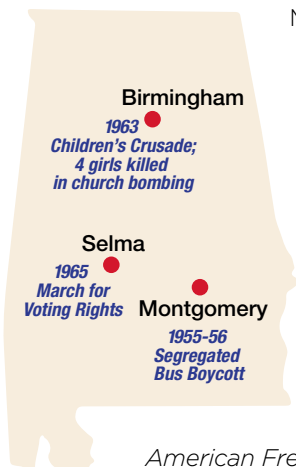


# AMERICAN FREEDOM STORIES: ALABAMA



## Civil Rights Video Series Education Guide



Many of the pivotal events of the modern Civil Rights movement in America took place in Alabama. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus, helping to spark the Montgomery Bus Boycott that ended segregation on public transportation. In Birmingham, the Civil Rights struggle shocked the world when children were violently arrested during the Children's Crusade of 1963, and four months later four little girls were killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. In 1965, protestors of all races joined in solidarity in the 50-mile march from Selma to Montgomery to demand the right to vote regardless of race. *American Freedom Stories: Alabama* is a collection of over 20 short videos that feature first-person testimonies from those who experienced the Civil Rights movement in Alabama.

### Note on the series:

*American Freedom Stories: Alabama* highlights the roles of ordinary people in Alabama who were involved in the Civil Rights movement. These individuals often risked their safety for the broader goal of achieving equality. Many participants are interviewed in these videos, and their perspectives provide powerful stories of struggle and change. Since many of those who participated in the Civil Rights movement were either students or children at the time, these videos are particularly suited for the classroom, giving students insights into the roles young people played in bringing about change.

### Link to access the full video series:

<http://histv.co/1zCIUaG>

### Curriculum Links

These videos would be useful for history, social studies, civics, politics, women's studies, African American studies, ethnic studies and film and media courses. They are suitable for 7th graders and above. Note to educators and parents: some of the content in these videos may be intense and difficult for students to watch. We recommend that adults watch the videos before showing them to students under the age of 14.

### Terms to Define

Before or after watching one or more of the videos in this series, students can define the terms below in discussion or in writing to gain a better understanding of the Civil Rights era.

adversity	civil disobedience	integration
boycott	empowered	segregation
catalyst	inequities	testimony



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## Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the goals of the Civil Rights movement and what were some of the tactics used to achieve these goals? (Discuss the difference between goals and tactics.)
2. One of the interviewees describes the Montgomery Bus Boycott as an example of “civic engagement.” What do you think this term means? What are some other examples of civic engagement from the Civil Rights movement and from the present?
3. Why do you think the murders of Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham mobilized many people to join the Civil Rights movement?
4. Why do you think Civil Rights leaders decided on a policy of non-violence? What were some of roots of this philosophy?
5. What role do you think the news media coverage played in the Civil Rights movement?
6. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about the difference between “de facto” and “de jure” segregation. Look up the meaning of these terms and discuss the difference. How did the Civil Rights movement change segregation in the U.S.?
7. What were some of the legal outcomes of the Civil Rights movement? Were the primary goals of the movement achieved? Discuss and, if possible, write an essay response to this question.



## Activities

1. **Alabama Freedom Stories: Essays.** Students can choose one video from this series and write a short essay describing their response. In their essays students can answer one or more of the following questions. Students can explore the videos more closely by filling out the chart below.

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What was the subject of the video you watched?

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What was the key event or who were the people featured in the video?

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What did you learn about the Civil Rights movement?

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How and why do you think the people in the video helped make change?

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What do you think were the outcomes of the events you learned about in the video?

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## Activities (cont.)

**2. Historic Events.** Some of the major events covered in this video series include the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Birmingham Civil Rights campaign and the Selma voting rights struggle. After watching one or more of the videos students can research these events further and write a short essay or newspaper article about the event and its outcome.

