in a personal and loving God who cares about the well being of persons in the world; always working on their behalf and because of the central place God occupies in religion and because it is an immortal and important issue which needed further clarification.²⁶

In his sermons King appealed to the magnificent orderliness of the universe as evidence for belief in the existence of God.²⁷

He explained that one evidence of God's existence the fact that all persons are subject to a system of moral law which they did not create and which they are not able to change. For example the true laws of nature are what they are independent of man's attempts to formulate them. In the same way the moral law is independent of human opinion regarding it.²⁸

²³ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁶ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

²⁷ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 43.

King stated that God placed certain moral principles within the structure of universe, like law of love. He clarified that those who stood against integration were opposing democracy and the eternal edicts of Good.²⁹

He selected Tillich and Wieman because they represented two different philosophical standpoints which were conducive to his desire to compare and contrast two theological systems.³⁰

Paul Tillich was a German Professor, Leader of the Christian Socialists in Europe and an Anti-Nazi Exile, who came to live in America and teach at the Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Tillich followed the method of correlation to show the interdependence between the ultimate questions and the answers given in the Christian message.³¹

The ultimate conviction of God in Tillich's is that "*God is being-it self*", Tillich is denying that God is a being beside other beings. He intended to convey the idea of power being. He means that "God is the power of being in every thing and above every thing".³²

The most important words in Tillich's conception of God are: "power and being".

Tillich believed that God was transcendent, he said that God is as "being –itself" or the ground of being.³³

Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman (1884 – 1975) an American Professor taught at many universities including: Professor of Philosophy at Occidental College (1917 – 1927), Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the University of Chicago Divinity School

²⁹ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³⁰ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF.

³¹ <http://www.stanford.edu/King/publications/papers>

³² Ibid.

³³ King, *op. cit.*, p.102.

(1927 – 1947) and Professor of Philosophy at the Southern University, Illinois (1956 – 1966).³⁴

The most important words in Wieman's conception of God are: "Goodness and Value". Wieman's basic definition of God is that "*Creative Event*".

He defines God as a supreme value and as the unlimited connective growth of value-connections. Wieman means that natural forces underline the achievement of value.³⁵

Wieman's conception of God was that "God is supreme value and supreme source of value".³⁶

Tillich proclaimed that love should be the foundation of power and that Christian love must be united with power in order to accomplish its twofold goal of negating what is against love and of saving the soul of him who acts against love.³⁷

King stated that power should be rooted in love; he called for Tillich's theme of the union of love, power and justice.

King said: "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love".³⁸

In his thesis, King referred to Tillich's doctrine: That love and justice should not be looked upon as two distinct attributes of God.

Against Tillich, King believed that God is not absolutely beyond in the world. He is both beyond and in the world.³⁹

In his dissertation King criticized Henry Nelson Wieman for denying that God is personal. Wieman defined God as "the principle of concretion".⁴⁰

³⁴ <http://www.stanford.edu/king/publications/papers>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 52.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 61.

Wieman defined God as: "The growth of living connections of value in the universe", "The growth of meaning and value in the world". "That interaction between things which generate and magnify personality and all its high values".

From these definitions King concluded that: "Wieman's God is a process, an order of events, a system or pattern of behavior".⁴¹

King concluded that Tillich and Wieman's conceptions of God were lacking positive religious values. He said: "Both concepts are too impersonal to express adequately the Christian conception of God. They provide neither the conditions for true fellowship with God nor the assurance of his goodness".⁴²

The most important in Tillich's conception of God is that God is "Power and Being". On the other hand Wieman's conceptions of God were "Goodness and Value".⁴³

King concluded that Tillich's emphasis on being denies value and Wieman's emphasis on value denies being. Neither of them believed in a super-natural being before and above all beings as their creator.⁴⁴

King rejected the views of Tillich and Wieman that God is Supra-Personal. Instead King agreed with the chief proponents of personalism that there are two ways to characterize God: as Personal or Impersonal.⁴⁵

King stated that it is in God that we get our best idea of the essence of person. The human person gives us our best clues to the meaning of person, but the true essence of person is to be found only in God.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁴² Ibid. p. 63.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁴⁵ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

⁴⁶ Ibid.

To King, person essentially means self-consciousness and self direction. In God these reach a perfection which could never be found in human beings who are just faint images of essential personhood.⁴⁷

In his thesis King argued that neither Tillich nor Wieman possessed an adequate conception of God neither a synthesis of their viewpoints, plus a large dose of personalist theology would be superior.⁴⁸

King was an ethical personalist, who means that he believed in a personal God who is the ground of all things; also he believed in the sacredness of all persons "Every man is somebody because he is a child of God.... Man is a child of God made in His image and therefore must be respected as such".⁴⁹

King credited personalism with providing him with a philosophical foundation for the idea of a personal God and with the basis for the dignity and worth of human personality. Personalism reinforced his religious faith because it presented rational evidence for the existence and nature of a personal God and for the intrinsic value of every human being.⁵⁰

King in his writing, speeches clarified the fundamental role of personalism is his intellectual development. He insisted on the term of personality as he believed that God is theomorphic, which means that God is the true essence of person.

King was thoroughgoing personalist; he was able to reason personalism out of its logical conclusions in metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of religion and ethics.

⁴⁷ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

⁴⁸ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ www.cts.edu/Forms/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

⁵⁰ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

C. King & the Nonviolent Struggle

1. Nonviolence

Nonviolent civil disobedience means a moral obligation to refuse to cooperate with unjust social system.⁵¹

Although the Montgomery bus boycott was considered to be the first nonviolent direct action, nonviolent strategy was proposed earlier. In 1941 A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), proposed a massive March on Washington to protest nonviolently against racial discrimination in the defense industries.⁵²

King's philosophy of nonviolent direct action and his vision for mass movement was combined with that of Jesus Christ and Mohandas K. Gandhi. Gandhi had discovered an insight into political power which was that "a ruler can not rule if the people do not obey". From that truth he developed a conceptual framework and outline of a comprehensive program which undermined Britain's ability and willingness to continue its rule over India. Gandhi proved that rulers are powerless without the support and cooperation of the people.⁵³

Gandhi developed "Constructive Program" to overcome Indian submission to the British rule based on: promote the transformation of Indians to self-respect and dignity; decrease reliance on British institutions and pursue an active struggle for independence.⁵⁴

The strategy for carrying out the mass nonviolent struggle used by Gandhi was the "Satyagraha". Satyagraha is formed of two parts: "Satya" which means "*truth*" which

⁵¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵² Ibid. p. 23.

⁵³ <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/OSNC.pdf>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

is also equal to love, and "agraha" which means "*force*". Thus Satyagraha means truth force or love force.⁵⁵

Satyagraha was a type of principled civil disobedience against unjust laws that included the concept of "Ahimsa" the notion that no harm should be done to any living thing.⁵⁶

Stayagraha was a firm commitment to truth. It was perseverance to a just cause pursued through nonviolent action. It included conversion efforts to change the heart of the oppressor to see the injustice inflicted upon the people.⁵⁷

Gandhi's main strategy of nonviolent struggle was that peaceful demonstrations would provoke both mass arrests and a violent reaction. This strategy would also draw national news coverage to their cause. The violence which was practiced by white racists, including beating and arresting thousands of black students between seven and eighteen years old shocked the American nation and pressured local white businessmen to change discriminatory practices.⁵⁸

After visiting India, King concluded that nonviolent struggle is the only valid approach for major social and political change, because the other two options of submission and violence are undesirable. Acquiescence and submission leads to suicide. Violence leaves the survivors embittered and the opponents scared from the brutality that they had inflicted.⁵⁹

King believed in nonviolent resistance as tactic and philosophy. He stated that "the nonviolent approach does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect. It calls out resources of strength and courage that they

⁵⁵ <http://www.stanford.edu/King/publications/papers>

⁵⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁵⁷ <http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/OSNC.pdf>.

⁵⁸ <http://learning.tuner.com>

⁵⁹ King, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

did not know they had. Finally it stirs the conscience of the opponent so that reconciliation becomes a reality".⁶⁰

The method of nonviolence was based on the conviction that all decent wise people are on the side of justice. It requests nonviolent resistance to accept suffering without retaliation. This belief meant that God is on the side of truth and justice, which came to them from the Christian faith.⁶¹

King believed in the existence of an objective moral order in the universe created and sustained by God, that the structure of the universe is on the side of justice and righteousness, that there is a higher law than human law.

King assured in many occasions that nonviolence was not a method of cowards. Because it does resist, according to him, it was physically passive but strongly active spiritually. Its main aim was not to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but rather to win his friendship and understanding. Its end was redemption, reconciliation and the creation of a beloved community.⁶²

The nonviolent policy also aimed at liberating whites from their prejudice and fear, and clarifying that white segregationists had been taught wrong. Thus they were victims of the evil system as well.⁶³

King said about nonviolence: "the nonviolent resistance is constantly seeking to persuade his opponent that he is wrong". He added "It is essential to understand that our aim is to persuade".⁶⁴

King emphasized that the nonviolent attack was directed against evil, rather than the persons who commits the evil acts. This was not a fight between black and white. It was a fight between justice and injustice, between forces of light against forces of

⁶⁰ <http://www.stanford.edu/King/publications/papers>

⁶¹ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁶² Ibid. p. 8.

⁶³ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

darkness. Nonviolent resistance avoids external violence as well as internal violence of spirit. It follows the principle of love, which stands at the center of nonviolent resistance.⁶⁵

The main strategy of nonviolence was based on dramatizing the evil of American society. Pressure is brought to bear against those evils by the force of good will in the community and change is produced.⁶⁶

King described nonviolence as an active and disruptive method of "resisting injustice and bringing social change". To him, nonviolence was an appealing physical and moral pressure to force opponents to bargain. This would achieve change against the opponent's will, without his agreement.⁶⁷

The strategy of nonviolence aims at resisting racial injustice, as King explained, it is demonstrated by African Americans forcing their oppressors to commit brutality openly, exposing them to public view through the media.⁶⁸

King clarified that nonviolent resistance draws its strength as a technique from the violent reactions of the opponents. It operates as the moral form of "Jiu-Jitsu", a type of Japanese Wrestling. As a strategy, nonviolence skillfully throws the opponent off balance causing his violence to rebound against him, weakening his moral position. In order to get nonviolent resistance to work, opponents must be provoked to commit their violence openly, so that it might be widely expressed within the presence of the media.⁶⁹

The method of nonviolent resistance operates on disarming the opponent, it exposes his moral defenses, it weakens his morale and it works on his conscience.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 141.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 138.

⁷⁰ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

The clever usage of nonviolence strategy in public events and perceptions, makes the powerful appears morally abusing power. It makes an oppressor appear immoral, overacting to the circumstances.⁷¹

King specified certain steps to be followed by the nonviolent campaigns in order to achieve the goals of the African Americans: Nonviolent demonstrators should go into the streets to exercise their constitutional rights and they should provoke racists to use violence against them. The hope was that if successful these steps would lead Americans of conscience and in the name of decency to demand federal intervention and legislation. Thus the Administration, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention and remedial legislation.⁷²

Nonviolence demanded the attention of the press. The press would interpret the issue to the community on a large scale and thereby sets in motion the machinery for change.⁷³

King outlined four steps for the nonviolent direct action campaign: Collection of facts to determine whether injustices had existed; try negotiation; self purification and then the use of direct action.⁷⁴

In the nonviolent direct action, King used to create a crisis and foster a tension, forcing the community which had refused to negotiate to confront the situation. Its main goal was to dramatize the problem so that it could not be ignored anymore.⁷⁵

⁷¹ <http://toptags.com>

⁷² Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

⁷³ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷⁴ King, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 79.

