

# Civil Rights in the USA 1945-1974: Timeline

1945

•**The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)** - Was originally established in 1938 but became a permanent standing committee in 1945. The committee focused on investigating real and suspected communists within US society. After McCarthy's downfall, it was used less.

1946

1947

•**The Hollywood Ten** - (Oct) - HUAC began to investigate alleged communist infiltration of the Hollywood film industry. Ten Hollywood writers refused to give evidence, saying that the US Constitution gave them the right to their own political beliefs. They were imprisoned.

1948

•**The Hiss Case** - (Aug) - Alger Hiss had been an advisor to President Roosevelt and was accused of being a communist spy by Whittaker Chambers. He was sent to trial by HUAC and found guilty of lying to court and imprisoned.

1949

•**USSR Develops Atomic Bomb** - (29th Aug) - First Soviet atomic test code-named *First Lightning*  
•**China becomes Communist** - (1st Oct) - Mao declares the victory of the CCP and the creation of the PRC.

1950

•**Tydings Committee Established** - (Feb) - Created to investigate McCarthy's accusations of communists in government. The committee called McCarthy's charges 'a fraud and a hoax'.  
•**The Rosenber Case** - (18th July) - Julius & Ethel Rosenberg arrested & sentenced to death for passing on atomic bomb secrets to the USSR. Executed on 19th June 1953, despite huge public protest.  
•**The McCarran Act** - (22nd Sep) - Denied communists US passports and limited the work they could do. Forced all communist organisations to register with the US Attorney General.

1951

•**'Truman Doctrine' Speech** - (12th Mar) - Communism needed to be 'contained' by USA.  
•**The Marshall Plan** - (5th June) - Committed \$13 billion USD to rebuild Europe.

1952

•**Berlin Blockade** - (24th Jun-12th May 1949) - Stalin surrounded West Berlin with a military blockade. Truman responds with Berlin Airlift. Blockade fails.

1953

•**McCarthy investigates the US army** (Sep) - Senator Joseph McCarthy begins to target the US army for communist sympathisers. Public saw him at his worse bullying army officers and WW2 hero's like General Zwicker. These public attacks led to his downfall and censure on 2nd Dec 1954.

1954

- **Brown v the board of Education of Topeka** - (17th May) - *Supreme Court rules that all school segregation was unconstitutional*
- **Communist Party Banned in US** - (24th Aug) - *The Communist Control Act is signed into law by Eisenhower, banning the Communist party*

1955

- **Montgomery Bus Boycott** - (1st Dec) - *Rosa Parks is arrested. Trial on 5th Dec. NAACP set up one-day boycott of buses. Protesters create Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to improve integration. Boycott lasted 381 days. Supreme Court eventually rules segregation on buses to be unconstitutional. On 21st Dec 1956, boycott ends.*

1956

1957

- **Little Rock High School** - (Sep) - *Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, uses national guardsmen to prevent 9 black students from attending school. This was declared illegal and Eisenhower uses 10,000 federal troops to stop attacks.*

1958

1959

1960

- **Greensboro Sit-ins** - (Feb) - *4 black students hold a sit-in in the woolworths store. Sparks copy cat protests across the South. In Apr, the Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee set up (SNCC) to co-ordinate protests.*
- **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) created** - *First meeting at University of Michigan*
- **Supreme Court orders Desegregation of all Bus Station Facilities** - (Dec)

1961

- **Freedom Rides** - (4th May) - *Led by CORE director James Farmer, 13 riders planned to test desegregation by travelling through the south. On May 14th in Anniston, their bus was fire bombed by a KKK mob. On 29th May, Kennedy petitioned the ICC to enforce desegregation.*

1962

- **Port Huron Statement issued by SDS** - (15th June) - *Statement became a manifesto for SDS and aimed to campaign against racial injustice, war and the violation of human rights.*
- **Eleanor Roosevelt Dies** - (7th Nov) - *She kept the issue of women's equality in the public eye*

1963

- **Feminine Mystique Published** - (19th Feb) - *Betty Friedan's book sparks the beginning of second-wave feminism in the USA.*
- **Birmingham Campaign** - (Apr/May) - *Campaign organised by SCLC to bring attention to segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. Children were attacked by fire hoses and dogs by the police.*
- **Washington March** - (28th Aug) - *Over 200,000 protesters marched on Washington demanding civil and economic rights for African Americans. Martin Luther King gives his 'I have a dream' speech.*

1964

- **The Civil Rights Act** - (2nd July) - Bans discrimination in education, work and public places. Equal opportunities Commission set up.
- **Berkely University Protests** - (Sep-Jan) - Free Speech Movement (FSM) was the name for student protests at Berkely to lift the ban on political activities.

1965

- **Malcom X Assassinated** - (21st Feb)
- **Selma to Montgomery March** - (Mar) - First march on 7th March, 600 marchers were attacked by state police with clubs and tear gas at the Edmond Pettus Bridge and forced to turn round.
- **The Voting Rights Act** - (6th Aug) - Set up a national literacy test for blacks and whites registering to vote.
- **Watts Riots** - (Aug 11th-17th) - 6 day riot in L.A. was the most severe race riots of the 1960s. 34 deaths.

1966

- **James Meredith March** - (6th June) - James Meredith organised a civil rights march to Jackson, Mississippi to encourage blacks to register and vote. He was shot during the march but over 3000 registered to vote.
- **National Organisation for Women (NOW) Founded** - (30th June) - Campaigned for Women's Rights
- **Black Panther's Created** - (Oct) - Huey Newton and Bobby Seale set up the Black Panther Party.

1967

- **'Black Power' book released** - *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* is released by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton. Carmichael would have a profound impact in the development of the Black Power movement.

1968

- **Columbia University Protests** (Apr) - SDS anti-war campaign.
- **MLK Assassinated** - (4th Apr) - King is assassinated by a white gunman in Memphis. Riots spread across the USA.

1969

1970

- **Kent State University Shootings** - (4th May) - 4 Students killed and 9 wounded by the National Guard during a student anti-war protest against the extension of the war into Cambodia. Led to a student strike of four million across the USA.

1971

1972

- **Equal Rights Amendment Passed** - (Mar) - Amendment would put stop any and all discrimination on grounds of sex. Was first proposed in 1923 but only under pressure from NOW was it passed. Was never ratified because STOP rallied conservatives to campaign against it at state level.
- **Watergate Break-in** - (17th June) - Five burglars caught in offices of National Democratic Committee.
- **Stop Taking Our Privileges (STOP)** - Created by Phyllis Schlafly, STOP campaigned against ERA.

73+74

- **Roe v. Wade** - (22nd Jan) - Landmark Supreme Court ruling makes abortion legal for first time under certain circumstances. Organisations like NOW had been campaign on this issue for sometime.
- **John Dean reveals Nixon's involvement** - (25th June) - Revelations go against Nixon's denials.
- **Nixon refuses to testify** - (7th July) - Nixon refuses to hand over documents or testify.
- **Nixon Resigns** - (9th August) - Nixon resigns after tapes reveal he had ordered the FBI to abandon its investigation of the break-in.