



Civil Rights Organizations

Overall Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Discuss the founding of the:
 - Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)
 - Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
 - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 - Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
 - Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
- Understand the role of the MIA, SCLC, NAACP, CORE, and SNCC during the Civil Rights Movement.

MIA Success Criteria:

- Recognize the history of the Montgomery Improvement Association.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's role in the MIA.
- Connect the MIA to other organizations established due to its existence.

SCLC Success Criteria:

- Recognize the history of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's role in the SCLC.
- Connect the SCLC to other organizations established due to its existence.

NAACP Success Criteria:

- Recognize the history of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's role in the NAACP.
- Connect the NAACP to other organizations established due to its existence.

CORE Success Criteria:

- Recognize the history of the Congress of Racial Equality.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's role in the CORE.
- Connect the CORE to other organizations established due to its existence.

SNCC Success Criteria:

- Recognize the history of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
- Demonstrate an understanding of Dr. King's role in the SNCC.
- Connect the SNCC to other organizations established due to its existence.



PART 1 → Lesson Content Overview:

The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was the local nonviolent civil rights organization of prominent Black pastors and leaders from Montgomery, Alabama. MIA was established in December 1955 following the conviction of Rosa L. Parks, to provide an organizational and administrative structure for the Montgomery Bus Boycott. On December 1, Parks, an African American seamstress, was arrested for refusing to yield her seat on a segregated Montgomery bus. Four days later, she was convicted and forced to pay a \$10 fine plus court costs.

The bus boycott movement reveals how the forces of African American political, religious, and feminine activism converged into a new civil rights movement. The MIA resulted from the response of the local NAACP, the Women's Political Caucus, and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance to a specific incident that reflected traditional social and civic injustice practices. The MIA focused national attention on Jim Crow in the South, which catapulted Dr. King into the national spotlight.

The MIA spawned the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, headed by King. In the years after the boycott, the MIA continued to meet monthly. Though the MIA still exists, the association primarily concerns itself with an annual scholarship award, organizing anniversary commemorations of the boycott, and advisory roles in creating museums recognizing the bus boycott and other civil rights milestones. The longest-lasting president of the MIA was Mrs. Johnnie Carr, who led the association from 1967 to her death in 2008. Carr was a lifelong friend of Rosa Parks', dating back to their enrollment in Montgomery Industrial School for Girls in 1924, then as active members of the local NAACP. Carr also helped organize the bus boycott that lasted 381 days. She later filed suit to desegregate Montgomery schools in 1964.

The first mass meeting of the MIA attracted several thousand people to the spacious Holt Street Baptist Church in the Black working-class section of the city. There, King delivered an address he had quickly composed before the meeting. He later recalled his thoughts before the address: "How could I make a speech that would be militant enough to keep my people aroused to positive action and yet moderate enough to keep this fervor within controllable and Christian bounds? I knew that many of the Negro people were victims of bitterness that could easily rise to flood proportions. What could I say to keep them courageous and prepared for positive action and yet devoid of hate and resentment? Could the militant and the moderate be combined in a single speech?"¹ In his speech, King described the mistreatment of Black bus passengers and the civil disobedience of Rosa Parks, and then justified the nonviolent protest by appealing to African American Christian faith in love and justice and the American democratic tradition of legal protest.

As the first president of the MIA, King worked tirelessly to negotiate with City Commissioners, Montgomery mayor W.A. Gayle, and the National City Lines representatives. At one of his first meetings with officials, King said he didn't want to eradicate the Jim Crow law, but wanted to amend it to ensure a "first come, first serve" policy in terms of seating on city buses. King's proposal was "flatly refused."² The refusal of segregationists in Montgomery to modify the city's segregation laws evolved into a nationwide effort to eradicate all laws and policies creating separate worlds for whites and Blacks.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church. December 5, 1955. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/mia-mass-meeting-holt-street-baptist-church>

² *Alabama Journal*. "Bus Boycott Is Being Aired." December 17, 1955. 1.



PART 2 → Lesson Content Overview:

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was a Christian-based civil rights organization established in 1957. Initially designed to facilitate the coordinated action of local protest groups in the South, the SCLC would grow into the unifying entity of independent Black churches throughout the South. The SCLC was the strength of the Black church's civil rights activities. On January 10, 1957, founding members elected Dr. King its president. He remained in that role until his death in 1968.

On January 30, 1955, the King family's home was bombed in Montgomery. By the grace of God, the poorly assembled bundle of 12 dynamite sticks did not explode as the fuse sputtered out on King's front porch. In fact, a series of bombings and shootings occurred in Alabama since the December 21, 1956, conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Four Black churches in Montgomery and the homes of Revs. Ralph Abernathy and Robert Graetz were targets of dynamitings.

Dr. King addressed the growing crowd of concerned African Americans from his porch. He encouraged them to continue to walk in nonviolence. "We must not return violence under any condition. I know this is difficult advice to follow, especially since we have been the victims of no less than 10 bombings. But this is the way of Christ; it is the way of the cross. We must somehow believe that unearned suffering is redemptive."³ On a divinely inspired mission, King refused to let anything, even death threats, stop him.