2. Love

King believed that only nonviolent love could break the eternal cycle of revenge and retaliation.

King was the first person in history who used the ethics of Jesus about love in treating opponents. He took the philosophy of "turn the other cheek", the philosophy of "love your enemies" and joined them in the nonviolent philosophy and turned them into a powerful and effective social force on a large scale to achieve social change. Love is a basic philosophy which came from the lips of Jesus Christ. Thus it became the Christian and moral responsibility to discover the meaning of loving the enemy.⁷⁶

It is not sentimental or emotional love. It is a creative understanding of good will for all men. It is the refusal to defeat any individual. When you rise to the great level of power and beauty of love, then you seek to defeat evil system.⁷⁷

To King the Agape Love meant understanding and redeeming good will for all men, active love given to human beings as grace, exchangeable, reconciliatory the essence of God.⁷⁸

Agape is understanding, creative, redemptive, good-will for all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return.⁷⁹

The Greek word Agape means understanding good will for all men. It is the love of God working in man, a type of love that loves a person who does the evil deed, while hating the deed. It is committed by the person, and it is a transforming and creative sort of love.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King>

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁷⁹ <http://www.mkgandhi.org/nonviolence/philosophy.htm>

⁸⁰ Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

Agape is understanding, creative, redemptive love. It allows you to love every man, because God loves him. "It is the love of God operating in human heart; it is "divine love".⁸¹

Agape love involves the recognition of the fact that all human life is interrelated. Humanity must be seen as a single process. All men are brothers and what ever directly affects one person affects all indirectly.⁸²

King explained that the spirit of Agape love should direct all the individual and social relation in the beloved community.

King stated "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven".⁸³

King believed that blacks should love their enemies because love was the center of Jesus thinking. And that hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in this universe. It is the strong person who can cut off the chain of hate. The only way to end the chain of hate and evil in this universe is by having a sense of morality found in love.⁸⁴

King explained that the reason for a man to love his enemies is to discover the element of good in our enemies. He added that such good points in our enemies will over balance the bad points.⁸⁵

King added that the nature of human beings is out of harmony, that within the best of us there is some evil and within the worst of us there is some good. So if we come to understand these contradictions we take different attitudes towards individuals.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁸² Ibid. p. 34.

⁸³ <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

The other way to love your enemy is that when you get the opportunity to defeat him, then it is the time not to do it. This is the real meaning of love.⁸⁷

Jesus said "It is this: that love has with it a redemptive power". As if you love your enemy you will discover that at the very root of love is the power of redemption. If you love the ones who mistreat you, they can't stand it too long, at the end they will break down under the load.⁸⁸

Love is the only creative, redemptive, transforming power in the universe, which can solve every problem that confronts us in all areas.⁸⁹

King stated: "Christian virtues of love, mercy and forgiveness should stand at the center of our lives".⁹⁰

He added that "Our goal is to achieve freedom and justice through love, not through violence and hate, through awakening the sense of shame within the oppressor and challenging his sense of superiority".⁹¹

King added "you are not struggling alone, but God struggles with you". The belief that God is on the side of truth and justice comes from the long tradition of Christian faith.⁹²

The Christian love to King was an "Overflowing love, which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative"; it is a willingness to forgive in order to restore community.⁹³

Love was defined by King as unconditional, disinterested well toward all men, which aims to preserve and create the beloved community.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ <http://www.stanford.edu/group/king>

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹⁴ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

3. Beloved Community

Beloved Community means a society based on justice, respect for self and others, and equality of opportunity to be the best that one can be.⁹⁵

King believed in the existence of an objective moral order created and sustained by God. Thus God creates persons with freedom of will within limits.⁹⁶

King had a firm conviction that there was a need for cooperation between God and sons in order to regain their dignity and freedom.⁹⁷

King insisted on the need for cooperative endeavor between persons and God in the struggle to actualize the beloved community.⁹⁸

To King, beloved community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In beloved community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.⁹⁹

To King the beloved community was a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.¹⁰⁰

King stated that the idea of beloved community would exclude all forms of discrimination in education, employment, housing and public accommodations. It would also exemplify full integration which means "genuine inter group and interpersonal living"¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ www.cts.edu/Form/Encounter/61-2Burrow.PDF

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.dension.edu/multicultural/mlk/>

¹⁰¹ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

In the beloved community King believed that every member of the community should participate in its social life, not as a result of the pressures of laws, but because of a commitment to brotherhood.¹⁰²

For instance, industries should be more concerned with persons not profits, respect consumers rights, improve job opportunities, working conditions, human relations and the sharing of profits so that all workers would be free of a destructive feeling of alienation from their work, their co-workers and themselves.¹⁰³

In beloved community, the government should concentrate on developing moral power, arrange to share political power with its citizens, preserve international harmony and establish domestic justice by ensuring equality under law for all citizens, by providing the necessary educational, social and economic opportunities and assistance so that all persons could preserve their dignity and channel their creativity. Schools should provide equal education for all. Churches should open doors to all races and be involved in community programs to enhance the spiritual and temporal well-being of all.¹⁰⁴

Members of the beloved community would always show willingness to sacrifice for the good of the community and for their own spiritual good. They would regard each person as an image of God and as a legacy of dignity and worth with rights that are not derived from the state but from God.¹⁰⁵

In formulating the idea of the beloved community King was inspired by the vision of "Total Interrelatedness" and of the solidarity of the human family, where all are aware that what directly affects one person affects all persons indirectly.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 187.

In beloved community people should not be reduced to mere means through laws, actions and attitudes, people should be always treated as ends in themselves, with the right or rational self-determination. People should be judged according to the content of their character not on the basis of the color of their skin.¹⁰⁷

According to King in the beloved community international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation of adversaries instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace and justice will prevail over war and military conflict.¹⁰⁸

King believed that the beloved community would be achieved when injustice is attacked and defeated through a policy of nonviolent resistance. He believed that nonviolent resistance was concerned with morality and justice not only with obtaining certain goals.¹⁰⁹

4. Violence

King believed that violence is a tempting technique for a frustrated and angry group. It often has been accompanied by rapid social change, but it is usually a by-product of shifting power relationships in society rather than the cause of change itself.¹¹⁰

King believed that oppressed people can't afford to follow a path of violence. Violence creates many more complicated social problems than it solves. If blacks would follow the procedure of violence in their struggle, following black generations would be recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness and future would be like meaningless chaos.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁸ http://www.lib.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The result of physical violence in the racial struggle would be an endless reign of chaos. It will also intensify the existence of evil and hate in the universe.¹¹²

King consistently condemned violence because he believed that it is immoral and impractical. King stated that "He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword"¹¹³

Violence is immoral because it is built on hatred rather than love. It attempts to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding. It seeks to annihilate rather than to convert.¹¹⁴

It seeks to injure rather than to redeem the other. Violence is opposed to creativity and wholeness. It aims to destroy community and renders brotherhood impossible. Hatred and violence intensify the fears of the white majority and lessen their shame in their prejudice against blacks.¹¹⁵

It is immoral because it deepens the brutality of the perpetrator of violence. The one who commits violence also injures himself spiritually, because he disrupts the harmony within his soul.

King said: "Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity"¹¹⁶

King referred to Booker T. Washington's warning: "Let no man pull you down so low as to make you hate him"¹¹⁷

Violence is immoral because it increases the existence of evil. During Montgomery's bus boycott in a meeting of MIA King emphasized his rejection of violence in the struggle where he stated: "To meet hate with retaliatory hate would do nothing but

¹¹² http://www.lib.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036

¹¹³ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

¹¹⁴ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 232.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Hate begets hate, violence, toughness begets a greater toughness".¹¹⁸

Violence may seek to eliminate an evil, but it only intensifies evil. Violence can't eradicate violence. It may bring temporary victory, but it never brings permanent peace.¹¹⁹

King also stated that violence is impractical. He clarified that the limited history of black insurrections in the U.S. revealed the futility of violent rebellion, because the well armed white majority could easily defeat black violent rebellion, even the fanatical right wing of that majority would be delighted killing thousands of black men, women and children.¹²⁰

It is also impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in the destruction of all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.

King added that futility of violence was clear in the consequences of race riots. Riots like that of Watts, Los Angeles in 1965, and Cincinnati, Ohio in 1967 have increased poverty rates in the black ghettos. Blacks living in those ghettos had suffered from direct riots where many of them had died, because of hunger and poverty.¹²¹

Violence negates some of the very goals rioters seek to achieve. They desire to participate in the very things that they attempt to destroy, namely the economy, the housing market and the educational system.¹²²

Blacks found it difficult to secure arms and knew that the opposition had the preponderance of physical power. But King believed that violence destroys the

¹¹⁸ Ansbro, *op. cit.* p. 232.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid.

community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. He stated that violence ends by defeating itself.¹²³

If Negroes choose the temptation of using violence in the struggle for freedom, future generations will be the recipients of a desolate night of bitterness.¹²⁴

King clarified that when another makes you hate him he leads you to work against community and to defy creation. Through his hate the hater becomes depersonalized because the design of creation demands that personality can be fulfilled only in community.¹²⁵

King stated that hate distorts the personality and scars the soul of the one who hates. Hate destroys a man's sense of values and his ability to make objective judgments. It causes a man to judge the beautiful as ugly and ugly as beautiful. It robs him of his ability to separate the true from the false.¹²⁶

Violence can be effective in suppressing evil only for a time and then evil will emerge with renewed vigor.

5. Conclusion

King described the nonviolent policy as a powerful, just and unique weapon, which cuts without wounding. To King it is a practical and moral answer to the black cry for justice. It could win victories without losing wars, so it became the triumphant tactic of the black civil rights movement in the 1950's and 1960's.

King emphasized that nonviolent resistance was the only practical, moral and sound method open to the oppressed in their struggle for freedom in America. King used the nonviolent tactic brilliantly to avoid bloodshed. If violence had been practiced, it would have caused blacks more death and injuries than whites.

¹²³ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 483.

¹²⁵ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 34.

To King and Gandhi, nonviolent protest was basically an art. They were artists by inspiring and leading a mass following, by carefully selecting protest tactics, by creatively using the media and by making themselves integral to the overall strategy. They orchestrated dramatic moral confrontations with their adversaries, compelling them to make reforms in the interest of justice.

The black civil rights movement, which adopted the nonviolent direct action, was considered the first popular uprising which used mass media to advance its objectives, as media had participated in covering the white brutality practiced against peaceful protestors. The main objective of the media was to bring moral public pressure upon an unjust system or an unjust law.

Nonviolence allows you to fight peacefully; you can make a war without violence.

Nonviolence makes it possible for the individual to struggle for moral ends through moral means.

