

CHRONOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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Chronology of Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights

1910 Founding of the NAACP to seek for legal protection, prevent lynching, use legal action against racial segregation.

June 1927 Ella Baker graduates from college (will be major behind-scenes leader in SCLC and SNCC).

Jan. 15, 1929, Atlanta- Martin Luther King Jr. is born to Martin Luther King Sr. and Alberta Williams King.

June, 1948- King Graduates B.A., Morehouse College, Atlanta.

June, 1951-Graduates Crozer Seminary, Chester, PA.

May 17, 1954-The U.S. Supreme Court declares with Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.

May 21, 1954 - Jo Ann Robinson, president, writes a letter in the name of the Women's Political Council to the Mayor of Montgomery

Sept. 1, 1954, Montgomery, Ala.-King becomes pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

Spring, 1955, LeFlore County MS, lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till

Dec. 1, 1955, Montgomery, Ala. Rosa Parks, Secretary of the Alabama NAACP, defies city segregation code by refusing to relinquish her city bus seat to a white man. She is arrested.

The boycott with which the community responds was to last 381 days.

Jan. 30, 1956, Montgomery, Ala.-King's home is bombed. Mrs. King, her infant daughter and a visitor escape injury. On Feb. 1, three more Montgomery Improvement Association officials' homes are bombed.

Feb. 21, 1956, Montgomery, Ala.-King and about 100 other blacks are indicted for conspiracy to organize an illegal boycott. King is found guilty on March 22. His \$500 fine is suspended pending appeal.

March 14, 1956-Trial of Montgomery Improvement Association leaders for violating Alabama's Anti-Boycott law.

Dec. 21, 1956, Montgomery, Ala.-The Federal Supreme Court, acting on a lawsuit brought by five Montgomery women, ruled Nov. 13 to support a lower court ruling which had declared bus segregation illegal. The court order arrives in Montgomery Dec. 20. On Dec. 21, King and other MIA associates begin first integration of Montgomery's bus system. Boycott ends.

Jan. 10-11, 1957, Atlanta-Sixty black leaders from the South meet to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to coordinate civil rights activities. King is elected president.

He asks Ella Baker to co-ordinate the national office and organize its mass meetings.

May 17, 1957-Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington, DC.

Sept. 9, 1957, Washington, D.C.-President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs 1957 Civil Rights Act; first federal civil rights bill since 1875. Intended to study "equal protection of the laws under the Constitution" and voting rights.

Sept. 24, 1957, Little Rock, Ark. The first serious federal commitment against southern resistance to desegregation. Eisenhower federalizes Arkansas National Guard to allow nine black students to integrate Central High School. Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas NAACP, had organized the "Little Rock nine"; Elizabeth Eckford, alone of the nine on the first day, walked alone to Central High School.

Aug. 19, 1958, Oklahoma City-Black students stage sit-down protests at luncheonettes and soda fountains throughout city, the earliest sit-down segregation protests in U.S.

October 25, 1958-10,000 black highschool and college students march in Washington to support school desegregation.

Feb. 2-Mar. 10, 1959-King tours India to study the legacy of Gandhi.

April 18, 1959-Second March of 26,000 black students on Washington to support school desegregation.

Jan. 24, 1960, Atlanta-King becomes co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Feb. 1, 1960, Greensboro, N.C.-Four black students from North Carolina A&T College and Bennet College (NAACP members) quietly occupy segregated lunch counters at Woolworth's and Kress stores. This begins sit-down strike movement that spread throughout the South.

Feb. 17, 1960, Montgomery, Ala.-King is arrested for perjury on his 1958 Alabama taxes. Later, an all-white jury acquits him.

April 15-17 1960 Ella Baker of SCLC convenes conference for student sit-in leaders at Shaw University, Raleigh, N.C. Formation of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Oct. 19, 1960, Atlanta-During sit-in, King and 51 others arrested for violations of trespass law. Charges against others are dropped but King is held on probation violation in connection with a September traffic violation. He is sent to Reidsville State Prison. On Oct. 27 Robert Kennedy intercedes, and King is released on \$2,000 bond.

