

Their protest lasted over a year. It ended when the city abolished the bus law. The boycott became the first organized mass protest by blacks in Southern history. It also focused national attention on its leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., a Montgomery Baptist minister.

In 1957, civil rights leaders, led by King, founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The organization promoted

equal rights through nonviolent civil protest and community development programs. Other important civil rights groups included the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC),

the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National

Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP). These groups staged such protests as boycotts, marches, and sit-ins.

Through the years, the civil rights movement encountered increasingly violent resistance. Angry mobs of whites often jeered or attacked protesters. Law enforcement officials sometimes broke up the protests using clubs, fire hoses, tear gas, and whips. Several civil rights activists were killed.

In 1963, King and other civil rights leaders organized a March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom at the nation's capital in Washington, D.C. Approximately 250,000 supporters gathered. The high point of the rally was King's stirring "I Have a Dream" speech. It is considered one of the greatest



Martin Luther King, Jr., center, and his wife, Coretta Scott King, arm in arm, lead a civil rights march in Alabama on March 21, 1965. Thousands of protesters marched with the Kings from Selma to the State Capitol in Montgomery to draw attention to African Americans' lack of voting rights. © Robert Abbott Sengstacke, Getty Images

speeches in history. For many people, it has come to symbolize the civil rights movement.

Because of the civil rights movement, Congress passed several laws designed to eliminate discrimination based on race. Major laws included the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964, and 1968; and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known in part as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, prohibited racial discrimination in the sale and rental of most of the housing in the nation. The 24th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, banning *poll taxes* in federal elections, was another victory for the civil rights movement. A poll tax is a tax levied equally on all the citizens of a community. The amount of the tax is the same for a poor person as for a rich one. Laws in several Southern States had required that a citizen pay the poll tax to vote. The states had used this requirement to prevent poor African Americans from voting.

Table : **Facts in brief about the U.S. (1960-1999)**
(from the [United States, History of the](#) article)

Presidents (with political parties and dates of service)	
1953-1961	Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican
1961-1963	John F. Kennedy, Democrat
1963-1969	Lyndon B. Johnson, Democrat
1969-1974	Richard M. Nixon, Republican
1974-1977	Gerald R. Ford, Republican
1977-1981	Jimmy Carter, Democrat
1981-1989	Ronald W. Reagan, Republican
1989-1993	George H. W. Bush, Republican
1993-2001	Bill Clinton, Democrat
States in the Union	
Number at start of period:	50
States added during the period:	none
Important dates	
1961	Astronaut Alan B. Shepard, Jr., became the first American in space.
1962	The Soviet Union removed missiles from Cuba, ending a threat of war with the United States.
1964	Congress passed a flood of important civil rights laws.
1965	American combat troops entered the Vietnam War.
1969	Astronaut Neil A. Armstrong became the first person to set foot on the moon.
1973	The United States removed its last ground troops from Vietnam. The war ended in 1975.
1974	Richard M. Nixon became the first American president to resign from office.
1976	The United States celebrated its bicentennial.
1991	United States forces helped defeat Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1991.
1998-1999	The House of Representatives impeached President Bill Clinton for perjury and obstruction of justice, but the Senate found him not guilty.