King believed that nonviolent resistance was the key to build a new world. He said "Only nonviolence and love could break the eternal cycle of revenge and retaliation".

Nonviolent resistance could engage civil disobedience when unjust laws are present. The nonviolent campaigns of King and the SCLC were most successful at exposing the brutality of southern racism when peaceful protestors provoked whites racist to resort to violence.

King and the SCLC were able to force the federal government to intervene on behalf of black citizens, and thus attracted national sympathy for civil rights legislation.

D. King & SCLC

After the successful end of the Montgomery bus boycott, black ministers held several informal meetings and strategy sessions in December 1956 at the Holt Baptist church in Montgomery. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the dynamics and outcomes of the boycott. These meetings were nicknamed the "Institute on Nonviolent Social Change".¹²⁷

The meetings were attended by Martin Luther King, Mr. C. K. Steel, leader of the Tallahassee bus boycott, Mr. Fred Shuttlesworth, founder of Alabama Christian Movement, Mr. Theodore Jemison of Baton Rouge, Mr. Joseph E. Lowery of Mobile and J. H. Jackson, President of the National Baptist Convention.¹²⁸

The participants came out with the following recommendations: The church had functioned effectively as the institutional base of the protest movement. Aggressive nonviolent action by blacks was necessary if the system of segregation was to be overthrown. An organized mass force was needed to supplement the activities of the NAACP, which was attacked fiercely in the south. Finally, movements could be generated, coordinated and sustained by activist clergymen and organized black masses working in concert.¹²⁹

The idea of establishing a new organization came from Bayard Rustin, a Pacifist from New York, and earlier member of CORE; Stanley Levinson, a Jewish attorney from New York with ties to the communist party and Ella Baker, a social worker from New York.¹³⁰

Acting on the suggestion of Rustin, King, Shuttlesworth and Steel organized a two day meeting in January 1957 at the historic Ebenezer Baptist church in Atlanta. The

¹²⁷ http://nps.gov/malu/documents/jrs_chapter_2.htm

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹³⁰ <http://www.africanamericans.com/MartinLutherKingJr.htm>

purpose of the meeting was to form an organization to coordinate the local protest movements. The meeting was attended by around sixty black leaders, representing 29 communities in 11 southern states.¹³¹

The outcome of the conference was the emergence of the "Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration".¹³²

On February 14, 1957, more than 97 persons from 35 communities, representing 11 southern states, convened for a one day session in New Orleans and changed the organization's name to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).¹³³

Martin Luther King was one of the founders of the organization. Its headquarters was in Atlanta. Its purpose was coordinating the nonviolent direct action campaigns throughout the South.¹³⁴

When established SCLC King insisted that the black church as a powerful organization in the south, should become fully involved in the civil rights struggle, that's why he called it the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.¹³⁵

Kings philosophy of nonviolent direct action and his vision for a mass movement based upon the Christian tenets of love and understanding guided the activities of SCLC.¹³⁶

Upon the formation of the SCLC, King was elected as its president while Ralph Abernathy was elected treasurer. All the other board members were black, from the eleven southern states. It was a southern organization and all of its members came from the NAACP and the church.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 83

¹³² Reddick, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹³³ Ibid. p.185.

¹³⁴ Colaiaico, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹³⁵ <http://www.echeat.com/essay.php>

¹³⁶ <http://www.lexisnexis.com>

¹³⁷ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

The main objective of the SCLC was to coordinate the efforts of protest centers in the south by employing the philosophy and tactics of nonviolence. Its main aim was to achieve full citizenship rights and equality for blacks and their integration into all aspects of American life. The ultimate goal was to create the beloved community in America.¹³⁸

Dr. Martin Luther King affirmed that the main goal of SCLC was to struggle in order to achieve voting rights for blacks. The SCLC's mission was called "The Crusade of Citizenship".¹³⁹

King clarified that beyond the main goal, the "Crusade" had several other goals: establish voting clinics, provide educational material to local voter registration efforts, collect evidence of discriminatory election practices and arouse the conscience of the American nation through radio, television, newspapers, to sponsor public appearances of southern leaders concerning existing conditions and the progress being made.

The responsibility of ensuring black citizens the elementary rights and arousing black masses to realize their chances for improvement in democracy rest on their ability to vote.¹⁴⁰

The other objectives of the SCLC were to stimulate nonviolent direct mass action to expose and remove the barriers of segregation and discrimination; to publicize the creative philosophy and techniques of nonviolence through local and area workshops; to secure the legal and constitutional right to the use of the ballot for every citizen; to achieve full citizenship rights and the total integration of the blacks into American life and to reduce the cultural gap through citizenship training programs.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹³⁹ Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 97.

¹⁴¹ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

The SCLC called for intensified voter registration efforts, initiation of a state-wide coordination of masses in direct action to secure the right of the ballot, patronization of businesses that practiced equal employment, implementation of the civil rights bill related to public accommodation provisions and insuring that black citizens of Alabama were allowed to vote freely.¹⁴²

The SCLC was not an individual membership organization. Other organizations, such as churches, and civil leagues could become its affiliates. The SCLC was in fact a southern wide organization of organizations.¹⁴³

The SCLC was the first civil rights organization to be born in the south. Within a short time it became the "dynamic center of the civil rights movement", because it consisted of local affiliates, grouped by state. It drew its strength from the black churches. By 1967, SCLC had some 270 affiliates throughout the south.¹⁴⁴

The formation of the SCLC made a great contribution to the local struggles by creating deep social bonds among lonely protesters. It also participated in strengthening internal organizations of local struggles.¹⁴⁵

The plan of the SCLC was to build a mass movement around the vote by mobilizing the masses through existing community organizations, especially the church. The SCLC was attempting to unify those existing organizations across the south for mass protest.¹⁴⁶

During the 1950's, the black church represented the only main center for all Negro activities, including religious, social, political and economic issues. Thus, King and other leaders decided to attach the SCLC to the black church.

¹⁴² Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

¹⁴³ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁴ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 108.

The SCLC also played a direct role in providing local communities the mental attitude necessary for protest. It promoted consciousness rising brought direct action workshops, voting clinics and mass rallies to many local communities across the south.¹⁴⁷

SCLC was the force that developed the infrastructure of the civil rights movement and functioned as the decentralized arm of the black churches.¹⁴⁸

The SCLC was able to influence public laws and bring profound changes in American race relations, particularly in the south. The organization could be considered as an agent of social change.¹⁴⁹

E. Black Church

1. Historical Background

Throughout history, the black church served as a community "bulletin board" as a "people's court" to solve disputes, as a support group and as a center of political activism. Even during slavery there had been an "Invisible Church".¹⁵⁰

After emancipation in 1863, organized religious life became the chief means of structured and organized social life among the black community.

The African American church became the most important organization within the black community. Besides providing spiritual strength and comfort, it became like a community institution, a center for social, political and economic life. The ministers became the most important leaders of their people.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ <http://collegehmco.com>

¹⁵⁰ Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson, *Waves of Protest: Social Movements since the Sixties* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 9.

¹⁵¹ http://www.luksian.com/text/fict_ae/036

The black church provided the primary networks through which southern blacks interacted and communicated with each other on a regular basis. Church represented the source of black leadership as preachers and teachers held the main status positions in the black society.¹⁵²

2. Church's Role in the Movement

The black church has played an essential role in the black civil rights movement and its struggle in the south, especially in the period of the 1950's and 1960's. During that time, the church was the center of the black community, as it provided both a refuge from a hostile white society and a place for political and social activities.¹⁵³

The black church has long stood at the center of black communities establishing itself as the pre-eminent source for religious enrichment of secular development.¹⁵⁴

Black churches were consistently at the social and religious center of black communities.¹⁵⁵

Churches became religious institutions devoted to addressing the needs of members of the black communities.

The church performed the central organizing function in the black community. It provided access to large masses of people on regular basis and a natural leadership. It also represented the center of the voter registration drives in addition to other activities of the civil rights movement.¹⁵⁶

Black church was an arena of political life for the black leaders. It had a political meaning for the black masses. Despite the fact that black masses were denied the right to vote in the American community. They could engage in electing their officers. The

¹⁵² Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.academic.udayton.edu/race>

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

election of bishops and other officers and representatives to conventions has been a serious activity for black masses.¹⁵⁷

Black church community has been a nation within a nation. Black churches were organizational sites for social and political activities, centers for economic development and growth. Black church provided an environment free of oppression and racism for African Americans.

The black church focused the mobilization of community resources to provide educational and welfare services, leadership training and organizational networks and served as a site of mass gatherings and meetings.¹⁵⁸

It had functioned as the institutional center of the modern civil rights movement. It provided the movement with an organized mass base, as well as a leadership of clergymen largely economically independent from white society. It was skilled in the area of managing people and resources and it worked as an institutionalized financial base through which protests were financed. The church also provided meeting place, where the masses planned tactics and strategies.¹⁵⁹

The church also had supplied the civil rights movement with a collective enthusiasm generated by a rich culture consisting of songs, testimonies, oratory and prayers, which spoke directly to the needs of the oppressed.¹⁶⁰

Spirituals were a religious manifestation of the African American heritage. Songs and dance were involved in the African's daily experience of work, play, love and worship. African American songs, dance, music and poetry were a response to their

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.academic.udayton.edu/race>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.mlk-hawaii-org/civilrightsmovement.htm>

¹⁵⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

American experience, a kind of emotional reaction to American's shameful treatment of the slaves.¹⁶¹

In the first half of the twentieth century and through elaborate rituals of songs, prayers and sermons, the black church taught people that the wise would inherit the earth. That God loved the dispossessed and would provide them with just rewards after they had fought the long Christian fight. A good Christian was more concerned with perfecting his or her spiritual life rather than with material wellbeing. Religious views became institutionalized through songs and sermons of church.¹⁶²

Thus the church had served as a relatively independent force in the movement, acting as a native institution owned and controlled by blacks.¹⁶³

Mr. Wyatt T. Walker, the Executive Director of the SCLC during the 1960's stated that: "If there had been no Negro Church, there would have been no civil rights movement today".¹⁶⁴

During the height of the civil rights movement, the church was the place from which a nonviolent army marched. It was also the place for retreat of the demonstrators when it was necessary.¹⁶⁵

The black church provided support and direction for different activities of blacks. It furnished outlets for social and artistic expression, and served as a forum for discussion of important issues; a social environment, that developed, trained and disciplined potential leaders from all walks of life, enthusiasm and a resilient group spirit.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 97.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ Colaiaico, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

The church acted for the civil rights organizations as an established communication network. It supplied them with leaders, organized masses, secured finances and a safe place to hold political meetings.

The black church was the chief institutional force behind all the direct action organizations in the south. One can say that the survival of the direct action organizations depended heavily on the church.

Also we can conclude that the black church had served as the center of the black life in the south; it was a complex of organizations. The church was a social institution with the right to interfere in matters related to public morals; in this role the church was able to exercise its power.

The black church became the most important organization within the black community. Besides providing spiritual strength and comfort, it became a community of institutions, a center of social, political and economic life. The minister became the most important leader of his people.

The cultural context of the church has significantly shaped the attitudes of a large number of black people.

King maintained that the social mission of the Christian church and its primary goal was the development of the beloved community.