At the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom on May 17, 1957, King and the SCLC held a program at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. to arouse the nation's consciousness concerning Black Americans' lack of civil and natural rights. King gave his historic "Give Us the Ballot" speech, which propelled the freedom struggle to an even greater dimension of social, political, and economic consciousness.

A crowd estimated at 50,000 people attended. The event was co-chaired by A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and King with the aim of accomplishing the following goals: commemorating the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision on school desegregation, protesting terror and violence in the South, showing unity in the demand for civil rights legislation (especially voting rights), and paying homage to Abraham Lincoln.

*Give us the ballot and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic human rights. Give us the ballot and we will no longer plead to the government for the passage of an anti-lynching law; we will by the power of our vote write the law on the statute books of the South and bring an end to the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence.*⁴

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As one of the principal speakers, King opened his speech by referring to the Supreme Court's decision three years earlier (May 17, 1954) in *Brown v. Board of Education*. He stated that the most urgent request by

³ Editor. Clayborne Carson. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Chapter 10: The Expanding Struggle. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/publications/autobiography-martin-luther-king-jr-contents/chapter-10-expanding-struggle>

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr. "Give Us the Ballot," Address Delivered at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom. May 17, 1957. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/give-us-ballot-address-delivered-prayer-pilgrimage-freedom>



African Americans, from both the executive and legislative branches of the American government, was the right to vote. He then launched into a litany of all the accomplishments possible for African Americans if they had the vote.

Because his list of expected accomplishments all began with the phrase, “Give us the ballot,” King’s address is often called the “Give Us the Ballot” speech. It is one of the most requested documents among his many works.

In addition to his call for suffrage for African Americans, King called for leadership in America from several segments of the population – leadership from the executive and legislative divisions of the federal government in protecting its citizens and providing moral direction, leadership from white liberals in the North by remaining committed to the cause, leadership from white moderates in the South by remaining open-minded, and leadership from the African American community by being calm and firm.

On an international note, King linked the African American struggle for human rights to the African and Asian struggles for independence and freedom. He urged listeners to be nonviolent, to love, to be understanding, to seek harmony, and to keep moving ahead with dignity despite hardships and obstacles.

By August of 1963, the momentum of the Southern movement traveled North to Washington D.C., where nearly 250,000 people gathered to march for freedom, equality, jobs, and voting rights.

PART 3 → Lesson Content Overview:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is an interracial civil rights organization established in 1909 to fight against racial discrimination and advance the Black economic, social and political agenda of people of color in the United States. The founders of the NAACP were Ida Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Moscowitz, Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villiard, and William English Walling, who led the “Call” to renew the struggle for civil and political liberty.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund is the legal arm of the NAACP, It is responsible for challenging the constitutionality of segregation and separate but equal laws in the United States. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (LDF) was founded in 1940 under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall, a protégé of deceased Howard Law School Dean and NAACP lawyer Charles Hamilton Houston. Although LDF’s primary purpose was to provide legal assistance to poor African Americans, its work has brought greater justice to all Americans over the years.

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was a northern interracial civil rights organization founded in 1942 by a group of students in Chicago. Early members included George Houser, James Farmer, Anna Murray, and Bayard Rustin. Members were mainly pacifists who Henry David Thoreau and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi had deeply influenced. CORE conducted voter registration campaigns, sit-ins, and freedom rides throughout the South.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was an organization of college students established with the guidance of Ella Baker in 1960. SNCC utilized the principles of nonviolence as well as the nontraditional tactics of sit-ins, selective buying, and going to jail as a means of “taking the freedom struggle into every community of the South.” The ultimate goal of SNCC was the development of the “Beloved Community” through the use of reconciliation.



SEL Opener:

Montgomery Improvement Association

- OPTION 1: Show a picture of Rosa Parks on the bus and of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
Discussion Questions: *How do you think the picture on the right connects to the picture on the left?*
- OPTION 2: Show a picture of YOU (recent or of the past) on a team/in a club.
Discussion Questions: *Are you on any teams, clubs, or organizations? What kinds of things do you do as a team/group?: Show a picture/pictures of YOU as a child with/of your family. Recognize the history of the Montgomery Improvement Association.*

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

- OPTION 1: Show several pictures of the neighborhood churches/synagogues/mosques.
Discussion Questions: *What if all these members came together to form a club/organization? What do you think would be their purpose?*
- OPTION 2: Show the "peace" symbol.
Discussion Questions: *What does this symbol represent to you? Would you join a club/group that was all about peace?*

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

- OPTION 1: Show the pictures of the founders of the NAACP.
Discussion Questions: *How are these people the same and how are they different? Why do you think they would come together during Dr. King's time?*
- OPTION 2: Show a clip art of a judge next to a picture of Thurgood Marshall.
Discussion Questions: *Why do you think the clip art is next to this man? What hint does it give you about him? What do judges do? What is justice?*