Spring 1961 Policy debates in SNCC about whether to do "nonviolent action" (i.e. getting jailed) or "political action". Ella Baker points out that aggressive voter registration would do both.

May 3, 1961-The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC organize "Freedom Riders." The group, traveling on two buses, intends to test Supreme Court rulings desegregating interstate travel.

May 14, 1961, Anniston, Ala.-After stopping outside Anniston to change a slashed tire, a Freedom Riders' bus is attacked by a mob of 200 whites. A smoke bomb is thrown into the bus and 12 riders injured. Diane Nash, one of the sit-in leaders, urges James Farmer (CORE) not to call off the rides. She would get volunteers from Nashville to continue the ride, triggering federal

protection and giving SNCC national visibility.

May 20, 1961, Montgomery, Ala.-New group of Freedom Riders beaten with clubs and fists by mob of 200 whites. Police make no attempt to protect group until crowd has swollen to 1,000. Nineteen people injured. President Kennedy dispatches 400 U.S. marshals to protect Freedom Riders.

May 21, 1961, Montgomery, Ala.-Gov. John Patterson declares martial law after racial violence continues.

July 2, 1961, Albany, GA-Demonstration degenerates into fighting.

Feb. 21-26, 1962, Albany, Ga.-Demonstrating against the arrest of seven Freedom Riders at the Central of Georgia Railroad Station, King among 700 arrested.

1962 National Security Agency initiates systematic data gathering on all war dissenters, under the doctrine that they are orchestrated from Moscow and Peking.

Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 1962, Oxford, Miss.-Thousands of students and segregationists riot at the University of Mississippi over the enrollment of its first black student, James Meredith. 15-hour riot leaves two dead, 350 injured. by Oct. 2, 13,500 federal troops in Oxford.

April 3, 1963, Birmingham, Ala.-King begins next major desegregation campaign. SCLC issues the "Birmingham Manifesto" to detail racial injustices in that city. Marches held daily. King is arrested April 12 on a march to city hall after defying a court injunction forbidding specifically marches led by King. There he writes his "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

May 2, 1963, Birmingham, Ala.-Youth marches on city hall inspired by King begin. Commissioner of Public Safety "Bull" Connor orders the arrest of 900 children in two days. On May 3 police attack the youths with high-pressure fire hoses and dogs. Despite pleas for non-violent demonstration, rioting continues through May 7 when a truce is declared. A settlement desegregating some city facilities announced May 10.

May 20, 1963, Washington-Supreme Court strikes down Birmingham segregation ordinances.

June 11, 1963, Washington-John F. Kennedy asks Congress for most comprehensive civil rights bill.

June 12, 1963, Jackson, Miss.-Local NAACP leader Medgar Evers is assassinated at his home. Evers had assisted Mississippi students' desegregation drives.

Aug. 28, 1963, Wash., D.C.-King delivers "I Have a Dream" speech on Lincoln Memorial steps before more than 250,000 assembled for the March on Washington.

Sept. 15, 1963, Birmingham, Ala.-Four girls killed, 21 others injured when a bomb explodes at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

Nov. 22, 1963, Dallas-John F. Kennedy assassinated. Lyndon B. Johnson will bring to civil rights legislation the strength of his being from the South and his negotiating skills as Senator.

Jan. 3, 1964.-TIME names King "Man of the Year."

Jan. 23, 1964, Wash., D.C.-The 24th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, outlawing the poll tax designed to keep poor and blacks from voting.

June, 1964- "Delta Project" of National Council of Churches takes 800 white college students to Mississippi for voter registration in collaboration with Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, under the slogan "freedom summer."

June 11, 1964, St. Augustine, Fla.-King focuses on St. Augustine in the SCLC's summer campaign for desegregation of public facilities. He is arrested with 40 others after staging a sit-down protest in a local hotel.

June 21, 1964, Philadelphia, Miss.-Civil rights workers James Cheney, 21, Andrew Goodman, 20, and Michael Schwerner, 24, are slain. The bodies are found in an earthen dam on Aug. 4. After four months 21 people are arrested in the case, including the Neshoba County sheriff, Lawrence A. Rainey, local lawmen and Ku Klux Klan members. The men are released Dec. 12 by U.S. Commissioner Esther Carter. Eighteen men are arrested Jan 15, 1965, for these slayings.