Conclusion

King was born into the black church; his father was a successful and prosperous Baptist Minister at Ebenezer Baptist church. He grew up on a steady diet of gospel preaching, church as center of community life and minister the ordained spokesman for God himself.

King learned from his parents that persons should love and respect each other as children of God. King believed in the need for his people to work together

cooperatively and with God in order to assert their humanity and dignity. He also believed in the necessity of struggle in order to gain blacks human rights of being citizens of America.

King continued his movement based on conceptions rooted in African American religious culture of God as a constant source of support.

King grew up in a religious environment. He studies the classical philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. King had his faith in God as an ultimate view.

To King, God is the creator; he created the world with the power of love. God is truth, intelligence and wisdom. He viewed God as a living reality that has been validated in the experiences of every day life.

King insisted that: "there is God in the universe that is the ground and essence of all reality" who is "a being of infinite love and boundless power"

King emphasized on the power of Christian love and the Perfectibility of human nature to advance the cause of social justice. He also viewed Christianity as a potential force for progressive social change.

Talking about his new understanding to suffering, King stated: "to be a Christian, one must take up his cross with all of its difficult and agonizing and tension-packed content and carry it until that very cross leaves its mark way which comes only through suffering".

Jesus Christ was God's love incarnate, a human form to teach and demonstrate the original principles of love.

Spirituality to King was the means through which God's love and justice and compassion are manifested in the life of the world.

Spiritual songs about freedom and the promised land all contained text of aspiration toward justice on earth as well as faith in God and the afterlife.

King's spirituality and his deep religious faith comprised his basic human desire for freedom.

The beloved community became the central goal of King's spiritual campaigns.

King saw a need for church, because he knew it was the strong foundation at the black community. For King church was the "chief moral guardian" of the community. He thought that church had a major responsibility to solve the tragic dilemma of racism in America.

King was a public theologian. He was able to join church tradition with the reference group of a wider society. King succeeded due his singular ability to join the public of society and church.

Main King's teaching is that: Nonviolent civil disobedience is the primary and necessary means of effecting social and political change.

King believed that without God, nonviolence lacked substance and potency.

King grew up with a number of personalist ideas which had influenced him: Reality "God"; persons are the highest intrinsic values; reality is social and the existence of an objective moral order is at the center of the universe. These ideas shaped King's fundamental faith of the beloved Community ethic.

King was a true interpreter and a prophet of the American civil religion, by appealing to the biblical tradition which was common to the national mythic structure and his own particular religious heritage, King served as a preacher and as a spokesman for an American civil religion, which served as the basis for a common public good.

King used charisma as a tool for mobilizing black communities. King was able to articulate black concerns to white audiences and he also mobilized blacks through his

day –to-day involvement in black community institutions and through his access to the regional institutional network of black church.

King immersed himself in the modernist theology of the day, which attempted to accommodate Christianity to science and modernity and was drawn to the social gospel, which sought to make Christianity relevant to the problems of industrial society.

King's motivation and inspiration were essentially religious and derived principally from his deep faith in the Christian God as defined by the black Baptist and liberal protestant tradition.

King acknowledged that personalism or personal idealism as his fundamental philosophical point of departure.

King was a social activist personalist, who employed personalistic principles to the solution of racism, economic exploitation and materialism. King's personalism was worked out in the social struggle for dignity and justice.

King's main conviction is that cooperation between persons and God is needed in order for African American to regain their sense of dignity and their freedom and actualize beloved community.

The most original and creative contribution of King to the personalist tradition was his persistence in translating personalism into social action by applying it to the social problems of racism, poverty, economic exploitation and materialism.

Chapter Five

Protest Campaigns & Legislations

V. Protest Campaigns and Legislations

This chapter talks about the marches and the protest campaigns being led by Martin Luther King and the civil rights organizations like SCLC, SNCC and Core during the 1960s. It also discusses the legislations that were issued as a result of these campaigns.

The chapter covers these events according to their dates: The march on Washington, 1957; the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 & 1960; the establishment of SNCC in 1960, Freedom Rides, 1961; Freedom Project, 1962; Birmingham Campaign, 1963; the March on Washington, 1963; St. Augustine Campaign, 1964; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Selma Campaign, 1965 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

A. The March on Washington, 1957

In July, 1957, A. Philip Randolph, the architect of the 1941 March on Washington Movement of 1941 and the founder and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), once again suggested plans for a massive March on Washington for a national protest aiming to combine King's appeal with the NAACP's organizational strength.¹

On May 17, 1957, King, Randolph and Roy Wilkins, the Executive Director of the NAACP in New York, announced the march to Washington.

The march was called: "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom". The prayer pilgrimage had several objectives, mainly to demonstrate black unity; provide an opportunity for northerners to demonstrate their support; protest ongoing attacks on the NAACP by

¹ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

southern states; protest violence in the south and urge the passage of civil rights legislation.²

The Pilgrimage was attended by somewhere between fifteen to twenty five thousand participants and King emerged from the pilgrimage as the number one black leader.³

King stated that the pilgrimage had been like an appeal to the American nation and the congress to pass a civil rights bill that would give the justice department the power to file lawsuits against discriminatory registration and voting practices anywhere in the south.⁴

The pilgrimage prayer helped to get the support of the Eisenhower Administration's proposal for civil rights legislation. In 1957 the congress passed the first major civil rights law since reconstruction.

B. Civil Rights Acts of 1957 & 1960

As a result of the Washington March in 1957, President Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act in September, 1957. The act created the United States Civil Rights Commission as an independent agency. The commission was charged with gathering facts about violations of voting rights and other civil rights issues.⁵

The act also created a civil rights division in the Justice Department. The division was headed by an Assistant Attorney General and empowered the federal government to obtain injunctions preventing deprivation of the right to vote.⁶

The act also authorized the federal district courts to appoint "Voting Referees" to safeguard the right to vote in places where they were prevented by local officials to vote by local officials. It authorized the Department of Justice to file suits in defense

² Garrow, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³ Ibid. p. 94.

⁴ Ibid., p.92

⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁶ Ibid.

of voting rights. The Act also authorized the justice department to file lawsuits in defense of the voting rights. But the act failed to protect black's voting rights.⁷

The failure of the 1957 civil rights act to protect black voting rights had pushed the administration of President Eisenhower to propose a new statute. The civil rights act of 1960 was then passed.⁸

The civil rights act of 1960 dealt with voting problems for blacks in the south. But the solutions which were suggested by the Judicial to overcome state literacy tests that were administered to prevent blacks from gaining the ballot were not effective.

The civil rights act of 1960 outlawed interference with federal court orders on school desegregation and gave judges the power to appoint referees to hear complaints against state election officials, accused of denying persons the right to register and vote.

Although the civil rights acts of 1957 and 1960 indicated some progress, they were insufficient in guaranteeing the right to vote for African Americans.

C. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

1. The Sit-ins

On Thursday, February 1, 1960, four black freshmen from the Agricultural and Technical (A & T) College in Greensboro, North Carolina violated the segregation laws of the local Woolworth's Five & Dime lunch counter.

The four black students entered the variety store and purchased several items. Then they sat down at its lunch counter which served whites only. They demanded coffee,

⁷ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁸ Ibid.

but they were refused service. They took out their textbooks and began doing their homework. They remained seated until the store had closed.⁹

Ezell Blair, Frank McCain, Joe McNeil and David Richmond, the four students, who sat-in at Woolworth's and sparked the widespread sit-in movement, had been activists of the local NAACP youth council, which was headed by McKissick. They also had ties with Dr. George Simpkins, who headed the local NAACP chapter in Greensboro.¹⁰

The four students who sat in were inspired by King's nonviolent direct action. Their action sparked the sit-in movement in the United States.¹¹

The sit-in action of the four black students on February 1, 1960, marked the beginning of the sit-in movement in the south.¹²

Within six weeks, the sit-ins spread to dozens of cities across the south. They served as a mechanism for bringing students together for the first time for practical interaction over political issues.¹³

The movement also spread quickly in the south and into several places in the north. In addition to lunch counters, protests were conducted at department stores, libraries, supermarkets, theaters, beaches and hotels.¹⁴

Within six months the sit-ins had ended segregation in restaurants and lunch counters in 26 southern cities. Student sit-ins succeeded in ending segregation in public parks, swimming pools, theaters, churches, libraries, museums and beaches.¹⁵

⁹ <http://toptags.com>

¹⁰ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 198

¹¹ Ibid. 197.

¹² Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹³ Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁵ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>

The sit-ins reflected the development of locally-based black movements throughout the south. By February 10, 1960 the sit-ins had taken place in fifteen cities throughout five southern states.¹⁶

The sit-in was a nonviolent form of protest. When the students were attacked by white students in Nashville they did not strike back. Instead they were polite and showed courteous behavior towards those who refused to serve them.¹⁷

Nashville's sit-in movement had started on February 13, 1960. The movement involved around 500 students. The participants in the demonstration organized sit-in groups to go downtown stores of Woolworth, Kresge's, McClellan's and other stores. At the beginning the demonstrations were peaceful without violence.¹⁸

But on February 27 the Nashville sit-in movement was faced with violent attacks, as white male customers at Woolworth's harassed female protestors. They were putting lightened cigarettes down their backs, in their hair and they were beating people. At other stores demonstrators had ketchup and mustard poured on their heads.¹⁹

A white demonstrator was pulled out of his stool, beaten and kicked by a group of young whites. Following the beatings, the local police arrived and arrested the protestors not whites who assaulted them. Some 82 people were arrested.²⁰

The combination of the sit-ins and the economic boycott of Nashville meant a big lose of black money for downtown business. It was estimated that 15 percent of income for a large Nashville department store was from African Americans.²¹

The sit-in movement developed in Nashville, Tennessee and was led by members of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC) an affiliate of SCLC was

¹⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 30

¹⁷ King, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁸ <http://www.facstaff.elon.edu>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

successful. The economic pressure being exerted on the businessmen of Nashville was so effective as in May 10, 1960 six stores in downtown Nashville integrated their lunch counters.²²

The sit-ins of 1960 pulled many people, often entire communities, directly into the movement. It continued to spread through the south and by the end of 1961 nearly 200 cities in the upper south and in the Border States had begun to desegregate.²³

By the end of 1960 hundreds of southern cities were desegregated.²⁴

By August 1961 sit-ins had attracted over 7000 participants and generated over 3000 arrests.²⁵

2. SNCC Establishment

On Easter weekend, between the 15th and the 17th of April, 1960, and upon the invitation of Ella J. Baker, the Executive Director of SCLC, black students leaders, representing 30 states, mostly southern, gathered at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, in order to maintain the sit-in movement and coordinate future actions.²⁶

The conference titled "Sacrifice for Dignity" was sponsored by the SCLC and was attended by around 175 student leaders, representing 56 colleges in twelve southern states, with the participation of representatives from nineteen northern schools and thirteen civil rights organizations, along with fifty seven students and observers.²⁷

The participants in the student leadership conference agreed to establish the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).²⁸

²² <http://www.facstaff.elon.edu>

²³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁴ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

²⁵ <http://www.watson.org/rlisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-56/sit-ins.htm>

²⁶ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁷ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 108.

