

Rhode Island Black Heritage Society

Chronology of the civil rights struggle The quest for Freedom by African Americans...

- 1619 Twenty Africans brought to Jamestown Virginia on a Dutch man-of-war ship as indentured servants; white servitude legalized in Virginia.
- 1637 Pequot “war/massacre,” ethnic cleansing in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Oral history and historical documents confirm that many captured Pequots were sold out of Rhode Island, as far as Bermuda.
- 1652 State Statute place limits on perpetual servitude up to 10 year period, or until the enslaved was twenty years old.
- 1663 Major Slave revolt, Gloucester, Virginia.
- 1669 The Seaflower sails to Rhode Island with enslaved Africans.
- 1688 Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania makes first protest against slavery in Western Hemisphere.
- 1733 Samuel Sewell, The Selling of Joseph, first anti-slavery tract in the colonies published.
- 1736 Sloop Mary, owned by James Brown sails from Providence to the West African Coast for Slaves.
- 1750 11 of 13 colonies recognized slavery as a legal institution
- 1770 Cripus Attucks, a black patriot, first martyr of the American Revolution; he died during the Boston Massacre, on King Street.
- 1774 Continental Congress restricts importation of slaves.
- 1775 Black Patriots at Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, and Rhode

- Island.
- 1775 Declaration of Independence carries no statement on slavery. Free Blacks allowed to enlist in Revolutionary Army.
- 1777 Vermont abolishes slavery.
- 1778 RI creates the First RI Regiment, and the troops fight in the battle of Rhode Island.
- 1784 Gradual emancipation law passed in RI, March 1, 1884, all children born to enslave mother, referred to as 'freeborn.'
- 1787 Congress excluded slavery in the Northwest territory, but Constitution approved two-year extension of slave trade.
- 1793 Invention of cotton gin led to increased mass importation of slaves. Congress passed first Fugitive Slave Law.
- 1800 Free Blacks of Philadelphia presented petition to Congress opposition continuation of slave trade, fugitive slave law and slavery as an institution.
- 1804 Eight of the States banned slavery, but Ohio enacted Black Laws which restricted the rights and movement of blacks.
- 1808 Congress prohibits the importing of Africans as slaves.
- 1820 Missouri Compromise prohibits slavery north of Missouri's southern boundary

- 1831 Nat Turner led greatest slave revolt in Southampton, County, Virginia.
- 1842 In Rhode Island, blacks males are given the vote.
- By
1849 Revolts against slavery continued; American Anti-slavery society formed; Underground Railroad had begun taking blacks who escaped from slavery.
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Law passed by Congress.
- 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed Missouri Compromise and opened northern territories for the expansion of slavery.
- Republican Party Formed by Free Soilers, Whigs and Democrats opposed to slavery
- 1857 Dred Scott decision by the US Supreme Court opened federal territories to slavery and denied citizenship to black Americans
- 1859 John Brown attacked Harper's Ferry, West Virginia.
- 1860 South Carolina seceded from the Union, followed by Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas
- 1861 Confederate Troops attacked Fort Sumter, beginning Civil War
- 1862 President Lincoln recommended gradual, compensated, emancipation.
- Senate abolished slavery in District of Columbia.
- 1863 Congress passed a bill freeing slaves of Southern rebels.
President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Blacks recruited for Union Army.
- Draft rioters [European Immigrants] in New York objected
- The Battle of Gettysburg,

Reconstruction Era 1865-1890s

- 1865 | Freedman's Bureau established to assist freed blacks
Congress passed the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery.
General Robert E. Lee surrendered, ending the Civil War.
- 1866 | Civil Rights Act gave Blacks citizenship.
Congress passed the 14th Amendment protecting civil rights of blacks.
- 1875 | Congress passed Civil Rights bill which provided for equal treatment in public conveniences and places of public amusement.
- 1881 | Tennessee enacted first "Jim Crow" railroad car law which forced blacks to sit in separate sections on trains.
- 1883 | Civil Rights Act of 1875 ruled unconstitutional by US Supreme Court
- 1890 | First literacy tests to exclude blacks enacted by Mississippi.
- 1896 | "Separate but Equal" doctrine upheld by the US Supreme Court.