Summer, 1964. "Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party" established to send an alternative group of delegates to the national Democratic party convention. Fanny Lou Hamer was one of the

organizers and a delegate.

July 2, 1964, Wash., D.C.-President Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act. King is present. The act bars discrimination in federally funded programs, protects voting rights of minorities and bans discrimination in public places.

18 September 1964 King is received by the Pope despite efforts of the FBI through Cardinal Spellman to prevent it.

Dec. 10, 1964, Oslo, Norway-King accepts the Nobel Peace Prize. On the way to Oslo he speaks in St Paul's London, his first public reference to South Africa.

Feb. 1-2, 1965, Selma, Ala.-City chosen for voting rights drive. Majority black population, of which only 1% were registered to vote. 1200 persons, including King and many children, jailed for march on Courthouse for voter registration.

Feb. 21, 1965-New York, N.Y.-Malcolm X killed in New York.

March 7, 1965, Selma to Montgomery-King leads 500 people on a march to Montgomery to protest Alabama voter registration practices. State troopers and sheriff's posse attack the crowd with tear gas, nightsticks and whips. Seventeen hospitalized, 67 others treated for injuries.

March 9, 1965, Selma, Ala.-Second effort. Strong support from outside, 450 clergy. Federal court enjoins. King determines to disobey court order but to stop when barred by federal marshals.

March 15, 1965, Washington, D.C.-Lyndon B. Johnson, sending voting rights bill to Congress, concludes his speech: "We shall overcome."

March 21-25, 1965, Selma to Montgomery-Under federal protection, King leads a march of 3,200 from Selma. The group proceeds peacefully to Montgomery.

March 25, 1965, Lowndes County, Ala.- Viola Luizzo, a civil rights worker from Detroit, driving for the march, is shot and killed by a sniper on Highway 80 after the march.

June 4, 1965, Howard University, DC-L.B. Johnson makes his strongest speech on civil rights.

Aug. 6, 1965, Wash., D.C.-President Johnson signs the 1965 Voting Rights Act which abolishes literacy tests and ensures registration of those turned away by state registrars.

Aug. 11, 1965, Los Angeles, Calif.-Rioting breaks out in Watts. Before the disturbance is quelled 35 die; close to 90 are injured. Property and fire damage is estimated at more than \$200 million. Signal that hoped-for change will call for more conflict; move to the North. Administration officials have begun to warn King against saying anything about the Viet Nam War (Harding p. 10f)

Jan. 7, 1966, Chicago, Ill.-King announces the "Open City" campaign to fight problems of the poor in the North. This is the SCLC's first true Northern campaign. Focus on Chicago.

May 16, 1966-First public statement against the Viet Nam war.

June 6, 1966, Hernando, Miss.-James Meredith (who in 1962 had been the first black student in the U. of Miss.) is shot shortly after he begins a voting rights march from Memphis, Tenn., to Jackson, Miss. Meredith recovers from the three shotgun blasts.

June 12, 1966, Chicago, Ill.-Rioting breaks out. This summer will see racial violence in 20 cities from New York to Atlanta, from Perth Amboy, N.J., to Milwaukee, Wis.

July 10, 1966, Chicago, Ill.-45,000 march from Soldier Field to City Hall.

August 21-28, 1966, Cicero, Ill.-Campaign for open housing and public housing; negotiation with City Hall, beginnings of Operation Breadbasket.

Dec. 5, 1966, Atlanta-The Supreme Court rules the Georgia Legislature must allow Julian Bond to take his seat. The legislature originally refused to seat Bond because of anti-war sentiments and opposition to the draft.

December 1966 Major General William P. Yarborough becomes Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, co-ordinating with CIA/FBI etc. Previously he had directed military intelligence operations aimed at Eastern Europe; before that had been involved in the creation of Special Forces Groups (aka "green berets") in Viet Nam. From early 1967 King is subject to "blanket

surveillance" with every public appearance recorded. Yarborough and Hoover et al. coordinate through Counter Intelligence Analysis Board.