The student leadership, who gathered at the Raleigh meeting on April 17, 1960, had decided upon the advice of Ella Baker, not to become a wing of any permanent organization of any kind. They decided that SNCC should be an independent and permanent organization.²⁹

SNCC's activities were concentrated in the rural black belt areas of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi where white resistance was intense.³⁰

The main goal of SNCC was to rid America of racial segregation and discrimination against blacks in every aspect of the American life.³¹

By 1961 when public facilities were largely integrated, SNCC moved into voter registration work among poor blacks in the rural Deep South.³²

By 1963, the SNCC moved more than half of its efforts away from direct action towards voter registration, as the network of young student activists turned themselves into political organizers.³³

3. Conclusion

As a result of these student demonstrations several hundred lunch counters were desegregated in the cities of Texas, Oklahoma and the border states of the south and Atlanta.

The student demonstrations shifted the desegregation battles from the courtroom to the marketplace.

They proved that nonviolent direct action and youth could be very useful weapon in the war against segregation.

²⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

³⁰ <http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/rach/htm>

³¹ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³² Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

³³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

The sit-in demonstrations had a great effect on the civil rights movement. They speeded up the rate of social change in the sphere of race relations. The demonstrations also made nonviolent direct action the dominant strategy in the struggle for racial equality during the next half-decade.³⁴

The sit-ins marked a change in the civil rights movement. They pumped new life into the civil rights movement and proved that organized disruptive politics could bring about change much faster than a legal approach. It made the civil rights movement like a towering issue throughout the U.S.

The Nashville sit-ins were another example in the many examples from the civil rights of how nonviolent protests can be used effectively for social change.

D. Freedom Rides

In March, 1961, James Farmer, the National Director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), called for volunteers to participate in the interracial freedom rides throughout the south to test the state of desegregation of travel facilities as well as waiting rooms and restaurants.³⁵

CORE modeled its freedom rides of 1961 on the "Journey of Reconciliation", which was organized in 1947. The earlier journey was comprised of white and black CORE workers, who had traveled by buses throughout the upper south to test the rights they had won in court. Blacks sat at the front of the buses and whites sat at the rear.³⁶

In a similar way the later project was made up of an integrated group of individuals, six whites and seven blacks, who were divided into two small groups. They rode two buses, the Greyhound and Trailways, from Washington D.C. to New Orleans. They

³⁴ Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 115.

passed through the Deep South to challenge Jim Crow in terminal restaurants, waiting rooms and rest rooms.

The main strategy of the freedom rides was that blacks would use facilities like restrooms and waiting rooms, reserved for whites, while white volunteers would use facilities reserved for blacks.³⁷

The main purpose for CORE establishing the freedom rides was to test southern compliance with the United States Supreme Court decision in "Boynton v. Virginia". The decision was issued on February 1, 1961, prohibiting segregation in interstate transportation facilities.³⁸

The other purpose of the freedom rides was to disrupt public order in the south and thus force the federal government to fulfill its responsibilities to protect citizens, who were trying to exercise their civil rights.³⁹

King, who served as the chairman of the freedom rides committee organized by CORE, SCLS and SNCC, clarified that the objectives of the freedom rides were: to test the use of transportation facilities according to the federal law; encourage others to demand use of facilities and to direct the spotlight of public attention to areas which were still segregated.⁴⁰

The riders were attacked, arrested and assaulted severely by whites in Montgomery, Birmingham, and South Carolina. They were brutally beaten by white mobs without receiving any adequate local police protection.

³⁷ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Claiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 37.

The images of the attacks which were aired by media around the world, aroused sympathy and support for the civil rights movement and obliged Kennedy's Administration to act and provide protection for the riders.⁴¹

As a result, King delivered a speech at a rally in Montgomery on May 20, 1961 for the aim of supporting a nonviolent campaign against the entire system of segregation in Alabama.⁴²

The nonviolent freedom rides forced the federal government to intervene on behalf of the riders. Kennedy sent 600 federal marshals to escort them on the rest of their pilgrimage.⁴³

On May 25, 1961, after being attacked with fierce violence by white mobs, CORE decided to end the freedom rides.⁴⁴

The freedom rides achieved the following gains: On May 29, 1961, Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General, formally established the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to act against segregation in the interstate bus terminals. On September 22, 1961, the ICC responded by issuing another ban on segregation in both interstate carriers and terminal facilities, which took effect on November 1, 1961.

The freedom rides supplied King and the SCLC with a very important strategic lesson in order to draw enough public sympathy and to pressure the federal government to enforce civil rights in the states and localities, white racists had to be provoked to use violence against nonviolent protesters, "put pressure, and create a crisis and then they act".⁴⁵

⁴¹ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴² http://nps.gov/malu/documents/hrs/hrs_chapter_2.htm

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁴⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

The freedom rides had become a mass movement, which dramatized the defiance of federal law in the south.⁴⁶

The freedom rides project was another example of nonviolent direct action and cooperation between individuals and organizations. The freedom rides were a project initiated by a civil rights organization, CORE, which had followed the strategy of nonviolent direct action which was introduced by Martin Luther King.

E. Freedom Project

The freedom project was a concentrated effort to register black voters in Mississippi. It was formed of a coalition of SNCC, CORE, NAACP and SCLC. The coalition was created in 1962, and was known as the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), to coordinate efforts for the Mississippi voter registration drive.⁴⁷

Robert Moses, the Program Director of the Freedom Project, stated that the main goals of the project were to register black voters and establish freedom schools to teach them the essentials of the Democratic Party to challenge the white democratic delegation at the national convention in August, 1964, for the presidential elections.⁴⁸

The project also aimed to keep Americans notified about racial conditions in the Deep South and to force the federal government to enforce civil rights laws.⁴⁹

The freedom project was a successful campaign which managed to register more than 90,000 black voters in Mississippi. This success inspired COFO to form a new political party in the spring of 1964. The party which was called Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was founded for the purpose of teaching blacks and preparing them for the forthcoming national elections in November, 1964.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 109.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

F. Birmingham Campaign, 1963

1. Historical Background

Between 1957 and 1963, Birmingham was the most segregated city in the south. There were eighteen unsolved bombings against black neighborhoods. As a result of these bombings, the city was nicknamed "Bombingham". Additionally, Birmingham was famous for the mother's day attack on the freedom rides in 1961.⁵¹

King described it as "the most segregated city in America".⁵²

Birmingham had experienced nonviolent protest before 1963 when Mr. Fred Shuttlesworth organized the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) in 1956, which led a boycott. The boycott succeeded in integrating the city's buses. Later in 1963, ACMHR became an affiliate of SCLC.⁵³

King and the SCLC chose Birmingham as the ideal place for starting the next campaign for many reasons. Birmingham was the center of segregation in the south; it had a long history of hostility to race reform. It had been the site of the fiercest mob attack on the freedom rides in 1961. Birmingham was the home of Fred Shuttlesworth, who founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), the local arm of SCLC.

King stated that Birmingham was apparently ignorant of the preamble to the constitution, the bill of rights, Jefferson, Lincoln, the thirteenth amendment, fourteenth amendment and the Brown decision.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁵² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 55.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 54.

King claimed that by focusing on Birmingham, SCLC would face the most difficult test in the south. He concluded: "The challenge to nonviolent direct action could not have been staged in a more appropriate arena".⁵⁵

King had also chosen Birmingham with the main aim of provoking Eugene Bull Connor, Commissionaire of Public Safety, to use violence against the peaceful demonstrations. The federal government would have no other choice but to force local segregationists to meet the demands of the movement.⁵⁶

2. The Campaign

The main strategy of King and the SCLC in Birmingham depended heavily on the news media. They meant to create a crisis, which would force the city to negotiate the main demands of the blacks of the city.⁵⁷

Through confrontations with Birmingham's white power, King and the SCLC wanted to accomplish two main goals:

The first goal was to force the Birmingham white power structure to yield to a set of demands: That include a desegregation of lunch counters and other public facilities in downtown department stores; the establishment of fair hiring procedures in the stores and city departments, with blacks given equal opportunity to qualify for jobs other than menial ones; the dropping of charges against all arrested demonstrators; the reopening of parks and playgrounds that the city had closed, rather than comply with a federal court order, to be operated on an integrated basis and the appointment of a biracial commission to set up a timetable for the desegregation of public schools.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵⁶ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁵⁷ King, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁵⁸ Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251.

The second objective of King and the SCLC in Birmingham was to score a victory that would serve as a central example to be used by other black communities and that would force the federal government to take a firm stand against racial domination.

According to King:

"We wanted confrontation, nonviolent confrontation, to see if it would work on a massive scale, not just for Birmingham – for the nation. We were trying to launch a systematic, whole hearted battle against segregation, which would set the pace for the nation".⁵⁹

City representatives refused to discuss grievances with the black leaders and in order to preserve segregation they closed the city parks and abolished its baseball team to prevent it from playing in the integrated international league. Even the metropolitan opera adopted a policy of not performing before black audiences.⁶⁰

Birmingham's racist policy was endorsed by George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, who in his inauguration address on January 1963, stated "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever".⁶¹

The Birmingham campaign was well organized and planned, including meetings with local black leaders to ensure support. The campaign was named "project c", as c for confrontation.⁶²

The main strategy planned for "project c" was an effective boycott of Birmingham's business community.⁶³

King and the SCLC were successful in planning the Birmingham campaign from the beginning. The cleverest step was the timing of the campaign. It was Christmas time

⁵⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁶⁰ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. p. 56.

⁶³ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

followed by Easter Season. Knowing that blacks in Birmingham had sufficient buying power, King thought that the policy of the economic boycott would be effective.⁶⁴

The main goal of the economic boycott was to use the power of blacks to force the city's business community to negotiate reforms. Consequently the business community would exert pressure on municipal and county officials.⁶⁵

The other procedure was to create a crisis that would attract the notice of the media, which would oblige the federal government to intervene.⁶⁶

The first stage of the demonstrations of "project c" started on April 3, 1963. Through these demonstrations King wanted to mobilize large numbers of Birmingham blacks. He wanted to focus national attention on the issue of the civil rights as well.⁶⁷

The confrontations meant a dramatic encounter with a segregationist power structure. This would nationally expose the evils of racism and attain necessary reforms. Thus King ordered his aids to create a crisis to bargain with.⁶⁸

The SCLC planned two activities for project c: boycott and sit-ins at the downtown stores combined with street demonstrations.⁶⁹

The first stage of "project c" demonstrations and lunch counter sit-ins at the downtown stores was followed by the second stage on April 6, 1963.⁷⁰

James Bevel, who had joined the SCLC in 1961, suggested using Birmingham's black high school students as demonstrators. His reason was that adults might hesitate to participate in the demonstrations, fearing that jail would cost them their jobs, while

⁶⁴ King, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁶⁵ Frady, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁶⁸ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 57.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 59.

school children would be less fearful. King accepted the suggestion and children began demonstrations.⁷¹

On April 7, 1963, the campaign stirred the racist violence necessary to draw national publicity. The demonstrations downtown were met by Connor and his police, who brought dogs and attacked the demonstrators fiercely in front of cameras. Thus Connor created an incident, which supplied press coverage for the protest.⁷²

