

Civil Rights Glossary

CIVIL RIGHTS - The rights of individuals to be free from unfair or unequal treatment (discrimination) in a number of settings, when that negative treatment is based on the individual's race, gender, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, or other protected characteristic.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 - A federal law that prohibits discrimination in a number of settings: Title I prohibits discrimination in voting; Title II: public accommodations; Title III: Public Facilities; Title IV: Public Education; Title VI: Federally-Assisted Programs; Title VII: Employment.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT - Historically, the term "Civil Rights Movement" has referred to efforts toward achieving true equality for African-Americans in all facets of society, but today the term "civil rights movement" is also used to describe the advancement of equality for all people regardless of race, sex, age, disability, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristic.

CORE - The Congress of Racial Equality U.S. civil rights organization played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. Membership in CORE is stated to be open to "anyone who believes that 'all people are created equal' and is willing to work towards the ultimate goal of true equality throughout the world." The Congress of Racial Equality sought to apply the principles of nonviolence as a tactic against segregation.

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DESEGREGATION - This is the breaking down of imposed racial separation. Desegregation has always been a fundamental aim of the civil rights movement in this country and was given special impetus by the 1954 Supreme Court decision.

DISCRIMINATION – This the act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually; prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment.

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FREEDOM RIDERS - A group of men and women from many different backgrounds and ethnicities who boarded buses, trains and planes headed for the Deep South to test the 1946 U.S. Supreme Court ruling outlawing racial segregation in all interstate public facilities.

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JIM CROW - This name was given to the day-to-day legal segregation of blacks from whites before the civil rights movement. The name itself comes from a black minstrel caricature popularized in song during the 1830s. Thus, laws restricting African Americans to the back of a bus or creating separate restrooms, drinking fountains or eating facilities were known as "Jim Crow" laws.

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KKK - The Ku Klux Klan is the name of a number of past and present fraternal organizations in the United States that have advocated white supremacy, anti-Semitism, racism, anti-Catholicism, homophobia, and nativism. These organizations have often used terrorism, violence and acts of intimidation such as cross burnings to oppress African Americans and others.

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LYNCHING - The term is derived from the "vigilante justice" practiced by Captain William Lynch and his neighbors in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, in the late 18th century. In the 19th century, lynching -- usually associated with hanging but also including tar and feathering, burning and other methods of killing -- became increasingly directed against African Americans. In the last 16 years of the 19th century, there were some 2,500 reported lynchings. The quest for federal laws against lynching was among the first crusades of the NAACP in the early decades of the 20th century.

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NAACP - The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is one of the oldest and most influential civil rights organizations in the United States. It was founded on February 12, 1909, to work on behalf of African Americans. Its name, retained in accord with tradition, is one of the last surviving uses of the term "colored people", now generally viewed as dated and derogatory. In the historical context of the NAACP, however, the term is not considered offensive.

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RACISM – This is a belief in the moral or biological superiority of one race or ethnic group over another or others.

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SEGREGATION - The separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means.

SIT-IN – This is a form of direct action that involves one or more persons nonviolently occupying an area for protest, often political, social, or economic change. In a sit-in, protesters seat themselves and remain seated until they are evicted, usually by force, or until their requests have been met. Sit-ins have been a highly successful form of protest because they cause disruption that draws attention to the protest.

SNCC - The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (or SNCC, pronounced "snick") was one of the primary institutions of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. It emerged in April of 1960 from student meetings led by Ella Baker held at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. SNCC began with an \$800 grant from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Some of the original student members were organizers of sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in the southern United States. Its purpose then was to coordinate the use of nonviolent direct action to attack segregation and other forms of racism.