



ESSAY 4

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“THE CHIEF IMPETUS FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT CAME FROM AFRICAN AMERICANS, NOT FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS.”

ASSESS THE VALIDITY OF THIS STATEMENT BY ANALYZING THREE OF THE FOLLOWING:

**BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA
MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT
LITTLE ROCK CRISIS**



Many believe that the government officials provided the chief impetus for the Civil Rights Movement, however the main source behind the drive for the Civil Rights movement came from the African American people themselves. This is clearly seen in events such as Brown vs. the Board of Education, the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, and the Little Rock Crisis.



BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION



- In the early 1950's, racial segregation in public schools was the norm across America. Although all the schools in a given district were supposed to be equal, most black schools were far inferior to their white counterparts.
- In Topeka, Kansas, a black third-grader named Linda Brown had to walk one mile through a railroad switchyard to get to her black elementary school, even though a white elementary school was only seven blocks away. Linda's father, Oliver Brown, tried to enroll her in the white elementary school, but the principal of the school refused. Brown went to McKinley Burnett, the head of Topeka's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and asked for help. The NAACP was eager to assist the Browns, as it had long wanted to challenge segregation in public schools. With Brown's complaint, it had "the right plaintiff at the right time." Other black parents joined Brown, and, in 1951, the NAACP requested an injunction that would forbid the segregation of Topeka's public school

MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT



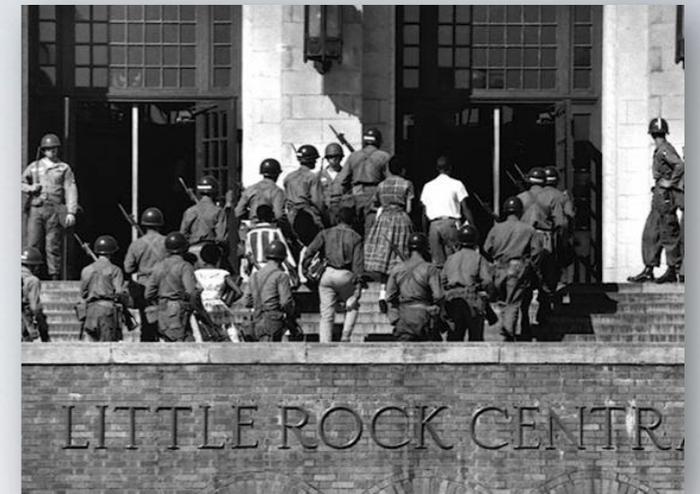
- Started on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger.
- In response, the city's black community organized a successful boycott of the bus system to force an end to such segregation.
- The boycott ended after the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public transit systems is unconstitutional.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. secured recognition in the civil rights movement by leading the Montgomery bus boycott.

BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION CONT...



- The U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas heard Brown's case from June 25-26, 1951. At the trial, the NAACP argued that segregated schools sent the message to black children that they were inferior to whites; therefore, the schools were inherently unequal. One of the expert witnesses, Dr. Hugh W. Speer, testified that:
 - "...if the colored children are denied the experience in school of associating with white children, who represent 90 percent of our national society in which these colored children must live, then the colored child's curriculum is being greatly curtailed. The Topeka curriculum or any school curriculum cannot be equal under segregation."

LITTLE ROCK CRISIS



- In 1957 nine African American students enrolled in little rock central high school. This high school was previously segregated and the students were at first denied entry into the school by the Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus. President Dwight D. Eisenhower then intervened and the nine were allowed to attend the school. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, in 1954, making all laws establishing segregated schools to be unconstitutional, and it called for the desegregation of all schools throughout the nation.
- The Little Rock School Board agreed to comply with the court's ruling. Virgil Blossom, the Superintendent of Schools, submitted a plan of gradual integration to the school board on May 24, 1955, which the board unanimously approved. The plan would be implemented during the fall of the 1957 school year, which would begin in September 1957. By 1957, nine black students were registered to attend the previously all-white Little Rock Central High, selected on the criteria of excellent grades and attendance. The nicknamed "Little Rock Nine", these students became a symbol of equality for all in America, and caused more African Americans to fight for equality.



In conclusion, it was actions of African Americans and not government officials that was the main impetus for the Civil Rights Movement. Some events which exemplify this include: Brown vs. Board of Education, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the Little Rock Crisis.