On May 3, 1963, Connor's men surrounded the sixteenth street Baptist church. When the black students started marching, Connor ordered his police to turn on their fire-pressure water hoses to disperse the crowds. In addition, he used German shepherd police dogs.⁷³

The dogs lunged forward biting several blacks, firemen turned fire hoses with pressured water. That evening television broadcast brought the horrors of racism in Birmingham into the living rooms of millions of Americans. These scenes attracted national and international attention. This obliged congress to act in response to public outcry. The federal government finally intervened and began to pressure the Birmingham business community to relent.⁷⁴

Across America, people watched television pictures of children being blasted with water hoses and attacked by police dogs. Newspapers and magazines, at home and abroad, featured the events in Birmingham on their front pages.⁷⁵

Due to the violence committed by Connor on May 3, 1963, national pressure began to pile upon the White House. The administration was forced to act. Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General dispatched Burke Marshall, Chief Civil Rights Assistant and Joseph F. Dolan, Assistant Deputy Attorney General, on April 4, 1963 to Birmingham

⁷¹ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁷² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁷⁴ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁷⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

to investigate the racial situation in the city and to encourage negotiations between blacks and the city business leaders. It was the first time that the federal government had taken an active role in such circumstances.⁷⁶

Marshall helped open channels of communication between the black leadership and top people in the economic power structure.⁷⁷

On May 3, 1963, President John Kennedy told King: "The civil rights movement owes "Bull" Connor as much as it owes Abraham Lincoln", because of his brutality.⁷⁸

The Birmingham confrontations of 1963, which were organized by King and the SCLC succeeded in dividing Birmingham's white political community from the economic power structures, thus creating two different opinions in dealing with blacks among white community.⁷⁹

Despite the huge pressure placed on them by the political elite to resist the movement, the economic elite of Birmingham yielded to the demands of the SCLC, because of the effective economic boycott and the massive demonstrations.⁸⁰

On Friday, May 10, 1963, after a week of intensive negotiations an agreement was reached between protest leaders of the SCLC, the ACMHR on one side and the representatives of Birmingham, including business leaders, merchants and political leaders on the other, in the presence of Burke Marshall, the U.S. Assistant Attorney General. The agreement was known as the "Birmingham Truce Agreement".⁸¹

Birmingham Truce Agreement comprised the following points:

Desegregation of fitting rooms within three days after the close of the demonstrations;
removal of racial signs from washrooms, restrooms and drinking fountains within 30

⁷⁶ King, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ansbro, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

days; the upgrading and hiring of blacks on a nondiscriminatory basis throughout the industrial community of Birmingham, that included hiring blacks as clerks and salesmen within 60 days of signing the agreement; commencement of a program of lunch room counters desegregation within 60 days; the release of all jailed persons and demonstrators on bond or on their personal recognizance and the establishment of a committee to deal with racial problems and employment issues. The committee is to be composed of members of the senior citizens committee. Such committee would be established within 15 days after the cessation of the demonstrations.⁸²

On May 20, 1963, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Alabama segregation laws were unconstitutional, consequently nullifying the convictions of those protestors, who had been jailed in Birmingham.⁸³

3. A Letter from Birmingham Jail

On Good Friday, April 12, 1963, King and Abernathy led fifty marchers from Zion Church to Birmingham downtown, where they were arrested. While in Jail, King wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail", which was considered one of the most important documents of the civil rights movement.⁸⁴

When King was arrested, he was placed in solitary confinement for violating a state court injunction, which prohibited protest demonstrations.⁸⁵

The cause of the letter was because on April 13, 1963, one day after King was arrested, he read a full-page advertisement by a local group of eight moderate Alabama clergymen. The group included four Bishops and one Rabbi. The advertisement, which appeared in the "Birmingham News", was headlined:

⁸² King, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

⁸³ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 64.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 77.

"Appeal for Law and Order", "WHITE CLERGYMEN URGE LOCAL NEGROES TO WITHDRAW FROM DEMONSTRATION".⁸⁶

The eight clergymen were: Bishop C.C.J. Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, Reverend George M. Murray, Reverend Edward V. Ramage and Reverend Earl Stallings.⁸⁷

The clergymen had attacked the demonstrations of Birmingham campaign as "unwise and untimely". They also criticized the protests as "extreme and unjustified". They called on the black population to look for settlements through courts and negotiations among local leaders, not by demonstrating in streets. They concluded that "We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham".⁸⁸

In a joint statement, the eight local dignitaries accused King of being an "outsider" and described the Birmingham campaign as a civil disturbance, which would cause hatred and violence without contributing to the resolution of their local problems.⁸⁹

The clergymen also praised the white community, news media and law enforcement officials for calmly handling the demonstrations, which they considered were led by "outsiders".⁹⁰

King was the object of the clergymen's criticism, because he was the leader of Birmingham protests. For that reason, he decided to reply to his critics in the form of an open letter to the American people.⁹¹

Upon reading the clergy's advertisement, King became very angry and started composing his famous letter. He seized the opportunity to defend his philosophy of

⁸⁶ Frady, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁸⁷ http://sas.upenn./African_studies

⁸⁸ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.106.

⁹⁰ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

nonviolent resistance and present the case of blacks to the American nation. The letter contained a methodical analysis of civil disobedience strategy, where King observed that: "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressors; it must be demanded by the oppressed".⁹²

King's letter was written on the margins of the newspaper and on toilet paper. It was later published as an essay. The letter was approximately of 7000 words, and in it King explained to the clergymen and to the world why the struggle against racism must not be deferred.⁹³

In response to the claim that he was an outsider, King clarified that he was not because he was the president of the SCLC and SCLC had around eighty five affiliate organizations in every southern state. Mr. Fred Shuttlesworth, President of Alabama Christian Movement for the Human Rights (ACMHR), an affiliate of the SCLC, had invited him to get engaged in a nonviolent direct action in Birmingham in order to secure equal rights for blacks. This meant that King was in Birmingham by affiliation and invitation.⁹⁴

King also explained that he had organizational ties in Birmingham. Basically he liked to be there, because injustice was there. He also believed that he was like a prophet and clarified that all prophets in the eighth century B.C. were accused of being outsiders.⁹⁵

In response to the "untimely" claim, King stated: "For years now I have heard the word "wait", it rings in the ears of every Negro with piercing familiarity, this wait has

⁹² King, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁹³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁹⁴ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁹⁵ Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

almost always meant "never", we must come to see with one of our distinguished jurists that "justice" too long delayed is justice denied".⁹⁶

King added that: "I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was well-timed in the view of those who have not suffered from the disease of segregation".⁹⁷

Regarding the need to wait and the campaign's timeliness King said:

"There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the blackness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience".⁹⁸

King clarified that he and the SCLC had followed the main steps of the nonviolent campaign before they started the demonstrations. These steps were: collection of the facts to determine if injustices were present, negotiations, self-purification and direct action. He declared that they had gone thoroughly through those four steps before starting the demonstrations.⁹⁹

King and SCLC managed to collect the following facts about Birmingham: Birmingham was the most segregated city in the United States. It had a very well known record of brutality. Racial injustice existed. Blacks faced unjust treatment in the courts. There had been many unsolved bombings of black homes and churches in Birmingham more than in any other city in the U.S. In Birmingham, blacks had been discriminated against in employment, denied the right to vote and denied equal access to public facilities.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Washington, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁹⁹ Arson, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁰ King, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

These facts were collected by King and SCLC before deciding the site of the nonviolent direct action campaign. Birmingham was an ideal target because of its well known record of racial injustice.¹⁰¹

Upon those hard facts, black leaders sought to negotiate with the city leaders. But the political leaders consistently refused to negotiate the grievances of blacks.

Later the protest leaders had the opportunity to talk with the leaders of Birmingham's economic community. During negotiations merchants promised to remove the humiliating racial signs from stores. Due to these promises, black leaders decided to stop all demonstrations. But the merchants broke their promises and as weeks and months passed the few signs which were removed had been returned, while others remained.¹⁰²

Blacks discovered that they were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. Blacks felt deep disappointment. They found that they had no alternative except to prepare for direct action. Before starting the direct action campaign, participants of the demonstrations had to be trained on self-purification workshops.¹⁰³

Despite the difficulties involved they decided to undertake a process of self-purification. Self-Purification means a series of workshops on nonviolence to make sure that they could accept blows without retaliating and endure jail. These workshops included training on sit-ins and demonstrations.¹⁰⁴

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create a crisis and foster a tension so that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁰² King, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 78

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 79.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The purpose of the direct action program was to create a situation and crisis that will inevitably open the door for negotiation.¹⁰⁶

King described the technique as a type of constructive nonviolent tension that was necessary for growth. Such tension in society will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood".¹⁰⁷

In the last part of the letter, King expressed his disappointment with the white moderates, who had agreed with the civil rights goals, but were still more devoted to order than justice and asked blacks to wait for freedom.¹⁰⁸

King was disappointed with the southern ministers, because they were supporting law and order, while neglecting the social evil that afflicted man in the world. According to King, those ministers were maintaining "un-biblical" separation between the sacred and the secular".¹⁰⁹

4. Letter's Impact

The letter was a synthesis of King's ideas, which he had been developing for several years in his speeches and articles. The completed text of the letter was dated April 16, 1963.

King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" constituted his comprehensive reply to all the accumulated cautions and accusations from parties about the legitimacy of his confrontational movement.

In the letter, King had addressed several issues such as nonviolent direct action, and when nonviolence should be used. He justified civil disobedience, the use of demonstrations and protest.

¹⁰⁶ King, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.mlk-hawaii-org/civilrightsmovement.htm>

¹⁰⁸ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 92.

The most important aspect of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" was its "prophetic quality". King believed he was the Trustee of a God-given mission to attack un-Christian institutions wherever they exist.

The letter was one of the most profound statements on the origins and goals of the civil rights movement, which "expressed clearly the view of the black mass community". The letter is also considered as one of the most significant documents in American history.

It was like a manifesto of the civil rights movement and a defense of nonviolent protest including civil disobedience.

The letter from Birmingham Jail attracted international attention to what was happening in Birmingham. It paved the way for the Washington March of 1963. It helped to bring the civil rights bill of 1964 into being.

The letter displayed King's distinctive ability to influence public opinion by approaching ideas from the bible and the American Constitution.

5. Conclusion

Inspired by Birmingham, Blacks were infused with confidence in the nonviolent method.

Birmingham events proved a turning point for the civil rights policies of the Kennedy Administration. It was a turning point in the black struggle for equality as prior to Birmingham blacks were demanding limited civil rights goals such as desegregation of public accommodations and integrating public schools, but after Birmingham blacks had broadened their goals and were demanding social, political and economic change so well.

The Birmingham Campaign sparked a new militancy among African Americans. In the summer of 1963 King asserted that blacks wrote their own emancipation proclamation ending the psychological slavery and declared:

"We can make our selves free".

King viewed the Truce Agreement as "The most magnificent victory for justice we've seen in the Deep South".¹¹⁰

The Birmingham achievement in 1963 was like a revolution, because it changed the face of America. Public accommodations were desegregated and job opportunities were opened for Negroes.