Black Protest during the Jim Crow Era

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1905 | Niagara movement organized, which aimed to abolish racial discrimination, by WEB DuBois and William Monroe Trotter. |
| 1909 | NAACP founded on the 100 th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. |
| 1911 | National Urban League organized |
| 1917 | US enters WWI; over 300,000 blacks serve in the Armed Forces

Public demonstrations [in NY] against lynchings and discrimination |
| 1927 | Texas law that prevented blacks from voting in 'white primaries' overturned |

The New Deal and the World War II Era

- 1932 | In the depths of the Great Depression, the presidential election of Franklin D. Roosevelt who enacted his New Deal Programs and legislation expanded the scope of Federal government. Government Relief, job programs, and legalization of unions.
- 1933 | University of North Carolina sued by NAACP
- 1935 | Black activists served in some cabinet offices and New Deal agencies, was informally known as the 'Black Cabinet.'
- 1936 | During this Election, blacks barred from the vote across the south
- 1939 | Opera Singer Marian Anderson prevented from singing at Constitution Hall, and encouraged Eleanor Roosevelt to resign from the Daughters of the American Revolution.
- 1941 | Executive Order 8802, prohibiting racial and religious discrimination in war industries and government training programs, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- 1942 | In Chicago, CORE organized to non-violent action
- 1944 - 1948 | Supreme Court Case, *Smith Vs. Allwright*, ruled that all white Democratic primary was unconstitutional.
NAACP and other Activists promote voter registration and drive
- 1945 | WWII ends. More than a million blacks served in the armed forces.
Postwar America: the emergence of Civil rights as a national issue
President Harry S. Truman, advances civil rights reform by commission of a review of racial discrimination, which resulted in sweeping governmental reform.
Truman's executive order to desegregate the Armed Forces
- 1946 | Segregation on interstate bus travel is banned by Supreme Court

1948 | Executive Order 9981 which required equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed forces

The Civil Rights Struggle, 1950s

1950 | US Supreme ruling: against classroom and social segregation of black students at University of Oklahoma.

1953 | US Supreme ruling: Restaurants in Washington, DC could not refuse to serve blacks.

1954 | Brown Vs Board of Education, [May 17, 1954] ruled by the US Supreme Court, that racial segregation, 'Separate but equal' doctrine as applied to public education was unconstitutional.

1955 | 14 year-old Emmett Till was murdered in Money Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Till's mother offered her son's mutilated body to be the gruesome evidence of the reigning terror and it influenced a generation about racial injustice.

Rosa Parks, Leader of the local chapter of the NAACP in Montgomery, Ala, refused to give up her seat. She was jailed and this incident sparked boycotts of Montgomery's segregated transit system.

Dr. ML King, Jr., leads Bus Boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, Interstate Commerce Commission outlawed segregated buses and waiting rooms.

1956 | Home of Dr. MLK, Jr., bombed.

1957 | Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC] organized under MLK's leadership.

Congress passed Civil Rights Act, allowing federal government to bring suits on behalf of anyone denied the right to vote.

- 1960 Four students from North Carolina College of Agriculture and Technology organized sit-in, beginning sit-in movement.
- 1963 Campaign against segregation in Birmingham, Alabama started by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Medger Evers, NAACP secretary was killed
- March on Washington, August 28th- drew 250,000 people.
- Church bombing in Birmingham, four young black girls killed.
- 1964 Civil Rights Act passed prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations and employment.
- Three Civil Rights Workers killed; their graves found in Mississippi.
- Lyndon Johnson's landslide win over Barry Goldwater in the presidential election.
- 1965 Malcolm X assassinated.
- Selma-To Montgomery March organized by Martin Luther King, Jr. Police attacks and the murder of Jimmy Lee Jackson by a police officer. The Marchers were clubbed and assaulted by 'Billy' clubs and attack dogs. [On march 7] as they crossed the Edmund Pettis Bridge, and driven back across the bridge. "Bloody Sunday" was televised and reported on news outlets around the world.