**3. Key Moments in Civil Rights History.** Working individually or in small groups, have students create a timeline of the key events featured in this series: the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Children's Crusade, the 16th St. Baptist Church Bombing, and the March from Selma to Montgomery. Students should also include 10-12 additional events from Civil Rights history on their timelines such as: Brown v. Board of Education, Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-ins, March on Washington, Civil Rights Act (1964), Freedom Summer, and the Voting Rights Act (1965). These timelines will give students a framework for understanding the Civil Rights Movement.

**4. The Civil Rights Act of 1964.** One of the key milestones of the Civil Rights Movement was the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Along with the Library of Congress, HISTORY created a special edition of the Idea Book For Educators® that features primary sources, activities, and oral history guidelines.

Visit: [www.history.com/shows/classroom/videos/civil-rights-act-introduction#civil-rights-act-introduction](http://www.history.com/shows/classroom/videos/civil-rights-act-introduction#civil-rights-act-introduction) to view a related video. Find a link to additional resources at the end of this guide.



## Focus on Youth: The Civil Rights Era

The two videos below feature the stories of young people who participated in the Civil Rights Movement. Students can watch these videos and respond to the questions below.

**Sheyann Webb: Smallest Freedom Fighter.**

<http://histv.co/1xjbFqS>

**Children's Crusade of 1963.**

<http://histv.co/1zB8nnb>

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think some parents would not have wanted their children to participate in the Civil Rights Movement? Why do you think so many children decided to participate despite the risks?
2. Why do you think freedom songs were so important in the Civil Rights Movement?
3. Do you think students today face any challenges equivalent to those experienced by young people in these videos?



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## Reading Passage:

“We were told in some of the mass meetings that a day would come when we could really do something about all of these inequities that we were experiencing, and we were calling it D Day. And that was May 2, 1963. We sang some freedom songs, we said some prayers, they reminded us that this was a non-violent movement, and with those instructions, we lined up in pairs and walked down those steps singing, “We Shall Overcome.” The police officers stopped us and speaking through a megaphone said, “Get out of this line or you’re going to jail...”

There were so many people there – we were just standing around shoulder to shoulder. More and more people were being arrested, and they called for school buses to come for us. At this time we were carried to the state fairground. We got excited driving into the state fairground because blacks weren’t allowed to go to the state fair except on Saturday night after 10 o’clock. I think we were the pivotal point that caused some changes to take place in society. I think the nation was so outraged by how children were being treated in a non-violent movement that it touched the hearts of people who otherwise would not have known what was going on.”

— Janice Kelsey, Civil Rights Movement Participant

## Questions

1. What event is Janice Kelsey describing in this passage?
2. According to Kelsey, what was the effect of the role of children in the Civil Rights movement?

## Websites

**The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom, from HISTORY and the Library of Congress:** [www.history.com/shows/classroom/videos/civil-rights-act-introduction#civil-rights-act-introduction](http://www.history.com/shows/classroom/videos/civil-rights-act-introduction#civil-rights-act-introduction)

**Birmingham Civil Rights Initiative:** [www.bcri.org](http://www.bcri.org)

**Rosa Parks Museum:** [trojan.troy.edu/community/rosa-parks-museum](http://trojan.troy.edu/community/rosa-parks-museum)

**Dexter Parsonage Museum:** [www.dexterkingmemorial.org/tours/parsonage-museum/](http://www.dexterkingmemorial.org/tours/parsonage-museum/)

**National Center of Civil Rights and African-American Culture:** [www.lib.alasu.edu/natctr](http://www.lib.alasu.edu/natctr)

**National Voting Rights Museum:** [nvrmi.com](http://nvrmi.com)

**Medgar Evers House Museum:** [www.everstrIBUTE.org/house\\_tour.php](http://www.everstrIBUTE.org/house_tour.php)

**NAACP:** [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

## Books for Further Research

Gaillard, Frye. *Alabama’s Civil Rights Trail: An Illustrated Guide to the Cradle of Freedom*. (Alabama University Press, 2010).

Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer. *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement From the 1950s through the 1980s*. (Bantam Books, 1991).

Levy, Peter B. (ed.). *Let Freedom Ring: A Documentary History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement*. (Praeger, 1992).