G. The March on Washington, 1963

In January 1963, A. Philip Randolph, the President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), suggested a March on Washington to dramatize the plight of unemployed blacks.¹¹¹

On August 28, 1963 an estimated 250,000 demonstrators, including around 60,000 whites, arrived in Washington, D.C., the American capital, using different transport means such as airplanes, trains, buses and cars. They gathered for a peaceful parade from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial demonstrating for jobs and freedom.¹¹²

The immediate goal of the march was passage of the civil rights bill that the Kennedy Administration had sent to the congress. The bill targeted the integration of schools and the enactment of a fair employment practices bill prohibiting job discrimination.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 177.

¹¹² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

¹¹³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

The march had six official goals: Meaningful civil rights laws; massive federal works program; full and fair employment; decent housing; the right to vote and adequate integrated education.

The broader goals of the march included the elimination of all legal segregation and increased job opportunities for Blacks.¹¹⁴

Black leaders who participated in the march on Washington were:

- Eugene Carson Blake, President of the United Council of Churches.
- Walter Reuther, President of the United Automobile Workers.
- John Lewis, President of the SNCC.
- Philip Randolph, President of BSCP
- Floyd McKissick, President of CORE.
- Whitney Young, President of Urban League.
- Matthew Ahmann, President of the National Catholic Conference.
- Roy Wilkins, President of NAACP.
- Martin Luther King, President of SCLC.¹¹⁵

At the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech which was deeply rooted in the American Dream which states that each individual has certain basic rights that not derived from the state.¹¹⁶

Through the dream speech King emphasized on human equality, individual character and moral truth.

The march to Washington achieved several gains for the black civil rights movement: It contributed to the passage of the Kennedy civil rights bill of 1964; created a moment of national uplift which reminded the country of its best values; maintained

¹¹⁴ http://nps.gov/malu/documents/hrs/hrs_chapter_2.htm

¹¹⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu>

the considerable momentum which had been achieved by the movement and proved King to be the symbol of the aspirations of the African Americans.¹¹⁷

One of the most significant facts of the historic March on Washington was that one quarter of the people gathered there were whites. The March marked the first white participation in large numbers in the black civil rights movement. Mostly whites had been moved by the events of Birmingham.¹¹⁸

The March on Washington dramatized the evil of southern racism to the entire world. King believed that the Washington March had mobilized national support for the civil rights bill.¹¹⁹

King's speech has changed the face of race relations forever. It has become one of the most recognizable in history. It was a perfectly balanced piece of rhetoric that showed hope and optimism at a moment when hatred and violence were imminent.

The speech was one of the key moments that led to positive changes in legislation a year later.

It had dramatized widespread support for the civil rights bill. But the hard struggle against southern racism was not over.

The March on Washington has been considered the greatest demonstration for freedom in America, as demonstrators expressed a strong plea for racial equality and justice for all

The March on Washington was a very clear example of collaboration among individual leaders and organization. The march had unified all the famous black leaders representing the black civil rights organization for the purpose of achieving freedom for all blacks in the United States.

¹¹⁷ Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.priestsforlife.org/resources/abortionimages/>

¹¹⁹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

H. St. Augustine Campaign, 1964

In the spring of 1964, King and the SCLC chose St. Augustine, Florida as the next battlefield in order to keep the *American Dilemma* before the eyes of the nation.¹²⁰

The primary goal of the St. Augustine campaign was the passage of the civil rights bill. As in previous campaigns King and the SCLC wanted to create a crisis in the city with the hope that the resulting publicity might pressure congress to enact pending legislation.¹²¹

King and the SCLC declared the goals of St. Augustine campaign to be: immediate desegregation of the hotels, motels, restaurants, lunch counters, swimming pools and other public facilities; the hiring of blacks by the fire and police departments and the creation of a biracial committee.¹²²

After weeks of demonstrations and repeated pleas submitted to the federal government, President Lyndon Johnson phoned Senator George Smatters of Florida, requesting that he use his influence to negotiate a settlement.¹²³

On June 1964, the Governor of Florida, Farris Bryant, accepted the decision of the business community in St. Augustine. He ordered the civic leaders to form a biracial committee to discuss the demands of the civil rights movement.¹²⁴

The nonviolent protest in St. Augustine which was led by King and the SCLC succeeded in provoking white racists and focused attention upon black grievances. It stimulated the federal court injunction in support of the civil rights movement and provided publicity that facilitated enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The St. Augustine was the final scene of nonviolent campaign against segregated public accommodations in the South.

¹²⁰ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. p. 101.

¹²³ Ibid. p. 105.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

I. Civil Rights Act, 1964

There were several factors that contributed to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: The nonviolent direct action; the Birmingham campaign; the war of the nonviolent protests in the summer of the 1963 and the St. Augustine campaign. All mobilized national support for the legislation.¹²⁵

The provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, stated that:

"All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations, without discrimination or segregation on the grounds of race, color, religion or national origin".¹²⁶

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on "race, color, religion or national origin" in public establishments which had a connection to interstate commerce or that were supported by the government. Such establishments of public accommodations included hotels, motels, trailer parks, restaurants, gas stations, bars, taverns and places of entertainment.¹²⁷

The act also authorized the Attorney General to initiate suits on behalf of private individuals. It prohibited employment discrimination when employers were involved in interstate commerce and founded the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC established earlier by Executive Order number: 10925 in 1961, was issued by President John F. Kennedy, for the purpose of investigating discrimination in hiring barring discrimination in federally-funded programs.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹²⁶ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

¹²⁷ Kranz, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 31.

The act also declared Congress's intent to bar discrimination in public schools and colleges, as these institutions received public funds.¹²⁹

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most significant federal legislation of its kind since the reconstruction era. It increased the federal government's ability to force local schools districts to desegregate and provided more protection for civil rights activists. It made it illegal to discriminate against an individual because of race, color or sex in public accommodations or employment.

The act was the great liberal achievement of the twentieth century. It destroyed Jim Crow Laws in public accommodations and paved the way for implementing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 integrated restaurants, bars, hotels, motels, swimming pools and all other public accommodation services.

It had provided for funds to be cut from any U.S. government supported program that was found to be practicing racial discrimination, provided equal employment opportunities in the workplace for women as well as racial, religious and ethnic minorities and it has provided immediate elimination of racial discrimination in places of public accommodations.

As a result of the 1964 act, one quarter of a million new black voters had been registered by federal examiners. Within four years voter registration in the south was more than doubled.

The only weakness of the 1964 Act was that it did not have a provision authorizing the assignment of federal registrars to aid southern blacks facing discrimination when they attempted to register with local officials.

¹²⁹ Kranz, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

The civil rights act did not end racial conflict; on the contrary, violence escalated. In Washington D.C., Mr. Lemuel Penn, a Black Educator who was driving through Georgia on his way home from a training session for reserve officers, was shot down by snipers in Broad Street, Classic City of Athens on July 11, 1964.

In Philadelphia, Mississippi, three civil rights workers - two whites and one black-disappeared. On August 5, 1964 the black youth was found brutally murdered by Mississippi Klansmen.¹³⁰

Blacks living in ghettos found that their daily life did not change. The economic gap between blacks and whites was increased.¹³¹

Although the Act was stronger than the earlier acts of 1957 and 1960, many felt that it was not completely satisfactory. Although it banned discrimination in employment practices and public accommodations, but it did not include a strong voting rights clause.

J. Selma Campaign, 1965

1. Historical Background

Blacks in the south had been denied the fundamental democratic right to vote by means of literacy tests, poll taxes and violent white resistance.¹³²

Despite the fact that the number of blacks registered to vote in the south had increased in 1962 and 1964, it was clear that registration was still proceeding at a very slow pace.¹³³

King stated that after the passage of the civil rights act of 1964 there was a strong need for a federal voting rights law that would end barriers to registration.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Kranz, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹³¹ <http://priestforlife.org/>

¹³² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹³³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

The SCLC and King decided that the campaign for the voting rights would center on Selma, Alabama, because it was situated almost in the center of the black belt, where blacks comprised a majority of 29,000 residents. Only three percent of the 29,000 were registered to vote.¹³⁵

The main goal of the Selma campaign was to secure blacks the right to vote.¹³⁶

Again King and the SCLC were planning to create a crisis in Selma, to arouse national support for legislation to guarantee the right to vote.¹³⁷

King's plan in Selma was composed of the following steps: Start a march to the ballot boxes. If blacks were refused to be registered then he would appeal to Governor Wallace. If Wallace wouldn't listen they would dramatize the situation to arouse the federal government. This would be done by marching by thousands to the registration places. If unsuccessful, then an appeal would be made to the Congress by another March on Washington.¹³⁸

King had already learned to use media to gain the sympathy of the Americans, especially in the north and the international community for their case. King targeted Selma for a concentrated campaign of protest activity partly because disenfranchisement of the African Americans in Dallas County was extremely obvious.¹³⁹

King used television to show how the state and county political leaders in Selma responded to the peaceful protesters with violence. Those leaders were exposed to the collective consciousness of the national television audience as irrationally brutal

¹³⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

¹³⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 117.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 118.

¹³⁹ Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

oppressors of defense crusaders, who were ready to sacrifice themselves for freedom and democracy.¹⁴⁰

2. The March from Selma to Montgomery

King thought that in order to bring the attention of the nation to Dallas County, they had to engage in a broader civil disobedience. He announced that he would lead a march from Selma to Montgomery, a forty five mile march, on Sunday, March 7, 1965.¹⁴¹

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, King was unable to lead the march because he was busy in Atlanta raising funds for the campaign. Instead, the march was started by about 600 marchers and led by Hosea Williams of the SCLC and John Lewis of the SNCC. They started out from red brick Brown's Chapel.¹⁴²

When the marchers arrived at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were asked by John Cloud, Major of Alabama State Troops, to go back. But they continued so troopers attacked the marchers, setting off tear gas and beating them with clubs, cattle prods and bull whips, in front of newsmen and television cameras.¹⁴³

On Pettus Bridge, women and children, old and young marchers, even students, were attacked savagely by troopers and the deputies of James Clark, Sheriff of Selma. As a result of police brutality, sixteen marchers were hospitalized and another fifty received emergency treatment.¹⁴⁴

Police brutality was brought into homes across America on television screens, in newspapers and magazines. Television networks interrupted their regular

¹⁴⁰Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁴¹ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 124.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 125.

¹⁴⁴ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

programming with film footage of police assault. The American public who viewed the scenes came to know it as the "Massacre".¹⁴⁵

According to the protest leaders and the American national media, Jim Clark, Sheriff of Dallas County had displayed a violent temper on camera along with his deputies who were armed with electric cattle prods. Such extreme cruelty unwittingly contributed much to the cause of African American voting rights.¹⁴⁶

The next day the newspapers told the story of the aborted march calling the event "Bloody Sunday"; this incident aroused national indignation.¹⁴⁷

The media coverage of the Bloody Sunday event produced an immediate national outrage. Selma's televised brutality had effectively highlighted the demands for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹⁴⁸

The unexpected white violence that Sunday stirred the national conscience and exerted pressure upon the federal government to act.¹⁴⁹

The police brutality on Bloody Sunday also stirred anger in the American Congress and the leaders of political parties. President Lyndon Johnson publicly deplored the brutality. Thousands of people in cities across the country marched in sympathy with the demonstrators over the next few days that followed the massacre.¹⁵⁰

The major focus of the SCLC and King's political strategy for the Selma campaign was to draw the attention of national media to the political plight of Selma's largely disenfranchised black citizens.¹⁵¹

King, who was in Atlanta, was shocked by the violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. He announced that he would lead another march from Selma to Montgomery on

¹⁴⁵ Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁶ Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁷ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 207.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 125.