25 February 1967 at Los Angeles King appears with antiwar senators McGovern and McCarthy

24 March King appears with antiwar activist Dr. Spock before a rally of 5,000.

April 4, 1967, New York-Riverside Church, "Declaration of Independence from the war in Vietnam." King's opposition to the war had been open for a year, but this was the most formal declaration, making it a matter of SCLC policy, against the advice of many of his supporters. Federal authorities no longer return his calls.

June 12-17, 1967, Newark, N.J.-The "long, hot summer" begins with race riots which spread to 50 cities by summer's end. 23 dead in Newark.

June 23, 1967, Detroit, Mich.-The century's worst race riot leaves 43 dead, 5,000 injured, 5,000 homeless and \$250-300 million property damage. The violence started after an alleged incident of police brutality during a police raid of an after-hours bar.

July 12, 1967- Race riots in Newark, 12 dead. President L.B. Johnson names "Kerner Commission" to study racism and violence.

August 1967 in Toronto James Earl Ray meets Raul ____ who offers him help in getting identity documents in return for his help in various illegal errands; sends him all around the US.

October 1967 formation of a SFG sharpshooter group Alpha 184 to train for intervention in racial unrest.

17 November 67 False report circulated by the intelligence network to the effect that armed blacks were planning to attack key public facilities; SFG are deployed to prepare to defend major cities

December 1967 (Date not given; Harding 19) "Nonviolent protest must now mature to a new level to correspond to heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. This higher level is mass civil disobedience."

31 January 1968 "Ted Offensive" in south Viet Nam

February 1968 before a speech at Vermont Baptist Church in Washington King meets with black dissidents H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael; surveillance transcript shows he was pleading with them to help keep future campaigns nonviolent.

March 1, 1968 Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford declares the Viet Nam policy is bankrupt. Clifford had discovered that he had been kept out of the loop by the way the White House was running the war.

March 2, 1968, Wash., D.C.-The National Commission on Civil Disorders--the Kerner Commission--releases its final report on the causes of 1967 summer racial unrest. It concluded that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal." They blamed the violence on segregation, poverty and the frustration they breed.

March 2, 1968 massacre of civilians at My Lai village (will be covered up until November 1969)

March 28, 1968, Memphis, Tenn.- A garbage workers' march (postponed from March 22 due to weather) becomes disorderly. Provocateurs (some white, some from out of state) break windows and King leaves the march. Police retaliate, one youth killed. King is invited to Memphis again to try to get things back under control. King believes the disinformation to the effect that the trigger had been the black gang "The Invaders."

April 3, Memphis, Tenn.-City authorities obtain court order to ban outside participation. King answers that he will participate anyway.

April 4, 1968, Memphis, Tenn. 6:01 PM-King is assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, apparently by Raul ___ in the employ of mafia bosses in New Orleans and Memphis. Raul had been the handler of James Earl Ray since August. At the same time King and Andrew Young were in the sights of Alpha 184 sharpshooters. Several riots break out in other cities, but calm is maintained in Atlanta where King lies in state at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

April 8, 1968, Memphis, Tenn.-Coretta King leads a march of 42,000 to city hall in her husband's place.

April 9, 1968, Atlanta-King is buried at South View Cemetery. An estimated crowd of 50,000 to 100,000 lines the mule-drawn cortege route. Mrs. King requests that King's last sermon be played to the crowd. "Say that I was a drum major...say that I was a drum major for peace...for righteousness."

May 5 1969 James Earl Ray is indicted in absentia.

June 8 1968 James Earl Ray arrested in England; he is ill-served by several lawyers, including Percy Foreman, who had already served Raul. Ray is railroaded into a guilty plea although he never ceased to affirm his innocence and demand a trial.

Glossary of agencies:

COFO Council of Federated Organisations (co-ordinating Freedom Summer)

CORE Council on Racial Equality - Freedom rides

MFDP Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

NAACP National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

SNCC Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee

SCLC Southern Christian Leadership Council

- **Expanded from a summary printed in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Jan. 19, 1986, initially compiled by Diane Hunter, augmented by J H Yoder, then (1992) by Jane Kirchner.**

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