

Civil Rights Movement Journal

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliation

1-2 Civil Rights Movement Journal

One prominent leader in the civil rights movement discussed in this week's resources is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King is widely regarded as one of the most effective leaders of the movement due to his unwavering commitment to nonviolent resistance and his ability to mobilize large groups of people to advocate for racial equality. His leadership was marked by eloquent oratory, strategic vision, and a profound moral compass that resonated with a broad audience. King's philosophy of nonviolence was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and was instrumental in shaping the civil rights movement's approach to activism, which emphasized peaceful protest and civil disobedience.

A specific issue within the civil rights movement that Dr. King focused on was access to education. During the era of segregation, African Americans were systematically denied equal educational opportunities, relegated to underfunded and overcrowded schools. The landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional (Geier, 2023). However, despite this legal victory, the implementation of desegregation was met with fierce resistance, particularly in the southern United States, where segregationist policies were deeply entrenched.

Violence played a significant role in the struggle for access to education. The resistance to desegregation often manifested in violent acts perpetrated by white supremacists against African American students and their supporters. One notable example is the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, where nine African American students, known as the Little Rock Nine, faced intense hostility and physical threats (Misco, 2024). The violent opposition they encountered underscored the deep-seated racism within society and the lengths to which opponents of desegregation would go to

maintain the status quo. While the violence was not justified, it highlighted the urgent need for federal intervention and protection for those fighting for their rights.

As a result of the civil rights movement and the relentless efforts of activists like Dr. King, significant changes occurred in the realm of education. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a pivotal piece of legislation that prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, including in public schools and universities (Shannon & Hunter Jr, 2020). This act provided the federal government with the authority to enforce desegregation, ensuring that African American students could access the same educational opportunities as their white counterparts. Over time, this led to increased educational attainment among African Americans and contributed to the gradual breakdown of institutionalized segregation.

In conclusion, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership was instrumental in advancing the civil rights movement, particularly in the fight for equal access to education. Despite facing significant violence and resistance, the movement's emphasis on nonviolent protest and legal advocacy resulted in profound changes that improved educational opportunities for African Americans. The legacy of the civil rights movement continues to influence contemporary struggles for equality and justice, underscoring the enduring impact of its achievements.

References

- Geier, B. A. (2023). Racial Discrimination: A Slow and Steady Eroding of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In B. A. Geier, *The Roberts Court and Public Schools* (pp. 83–105). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-46008-1_6
- Misco, L. (2024). *School Discipline, the Little Rock Crisis, and Aaron v. Cooper*. https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/all_honors/21/
- Shannon, J. H., & Hunter Jr, R. J. (2020). The Civil Rights Act of 1964: Beyond Race to Employment Discrimination Based on Sex: The 'Three Letter Word' That Has Continued to Vex Society and The United States Supreme Court. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 3(3). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3649409