¹⁵⁰ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹⁵¹ Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

Tuesday, March 9, 1965. The proposed march was postponed due to a court order prohibiting it.¹⁵²

In order to avoid the violence committed during the first march, Mr. Le Roy Collins, the Former Governor of Florida, sent by President Johnson as a mediator for the second proposed march, suggested a deal. He suggested that the marchers cross the Pettus Bridge on Tuesday, as proclaimed, and then turn back upon their arrival at the police barricade. This meant saving face for both sides.¹⁵³

Finally after Judge Johnson had lifted the injunction, King led the 54 mile, six day march between Selma and Montgomery on March 21, 1965.¹⁵⁴

In reality Selma's campaign was for black voting rights, but on television it was clearly depicted as a struggle of good against evil.¹⁵⁵

The march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 was the last major surge of the nonviolent direct action by the southern movement on a national level involving both blacks and whites. After that, the movement turned almost exclusively to tools of political and economic organizing.¹⁵⁶

King described the Selma campaign as the most powerful and dramatic civil rights protest that had ever taken place in the south. He added that the march marked the culmination of the civil rights movement in the south.¹⁵⁷

The drama and passion generated by television coverage of the Selma protest campaign created the suitable atmosphere for issuing the 1965 Voting Rights Act.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹⁵³ King, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 133.

¹⁵⁵ Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁶ King, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁷ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁸ Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

3. Conclusion

Selma Campaign attained for African Americans the fundamental democratic right to vote.

The Selma to Montgomery march clearly showed how far the African Americans had come and how far they still had to go.

Ten years before, in 1954, blacks could not sit in the front seats of the bus, but now they were demanding their full rights as American citizens. Although their situation was much better than before, but still they were not at the end of the road.

K. Voting Rights Act, 1965

During the 1960's several social and political forces helped to overcome the racial resistance for the implementation of the 15th Amendment: The change of the socioeconomic structure in the south; the migration of blacks to the southern cities; the growing electoral strength of African Americans in the north; the energies of the civil rights movement; the pioneer role played by black veterans of the second world war; renewed American commitment to democracy occasioned by international struggles against Fascism and Communism; the election of the skillful southern President Johnson; the talents of the civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King and the technological changes in media coverage, which brought violence and ugliness of southern political leaders into the homes of the citizens throughout the American Nation.¹⁵⁹

The black civil rights struggle in the south won the support of northern liberals. Once protest campaigns escalated and televised images of southern law enforcement officers savagely beating peaceful black demonstrators in large numbers, people in the

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp.264-265.

north were convinced that support for the cause of the black civil rights was a moral imperative.¹⁶⁰

The national media played a great role in supporting the campaigns of the black civil rights movement. As television networks were searching for dramatic visual news, they helped show morality plays enacted on the streets by the black civil rights organizations. King also learned to use television to gain the sympathy of the northern audiences for their cause.¹⁶¹

The voting rights act of 1965 went to Congress as a direct result of the Selma – Montgomery march which was organized and led by Martin Luther King.¹⁶²

On August 6, 1965, President Johnson invited major civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer and Rosa Parks to the president room of the capitol rotunda where he signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This was the same room where President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation 104 years earlier.¹⁶³

The provision of the voting rights act stated:

"No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any state or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race, color or national origin".¹⁶⁴

During the signing ceremony, President Johnson stated:

"The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls, which imprison men, because they are different from other men".

¹⁶⁰ Crenson, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 66.

¹⁶² <http://www.sol.com.au/kor/15-01.htm>

¹⁶³ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 294.

Johnson Added: "The voting rights act of 1965 is one of the most monumental laws in the entire history of American freedom".¹⁶⁵

The voting rights act barred literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting. It authorized the appointment of federal examiners to register black voters in the south whenever the right to vote was obstructed. It attained to the blacks the fundamental democratic right to vote.¹⁶⁶

The act of 1965 dismantled the national origin system that had been in place since 1924.¹⁶⁷

The act also brought the basic right of free citizenship for southern blacks; changed the character of the southern electorate and laid the basis for a political revolution in several states. In addition it concluded most of the civil rights movement's work to meet special problems of southern blacks and encouraged the leaders of the civil rights movement to broaden the scope of their mission.¹⁶⁸

By winning the right to vote, blacks were allowed to participate freely in local and national elections. As a result they have changed the political landscape of the south. They were appointed as sheriffs, as well as to top positions within city, county and state governments. They were also elected to public offices as mayors and state congressional representatives.¹⁶⁹

The voting rights act had several objectives: It immediately suspended literacy tests and other devices to prevent voting. The act authorized the Attorney General to send federal examiners into the south to enroll voters and observe registration practices. It prevented the implementation of new discriminatory laws. Finally the act prohibited

¹⁶⁵ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁶⁶ Colaiaco, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁷ Gerstle, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

¹⁶⁸ Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

¹⁶⁹ Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

the governments of all affected areas from changing their electoral procedures without the approval of the civil rights division of the justice department.¹⁷⁰

The main achievement of the voting rights act is that it was used to register millions of African Americans, who had never been allowed to vote. But once the registration of new voters increased, many schemes were developed in an attempt to cancel out the effect of the new voters.

Attempts such as changing elected positions to appointed positions, gerrymandering election boundaries and the changing of a single-member districts to at-large elections became commonplace.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a milestone in American political history; simply it was an effort to enforce the 15th Amendment, which was a law for more than a century.

The voting rights act of 1965 represented a landmark victory of the Civil Rights Movement. Many blacks since then have been elected to important political offices on the state and local levels.

After the success of the voting rights act of 1965, King, SCLC and the Civil Rights Movement changed their main strategy from a protest movement into a full-fledged social movement. They turned their attention to broader problems of poverty and unemployment, particularly in the slums of northern cities.

¹⁷⁰ Keyssar, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

Chapter Six

VI. Conclusion

In the 1950's, during the cold war era, the United States was proclaiming itself as the leader of the free world and democracy, while African Americans were suffering from segregation, deprived of freedom and treated as second class citizens.

There exists a striking gap between American principles of freedom and equality and everyday practices. A moral gap encounters the American traditional concepts of American faith in the democratic system.

The contradictions between the rhetoric of democracy and the reality of race relations in the United States compelled President Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy to support civil rights measures.

From the middle of the 1950's until the late 1960's, Martin Luther King ranked as the most important leader of the nonviolent civil rights movement. This movement transformed the politics of America and inspired oppressed people throughout the world.

Nonviolence was not a ready-made concept used by blacks in their struggle for freedom, but it was an evolution which roused in part from the personal and intellectual inclinations of Martin Luther King and the practical situation that confronted Negroes.

Nonviolence was the key to tactical victories won in the civil rights era. The U.S. Constitution was the anchor that provided guarantees that nonviolent tactics were legally defensible to provide the gains necessary.

The tactical choice of civil disobedience was part of a larger political strategy, based on predicted responses of both local and national audiences. Disobedience escalated the conflict, polarizing supporters and opponents. The violent response from local authorities generated publicity and outside pressure for legislation.

King and the SCLC achieved major victories against segregation in the south, through creating dramatic crises, provoking racists to respond to peaceful protests with violence.

King, who led the black civil rights movement in the 1950's, managed to change racial consciousness and the American political system. To the black community, King was like a candle along with a light. He provided his nation with a "road map", so that all people could locate and share in the practice of democracy.

During ten year period which extended from 1954 till 1965, the black civil rights movement, which had followed nonviolent direct action, managed to achieve the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act 1965. It also succeeded in breaking the back of racial segregation system and destroyed legal basis for denying blacks and other minorities' full access to education, employment, professions and opportunities of the private market place and public arena.

The Civil Rights Laws put an end to many forms of legalized segregation and paved the way for some improvement in black's position, such as the increase of the number of blacks employed in professional, technical, managerial and administrative positions since 1960.

The voting rights act of 1965, which was a direct result of the civil rights movement, represented a historic political victory for African Americans and America as a whole. It promoted political equality for African Americans and established a legal cause of

action for private citizens and the government to challenge discriminatory voting practices and procedures.

The black civil rights movement also managed to achieve a number of remarkable accomplishments and succeeded in changing the face of the American Nation. It gave a sense of dignity and power to African Americans.

From the American experience one learns that legislation and court orders issued on behalf of African Americans were just declaring rights but not fulfilling them. Blacks managed to obtain these rights when they started to act, to demand and to protest.

The civil rights movement expanded the parameters of American democracy and the guarantees of citizenship. It also helped in raising new challenges in the ongoing struggle to advance racial and economic justice.

The black civil rights movement was the most momentous social struggle in postwar America. It was like a second American revolution that forced America to reaffirm its democratic ideals and brought to light the injustice that have undermined American democracy.

It also succeeded in breaking the back of racial segregation system and destroyed legal basis for denying blacks and other minorities full access to education, employment, professions and opportunities of the private market place and public arena.

One lesson the black civil rights movement teaches us is that we can depend on the power of the people to eliminate injustice and that democracy comes alive when citizens unite together and create a movement, which arouse the conscience of society.

The strategy of nonviolent direct action proved to be the most effective generator of change and a very successful method, which enabled an oppressed people to fight their oppressors. Thus nonviolence represents a model to be followed by other oppressed groups through their struggle for freedom and equality.

It offered a unique weapon in which, without shooting a single bullet, the African Americans were able to disarm their opponents.

Events in the American south of, India and Southern Africa, as well as the relatively peaceful democratic transformation of Eastern Europe, proved that nonviolent direct action is a successful way to resolve the world's problems.

If we take into consideration Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against the British and African Americans struggle against segregation in America, we can conclude that nonviolent Struggle is the only practical approach for major social and political change.

The black civil rights movement teaches us that through nonviolent struggle we can achieve peace. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. Violence and war only create more crisis and hatred, as President John F. Kennedy said on one occasion: "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to Mankind".

From the American experience we can conclude that violence never solves problems; on the contrary it only creates new problems adding those to the old existing problems and making things more complicated.

The modern black civil rights movement emerged in the 1950's and reached its peak in the 1960's. Although it did not achieve all of its goals, it continues to have an impact on the course of history, serving as an agent and as a model for the struggle of human rights.

The American nonviolent struggle could be adopted by colonized people, such as the Palestinians in their struggle to gain their freedom and independence.

As Palestinians, studying the black civil rights movement I totally agree with Martin Luther King who said: "*oppressors never voluntarily give freedom to the oppressed. Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance. Freedom comes only through persistent revolt, through persistent agitation, through rising up against an unjust system*".

The Palestinian Liberation Movement should be inspired by the black civil rights movement, and start thinking of establishing nonviolent liberation organizations similar to SCLC and SNCC. Also Palestinians should elect leaders for such organizations who believe in nonviolent struggles like that of Martin Luther King. In other words Palestinians need a Palestinian Martin Luther King.

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