Congress for Racial Equality

- OPTION 1: Show a map of Chicago, Illinois (for students to see its geographical location).
Discussion Question: *Do you think people in Chicago were going through the same civil rights issues as the people in the south?*
- OPTION 2: Show a clip art of a student next to a picture of students from your school.
Discussion Questions: *What does it mean to be a student? Should students only worry about what goes on in school? What can a student do to help someone both in and out of school?*



Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

- OPTION 1: Show a clip art of a student next to a picture of students from your school.
Discussion Questions: *What does it mean to be a student? Should students only worry about what goes on in school? What can a student do to help someone both in and out of school?*
- OPTION 2: Show an image of people trying to reach towards each other.
Discussion Questions: *What is going on in this picture? Why would people want to do this? What is a community? How does this help the community?*

Instructional Activities:

Montgomery Improvement Association

- Activity 1: Read [MIA in Kids Britannica](#).
 - Complete the [Guided Notes/Answer Key](#)
- Activity 2: Study the [MIA Concert Flyer](#) featuring Mrs. Coretta Scott King.
 - **Discussion:** *Why would the MIA host a concert and not focus on fighting for Civil Rights? Or is there a connection?*
- Activity 3: Read and discuss the introduction: [MIA Library of Congress - Rosa Parks Papers](#).
 - **Small Group/Individual Work:** Read and discuss the notes Rosa Parks wrote as she assisted the MIA.
 - **Large Group Discussion:** *So did Rosa Parks do more than just “stay seated” on the bus? What else did she do to help fight for justice?*

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

- Activity 1: Work in small groups/individually and complete the SCLC WebQuest
 - Station 1: [The History of SCLC](#)
 - Station 2: [SCLC Leadership](#)
 - Station 3: [SCLC Programs/Initiatives/Causes](#)
 - Complete the [WebQuest Journey Packet](#)
- Activity 2: Read the [Tweets from the National Civil Rights Museum](#).
 - Create a Tweet/reply showing that you understand how SCLC connects to the Civil Rights Movement and/or Dr. King.
- Activity 3: Read [SCLC Britannica Overview](#).
 - **Small Group/Individual Work:** Complete the [Guided Notes](#) / [Answer Key](#)
 - **Large Group Discussion:** Review the guided notes.
 - Discussion Questions: *Which action would you take? Why? Would any of these actions not work today?*
 - Acknowledge the themes among students’ answers.



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

- Activity 1: Read [The History of the NAACP](#).
 - Create a Historical Acrostic Poem based on historical facts within the History.com resource → [NAACP Historical Acrostic Poem Template](#).
- Activity 2: Watch [The Founding of the NAACP](#)
 - **Small Group/Individual Work:** Complete the [NAACP Video Cartoons](#)
 - Have the students present their video cartoons.
- Activity 3: Divide the students into 6 groups:
 - Organization
 - History
 - Mission
 - 21st Century
 - Awards
 - Interesting Facts about the NAACP
 - Have each group use [NAACP Facts for Kids](#) to complete their assigned [NAACP Google Slide](#).
 - Allow each group to present their slide to the class.

Congress for Racial Equality

- Activity 1: Watch the Video Overview: [Congress of Racial Equality: Fighting Discrimination and Segregation](#)
 - Complete the [CORE Video Guide/Answer Key](#)
- Activity 2: Have the students fight with CORE by completing the [CORE Fights Against Segregation worksheet](#).
- Activity 3: CORE was rooted in the idea of fighting violence with nonviolence. Write a letter to the leaders of CORE explaining the benefits of this approach → [Letter Template](#).

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

- Activity 1: Watch the Video: [CNN: SNCC's Legacy: A Civil Rights History](#)
 - **Small Group/Individual Work:** Complete the [Guided Notes / Answer Key](#).
- Activity 2: Read about the relationship between SNCC and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. [SNCC and MLK](#)
 - **Small Group/Individual Work:** Complete the [SNCC and MLK Relationship Worksheet](#).
- Activity 3: Read *Lift As You Climb: The Story of Ella Baker* by Patricia Hruby Powell
 - Discuss the characters, plot, feelings, vocabulary, summary, and themes



Assessments:

- **OPTION 1:**
 - **Civil Rights Club Fair:** Divide the students into five groups. Let them pretend that they are students in the 1960s. Have them create flyers, posters/tri-boards, presentations, sign-up sheets, etc. for MIA, SCLC, NAACP, CORE, and SNCC. All groups will present their materials at the Civil Rights Club Fair (open to the student body).
- **OPTION 2:**
 - **Civil Rights Organizations Brochures:** Divide the students into five groups: MIA, SCLC, NAACP, CORE, and SNCC. Have each group create a handheld or digital brochure providing the history of the organization, Dr. King's role in the organization, and the impact it made on the Civil Rights Movement.

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP/504:

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD/ELL/ESL:

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences