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Dr. King's Nonviolent Direct Action during the Civil Rights Movements in 1965

A thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in Literature and Civilization.

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material that has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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Dedications

Throughout these past five years, I have come across challenges I never thought I would overcome. For that, I am proud of myself

I dedicate my work to those who believed in me, even when I did doubt my own self.

To my one of a kind parents, Karim and Nabila, without whom I would not be where I am today if it was not for their unconditional love and support. I thank them for picking me up with words of encouragement when I needed it most. They definitely taught me how to be a strong and affectionate person at the same time. Their unhesitatingly willingness to provide me with every emotional and financial support has helped me throughout my existence. I cannot explain how much I love my parents and how much am honored to be their daughter and wouldn't change my parents for anyone else.

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Abstract

The Blacks' history in the United States of America begins as slaves, but they ended up as citizens three centuries later. After the emancipation proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, slaves had a newfound freedom. Little later, this freedom was taken away from them under the Jim Crow Laws. Such laws mandated racial segregation in all public facilities until 1965 when the civil rights movements started under Martin Luther King Jr. This research examines how Dr. King's nonviolent direct action, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience, contributed to the success of the Civil Rights Movement. While Gandhi's approach drew from religious and philosophical traditions like Hinduism, Ahimsa, Thoreau, and Tolstoy, King adapted these principles to the unique context of African American struggles under segregation laws. Using a qualitative historical analytical methodology, this study analyzes key texts and historical events to explore the similarities and differences in both leaders' strategies. The findings suggest that this approach, while rooted in Gandhi's philosophy, required tailored guidance to mobilize a community eager for change. The research concludes that nonviolent direct action, when properly adapted, proved to be a powerful tool in achieving civil rights for African Americans.

Keywords: civil disobedience, civil rights movements, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., nonviolent direct action

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SCLC: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
U.S: United States
NAACP: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
W.E.B. Du Bois : William Edward Burghardt Du Bois
MIA: Montgomery Improvement Association
WPC: Women's Political Council
WCC: White Citizens' Council.
AFL-CIO: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization
Washington, D.C.: Washington District of Columbia
SNCC: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
CORE: Congress of Racial Equality
UAW: United Auto Workers
ILGWU: International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
TWU: Transport Workers Union
TV: Television
FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation
DCVL: Dallas County Voters League
AME: African Methodist Episcopal
FOR: Fellowship of Reconciliation

General introduction

The mid-1960s Civil Rights Movement in the United States was a pivotal era marked by intense struggle for racial equality. Among its most powerful tactics was nonviolent direct action, championed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who sought social change through peaceful resistance. Dr. King himself described nonviolent resistance as a "courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love," viewing the "Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence" as "one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom". Leaders and scholars note that this commitment to nonviolence was a major factor in the movement's success.

This thesis examines Dr. King's nonviolent direct action during the 1965 movements as a case study to understand how this strategy contributed to the Civil Rights' objectives and legacy. By shedding light on the ideological foundations, political objectives, and practical outcomes of his activism, the research aims to assess how nonviolence served as both a tactical method and a transformative moral force. The study situates King's actions within the broader historical trajectory of African American resistance, tracing the evolution from the forced migration of Africans through the Middle Passage to their eventual redefinition as Black Americans who continuously fought for dignity and justice. This long arc of struggle provides essential context for understanding why nonviolence emerged as the preferred mode of protest during this period and how it succeeded in galvanizing national support. The significance of this research lies in its exploration of a turning point in American history, when moral appeal, legal demands, and mass mobilization coalesced to achieve real change.

To explore these dynamics, the study adopts a qualitative historical methodology, analyzing primary and secondary sources to trace the philosophical, cultural, and political currents that shaped the 1965 campaigns. Central to this inquiry are the following research questions: Was Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent direct action effective in achieving the goals of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965? Were the consequences of these actions, whether social, political, or moral ultimately valid and beneficial to American society?

This thesis hypothesizes that King's method of nonviolent direct action not only advanced legislative victories such as the Voting Rights Act but also validated nonviolence as a powerful force for social change. The analysis suggests that his approach enabled the movement to secure both national attention and moral high ground, converting public sympathy into political will.

To support this investigation, the thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter

traces the historical background of African Americans from the Age of Exploration to the Reconstruction era, including the transatlantic slave trade, the formation of Black identity, and the participation of enslaved people in key American wars. The second chapter explores the theory of civil disobedience through figures such as Thoreau, John Rawls, Gandhi, and more, culminating in King's adaptation of these principles into a uniquely American form of protest. Then the third chapter turns to the Civil Rights Movement itself, focusing on key events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the March on Washington, and most importantly, the Selma to Montgomery marches of 1965. Through this structure, the thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of how nonviolent direct action evolved and how it reshaped the American political and moral landscape.

Chapter one: Slavery in America (1619-1877)

1.1 Introduction:

The period from the fifteenth to seventeenth century marked the beginning of a monumental change in world history, the Age of Discovery, more commonly referred to as the Age of Exploration, which was a period where European countries, particularly Spain and Portugal, embarked on a series of voyages in the aim of expanding their knowledge by exploring the globe by sea. This chapter examines the profound impact of European exploration and colonization, tracing the motivations and consequences of transatlantic voyages. From the exploits of various explorers to the establishment of English settlements and the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, the narrative unfolds the harsh realities faced by Indigenous peoples and Africans. It explores how forced labor, chattel slavery, and systemic exploitation laid the foundation for the Americas' economic rise and the emergence of African American identity shaped through resistance, resilience, and cultural survival.

1.2 Age of Exploration:

The discovery era was a pivotal shift in the global history, driven by a combination of motives such as the desire for religious spread and political power. However, the primary motivational aspect behind the Age of Discovery was economic gain, as Europeans ventured beyond their known world during the Middle Ages in search of new trade routes to access valuable resources that included rare spices, cloth, silk, gold, and precious metals in Africa and Asia without having to rely on the traditional overland routes which were dominated by the massive powered Ottoman Empire after the Constantinople fall in 1453, making trades expensive and difficult to make at that time.

The period began in the late 1400s in which travelers, initially from Spain and Portugal, set sail in search of something specific, an escape route to increase the nations' profits yet avoiding direct interaction with the Ottomans. Portuguese explorers such as Prince Henry the Navigator and Vasco da Gama focused on Africa and India while Spanish ones sought direct access to the lucrative spice trade by reaching Asia from Western Europe. In pursuit of this goal, some left an inerasable mark in history more than others, whether on purpose or unintentionally like Christopher Columbus did while marking the first European contact with the Americas.

Among the explorers, there is the Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator, who played a significant role in the Age of Discovery's initiation through his sponsorship of expeditions across the coast of West Africa. Prince Henry had a specific dream of finding a sea route that led directly to India and China. To bring this vision to life, the Portuguese crown founded a school dedicated to scientific navigation and financed several expeditions along Africa's west coast. With the same objective in mind, he also constructed Portugal's first observatory to advance the study of celestial navigation, enabling sailors to steer their ships using the stars (Haugen, 2009). Although he passed away before witnessing his students successfully sail around Africa, His work paved the path for later travelers by producing new maps and navigational methods that enabled explorers to embark on long voyages across uncharted waters and withstand rough ocean conditions. It became Portugal's greatest maritime and commercial achievement. Spain later on got inspired by these accomplishments and sought its path to riches and power, setting the stage for Columbus' epic journey.

Christopher Columbus was an Italian navigator who thought that a quicker way to Asia would be to sail west over the Atlantic Ocean. He pursued sponsorship for his voyages. After many rejections, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain consented to finance his four expeditions. He set sail in 1492, a year that marked the biggest turning point in global history opening up the New World to European colonization. After a challenging journey of more than two months trying to reach the rich ports of Asia by sea which was a major goal for traders and navigators, his expedition landed on an island in the Bahamas, Cuba which he named "San Salvador", with the belief that he had reached East Indies in Asia. He even mistakenly called the Indigenous peoples he encountered "Indians" because he believed he landed in India. He then passed away in 1506 from illness on his fourth expedition without accomplishing his mission of reaching Asia as promised. Columbus remains a controversial figure, celebrated by some and condemned by others for the discovery of a new world that he never sought to discover, as Peter Haugen mentioned in his book: "Some people celebrate Columbus while others vilify him for his so-called discovery of America. But the tall, red-haired, eccentric sailor died never realizing what he accomplished" (Haugen, 2009).

Figure 01: An 1846 painting depicting Christopher Columbus and members of his crew on a beach in the West Indies after arriving on his flagship Santa Maria Oct. 12, 1492.

For the Europeans, 1498 was an even more monumental year than 1492. It marked the success of Vasco da Gama, who sailed for King Manuel I (Manuel the Fortunate) of Portugal, and achieved where Columbus failed: Find a direct sea route to the East. This accomplishment revolutionized global trade by linking Europe directly with the Indian Ocean's wealth of spices, textiles, and other valuable goods. Da Gama navigated south around the tip of Africa, with the guidance of an Arab navigator, and crossed the Indian Ocean to successfully reach India in 1498 where he established direct contact with the thriving spice markets. Unlike Columbus, who mistakenly landed in the Americas while searching for Asia, Da Gama indeed reached his intended destination, opening up a vital maritime trade route (Haugen, 2009).

Another navigator, Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese commander sailed under the Spanish flag, led his first expedition in 1519 and became the first to circumnavigate the globe, proving the Earth's roundness and revealing the true scale of the world. Although he was killed halfway through his expedition by the Philippine natives, he still got credit for proving that it was always possible to reach Asia from either direction. (Haugen, 2009)

These expeditions gave Europeans the impression that the Americas were more than just an unexplored part of Asia. The vast ocean to the west of the New World confirmed that it was a new world — to Europeans, anyway.

Columbus's so-called discovery of the Americas connected the Old World with the New World, setting the stage for globalization and shaping the modern world order. However, this era also brought significant challenges, including the displacement of Indigenous peoples, the spread of diseases, and the rise of colonial exploitation. Spain and Portugal dominated early exploration, but soon other European powers attempted to make their claims. Even smaller countries like the Netherlands and Sweden tried to gain power and territory, but their influence was short-lived, while England and France emerged as prominent competitors and rivals. The British were motivated by economic opportunities, religious freedom, and the desire to expand their empire, as they increasingly turned their attention to the New World, laying the foundation for what would become a massive colonial presence.

1.3 English Settlement:

One of the earliest figures to pave the way for England's colonial ambitions was the Italian navigator John Cabot, whose journey is considered the first European exploration of the North American mainland since the Vikings. In 1497, he attempted his first trip using the old Viking northern route under the sponsorship of King Henry VII of England, and unlike Columbus, who had landed in the Caribbean, Cabot reached the coast of North America, possibly present-day Newfoundland. His voyage was of great significance as it provided England with a claim to North American territory, laying the groundwork for future settlements. (Wiegand, 2019).

However, despite this early claim, England did not instantly establish an enduring presence in the New World. It was not until the early 17th century, when economic opportunities and imperial competition arose, that the English launched serious steps toward permanent colonization. The beginning of British colonization was marked when Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in North America, was established in 1607 in what is now Virginia, this plan finally came to completion and eventually led to the formation of the thirteen colonies along the eastern seaboard.

Jamestown was established by the Virginia Company of London, a joint-stock company created by a group of English merchants to finance and manage the settlement with

the hope of generating profit for investors (Wiegand, 2019). Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies, which directly funded their colonial enterprises, England relied on stockholders to shoulder the financial risks of colonization. The Virginia Company was granted a charter from King James I, the first of the Stuart kings, who succeeded Elizabeth upon her death in 1603, giving them the right to establish a colony in the land from the coastline westward to the Pacific Ocean and search for gold and other valuable resources there. That area was later named Virginia after the virgin Queen Elizabeth as she died unmarried. However, the three ships of the colonists that arrived in Jamestown in 1606 faced extreme hardships from the very beginning and it appeared to have none of the gold they were searching for. The swampy location they chose resulted in outbreaks of disease, and food shortages, particularly during the notorious "Starving Time" of 1609–1610, when many settlers perished under the leadership of John Smith. The colony survived thanks to the Indigenous Powhatan tribes who taught them how to grow corn and where to better catch fish but it further turned into tense relationship because of the English greediness, which eventually led to violent clashes between the two. (Foner, 2011)

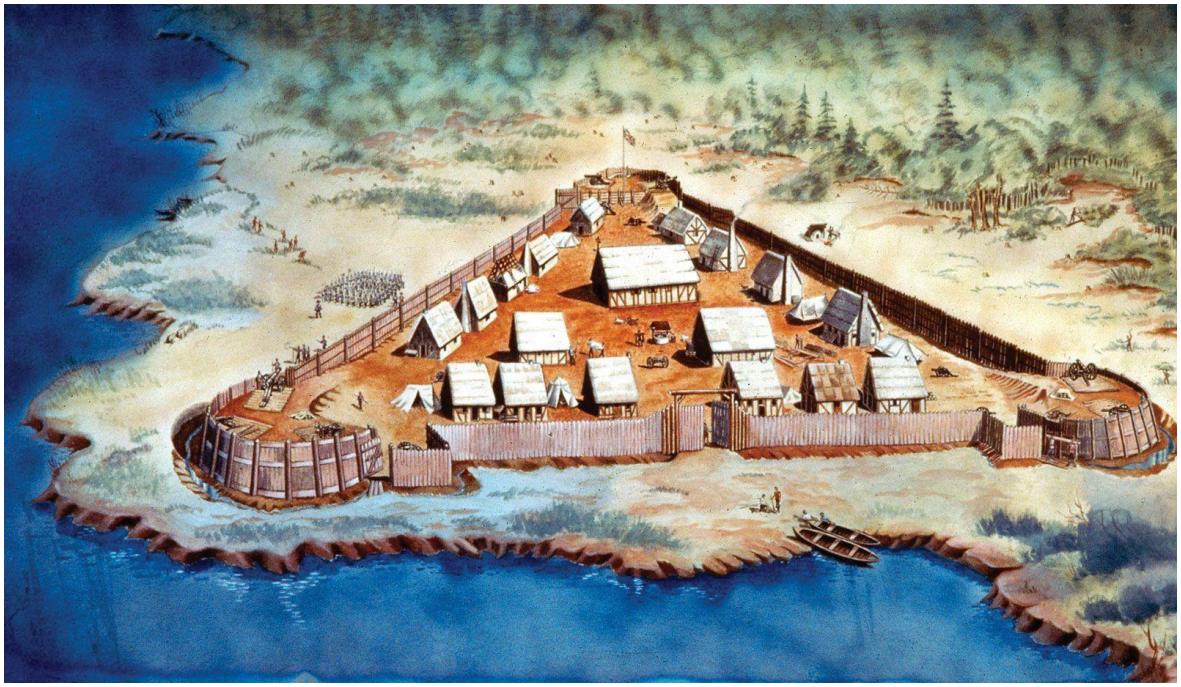

Figure 02: Jamestown Fort Virginia 1608

Jamestown persevered despite these difficulties mostly as a result of the cultivation of tobacco that was grown there and turned into a highly valued lucrative cash crop. It was John Rolfe, the husband of Pocahontas (daughter of the Powhatan chief) who introduced tobacco which immediately improved the colony's economic prospects by attracting more investors

and increasing the number of English settlers (Foner, 2011). Consequently, large plantations quickly developed to cultivate the plant and Virginia flourished as a colony. However, the labor-intensive nature of tobacco farming created an increasing demand for a steady and cheap labor force. At first, the English's first source of indentured servants were the poor Europeans who worked for a certain number of years in exchange for transportation to the New World. Yet, as the colony expanded, the need for labor grew, and indentured servitude was no longer sufficient. This demand paved the way for the introduction of the first enslaved Africans, who were brought to Virginia in 1619 through a Dutch ship. Despite their ambiguous status initially, racial slavery became official as the plantation economy gained power, serving as the cornerstone of the cruel chattel slavery system that would characterize the American South for centuries.

The establishment of colonies like Jamestown marked the beginning of European dominance in the Americas, paving the way for the transatlantic slave trade and the rise of plantation economies reliant on enslaved African labor.

1.4 The Transatlantic slave trade:

Before delving into the transatlantic slave trade that took place from the 16th to the 18th century by the European countries, it must be pointed out that the slave trade itself took precedence in the ancient civilizations, let alone the idea of slavery as it existed throughout the written as well as the unwritten history of humanity and its roots run deeper. It is worth noting that even the Islamized nations in Africa practiced slavery. Even though it was not possible to spot the first slave held hostage, this practice surely became omnipresent as civilizations developed. (Captivating History, 2021).

The earliest slaves were probably captured prisoners of war who were given limited food to work for their owners. They were treated the same as animals, such as cattle or mules, and had no free will. People were denied their humanity and treated like nothing more than property in this fundamental type of slavery, called chattel slavery (Captivating History, 2021). Their masters were therefore permitted to treat them whatever they saw fit. Typically, slaves were forced to perform hard labor whenever and wherever their owners asked them to. In addition to hard work, women were occasionally exploited for pleasure. They were also inherited, bought and sold, or even given away as gifts considering that they were property.

Portugal and Spain were among the first settlers in the Americas besides England, they began establishing proper legitimate colonies in their American territories, particularly in the Caribbean and parts of Central and South America, and directly tackled sugar, or in the British case, tobacco as their source of income. Their lands had climates and fertile soil that were ideal for producing such a lucrative product. It was thought to be the most effective means of covering the expenses of their lengthy travel and costly conquests. However, sugar farming required a lot of intensive work, and the colonists lacked the labor to do it properly. In addition, many of them traveled to the Americas to become wealthy without putting in a lot of effort (Captivating History, 2021). At first, they turned to an already existing labor force, the Amerindians as they tried enslaving them, as they were numerous to exist. Yet, the local population soon stopped being a reliable source of human labor and they suffered from a demographic collapse during the 16th century because of the Europeans and their fights against them. Many reasons prevented the Amerindians from being the settlers' slaves and among them were the numerous illnesses brought with them that led to their deaths. On top of that, because the locals were not as physically fit as the Africans, the thorough work on the sugar plantations proved to be too much for them. Furthermore, many local people rarely engaged in large-scale agriculture, particularly those from areas without highly developed civilization, such as the coast of Brazil. As a result, the colonial masters perceived the locals as less productive. Most of the indigenous managed to escape enslavement due to their familiarity with the land which helped them escape (Phillips & Sandy, 2021). It is noteworthy to mention that Europeans were also enslaved as indentured servants in hopes of gaining passage to the Americas. They would forfeit themselves into servitude for a few years of labor to gain citizenship and freedom in the U.S.These endless limitations advocated for African labor as a more suitable human alternative and led to a shift in strategy. In addition to the price of a slave which was cheaper than the yearly wages of a white laborer (Becker, 1999)

The growing demand for a reliable and controllable labor force led European colonizers to turn their attention to Africa. Thus, slowly over the 16th century, enslaved African people replaced the natives both as a labor force and, to a degree, as the main population in certain areas. Africans were considered more resilient to European diseases, better suited to the climate of the Americas, and less able to escape due to unfamiliarity with the land and the absence of supportive communities. The emergence of the slave trade in antiquity was another factor contributing to the spread of slavery. Since slaves were viewed as a

commodity like any other (Captivating History, 2021). The story of the transatlantic slave trade begins in the early 15th century with the Age of Discovery pioneered by the Portuguese as they were the first Europeans to explore the African coast and the Atlantic Ocean. Their initial intention was and had nothing to do with trading human beings as they did later on. They managed to control the market for centuries alongside the Spanish as they were under the same rule. It was when Europeans discovered more of America that the slave trade finally saw a change and a new market arose, essentially transforming the Atlantic slave trade into the transatlantic slave trade. This later involved a triangular trade system: African slaves were traded for European goods. Slaves were shipped to the Americas and sold. Colonial goods such as sugar, tobacco, cotton, and coffee were transported back to Europe. (Captivating History, 2021)

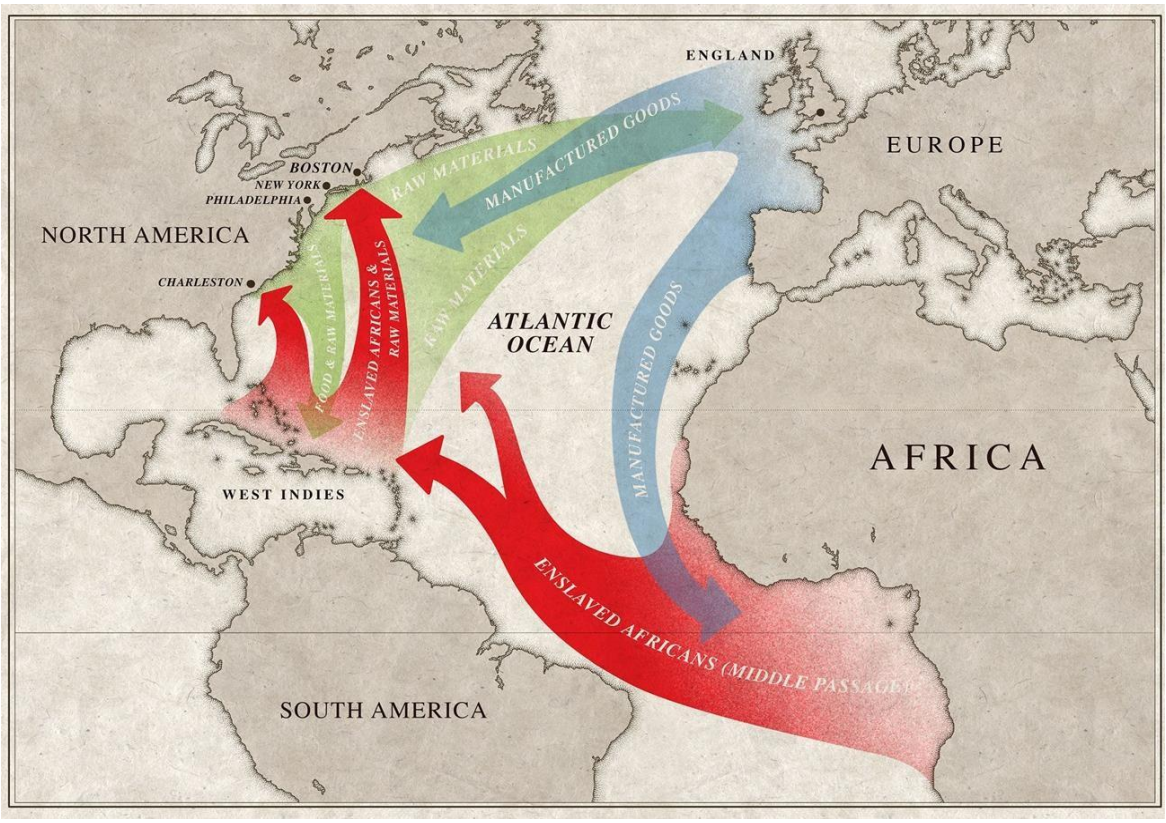

Figure 03: Map showing the movement of Enslaved Africans, raw materials, and goods.

This system not only fueled the economic growth of Europe but also entrenched slavery as a central institution in the Americas. European traders worked with African intermediaries to acquire slaves, who were often prisoners of war, victims of raids, or kidnapped individuals. As more Europeans became involved in the slave trade, they generally stayed

along the western coast of Africa and relied on African traders to bring captives from the interior regions. They did not go inland for fear of disease and because they were greatly outnumbered. By the early 1700s, Europeans had built more than 25 trading forts along the coast near present-day Ghana. However, in the mid-1700s, small clusters of huts on shore replaced the large forts of trading companies. These captives were often taken far from their homes and forced to travel long distances which could go up to 485km to reach the coast. Typically, two captives were chained together at the ankle, known as coffles, where columns of captives were tied together by ropes around their neck, sometimes in groups of 50 or more which was a common sight in Africa in the 1700s. The journey was harsh and deadly, with many not surviving due to the brutal environment, lack of food and water, exhaustion, and even suicide. Captives who got sick or injured along the trip were immediately slaughtered by the slave traders. By the time they arrived at the coastal trading posts, a significant number had already died, roughly 5 percent of purchased slaves died before they even left the continent (Kachur, 2006). On the coast, slave traders kept the captives in dark dungeons or open slave pens known as barracoons. Usually, slave traders had to wait in one place for several weeks before factors and African traders rounded up enough slaves to make trading worthwhile. From the moment of their enslavement, until they boarded European ships, the majority of slaves were held for six months up to a year. Typically, they would wait on the coast for three of these months. The captain or physician of the ship examined the prisoners at the barracoon. The prisoners to be examined were "naked too, both men and women, without the least distinction or modesty," according to a Dutch slave merchant. They were ordered to exercise to pass a thorough examination for illness. The captured slaves who were chosen to be sent across the ocean were marked with the buyer's mark using a hot iron on their bare skin. Slaves who were turned away were occasionally put to death. It was only the beginning of their suffering, as they then would be going on yet another long journey. Millions of captives were then transported across the Atlantic Ocean to America under even more horrific situations (Horton & Horton, 2005). Known as the middle passage, the leg of the triangular trade remains one of the darkest chapters in human history for its unimaginable cruelty and filthy conditions aboard some overloaded slave ships, where hundreds of Africans were crammed into layers below decks for a journey that might last anywhere from a few weeks to several months and covered roughly 8,000 km. The voyages of each ship depended on which region of the African coast it sailed from, some ships took longer to cross the Atlantic than others. Conditions on the slave ships especially below deck were nightmarish as the captured slaves were chained together, lying shoulder to shoulder

in tight places that they could barely sit up, often with less than eighteen inches of headroom. Diseases such as dysentery, smallpox, malaria, and yellow fever were uncontrollable and spread quickly among the weakened slaves even after the intensive examinations done in ports. Falconbridge, a doctor who served during the peak years of the slave trade described the conditions that the slaves experienced below deck: “The excessive heat was . . . intolerable. The deck, that is, the floor of their rooms, was so covered with blood and mucus . . . that it resembled a slaughterhouse. It is not in the power of the human imagination to picture to itself a situation more dreadful or disgusting”. There was also Olaudah Equiano, a former enslaved African whose autobiography provides a rare first-hand account, describing the stench of the hold as "loathsome," making it difficult to breathe. He wrote: "The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, produced copious perspirations so that the air soon became unfit for respiration... the shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable” (Equiano, 1789). Besides illnesses, captives endured physical abuse. Any slaves who refused to eat might be tortured until they gave in and the ones who tried to rebel were killed as a warning to others. Africans who died during the journey were merely tossed over the side. Sharks occasionally tracked slave ships across the Atlantic Ocean. Tragically, suicide was widespread among captives who would rather die than endure more agony. To speed up the process of death, some refused to eat or drink seawater, while others leaped overboard when they could. To stop prisoners from jumping into the sea, slave ship crews used nets over the sides of their vessels.

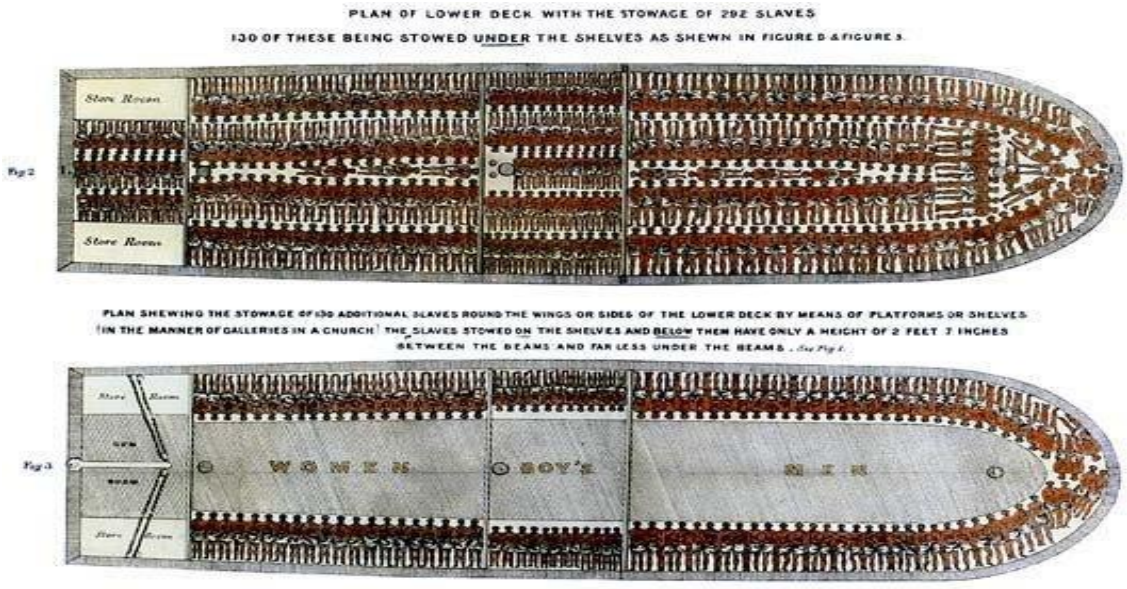

Figure 04: Detail of a British broadside depicting the slave trade ship

The latter days of the Middle Passage were some of the most emotional and psychologically challenging periods of the transatlantic slave trade, as the Americas' coasts slowly came into view after weeks or months at sea. A lifetime of forced labor, suffering, and cultural displacement began with the ocean voyage's conclusion, even though it also signaled the end of a cruel maritime struggle. These final days were marked by a combination of worsening physical conditions, greater ship crew preparations heightened psychological suffering among prisoners, and a terrifying shift toward slavery. Crews would start what was referred to as the "preparation" or "scrubbing." Among other things, this involved making captives wash in salt water, putting oil or animal fat on their skin to make them look healthier, and even cutting or arranging their hair to make them appear more appealing to purchasers (Horton & Horton, 2005)

After arriving in Brazil or the Caribbean, the enslaved Africans were sold at auction and were taken throughout the New World. Many were put to work on plantations. The shipment to Europe of plantation crops and products made from them was the third leg of the triangular trade. Among the most valuable exports to Europe were sugar, rice, indigo, tobacco, cotton, molasses, and rum. (Kachur, 2006)

The Middle Passage was more than just a somber chapter in history. The economic underpinnings of the Americas, from cotton fields in the American South to sugar plantations in the Caribbean, were constructed on the backs of the millions of Africans who were ripped from their homelands and forced to endure unimaginable circumstances on slave ships. Beyond the atrocities of the actual voyage, the transatlantic slave trade left behind a legacy that drove European imperial growth, upended African communities, and produced racially stratified societies in the New World.

1.5 The Enslavement of Africans:

One of the most tragic moments in world history was the transatlantic slave trade. Millions of Africans were forcibly removed from their homes and brought to the Americas across the Atlantic Ocean starting in the early 16th century and peaking in the 18th century. Centuries of slavery in what would become the United States began in 1619 when the first Africans were brought to the English colony of Virginia.

Slavery was not just an economic institution but also a social and legal structure that reinforced white supremacy and racial hierarchy. These men, women, and children were uprooted from diverse African societies and thrust into harsh conditions. The Middle Passage—the journey from Africa to the Americas—was infamously inhumane, with mortality rates reaching up to 20% due to disease, malnutrition, and abuse (Rediker, 2007).

Once they arrived, enslaved Africans were sold into a system that denied their legal personhood and forced them to work for the rest of their lives.

These Africans were obliged to abandon their languages, faiths, and ties to their families from the moment they left the ships. However, by establishing thriving cultural traditions, preserving African spiritual practices, and inventing new modes of resistance including fight, revolt, and work slowdowns, they fought against erasure. Slavery was marked by psychological fear, sexual exploitation, and physical violence. Families and communities could be torn apart by the constant possibility of slave sales. However, they were more than just passive workers. Their religion, music, language, values, and abilities contributed to form America and its unique blended culture. They also brought many new civilizations to the country. African slaves endured a system of brutal oppression, but they also grew deeply committed to liberty and became live examples of the strong allure of freedom.

Since slavery was a long-standing practice that existed in North and West Africa before European involvement in the trade, the majority of Africans were aware of it. However, as Equiano mentioned in his book “the white people looked and acted... in so savage a manner, for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty”. At this point, slaves were expecting so much worse.

Upon arrival, these individuals faced dehumanizing conditions but also demonstrated remarkable resilience. History records that only about 6 percent of slaves transported to the Americas came directly to British North America. About 40 percent were landed in Brazil, where Portuguese colonial slave masters used huge numbers of Angolan and Congolese slaves to cultivate sugar cane. Many of Ships landed in ports including Havana, Cuba, Newport, Rhode Island, and Charleston, South Carolina, where enslaved Africans were dragged into warehouses or enclosures where they awaited public or private sale after being forcibly unloaded. Newly arrived Africans faced a traumatic process called the slave market, sometimes described by scholars as the “Second Middle Passage” (Kachur, 2006). This process was designed to commodify, humiliate, and psychologically dominate the enslaved.

They started the methodical deconstruction of any social bonds when they were immediately split off from any close companions they might have formed throughout the journey. They were also stripped of their clothes, put on display at slave markets, and physically examined after arriving on shore. Traders treated humans like cattle, examining their skin, teeth, and muscle tone. To indicate ownership, branding -burning a symbol of the owner or business into their skin- was occasionally used. By being separated from their family, community, and homeland, as well as by having their worth measured through sales, enslaved persons were "converted into commodities." As part of a broader scheme to erase African identities and force people into new, subservient positions, they were renamed, frequently using European or biblical names. Then comes the auctioning part, although the location and circumstances of slave auctions varied, most of them followed a similar and dehumanizing pattern. To enable buyers to examine their bodies for strength, indications of illness, or physical flaws, enslaved Africans of all ages were usually stripped from their clothes or almost so. To illustrate their fitness, they were prodded, pushed to walk or carry out easy chores, and told to open their lips to reveal their teeth. This dehumanizing act was symbolic as well as physical. In the eyes of the public, it turned people into property. (Kachur, 2006)

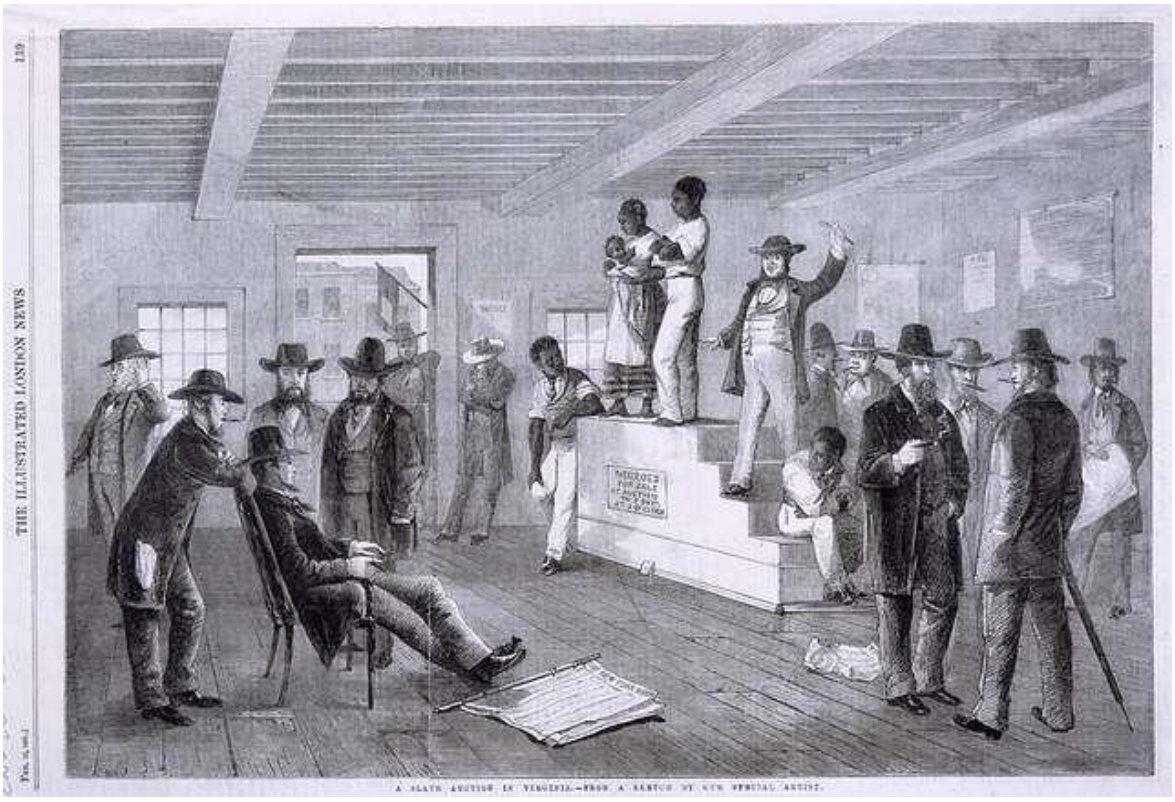

Figure 05: Slave auction in Virginia, February 16th, 1861.

After being sold at auction, enslaved Africans' lives took a darker turn for the worse as they were absorbed into the massive colonial labor machinery. With the new identities given, they were taken to plantations located in the American South, sometimes by foot, wagon, or smaller ships. As Slavery and the Making of America describes, this process was not only logistically brutal but psychologically devastating; slaveholders intentionally severed familial and cultural ties to break the will of the enslaved and assert total control. They were moved to tobacco farms in Virginia, rice plantations in South Carolina, or later cotton plantations in the Deep South. These plantations were the foundation of the colonial and early American economies; however, they required tireless, unpaid labor by the enslaved men, women, and even children from sunrise to sunset, and during harvest season even longer across a range of harsh environments. As mentioned in Slavery and the Making of America, "Planters required both men and women to engage in hard physical labor, and they worked in marshy rice fields, hot and humid tobacco fields, dusty wheat fields, and dangerous back-breaking lumbering camps. Workers on rice plantations spent days standing in the water of the rice field, prey to insects and disease, with a minimal diet to sustain them. Children were expected to work as soon as they were deemed old enough to be useful. Pregnant women worked, and after childbirth, women returned to the fields quickly, with little time lost" (Horton & Horton, 2005)

Figure 06: Black cotton farming family

They served in what was known as the "gang system", a cruel kind of collective labor in which masters pushed slaves to keep up a steady pace in the field. It was common practice to beat, whip, or otherwise punish slaves who fell behind, showed indications of fatigue, or violated orders. Physical violence was not the exception but the rule, used as both punishment and control mechanism. However, in Georgia and South Carolina's Low Country, another system called the "task system" was occasionally used. Here, slaves had a set daily task to do before they could take care of personal affairs or relax. The task system provided no safeguard against mistreatment and, although marginally less harsh, continued to function under the harsh framework of slavery. These harsh labor systems that enslaved people endured were not just about demanding physical work, they were rooted in a legal and economic framework that treated Black people as property through a system known as chattel slavery. Under this system, enslaved Africans and their children were not seen as individuals with rights or humanity, but as objects that could be sold, traded, inherited, or used as collateral, much like land or livestock. As Heather Andrea Williams explains that the law did not recognize them as people at all, but rather as possessions (Williams H. A., 2014). This legal classification stripped them of all autonomy and dignity, embedding a brutal racial hierarchy into every aspect of American life. It was this complete denial of their personhood that allowed the widespread violence, forced separations, and relentless labor to continue as accepted norms in society. As for the living conditions and arrangements, enslaved people were kept alive at the lowest possible cost. On plantations, slaves were typically housed in crude cottages with dirt floors, few or no windows, and no furniture, only a straw mat or a wooden plank for a bed. These cabins were overcrowded, poorly insulated, and exposed to the elements. Disease spread quickly in these conditions with virtually no medical care until the slaveholder intervened to protect their "investment." The severe and public punishment served as a control and intimidation tactic. Common methods of discipline included whippings, mutilation, branding, and iron collars. Another burden for enslaved women was sexual abuse by white slaveholders. Rather than being isolated or occasional, this violence was a deliberate component of the slave system used to maintain authority and ownership over the bodies of enslaved people. Beyond the physical suffering, the working circumstances caused severe psychological stress. Even small acts of disobedience, like working slowly or breaking tools, were punished disproportionately because of the oppressive environment generated by the unrelenting speed of work, the inability to take

breaks, and the owners' continual monitoring. However, enslaved individuals managed to live and, to the extent that they could, rebel. According to African American History for Dummies, enslaved workers created networks of collaboration, exchanged knowledge and talents, and even employed storytelling and singing to keep spirits high in the fields (Penrice, 2007).

The enslaved Africans never completely gave up their humanity or agency, even though they were forced to live under one of the most dehumanizing institutions in history. Instead, they participated in a process of cultural syncretism, fusing African traditions with the realities of plantation life, as the Hortons observe in Slavery and the Making of America (Horton & Horton, 2005). Everything from religious rituals and cuisine to music and language reflected this syncretism. They adapted and preserved the cultures brought with them, developed strong communal ties, and created lasting forms of resistance, although open rebellion was dangerous and frequently violently put down.

One of the most successful and long-lasting forms of resistance was the preservation of African cultural customs. Despite enslavers' attempts to eradicate the languages, religions, and customs of the people they kept as slaves, Africans took with them a rich cultural heritage. This memory was altered in the Americas by spirituality, foodways, naming practices, music, and oral storytelling. African oral tradition folktales, particularly those about clever animals like Brer Rabbit, were passed down via slavery and came to symbolize survival by skill instead of force (Penrice, 2007). In addition to being entertaining, these stories were tools for identity preservation, resilience teaching, and subtly questioning established power systems. Meanwhile, spirituals blended African rhythms with Christian themes and often served as coded messages of hope and escape. Enslaved people formed strong communal bonds and surrogate families to overcome the trauma of separation. According to Slavery and the Making of America, these community bonds were essential in maintaining a sense of identity and belonging amid constant upheaval. Parents and elders passed on cultural values, oral history, and survival strategies, ensuring that even in the absence of legal recognition, Black family structures could endure (Horton & Horton, 2005). Religion, especially a reinterpreted Christianity rooted in liberation, offered spiritual solace and strength. The religious rituals established communal places where slaves could express their grief, faith, and unity in defiance. Even subtle acts like working slowly or breaking tools became meaningful acts of daily resistance. Together, these cultural and ritual practices not only sustained enslaved people through oppression but also laid the

groundwork for a distinctive African American identity, a legacy of creativity, resistance, and survival that shaped the nation's cultural and historical landscape. Many African Americans were American-born during the 18th and early 19th centuries, having never visited Africa but carrying on its traditions through songs, stories, and customs. Therefore, the change from enslaved Africans to African Americans was a reinvention of African identity rather than a rejection of it. It marked the beginning of a new culture that was influenced by the harsh realities of slavery in America yet had its roots in African customs. Despite the exclusion and oppression that its creators experienced, Paul Johnson argues in A History of the American People that this new identity was one of the most important cultural developments in early America, influencing the country's spiritual and artistic life (Johnson, 1997)

1.6 African Slaves in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars:

African Americans; both enslaved and free, have played a critical role in the nation’s military history. A combination of obligatory enlistment, voluntary service in return for promised freedom, and a larger fight for civil and human rights influenced their participation in the Revolutionary War. Thousands of enslaved Africans who were denied the very rights the revolutionaries professed to preserve were aware of the irony of the American colonies' call for freedom from British oppression. However, the goal of both the American and British sides was to take advantage of slaves. In 1775, Lord Dunmore, the monarch of Virginia, declared that any slaves who managed to flee their Patriot captors and joined the British army would be set free. This offer, according to historians, signaled the start of the first meaningful emancipation campaign in American history. According to Paul Johnson in A History of the American People, Dunmore's Proclamation incited terror among Southern slaveholders and encouraged many enslaved individuals to flee farms in the hopes of obtaining their freedom (Johnson, 1997). Tens of thousands responded. According to The African American Experience: A History of Black Americans from 1619 to 1890, between 80,000 and 100,000 enslaved people sought refuge with the British during the war, though only a fraction succeeded in escaping or surviving the conflict (Joe R. Feagin & Harlan Hahn, 1973). These individuals became known as "Black Loyalists," and many were later evacuated to Nova Sc the Caribbean, or Sierra Leone after the war

ended.

Figure 07: Black Americans Serving in the Revolutionary War

In the meantime, particularly in the Northern colonies, African Americans also served with the Patriots. The Continental Army changed its policy following severe manpower shortages, despite initially prohibiting enlistment. Free Black men joined regiments like the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, which came to be known as the "Black Regiment," and some enslaved males joined as well, offering manumission as a perk. Although they were rarely granted complete freedom or equality following the war, these soldiers frequently fought with valor and distinction, as Slavery and the Making of America recounts (Horton & Horton, 2005). Despite the promises given to some who served, freedom was not always granted, and many who fought found themselves back in slavery. Therefore, the revolutionary discourse of liberty sounded hollow to most enslaved people; nonetheless, the war sowed seeds of resistance and expectation that would grow over the next few decades.

When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860 and opposed the spread of slavery into new territories, eleven Southern states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. They believed that Lincoln's presidency threatened the institution of slavery, which was closely related to their social and economic structures. The Confederacy upheld its right to separate on the grounds of states' rights by claiming that the federal government lacked the authority to decide the state-by-state status of slavery. At first, the Union -which was made up of the states that remained devoted to the central government- fought to protect the country rather than to completely abolish slavery. Emancipation and Black freedom, however, became crucial to the Union's war objectives as the conflict went on. Slavery was "not just a Southern issue, but a national institution," as explained in

American Slavery: A Very Short Introduction, and the conflict between American ideals of liberty and the harsh reality of human bondage was made clear by the war (Williams H. A., 2014).

By the mid-19th century, tensions over this matter reached a breaking point, leading to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Enslaved people were at the heart of this conflict, not only as the cause of the war but also as active participants in shaping its outcome. At first, the Union was hesitant to arm up African Americans for fear of backlash from white soldiers and neighboring states. But after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation (1) in 1863, stating that slaves in Confederate-held regions were now free, the policy was altered. The Civil War “evolved from a war to preserve the Union into a revolution for freedom,” with African Americans at the center of that transformation (Hatchett, 2021, p. 88). Over 180,000 African American men served in the USCT, making up roughly 10% of the Union Army by the war's end. Their participation was vital to the Northern war effort. Black soldiers served bravely despite facing discrimination, unequal pay, and often being assigned to labor-intensive or high-risk duties. Also, as described in Slavery and the Making of America, African Americans not only contributed as soldiers, but also as laborers, spies, guides, and nurses. Enslaved individuals in the South took bold steps to sabotage Confederate infrastructure, escape plantations, and support Union forces whenever possible (Horton & Horton, 2005). These acts of resistance further weakened the Confederate war effort and illustrated the agency of Black people in shaping their liberation. Many enslaved people rebelled at the same time by escaping to Union lines, which weakened the North and upset the Southern economy. Sometimes referred to as "contrabands of war," these self-liberated people compelled the Union to create new guidelines for handling formerly enslaved groups. Even before the 13th Amendment was ratified in 1865, their flight had a significant impact on the abolition of slavery in the South. Military service became both a practical tool and a symbolic statement: African Americans were not just victims of the system but agents in its dismantling (Hatchett, 2021). Their participation challenged racist assumptions and helped lay the groundwork for future demands for civil rights and equality.

1.7 Emancipation and Reconstruction:

One of the most notable turning events in American history was the end of the Civil War in 1865. After decades of slavery, African Americans were promised a fresh start with the Emancipation Proclamation and the ratification of the 13th Amendment. However, freedom turned out to be much more nuanced than a straightforward legal proclamation. The period of Reconstruction (1865–1877) was of both violent backlash and tremendous possibilities as formerly enslaved people tried to figure out where they fit into a country that had made its fortune on their enslavement. All slaves in Confederate-held territory were proclaimed free on January 1, 1863, by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Since it did not include the Border States and territories already governed by the Union, it did not immediately free the vast majority of enslaved people, but it was a pivotal moment in the conflict and a moral pronouncement that changed the course of history. Black soldiers were recruited into the Union Army as a result of the proclamation, which also demonstrated the federal government's commitment to abolishing slavery (Williams H. A., 2014). The 13th Amendment, which prohibited slavery in all its different forms in December 1865, formally established freedom. Centuries of struggle came to a head at this time, and Black life in America entered a new era marked by freedom devoid of resources, rights, or protection.

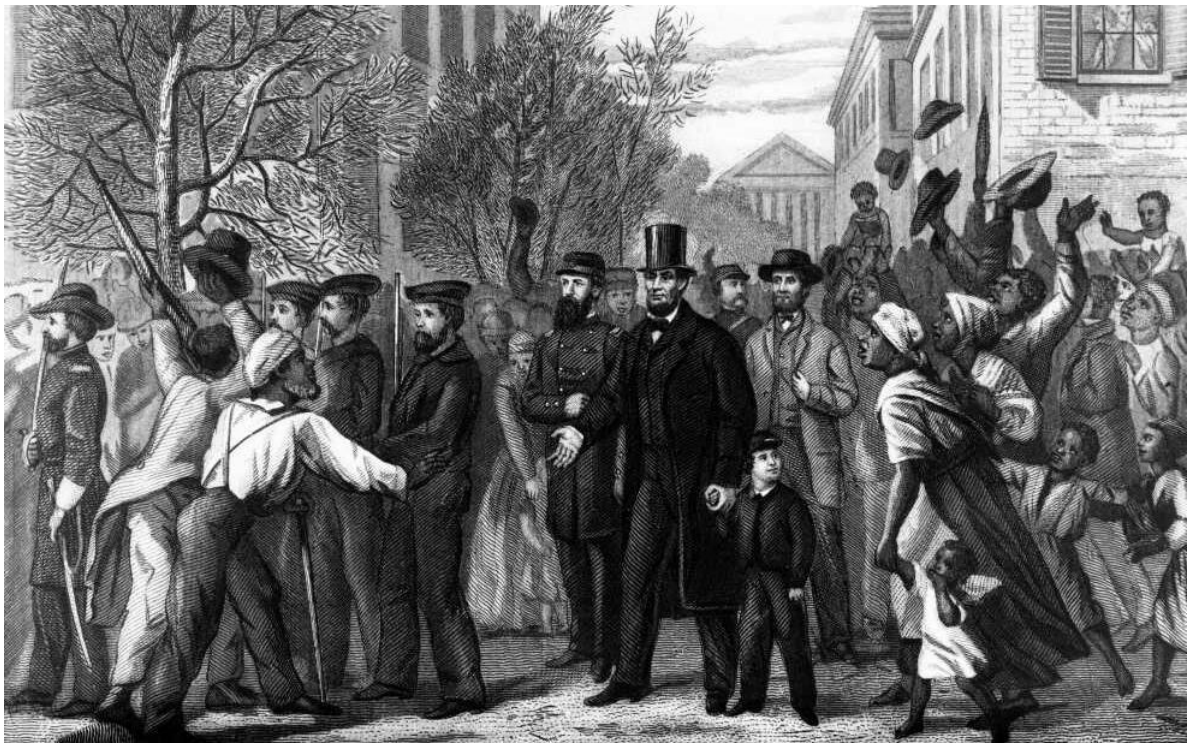

Figure 08: Abraham Lincoln in Richmond after the Emancipation Proclamation 1865

The following Reconstruction era was characterized by violence, experimentation, and hope. The federal government made an effort to rebuild the South and reintegrate freed slaves into society under President Andrew Johnson and later the Radical Republicans in Congress. African Americans took the initiative to create schools, start churches, reconnect families, and get involved in local and national politics, as described in Slavery and the Making of America (Horton & Horton, 2005). In a setting that was still antagonistic to their independence, these were significant displays of independence and resistance. The Freedmen's Bureau was established in 1865 to help freshly freed individuals and provided legal aid, food, education, and labor contracts. According to The African American Experience: A History of Black Americans from 1619 to 1890 (Feagin, 2006) the agency helped establish hundreds of Black schools and institutions, laying the groundwork for future African American intellectual and political leadership. In just a few decades, African American reading rates soared, making education one of the most effective tools for empowering people. Reconstruction presented unprecedented political opportunities. Black men were granted the right to vote by the 15th Amendment (1870), and many of them went on to become public officials. During Reconstruction, approximately 2,000 African Americans held positions in local, state, and federal government, including Hiram Revels, the first Black senator in 1870 (Hatchett, 2021). These achievements unsettled Southern whites, who increasingly saw Black advancement as a challenge to the racial hierarchy. Regardless of legal emancipation, freedom was fiercely disputed in practice. Black Codes, rules intended to limit Black mobility, limit economic opportunity, and preserve a labor system reminiscent of slavery, were implemented by Southern states in opposition to Reconstruction. These laws successfully forced many Black people into sharecropping and debt peonage; systems that kept them bound to white landlords in permanent poverty, by making unemployment, vagrancy, and even "disrespect" toward whites illegal. The evacuation of federal troops from the South in 1877 marked the end of Reconstruction as this systemic repression intensified. Due in large part to the activities of the Ku Klux Klan (2) and other white supremacist organizations, this marked the beginning of the Jim Crow era, which was marked by racial terror, marginalization, and segregation. Black civil rights activities were suppressed and white domination was enforced through mob violence and executions.

1.8 Conclusion:

The chapter outlines how colonization and exploration changed the world through centuries of slavery, brutality, and instability in culture alongside to economic and territorial development. Enslaved Africans maintained their culture and shaped the social, political, and cultural climate of early America in spite of indescribable hardships. They played a crucial role in the establishment of the country, as seen by their resistance, involvement in conflicts, and quest for freedom during Reconstruction. The African American experience and the larger American identity are still shaped by this history.

Chapter two: Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Civil Disobedience (1893-1915)

2.1 Introduction:

Civil disobedience has long been a method used to create social and political change. It means breaking the law on purpose, but with a goal of bringing justice and moral improvement not just to cause trouble or chaos. The most beneficial form of civil disobedience is nonviolent and based on strong moral and logical reasons. It aims to make both the general public and those in power think about what is right. This chapter explores civil disobedience not just as a way to resist, but as an important and meaningful form of action with a long history.

The theoretical foundations of civil disobedience have been developed and discussed by philosophers across time, originating in diverse traditions and eras. Through his groundbreaking essay *Civil Disobedience*, published in 1849, American philosopher Henry David Thoreau established the theoretical basis for individuals who peacefully and morally oppose unjust state laws. Thoreau's ideas found fertile ground in the ideologies and techniques of both Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., whose activities would put civil disobedience into worldwide attention. Building upon Thoreau's moral imperative, Gandhi developed a form of nonviolent resistance he called “Satyagraha” by incorporating spiritual and ethical elements from Hindu, Jain, and Christian teachings. In turn, King's nonviolent direct action tactic during the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century, especially in 1965 during the Selma campaign, was influenced by Gandhi's example.

In this chapter, civil disobedience is positioned as a theoretical concept as well as an efficient strategy. It explores its theoretical roots, its development via Gandhian practice, and its worldwide impact, paying special attention to how Gandhi's reactions to colonial and racial oppression in South Africa and India between 1893 and 1948 influenced contemporary nonviolent resistance organizations. The debate focuses on the need that forced Gandhi to establish a protest style based on self-suffering and dignity rather than violence. This chapter offers the intellectual framework for Dr. King's eventual development of his own distinctively American definition of nonviolent resistance through a blend of historical narrative and philosophical discussion.

2.2 Civil Disobedience:

The concept and practice of civil disobedience had already crossed continents and cultures before arriving in the American South. The legitimacy, scope, and ethical conditions of civil disobedience have been examined from a variety of angles by philosophers like Richard Gregg, who first used the term "moral jiu-jitsu" to describe the impact of nonviolence on the aggressor's conscience, and modern philosophers like Candice Delmas and John Rawls. In light of structural injustice, their work frames the debate of whether civil disobedience should stay within the parameters of democratic legality or go beyond them.

Commonly, civil disobedience is defined as willfully breaking the law to express disapproval of injustice, motivated by political principles and conscience. According to the well-known definition provided by John Rawls, it is "a public, non-violent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law" that aims to alter governmental laws or practices. This moral-political concept believes that when laws cause serious injustices, people may be justified in breaking them, or even required to do so (Rawls, 1999). "All men recognize the right of revolution, that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable" Henry David Thoreau noted in his well-known essay "Resistance to Civil Government." This statement, expressed in classical terms, echoes the idea of a "right of revolution" acknowledged by many thinkers. A just person, according to Thoreau, must abide by higher moral law, if the government "imprisons any unjustly," the only ethical response is to embrace imprisonment rather than comply (Thoreau's, 2013).Based on contemporary definitions, civil disobedience is usually defined by traits like conscience, nonviolence, publicity, and a willingness to face consequences from the law (Smith, 2013)

Scholars note that it falls inside a "boundary of fidelity to law," since participants typically respect the rule of law even when they break specific statutes (Scheuerman W. E., 2018). Civil disobedients, described by (Rawls, 1999) and others, are pleadings or appeals to the justice of the majority, seeking reform as opposed to anarchy. Rawls maintains that in a just constitutional government, standard duties to obey the law may give way to a responsibility to use civil disobedience as a last resort to pursue legal change when laws represent "severe injustices." Civil disobedience is therefore morally acceptable when it targets unfair laws or policies that violate fundamental rights.

Scholars have elaborated various norms governing legitimate civil disobedience. Effective civil disobedience needs to be conscientious and principled, it needs to be intentional, free from

coercion, and driven by genuine values about justice. It is distinct from regular law-breaking, which is usually motivated by self-interest, in this regard (Brownlee, 2022). A prime example is Rosa Parks's 1955 refusal to give up her bus seat in Alabama, where she publicly disobeyed an unfair segregation law on principle because her harmless action showed that the people could not tolerate injustice. Actions taken in secret or for solely selfish reasons, however, are not eligible. Additionally, civil disobedience is typically symbolic and public, with its primary objective of denouncing injustice and inciting public discussion. Even though they disobeyed unfair laws, citizens and leaders like Gandhi, King, and Mandela all publicly showed their support for the rule of law by facing legal consequences (Scheuerman W. E., 2018). In his analysis of Gandhi's thoughts, William E. Scheuerman reflects on this balance by pointing out that true disobedience necessitates prior voluntary obedience to the law. As he explains, “The right to civil disobedience accrues only to those who know and practice the duty of voluntary obedience to laws whether made by them or others… Without the fulfillment of this preliminary condition, civil disobedience is civil only in name” (p. 419). In other words, Gandhi urged for complete and strict obedience to just laws, arguing that only individuals who have "thus obeyed the laws of society" are qualified to identify and oppose unjust laws. Gandhi's formula states that a Satyagrahi must obey the law "intelligently and of his own free will" before the "right accrues”.

However, interpretations differ. Candice Delmas draws attention to a significant flaw in conventional narratives (such as Rawls's), they frequently assume a utopian, almost ideal society and tend to minimize the brutality activists endure. According to her, traditional theory "considers an idealized and sanitized version of the history of the civil rights movement," neglecting the fact that privileged groups and governments frequently use force in response and that activists occasionally feel obligated to resist using more than just "civil" means. In her view, when peaceful protest is unable to eliminate systemic injustice, oppressed people may legitimately turn to more extreme strategies or "uncivil" disobedience (Delmas, 2018)

The strength of disciplined resistance was also documented by Richard Gregg, one of the first American interpreters of Gandhian methods. Gregg showed in The Power of Nonviolence that Gandhi's initiatives produced widespread moral influence despite critics’ skepticism. He argued that, as Gandhi's struggle demonstrated, human issues resulting from oppression could frequently be settled "without violence, against armed might” (Gregg R. B., 1960). Gregg even proposed that "human unity… can overcome all differences" more sustainably through

love and justice than through force and fear because the strongest powers in nature, such as light or gravity, are delicate and nonviolent (Gregg R. B., 1960)

Indeed, there is general agreement that civil disobedience is uniquely "civil" since it strives to preserve the legal system while appealing to the community's conscience. Participants often publicly accept punishment, demonstrating their overall commitment to the law (Rawls, 1999); (Scheuerman W. , 2018).Key ideas were outlined by John Rawls, civil disobedience ought to be nonviolent, public, and carried out to address and correct serious injustices. It should be a last alternative when all other attempts have failed, with a reasonable chance of success, most importantly, it must affirm its "willingness for future cooperation" with the state by embracing the consequences (Rawls, 1999). (Scheuerman W. E., 2018) and others also emphasize respect and nonviolence: in the Gandhian ethic, civil disobedients see their opponents as potential partners in a new, just system and work to prevent harm to them. Nonetheless, some authors contend that not all forms of civil disobedience need to be strictly unselfish or "civilized". As Delmas points out, historical movements have occasionally involved tactical or even quasi-violent resistance, blurring the borders between oppressed people's interests and the benefits of change (Delmas, 2018). Still, overt or violent resistance is typically not included in mainstream theory, as developed by Rawls and others. To differentiate civil disobedience from criminal activity, the traditional definition requires visibility and selfless actions.

Historically, civil disobedience has occurred globally and in a variety of contexts. It has been a common strategy for social change in democratic systems, as seen by the abolition, suffrage, civil rights, and anti-colonial liberation movements, as well as more contemporary efforts against war and the environment. For example, (Thoreau's, 2013)'s brief imprisonment for defying a poll tax in 19th-century America was a protest against slavery and war. Thoreau's act inspired generations of political thinkers by asserting that "the only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right" (p. 23). Mahatma Gandhi's fight against colonial oppression in South Africa and India during the 20th century served as an inspiration to politicians all across the world. Gandhi was a clear influence on King's use of peaceful disobedience in the American civil rights movement, which involved leaders like John Lewis and Rosa Parks. As one account notes, "many of the most famous civil disobedients
-Mohandas Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela- were members of the groups whose rights they sought to champion". Parks's 1955 bus protest and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott are textbook examples of protests against racist laws. In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, King (1963) defended civil disobedience as "a moral

responsibility to disobey unjust laws," distinguishing between laws that uplift human dignity and those that degrade it (p. 85). Black and Indian activists in South Africa, notably Nelson Mandela in later decades, opposed apartheid policies through boycotts, strikes, and large protests. In the late 20th century, activists in Soviet-ruled Eastern Europe used civil disobedience to protest communist persecution. More recently, civil disobedience techniques have been adopted into international movements such as pro-democracy marches, refugee rights demonstrations, and climate protests. Some have even portrayed actions such as unlawful border crossings as violations of unfair immigration laws. Scholars agree that civil disobedience, understood in its classic form, is a deliberate, peaceful appeal to justice that has been used around the world to challenge tyranny and discrimination, shaping politics across eras.

2.3 Mahatma Gandhi's Nonviolent Philosophy:

One of the most influential figures in the contemporary history of civil disobedience was Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948). Born on the 2nd of October 1869 in Porbandar, India, he studied law in London before going to South Africa in 1893 as a 24-year-old barrister (Prabhu & Rao, 1958).Gandhi initially formulated his thoughts and philosophy amid the explicitly racist environment of South Africa. He concluded that passive obedience to unfair laws extended oppression after experiencing prejudice, such as being kicked out of a first-class train in the Pietermaritzburg compartment for refusing to move despite having a valid ticket. This experience deeply humiliated him and marked the beginning of his political awakening (Mazmudar, 2003). Gandhi developed the concepts of ahimsa (non-harm) and Satyagraha (truth-force) as useful guidelines for opposing injustice, drawing on his Hindu upbringing as well as inspirations from Jainism and Christianity but also Western thinkers such as Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau. His own words explain his choice of Satyagraha as both a moral doctrine and a political strategy: "Truth means Love, and Insistence means Force" in Sanskrit, resulting in a "force born from Truth and Love (non-violence)" (Prabhu & Rao, 1958). It was rooted in the principle of ahimsa, or non-harming, which he inherited from Hindu and Jain traditions. However, Gandhi did not interpret nonviolence as passive submission, rather, he insisted that it involved active resistance to evil through suffering and self-discipline (Mazmudar, 2003).

Gandhi fused multiple traditions. He revered the Jain dictum "nonviolence is man's highest duty" and embraced the Christian Sermon on the Mount, famously saying he would prefer

carrying a copy of it over the Bhagavad Gita if he had to choose. Through correspondence, he became friends with Leo Tolstoy, and his writings (especially The Kingdom of God Is Within You) and Thoreau's Civil Disobedience deeply inspired him. Soon after that, he adopted Thoreau's term "civil disobedience" to label his method. According to (Gregg R. B., 1960), Gandhi "adopted the name 'civil disobedience' and put the idea into action" against the South African government (p.23). Gandhi, however, aimed for a philosophical synthesis, which was broader than any one piece of text. He believed that nonviolent resistance was a universal moral strategy that could be used in any conflict, not a sign of weakness. Gandhi, as one journalist put it, "raised nonviolent action to a level never before achieved," bringing pacifist principles from personal morality to a large-scale political movement (González Vallés, 2012). The combination of truth and nonviolence was at the core of Gandhi's viewpoints. He clarified that ahimsa was an "active form of love," even for one's enemies, rather than simply abstaining from violence. "What in a dormant state is non-violence, becomes love in the waking state," he thought, "Love is a rare herb that makes a friend even of a sworn enemy. Love destroys ill will" (Mazmudar, 2003). This meant that Satyagrahis would ethically disarm their opponents by causing them pain instead of harm. Gandhi famously stated that he chose truth and nonviolence to lead the fight; he joked that he would save the Sermon on the Mount to comfort him even if India lost all of its scripture (Prabhu & Rao, 1958). He lived simply and promoted selflessness, embodying this philosophy: "He lived his message by resolute adherence to non-violence and truth, resistance to evil by Satyagraha and self-suffering". This moral position evolved out of need. Gandhi saw that Indians were forced into intolerable situations by racism and colonial power and that traditional avenues of resistance were shut down. He maintained that love, truth, and tolerance -rather than violence- were "the only solutions for hate, ignorance, and malice". The constant use of peaceful principles was, in his opinion, a potent political tool. After one campaign, Gandhi wrote: "He fought against inequality, discrimination, and the cruelty of man to man throughout his life." He... minimized his desires and worked toward achieving moksha by helping others (Mazmudar, 2003).

In brief, Gandhi turned civil disobedience into a widespread movement based on moral principles. He advocated for the determination of truth that may awaken the oppressor's conscience rather than using force to bring down unfair laws. As a result, he gained international recognition as the "Father of Nonviolence".

2.4 Gandhi's Civil Disobedience in South Africa and India:

Gandhi first applied his philosophy in practice during the twenty-one years he spent in South Africa (1893–1914), where Indian immigrants faced harsh racial prejudice. When the young lawyer arrived in 1893, he was subjected to rights denial and segregation legislation and quickly got to experience the dehumanizing effects of white settlers' racism. His initial act of defiance which is refusing to leave a train cabin reserved for white people, foreshadowed his subsequent strategies. Over the next two decades, Gandhi witnessed and resisted a range of discriminatory practices such as the denial of voting rights, compulsory identification passes for Asians, curfews, restricted trade licenses, and police brutality. Soon after the train incident, he coordinated Satyagraha campaigns within the Indian population. He led the Indian diaspora there and organized campaigns against discriminatory colonial legislation, which he referred to as "Satyagraha". The Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act of 1906, which mandated that all Indians register with the government, was one of the first flashpoints and the trigger. Gandhi called huge gatherings in protest and urged Indians to decline registration. Under his leadership, "they held meetings of protest… Thereupon the leading Indians… took an oath that they would all refuse to register and would go to jail rather than obey a law that they regarded as an attack upon the very foundations of their religion, their national honor and their self-respect" (Gregg R. B., 1960). Despite severe consequences, such as Gandhi's and many others' imprisonment, the campaign persuaded Prime Minister Jan Smuts to change the policy. From 1906 onward, Gandhi's small group of Satyagrahis began peacefully opposing unfair legislation. For instance, he led a rally of Johannesburg Indians in September 1906, when they vowed to disregard the registration ordinance "in the teeth of [colonial] opposition." This campaign marked the first true application of Satyagraha, or what Gandhi called "holding firmly to the truth." It was not just resistance—it was principled, nonviolent struggle based on love and self-suffering rather than hatred. Gandhi explained in his later writings that the term "passive resistance" did not fully express the spiritual discipline of his approach, which aimed not to humiliate opponents but to transform them (Prabhu & Rao, 1958). Which is a novel method of "fighting adversaries without violence and resisting them without resentment". As the campaign gained power, Indians voluntarily courted arrest, boycotted courts, and schools, burned registration certificates, refused to comply with curfews, and conducted cross- border marches into Natal - an act considered illegal under immigration laws. Gandhi himself was arrested multiple times and subjected to physical abuse. Yet, he maintained strict nonviolence among his followers. The Satyagrahis never used violence or retribution, despite

the colonial rulers' responses of mass imprisonment, floggings, and beatings. Despite these crackdowns, the Indian community remained disciplined. Gandhi believed that their willingness to suffer without retaliation had immense moral and political power. He often quoted from the Bhagavad Gita and Christian texts to inspire self-restraint and perseverance. As he explained, “Our religion is based upon ahimsa which in its active form is nothing but love… even to those who may be your enemies” (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi’s practice). (Gregg R. B., 1960), one of Gandhi’s earliest interpreters, referred to this approach as “moral jiu-jitsu”—a process in which the oppressor is ethically disarmed by the nonviolent discipline of the oppressed.

Severally intense, the South African struggle lasted for seven years. Under Gandhi's guidance, the Indian minority consistently gave up their freedom and means of subsistence rather than comply with regulations that were "repugnant to their conscience and self-respect”. By 1913, thousands of workers went on strike in solidarity, threatening to be flogged or worse, while hundreds of Indian men, women, and even children had been imprisoned in waves of nonviolent protest. The orderly protests won support for the Indians both domestically and abroad. Ultimately, in response to pressure from New Delhi and London, the South African government engaged in negotiations with Gandhi and made numerous compromises. As an example of the effectiveness of disciplined nonviolent resistance, by 1914 all of the main Indian requests had been met, including “the abolition of the registration, the abolition of the three-pound head-tax, the validation of their marriages, [and] the right of entry of educated Indians”. Following Gandhi's departure in July 1914, Prime Minister Smuts famously commented, "The saint has left our shores," acknowledging that he had come to revere Gandhi despite his opposition to him. Gandhi was well known as the "father of nonviolence" by the time he departed South Africa.

After twenty years in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India in 1915 with not only international recognition but also with a proven and well-tested strategy for nonviolent resistance. However, he refrained from getting involved in politics right away. Gandhi's initial years were instead devoted to re-establishing a connection with Indian society and establishing a foundation of organization and morality. To develop the self-discipline he felt was necessary for successful Satyagraha, Gandhi founded the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat. According to (González Vallés, 2012), "Gandhi had to first remake the man before remaking the nation" (p. 61). Colonial rule in India had resulted in social inequity, oppressive taxation, and economic pain and suffering, especially for peasants. Gandhi felt that grassroots efforts were necessary to achieve political

liberation. According to (González Vallés, 2012), he frequently reminded his followers that swaraj, or self-rule, was a "moral awakening" of the population via self-discipline, service, and nonviolence rather than just a question of constitutional power. In addition to political independence, he aimed for moral reconstruction based on the combination of Satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence).

In 1917, Gandhi launched India's first significant Satyagraha in Champaran, Bihar, where British planters were abusing indigo farmers under the Tinkathia System, which is a system of forced cultivation. Gandhi headed an investigation into the abuses and secured concessions from colonial authorities following negotiations and nonviolent demonstrations. His victory in Champaran signaled the start of India's rural mass movement for civil disobedience. Gandhi convinced farmers to refuse to pay land taxes in 1918 during a famine in Kheda, Gujarat. The protest was peaceful and nonviolent, but its fundamental principles were unshakable. Villagers held together and stayed united when authorities threatened to seize their belongings. The government finally gave in and stopped collecting taxes. Gandhi viewed these regional achievements as evidence that popular agency could be awakened and colonial institutions could be forced to change without coercion through nonviolent resistance (Mazmudar, 2003).

The 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, in which British troops murdered hundreds of unarmed protesters in Amritsar, was an important turning point in Gandhi's national political leadership. In 1920, Gandhi responded by starting the Non-Cooperation Movement, which swiftly grew into a large-scale campaign. In particular, he called on Indians to boycott British government institutions, courts, schools, and imported commodities. As a sign of independence, Indians spun khadi (homespun cloth), returned medals, and handed up titles. Gandhi explained that non-cooperation was not a form of lawlessness but a moral imperative, “It is the inherent right of a subject to refuse to assist a government that will not listen to him. Non-cooperation… is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil” (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi’s practice).Millions of ordinary Indians were involved in the movement, which made it grow quickly. Gandhi, however, was firm in his commitment to nonviolence. He suspended the campaign straight away after a violent mob killed officers in Chauri Chaura in 1922 by burning a police station. Gandhi defended the decision, claiming that true Satyagraha required complete self-control, despite the dismay of his critics. "We depart from the doctrine of ahimsa if we return blow for blow," he insisted. Despite its brief existence, the movement forever changed the political landscape of India and showed the power of nonviolent public mobilization.

By the late 1920s, British colonial rule had shown itself resistant to constitutional reform. In 1929, the Indian National Congress proclaimed Purna Swaraj, or total independence, as its objective. Gandhi responded by suggesting a fresh strategy, a widespread campaign of civil disobedience that would openly break colonial rules in a controlled, nonviolent way. Since the British salt monopoly impacted all Indians, regardless of class, he recognized it as both a symbolic and real injustice. On March 12, 1930, Gandhi marched 240 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi on the Arabian coast to launch the Salt Satyagraha. He traveled from village to village with 78 volunteers, giving talks and advocating for nonviolent resistance. On April 6, he reached the sea and illegally produced salt, declaring, “With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire”. It was a really basic act however profound. An everyday requirement, salt turned into a representation of freedom and dignity, which inspired millions to join Gandhi's civil disobedience. In India, people started picketing liquor shops, boycotting British products, refusing to pay taxes, and making salt illegally. The campaign's inclusiveness and moral purity were what gave it its spiritual power. “The salt Satyagraha resulted in mass awakening which shook the very foundation of the British Empire” (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi’s practice.)The British government reacted angrily. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other Congress leaders were among the more than 60,000 Indians who were taken into imprisonment. However, the movement's nonviolent nature persisted. When nonviolent volunteers tried to seize the Dharasana Salt Works in May 1930, it became the campaign's most famous moment. Police brutally attacked them, but they did not strike back. American journalist Webb Miller described the scene to the world,

“Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten pins... It was the most amazing display of passive resistance”. Gandhi's methods gained international legitimacy as a result of this incident, which attracted attention from all around the world. Support for Indian self-rule increased in the United States and Britain. Gandhi's "salt rebellion" revealed the moral emptiness of colonial control, making it far more effective than any military resistance, according to historian (González Vallés, 2012).

Figure 09: Gandhi leading his followers on the Salt March to abolish the British salt laws

Following almost a year of protests, Gandhi was freed in early 1931 and allowed to negotiate with Viceroy Lord Irwin directly. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact promised the eradication of some oppressive legislation, permitted nonviolent protesting, and awarded political prisoners freedom. Gandhi agreed to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London and to put a stop to civil disobedience in exchange. Nevertheless, negotiations quickly broke down. Gandhi was disappointed when he came home because the British would not consider complete independence. Early in 1932, civil disobedience was once again practiced, although it was met with much more suppression. Gandhi started "fasts unto death" to protest the oppression of Dalits, who were then known as "untouchables," after being imprisoned once more. Even as political outcomes stagnated, his moral influence increased. Gandhi explained that civil disobedience was not just about policy, but a soul force by saying: “The aim of civil disobedience is to convert the opponent by self-suffering, to awaken his conscience and humanize his behavior”. Gandhi's particular contribution to political thought was highlighted by this emphasis on pain as a means of persuasion. He maintained that the ultimate objective of civil disobedience was spiritual transformation rather than merely legal reform, in contrast to Western liberal intellectuals such as (Rawls, 1999), who contended that civil disobedience must appeal to justice within a constitutional democracy. Gandhi “did not merely break laws to protest them, he dramatized injustice through moral witness,” according to political scholar (Scheuerman W. E., 2018), who later reshaped the global understanding of civil disobedience . Even though Gandhi's attempts were frequently short-lived, they strengthened the depth and tenacity of Indian nationalism and established the psychological foundation for future popular action. Throughout these years, Gandhi insisted that civil disobedience must remain disciplined, public, and grounded in love. He opposed secrecy, sabotage, or coercion. His instructions to

Satyagrahis were clear, to disobey unjust laws publicly, to accept arrest and punishment without resistance, to never retaliate with violence, even in the face of brutality and to remain truthful and treat opponents with respect. This approach required an immense amount of personal sacrifice. Gandhi set an example by traveling great distances, spinning his fabric, fasting, and denying the poorest Indians any privileges. As argued in Civil Disobedience: Theory, History, and Gandhi's Practice, "he lived his message by resolute adherence to nonviolence and truth… resistance to evil by Satyagraha and self-suffering". In Gandhi's thought, political liberation was inseparable from ethical transformation. He rejected the idea that ends justify means.

In August 1942, Gandhi started his last mass movement, the Quit India Movement, while World War II was still raging and British rule was still in effect. Gandhi demanded an immediate British withdrawal with the full backing of the Congress Party, arguing that India could not participate in a struggle for liberation abroad while it was still a slave state. He urged the populace to "do or die" in a ferocious address (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi's practice.)The Quit India campaign, in contrast to previous movements, was focused on abolishing British rule rather than changing it. Gandhi felt that nonviolent resistance needed to evolve into a national revolution rather than a small-scale or symbolic demonstration. His message was bold and clear: "Leave India to God. If this is too much, then leave her to anarchy. This orderly, disciplined anarchy should go" (Prabhu & Rao, 1958). Within hours, the British government reacted. Nearly all of the Congress leadership, including Gandhi and Nehru, were detained without charge or trial. The decentralized movement continued. Nationwide strikes, protests, and acts of sabotage occurred, frequently without the determined order Gandhi called for. Hundreds of Indians were killed in police violence, and more than 100,000 were detained. While under house arrest, Gandhi suffered from serious health problems and was imprisoned at Aga Khan Palace. Gandhi's dedication to nonviolence and self- purification persisted even while he was imprisoned. He urged Indians to stay calm and unified while fasting in protest of the treatment of political prisoners. Despite being militarily suppressed, the movement had a vital function in showing Britain and the rest of the world that Indian independence was no longer negotiable. According to (González Vallés, 2012), Gandhi's last campaign succeeded by "making imperial rule morally impossible" rather than by using violence or constitutional arguments .

Five years after the Quit India movement, India achieved independence in 1947. The division of India and Pakistan, which Gandhi had fought against all of his life, was a severe wound that accompanied this historic victory. Gandhi turned his attention from politics to peacekeeping

when Hindu-Muslim sectarian violence broke out. He risked his life at the age of 77 to advocate for nonviolence, peacemaking, and interfaith cooperation in the most riot-torn areas, including Noakhali in Bengal and later Delhi. He forced Muslims and Hindus to stop their bloodshed by fasting for days, sometimes to the point of death. He claimed that "purifying our hearts is where the real freedom struggle begins now" (Prabhu & Rao, 1958). Religious extremists were offended by Gandhi's position. Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist who felt Gandhi had compromised the Hindu cause by being too accommodating of Muslims, murdered him on January 30, 1948. The world was shocked by the murder. "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth," lamented Albert Einstein.

Political turning points are not the only way to measure Mahatma Gandhi's impact on history. His true contribution to history is the transformation of opposing parties into an act of moral and spiritual defiance. Gandhi "raised nonviolent action to a level never before achieved," transforming it into a means of mass transformation, as (Gregg R. B., 1960)stated. His combination of love (ahimsa) and truth (satya) produced a new civic ethic in addition to a strategy. Gandhi's use of civil disobedience was always intensely personal. By using self-suffering as a method of protest, the Satyagrahi questioned the moral foundation of oppressive power in addition to just opposing laws. “He lived his message,” as one writer observed, “by resolute adherence to nonviolence and truth, resistance to evil by Satyagraha and self-suffering” (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi’s practice). Since then, movements all over the world have been influenced by Gandhi's example, including the civil rights movement in the United States led by Dr. King, the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa, and nonviolent demonstrations in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Gandhi's kind of civil disobedience, according to political analyst (Scheuerman W. , 2018), "dismantled the binary between law-abiding civility and revolutionary disruption," providing a third route based on moral clarity.

2.5 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Philosophy of Civil Disobedience:

The most well-known figurehead in American history is Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968). He was a Baptist, theologian, and pastor, but most importantly a prominent leader of the American Civil Rights Movement. King was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and grew up in a religious family that valued education, discipline, and service. He obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from Crozer Theological Seminary after graduating from Morehouse College in 1948, and a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Boston University in 1955. There, he was exposed to a broad range of theological thought, including the social gospel tradition of Walter Rauschenbusch and the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (Taylor Branch, 1988). It was during this time that King also encountered the writings of Henry David Thoreau, whose essay Civil Disobedience planted the seed for King's later embrace of principled law-breaking. King first became interested in nonviolent resistance as a moral and political strategy while studying theology, where he came across Mahatma Gandhi's works (Washington, 1991). Following Rosa Parks' imprisonment, King assisted in leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955–56, which received widespread attention. He became the public face of the nonviolent civil rights movement as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, using nonviolent protest to promote racial justice. His involvement in protests throughout the South, including the March on Washington, Selma, and Birmingham, changed American public opinion and had an impact on international justice movements. In 1964, he became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in recognition of his “nonviolent struggle for civil rights for the African American population” (Prize, 1964). King left behind a legacy of moral bravery, civic discipline, and radical compassion that is firmly anchored in the Christian ethic of love and

motivated by Gandhi's Satyagraha (Carson, 2001). Despite his many achievements, King remained a controversial figure during his life, especially as he expanded his criticism beyond civil rights into opposition to the Vietnam War and economic injustice. His later activism included launching the Poor People's Campaign, which sought to unite Americans of all races around shared issues of poverty and inequality (King M. L., Where do we go from here: Chaos or Community?, 1967)

King's nonviolent philosophy developed at the intersection of Gandhian resistance and Christian theology. Jesus' teachings, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, had a significant impact on him. He saw it as a heavenly commandment to respond to violence with forgiveness and hatred with love. The ethical foundation of his activity was the idea of Agapē, or unconditional, selfless love. Agape is "disinterested love," as King put it. It is a form of love where the person prioritizes the well-being of his neighbor over his own (King M. L., 1991). “I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom,” King later wrote. But while Christian ethics gave him the moral grounding, it was Gandhi who showed King that nonviolence could be an active political weapon. Though the two men never got a chance to meet (King was 19 when Gandhi was assassinated), King learned about Gandhi through his writing and a trip to India in 1959. Gandhi’s concept of Satyagraha - truth-force or soul-force- demonstrated how disciplined civil resistance could dismantle unjust systems without resorting to violence (Gregg R. L., 1960) (Civil disobedience: Theory, history, and Gandhi’s practice.)). Gandhi had led movements in both South Africa and India where people broke oppressive laws, endured jail, and maintained dignity in the face of brutality. These examples convinced King that the “ethic of love” could become a strategy for revolution (Washington, 1991)In his 1958 book Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story, King laid out the principles of nonviolence he’d employed during the boycott. He affirmed that it is possible to resist evil without resorting to violence and to oppose evil itself without opposing the people committing evil. He also wrote that people who practice nonviolence must be willing to suffer without retaliation, internal or external: “The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him”.

King made a pilgrimage to India in 1959 for a whole month to gain a deeper comprehension of Gandhi's philosophies. As Washington Post historian Gillian Brockell recounts, King arrived declaring “To India, I come as a pilgrim”. Everywhere he and Coretta were treated as honored guests. One of the first stops was at Gandhi’s samādhi in New Delhi, where “King and his party

laid a wreath… [and] King was ‘deeply moved’ and knelt to pray for a long time”. There in India, he was pleasantly surprised to find that many people there had followed the nonviolent bus boycott he’d been a part of. He met Gandhi's family, was greeted by Indian leaders, and saw significant locations related to the Indian independence struggle during this trip. He said he found "the spirit of Gandhi alive in India today" and called the trip "a deeply meaningful experience" (King M. L., 1991). Although the Montgomery Bus Boycott had already shown that nonviolence might succeed, King later claimed that his time in India solidified his belief in Gandhian principles.

Figure 11: Coretta Scott King and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. were given garlands upon their arrival in New Delhi in February 1959.

He left even more convinced of the power of nonviolent civil disobedience to affect social change. “It was a marvelous thing to see the amazing results of a nonviolent campaign,” King wrote in Ebony after his trip. “The aftermath of hatred and bitterness that usually follows a violent campaign was found nowhere in India. Today a mutual friendship based on complete equality exists between the Indian and British people within the commonwealth”. King was persuaded to double up his efforts back home by this pilgrimage. He later said that he brought Gandhi's ideals to new audiences by returning as "the most prominent living advocate for nonviolence”. King "popularized a lot of the ideas that Gandhi had," as his biographer Clayborne Carson notes, and disseminated them across the United States and abroad. King is seen respectfully paying tribute to Gandhi's legacy in the above photo, which was taken during that trip. King created a distinctively American form of nonviolence by fusing Gandhi's satyāgraha with his own Christian beliefs: an agapē, or "love force," prepared to seek justice

via nonviolence. In his own words, King took Gandhianism "out of its Indian context and apply[ing] it to the American situation" by "wedding Satyāgraha to the Christian concept of Agapē". Carsen says "I would say that after he returned he was the most prominent living advocate for nonviolence, he popularized a lot of the ideas that Gandhi had, but through King, they spread throughout the United States and, of course, came to other parts of the world."

King's nonviolence was a well-organized, cohesive system with roots in political realism and spiritual philosophy rather than abstract moralism. He created a set of six fundamental principles that guided the Civil Rights Movement's tactics and ethics, largely drawing from Gandhian Satyagraha. King's fundamental claim was that nonviolence is a brave act of resistance that requires a great deal of inner fortitude and self-control, not a sign of cowardice or submission. According to King, a person who practices nonviolence fights evil with love and moral clarity rather than with guns or hatred. Such resistance aims for reconciliation rather than annihilation, to gain the friendship and understanding of the opponent rather than defeat or degrade them. Both violent vengeance and passive endurance were drastically altered by this perception. Rather, it concentrated on destroying systems of injustice instead of specific people, protecting the dignity of everyone, even the oppressors. Furthermore, King thought that suffering may be transformative and redeeming. The voluntary acceptance of suffering has the potential to awaken society's consciousness and topple oppressive regimes, as Gandhi had said. The nonviolent resister exposes the oppressor's moral failings and compels the general public to face injustice by bearing unfair punishment without retaliating. King also highlighted the significance of agapē, the Greek word for unconditional, selfless love, as the driving force behind nonviolence. Unlike friendship or passion, this kind of love looks out for everyone's welfare, even one's adversaries. Therefore, practicing nonviolence meant eradicating "internal violence of the spirit"—hatred, bitterness, and resentment—as well as physical violence (The King Center)). Lastly, King firmly believed that justice would be served in the end, which served as the foundation for his nonviolent ideology. He believed that the cosmos was morally ordered in favor of truth, dignity, and human freedom, and he frequently emphasized the idea that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" (King M. L., 1991). In campaigns from Birmingham to Selma, where love and sacrifice were used as instruments of historical change, these interconnected ideas served as the intellectual and spiritual foundation of King's direct action approach.

Conclusion:

The development of civil disobedience from a philosophical concept to a widely influential nonviolent resistance method has been examined in this chapter. According to the philosophy, civil disobedience advocates for ethically sound and group-based disobedience of unjust laws. This idea was first widely implemented under Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary leadership in colonial India and South Africa, where nonviolent campaigns not only overthrew repressive governments but also reshaped the morality of political conflict.

Gandhi taught the world to a method of resistance based on love, sacrifice, and spiritual discipline through his lifetime commitment to ahimsa and Satyagraha. His accomplishments showed that hardship and moral clarity, rather than violence, might be used to challenge power. Dr. King was greatly impacted by these concepts and adapted Gandhian nonviolence for the American Civil Rights Movement. By doing this, King created a unique kind of nonviolent direct action that was based on Gandhian principles and Christian virtues. Its goal was to change the nation's spirit as well as end segregation.

Chapter Three: Martin Luther King's Nonviolent Direct Action 1965

3.1 Introduction:

One of the key moments in the Civil Rights Movement was the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which started in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 5, 1955. The long-standing Jim Crow system of racial segregation was challenged during this 381-day protest, which was sparked by Rosa Parks' imprisonment for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. In addition to bringing leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to national prominence, the boycott resulted in a Supreme Court decision declaring bus segregation illegal.

3.2 Emancipation and the early civil rights movement:

During the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which mandated the freedom of all slaves in Confederate-held territory (Foner, 2010). It constituted a moral turning point in the war and reframed its goal as a fight for both union and human freedom. Even if it did not instantly abolish slavery, only the 13th Amendment, which was enacted in 1865, did. After escaping slavery, more than four million African Americans gained a new legal standing, but in reality, they faced significant restrictions. Initially, there was a brief time of political empowerment during the Reconstruction Period (1865–1877) following the war. African Americans established churches and schools, cast ballots, and served in public office. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 forbade racial discrimination in the legal system, and the 14th and 15th Amendments guaranteed citizenship and the ability to vote (Foner, 2011). Black equality was acknowledged in the U.S. Constitution for the first time. These advantages, nevertheless, were fleeting. Following the Compromise of 1876, the removal of federal soldiers in 1877 allowed Southern states to reestablish white supremacy through Jim Crow laws, which imposed segregation in public places, transportation, education, and housing. "Separate but equal" was established by the Supreme Court's 1896 ruling in Plessv. Ferguson, and it would shape American race policy for the ensuing fifty years.

Black Americans resisted injustice even during this time of oppression. Legal challenges to discrimination and segregation were the focus of groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which was established in 1909. The NAACP worked for equal education and anti-lynching laws under leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois. Important individuals like Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston established legal foundations in the 1930s and 1940s, who would go on to fight the famous Brown v. Board of Education case. Activism was further encouraged by the homecoming of African American

veterans from World Wars I and II. The fundamental contradictions of American culture were brought to light by fighting for democracy overseas while dealing with segregation at home. This twin battle was encapsulated in the Double V campaign during World War II, a triumph against racism at home and Nazism abroad. President Harry Truman acknowledged that racism existed at the federal level in 1948 when he desegregated the military. (Foner, 2011)

The modern Civil Rights Movement found its legal foundation in the courts. The turning point was reached in 1954 when the Supreme Court overturned Plessy v. Ferguson and declared in Brown v. Board of Education that school segregation was unconstitutional. In recognition of the psychological damage segregation does to Black children, Chief Justice Earl Warren declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Kluger, 2004). Brown sparked a wave of activity and legal challenges throughout the South, notwithstanding the sluggish implementation.

Although African Americans had been fighting for civil rights since liberation, the contemporary Civil Rights Movement is generally considered to have started in the middle of the 1950s as a result of a popular uprising against racial injustice and official segregation. It was not a sudden awakening, but rather the result of decades of struggle, including voter registration drives, union organizing, court cases, and moral protests. (Kluger, 2004)

3.3 The Montgomery Bus Boycott:

Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, ‘There lived a race of people, fleecy locks and black complexion, a people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. (King M. , 1955)

Those were the words of Dr. King, spoken on the first day of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The city of Montgomery nicknamed the “Cradle of the Confederacy,” eventually became the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement. The city with its humble beginnings has a rich history. (King M. , 1955)

Montgomery is located in the Alabama River in Central Alabama. The area was first inhabited by Indians until the first white settler arrived in 1716. (Remington, 1994)

The city was named after Richard Montgomery, a major general in the Continental Army who died during the American Revolution. It was chartered in 1819 and became the state capital in 1847. In 1861, delegates from six southern states voted to secede from the Union and become the newly created, “Confederate States of America.” They chose Montgomery as the provisional capital of the new Confederate states. The city served as the capital for only four

months, but earned the nickname “The Cradle of the Confederacy” (Greenhaw, 2002). The eleven southern states that seceded from the Union eventually lost the war, and Reconstruction began. After Reconstruction, Jim Crow black codes were passed in Montgomery. Under these codes, blacks could not own land within the city limits, or vote in city elections, and a gathering of more than two blacks constituted a mob. (Greenhaw, 2002)

Montgomery was characterized by a high percentage of the black population, a land with rich soil, a heritage of plentiful cotton crops, and a legacy of slavery. An increase in cotton production and trade transformed most of the former slaves to the cotton ranchers. The transition to industrialization and urbanization in Montgomery was more slowly compared to the other cities thanks to the intensive agricultural activities. The social and economic structure of the city depended mostly on the affordable labor force of African Americans. The inadequacy of industrial job opportunities limited the average household income. The median income for an African American family in Montgomery was 908$ in 1949, while it was 1,609$ in Birmingham. (McGhee-Hilt, 2008)

Racial segregation rose to a peak in the Southern states after World War II. Most cities in the South divided bus seating by race with whites in the front and blacks in the rear. Montgomery was one of those cities that was a direct challenge to the system of Jim Crow laws. Under these laws were race plates (a letter C to indicate colored people) next to the names of African Americans in the Montgomery telephone directory. There was police brutality against African Americans. Hilliard Brooks, a World War II veteran, was intoxicated and not allowed to board by a bus driver. He refused to get off the bus, and the driver called the police. An officer arrived on the scene, pushed Brooks to the ground, and fired a fatal shot when he tried to get up. (Greenhaw, 2002)

The police arrested a fifteen-year-old African American student on March 2, 1955. Claudette Colvin got on the bus and sat. She was not in one of the “reserved” seats. The first five rows (ten seats) of the buses were reserved for the white passengers only. In many instances, there were one or two white people occupying seats, but thirty or forty black riders jammed the aisles where men and women, old and young over those empty seats, dared not sit down. The driver stopped the bus and ordered blacks to leave their seats for the standing whites. Most of the standing blacks left the bus apprehensively and walked away because bus arrests were common in those days. The driver stood over Claudette and repeated his order. Claudette looked around, saw no empty seats, and remained seated neglectfully. She knew that she was not in the restricted area. A pregnant black woman sitting next to her got up. A black man on the last row

of the bus gave the pregnant woman his seat and left the bus. Claudette was occupying two seats alone because a white and a black could not sit in the same row according to the law. The driver called the police. Two officers dragged her off the bus, handcuffed and arrested her (Williams & Greenhaw, 2006)

Figure 12: Back of the bus

Similarly, the police arrested another African American woman on December 1, 1955. It was an unseasonably warm December day. Tired from work, Rosa Parks boarded the Bus numbered 2857. She paid her dime and took a seat in the first row of the black section. There were some vacant reserved seats. Then, more white and black riders boarded the bus and all reserved seats were occupied. Only one white man was standing. The driver gestured toward the first black row and ordered four black passengers to move. That was the law; no blacks were allowed to sit on the same row as whites, even though the row was beyond the reserved five rows. Two black women across the aisle left their seats, and the black man next to Rosa Parks also got up and moved forward in the aisle. Rosa Parks kept sitting. The driver looked at her and repeated his order. He asked her if she was going to stand up. Rosa Parks firmly said “No.” The driver told her that he would have her arrested. She said, “You may do that.” In a few minutes, the police arrived, arrested Rosa Parks, and took her to jail (Balcı & Balcı, 2011).

Rosa Parks’ arrest was different from the other bus incidents of the 1950s. It triggered one of the most effective social movements of the century. Edward Daniel Nixon stated after the arrest

that “Mrs. Parks’s case is a case that we can use to break down segregation on the bus” (Williams & Greenhaw, 2006)..Hence, the arrest can be classified as a transformative event. Hess and Martin define the transformative event as “a crucial turning point for a social movement that dramatically increases or decreases the level of mobilization” ((Balcı & Balcı, 2011). The Montgomery Bus Boycott was organized upon the arrest of Rosa Parks, who is known as the mother of the civil rights movement. King, the president of the MIA, Edward Daniel Nixon, the president of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP, Clifford Durr, a white lawyer, and his wife Virginia Durr, lawyer Fred Gray, a friend of King and Nixon, Ralph David Abernathy, and Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, and the president of the Women’s Political Council had rapidly organized the boycott. Early on Friday morning, members of the WPC wrote a message for the black community of Montgomery. The boycott would begin on Monday, December 5, 1955. They had to reach bus riders as much as possible. Jo Ann Robinson and members of the WPC prepared and distributed 52,500 leaflets during the weekend. The following text was written on the leaflets (Balcı & Balcı, 2011).

"Another negro woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down. It is the second time since the Claudette Colvin case that a negro woman has been arrested for the same thing. This has to be stopped. Negroes have rights, too, for if negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are negroes, yet we are arrested or have to stand over empty seats. If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it may be you, your daughter, or your mother. This woman’s case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don’t ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus. You can also afford to stay out of the town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups, don’t ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off of all buses Monday."

Figure *13:* left) Rosa Parks' mug shot from Montgomery City Jail, Montgomery, 1955. (right) Recreation of Ms. Parks sitting on a Montgomery bus, staged and taken on December 21, 1956, the day after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregated buses illegal.

Early Monday the buses went out for the regular morning's pickup. People ordinarily used to scramble for the vacant seats, but that morning very few people, who were merely whites, took buses. All others walked, took cabs or private cars. There were no black late-risers that morning. Since the vast majority of bus riders were blacks, all buses were operated for a few white passengers all day. One of the bus drivers confessed that he could take only $6.30 for a six-hour-run on Monday, December 5, 1955. At the end of the first day of the boycott, six thousand black people came together in Holt Street Baptist Church and decided to continue on the boycott. The MIA pledged to protect, defend, encourage, enlighten, and assist the members of the black community against unfair treatment, and unacceptable subordination. King was elected as the president and the spokesperson of the boycott. Reverend Roy Bennett was the first vice president, and Moses W. Jones was the second vice president. Edward Daniel Nixon was elected as the treasurer of the organization. The leaders reiterated that the nonviolent legal format of the boycott would be pursued until the adoption of legislative actions against segregation. Joe Azbell, city editor of *The Montgomery Advertiser,* stated that there was discipline among Negroes that whites were not aware of. The announcement after the meeting declared that the boycott would continue until the adoption of three proposals: more courteous

treatment of Negro passengers, seating on a first come first served basis, and assignment of Negro bus drivers to the predominantly Negro neighborhoods . (Balcı & Balcı, 2011)

The boycott was maintained successfully. The black population of Montgomery was encouraged to come together and take black-operated cabs. Carpooling was another part of the boycott. Black doctors, lawyers, and businessmen picked up walking people. One of the boycotters who had walked halfway across town reported that "… my body may be a bit tired, but for many years now my soul has been tired. Now my soul is resting. So I don't mind if my body is tired because my soul is free" (Balcı & Balcı, 2011).

Figure 14: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Begins

The following days and weeks of the boycott brought about several economic results in Montgomery. Since the black population stopped using buses for transportation, they limited their regular daily activities. They boycotted the buses intentionally, but the boycott unintentionally expanded to other markets and businesses. According to (Garrow, 1987)Montgomery's stores took in 2$ million less during the 1955 Christmas than the previous Christmas season. Several stores placed closed signs because of a lack of business. Additionally, the city bus company faced considerable economic problems and announced to stop bus services on any lines in the city or county in the area from December 22 to the end of the Christmas holiday season. The bus service in the city had never failed to run for more than twenty years. It had barely survived for the last seventeen days, between December 5 and December 22, eight lines were completely discontinued. Thirty-nine bus drivers were laid off, and many buses parked in a parking lot since there was no need for them. The black population

of Montgomery had severely internalized the boycott. An old black woman was hardly walking with a cane. A bus stopped at the bus stop, and a black passenger got out of the bus. The old woman began to walk faster as if she was trying to catch the bus. The driver saw her through the mirror of the bus. When the woman arrived at the door of the bus, the driver's friend told her: “Don’t hurt yourself, auntie, I’ll wait for you.” He wanted to show how courteous he was to the black people if they would only ride again. The woman scornfully called up to him “In the first place, I ain’t your auntie. In the second place, I ain’t rushing to get on your bus. I’m just trying to catch up with that nigger who just got off, so I can hit him with this here stick“ (Garrow, 1987).

As the boycott progressed successfully with no indication of a solution from the city officials and the bus company, a white reaction against the blacks emerged. The WCC began to impress the members of the city council. The police put a “get tough” policy into effect. Stops, searches, tickets, and arrests against black drivers dramatically increased. (Garrow, 1987) maintains that within two weeks sixty-four black drivers had been arrested for minor traffic violations. King was arrested for driving thirty miles an hour in a twenty-five-mile zone. It was not the only case that he was accused of. He and ninety-three African Americans were charged with illegally boycotting the Montgomery City Lines, the bus company of Montgomery. Dr. King and the leaders of the boycott were put into cells. He was convicted on a charge of violating the state’s anti-boycott law and was fined $500 and court costs, the equivalent of 386 days of hard labor in the County of Montgomery. In addition to the official repression against the boycotters, there was a hate campaign against the black people on the street. White pedestrians stopped and looked wryly into the crowded black cars. They called the walking blacks “Walk, nigger, walk.” White teenagers drove upon the walking blacks and squirted water on them. Then, they changed water to urine. The black families began to receive threatening calls. The leaders of the boycott especially could not sleep nights for the ringing phones. Many of them had to change their numbers or leave the telephone receivers off the hooks at night to be able to sleep. However, for Dr. King none of these efforts would deter them from boycotting until a final solution. He stated, “If all I have to pay is going to jail a few times and getting about twenty threatening calls a day, I think it is a very small price to pay for what we are fighting for.” While he was making this speech in the First Baptist Church on January 30, 1956, a bomb exploded at the front porch of his home. There were King’s wife Coretta and their two-month-old daughter Yolanda at home, but neither of them was injured. The next day Edward Daniel Nixon’s home was bombed, as well.

However, the police could not find the suspects of both bombings. Repression and campaigns against boycotting blacks had persisted for months. (Balcı & Balcı, 2011).

On November 13, 1956, the US Supreme Court affirmed that the segregated bus laws in Montgomery and the state of Alabama were unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's decision reached Montgomery on December 20. The boycott, which had begun 381 days ago, ended on December 21, 1956, and the first black riders took seats just behind the driver. However, campaigns against the blacks had not stopped. On January 10, 1957, the city was shocked by six bombings, which were against four black churches and two pastor's homes (Balcı & Balcı, 2011)

The bus boycott started in Montgomery but resulted in a national level of civil rights awareness. (Tarrow & McAdam, 2004) argue that the Montgomery Bus Boycott generated the diffusion of the civil rights movement from the South to the North in the 1960s.

Therefore, a scale shift existed during the overall development of the civil rights movement. Scale shift, according to (Tarrow & McAdam, 2004), is an alteration in the quantity and degree of organized contentious actions that results in wider contention encompassing a broader array of participants and connecting their claims and identities . They view the Montgomery Bus Boycott as the beginning of the mass movement phase of the civil rights struggle. Then, sit-in demonstrations began and spread in Greensboro, North Carolina; Hampton, Virginia; Rock Hill, South Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; and Tallahassee, Florida. In the early 1960s, civil rights campaigns jumped to Northern cities. ((Tarrow & McAdam, 2004)) explain the interactions among different groups in light of three forms of diffusion**:** relational diffusion, where information spreads through established social connections; non-relational diffusion, where information is shared through impersonal or indirect channels; and brokerage, which facilitates the flow of information between previously unconnected social networks. The spread of protests and initiatives from the South to the North, therefore, indicates the existence of these types of connections throughout the country.

3.4 March on Washington 1963:

For more than two decades, A. Philip Randolph, a key figure in the Black labor movement and President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had envisioned a massive march on Washington to demand jobs and justice for African Americans. As a long-time leader in the struggle for racial and economic equality, Randolph had significant influence, holding roles as

President of the Negro American Labor Council and Vice President of the AFL-CIO. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom).

His idea for a large-scale protest dated back to 1941 when, with support from activists Bayard Rustin[2] and A.J. Muste, Randolph threatened to lead 100,000 Black Americans in a protest in Washington, D.C., against segregation in the armed forces and discrimination in war industry employment. To avoid this protest, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, banning racial and ethnic discrimination in the nation's defense industries and government jobs. This marked the first federal action taken against discriminatory employment practices, showing the power of Randolph's threat and foreshadowing the potential impact of a future march.

Fast forward to the early 1960s, at a time when such mass mobilizations were rare and seen as radical, especially involving large numbers of Black protesters, Randolph's idea remained bold and controversial. Past large-scale demonstrations in D.C. had been predominantly white, such as the Ku Klux Klan's 35,000 white supremacists who marched openly down Pennsylvania Avenue in 1925, the 1913 suffragist parade of 8,000 mostly white women who marched for voting rights just before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, and the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Civil Rights organized by Randolph, Rustin, and Martin, which drew 30,000 people and was peaceful but received limited media attention and lacked the full national impact of later demonstrations like the 1963 March on Washington. Even in 1932, the so-called Bonus Army, 20,000 World War I veterans were violently dispersed by U.S. federal troops under orders from President Herbert Hoover when they gathered and camped in
D.C. to demand their promised bonuses. But no one had yet managed to bring 100,000 Black people to the nation's capital for a political demonstration, it was unheard of and perceived by the establishment as dangerously radical. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

By late 1962, as the Civil Rights Movement intensified, Randolph approached Bayard Rustin again, asking him to draw up plans for a large-scale protest in Washington, this time focused on jobs. Then, after the violent events in Birmingham in the spring of 1963 sparked national outrage, the urgency for direct federal civil rights legislation grew. Dr. King, reflecting on the moment, expressed a need for a nationwide action to unify the scattered movements into "one luminous action" that could force legislative progress.

On June 11, 1963, the same day President John F. Kennedy delivered a major speech on civil rights, leaders from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference publicly announced their intention to hold a demonstration in Washington. Their plan initially called for massive acts of civil disobedience, including sit-ins on Congress and physical disruptions of public transportation infrastructure. That night, Medgar Evers, a prominent civil rights activist, was assassinated**,** further intensifying national attention on the Movement. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

As calls for mass action grew, Randolph, King, and Rustin began coordinating their efforts. Their plan for large-scale direct action unsettled many, including the Kennedy administration and members of Congress, who feared unrest and political fallout. On June 22, President Kennedy convened a White House meeting with civil rights leaders, later dubbed the **"**Big Six"**:** Randolph, King (SCLC), John Lewis (SNCC), Jim Farmer (CORE), Roy Wilkins (NAACP), and Whitney Young (Urban League)**.**

At that meeting, Kennedy attempted to dissuade the group from moving forward with the march. At that point, the march had no set date, no plan, no infrastructure, and no funding, but the more militant leaders -Randolph, Farmer, King, and Lewis- refused to cancel**.** Wilkins and Young were still undecided. Despite Kennedy's misgivings, he realized he could not stop the march from happening. Frustrated, he told his aides, **"**Well, if we can't stop it, we'll run the damn thing." As planning progressed, the disorganized vision that had concerned Kennedy rapidly transformed into a well-structured, united campaign for justice. Out of their determination emerged a focused agenda The 10 Demands of the March on Washington (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

At the heart of the March on Washington were ten clear and urgent demands aimed at ending racial injustice and economic inequality in America. Marchers called on Congress to pass strong civil rights laws—without delay or compromise—that would guarantee all Americans the right to use public spaces, live in decent housing, attend good, integrated schools, and vote freely. They wanted the government to stop funding any programs that allowed discrimination and to make sure all schools were desegregated by the end of 1963. The marchers also pushed for stronger enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment by cutting political power from states that denied people their voting rights. They called for a new presidential order to end discrimination in federally funded housing and wanted the Attorney General to have the

power to step in legally whenever people's constitutional rights were being violated. On the economic side, they demanded a large federal program to train and hire both Black and white unemployed workers, and they wanted a higher national minimum wage—at least $2.00 an hour—to ensure a decent quality of life. They also called for an expansion of labor laws to protect more types of workers and the creation of a federal law that would ban discrimination in hiring by all levels of government, businesses, unions, and employment agencies. These demands represented a unified call for real, lasting change—speaking not just to politicians, but to the entire nation. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

3.4.1 Building the March

Bayard Rustin established the March on Washington headquarters in a Harlem tenement, supported by Tom Kahn as chief of staff and activists from CORE, SNCC, and other sponsoring organizations. Staff includes Norman Hill, Blyden Jackson, Cortland Cox, and Joyce and Dorie Ladner in New York, with others like Ed Brown and Cleveland Sellers working in D.C. Rachelle Horowitz takes on the massive task of coordinating national transportation. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

Local organizations such as NAACP, CORE, SCLC, SNCC, labor unions, churches, and student groups arrange and fund buses, trains, and car caravans. However, fundraising falls short, especially for Southern Black activists, many of whom are unable to attend despite their frontline roles in the movement.

A. Philip Randolph, the vice president of the AFL-CIO, requests endorsement of the march. While some unions are supportive, the AFL-CIO Executive Council, led by George Meany, refuses due to internal racial biases and opposition to direct action. Randolph and Meany clash over civil rights strategies—Randolph advocates for affirmative action, while Meany supports a seniority-based system that preserves past discrimination. Nonetheless, individual unions like the Sleeping Car Porters, UAW, ILGWU, and TWU support the march and help transport thousands of participants. Walter Reuther of the UAW joins the march committee as a labor representative.

To widen support, major religious leaders such as Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Dr. Mathew Ahmann, and Eugene Black are added to the organizing committee in July. While Black churches had

long been vital to the Southern movement, this marks increased involvement by national religious institutions in the North. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

Women, though essential to the civil rights movement, are sidelined in public recognition. None are invited to speak at the Lincoln Memorial or Washington Monument. While performers like Marian Anderson and Joan Baez are featured, influential leaders like Ella Baker and Dorothy Height are excluded from speaking roles. When Randolph agrees to speak at the all-male National Press Club, female staffers protest. In response, organizers allow Daisy Bates a brief moment to acknowledge other key women leaders, after Myrlie Evers (originally chosen) is unable to attend. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

During the march Dr. King's address is famous as the I Have a Dream speech. But the dream section, which is forever repeated in TV sound-bites and classroom recordings, is not part of his original draft. When King nears the end of his seven minutes of prepared text the metaphor of the bounced check and the echo of Amos that "... we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream" he senses as do others on the platform that something more has to be said. That the march itself requires some summing up, some articulation of the vision that moves the Movement, some expression of the aspirations, pride, determination, and courage of not just these marchers, but the Freedom Movement as a whole.

Sitting behind him, Mahalia Jackson leans forward, "Tell them about the dream, Martin." She had heard him speak the dream at recent rallies. And with that, he steps over the seven-minute limit and off his prepared text to soar, speaking from the soul of the struggle to the heart of oppressed people everywhere, "Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, ... go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, ... Let us not wallow in the valley of despair ... And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal ... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today! ..." As he rolls on with his majestic cadences towards his ringing conclusion, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, free at last," Mahalia and others on the platform can be heard over the loudspeakers backing him up with the traditional affirmation of the Black church, "My Lord! My Lord!"

Deeply rooted in two cherished gospels — the Old Testament and the unfulfilled promise of the American creed — King's 19 minute address indelibly positions the Freedom Movement in faith and history. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

3.5 Effects of the March:

3.5.1 Effect on those who marched:

The people most strongly affected by any direct-action protest are those who participated in it. Many of the marchers, particularly those mobilized by labor and northern churches, had never before participated in a civil rights protest. After years of violent images of police and racist violence and a week of hysterical media hype, some of them are nervous about the buses coming down, fearful of what might occur. Others are excited and empowered by being part of something larger than themselves. For most, the dedication and discipline, unity, and solidarity of the march is a revelation, an awakening, and for some a life-altering epiphany that moves them into social reform for years and decades to come. Lerone Bennet writes:

"The participants knew that [even] if the march had changed no votes in Congress or no hearts in America that it had changed them... men and women would look back on this day and tell their children and their grandchildren: "There was a march in the middle of the twentieth century, the biggest demonstration for civil rights in history — and I was there.". Somewhat over half of the marchers have been previously active in the Freedom Movement, most of them in the North, some in the South. For those up from the lonely, desperate battlegrounds of the South, the march is a powerful antidote for isolation and an affirmation that not only are they not alone, but that they are part of a powerful nationwide struggle. And for most, North and South, the march is an inspiration that rededicates them to the struggle. One marcher recalls: "For six months before the march I had been active with CORE in the West. But fear of consequences — from parents, from school, for future employment — held me back from courting arrest with acts of civil disobedience. When I returned from Washington that was all changed. In the following months, I dropped out of school and became a full-time activist. I was arrested a number of times. Then I went south and served as an SCLC field secretary in Alabama and Mississippi for two years." (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)But for SNCC and CORE's dedicated field staff -the organizers in the South who daily confront danger and death- the march and its aftermath are deeply disappointing. They are angry and bitter at the heavy hand of the Kennedys and the censorship of SNCC's statement. And after the vast outpouring of energy, they see no change, no change in segregation, and no change in

denial of voting rights, no change in police brutality, no change in racist violence, and no change in Federal appeasement of southern racism. John Lewis later writes:

“In the days that followed, too much of the national press, in my opinion, focused not on the substance of the day but on the setting. Their stories portrayed the event as a big picnic, a hootenanny combined with the spirit of a revival prayer meeting. Too many commentators and reporters softened and trivialized the hard edges of pain and suffering that brought about this day in the first place, virtually ignoring the hard issues that needed to be addressed, the issues that had stirred up so much trouble in my own speech. It was revealing that the quotes they gathered from most of the congressional leaders on Capitol Hill dealt not with the legislator's stand on the civil rights bill but instead focused on praising the 'behavior' and 'peacefulness' of the mass marchers. In his assessment, John Lewis expresses his disapproval regarding the way the media and political figures handled the March on Washington. Coverage and commentary frequently concentrated on the event's joyful atmosphere and peaceful character rather than the pressing calls for civil rights and racial justice. Lewis believed that this was a misrepresentation that minimized the suffering, sacrifice, and gravity of the struggle. He emphasizes how even well-meaning praise can be used to avoid unpleasant realities by drawing attention to the press's inability to address the "hard issues."

3.5.2 Effect on the Country:

Millions of Americans, Black and white, watched the March and rally on TV. For most of them, this is their first direct exposure to the Freedom Movement beyond brief soundbites and newspaper interpretations. While the march does little to change the minds of committed segregationists, for the rest of the population the dignity, strength, purpose, and discipline of the freedom marchers have a positive effect.

A national poll reports that more than 75% of white Americans support ending segregation in public facilities, equal job opportunities, “good” housing for Blacks, and integrated schools. Two-thirds of them support the passage of Kennedy's civil rights bill. But, 97% of whites oppose preferential hiring of Blacks to make up for past discrimination, the great majority oppose any Federal legislation against housing discrimination, and 56% oppose any further protests by Blacks. (The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

In 1963, fear of Communism dominated the political thinking of a great many white Americans. Most Blacks have long since dismissed “red menace” and “Communist plot” smears against civil rights activists by racists such as Hoover of the FBI, and segregationist Senators such as Eastland and Thurmond. But red-baiting attacks on the Freedom Movement still influence a large number of whites. Now, at least for some of the millions of whites who watch the march

and King's entire 19-minute speech live on national TV — and hear for the first time, not just a few sound-bites but the full content of a freedom sermon — those slanders of foreign-subversion and secret plots begin losing credibility.

3.5.3 Effect on Congress:

Before, during, and after the march, members of Congress vow in strident chorus that it will not influence or affect their votes in any way, shape, or form. However, as the elders teach us, "*The proof of the pudding is in the eating*." In the 86 years since the end of Reconstruction, not a single piece of effective, race-related civil rights legislation has been signed into law. In the two years following the March on Washington, the two most effective civil rights bills ever enacted, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, were passed. It is the Freedom Movement as a whole that forces passage of these acts — not the march alone — but the march does make clear to legislators from rural states and suburban districts outside the South that at least some of their constituents, Black and white, do care about civil rights, and that those constituents are watching how they vote in Congress. Since the crucial votes to overcome the Southern filibusters against the two bills are extremely close, a shift of even one or two votes makes a critical difference.

But while the march does affect Congress in regards to basic civil rights, it has little effect on the economic issues that form a key portion of the 10 demands. There are no Black Senators and only five Black Representatives in the House. They and their progressive allies are unable to move federal legislation on open housing. Segregated, "separate but equal," school systems are slowly being integrated, but adequate education for all remains an unfulfilled dream. Unemployment remains high — doubly so for non-whites — and the call for dignified jobs at decent wages falls on deaf ears, as do demands to increase the minimum wage to a living wage.

Figure 15: Martin Luther King at the Washington march

3.6 Selma to Montgomery 1965:

The Selma Marches were a series of three marches, but most importantly a defining moment in the civil rights movement, that took place in 1965 from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. They were a direct reflection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolent direct action. These marches were organized to protest the blocking of Black Americans' right to vote by the systematic racist structure of the Jim Crow South. With the leadership of groups such as the Dallas County Voters League, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee , and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Selma Marches would become a watershed moment that led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, proving that King's approach was not only ethically grounded but also politically effective. In his memoir "Stride toward Freedom", King explains that nonviolence is "not a method for cowards; it does resist... nonviolent resistance is not passive" but a "courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love" (King M. , 1955)This philosophy served as the foundation for the Selma movement, particularly on "Bloody Sunday" of March 7, when state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge brutally beat nonviolent protesters.

Black citizens of Alabama were early to formally organize and obtain voting rights with the Dallas County Voters League. In 1965, DCVL was led by the "Courageous Eight" Ulysses S. Blackmon, Amelia Boynton, Ernest Doyle, Marie Foster, James Gildersleeve, J.D. Hunter, Sr., Henry Shannon, Sr., and Frederick Douglas Reese. That year, Diane Nash, James Bevel, James Orange, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference came to Selma to work with the DCVL and SNCC on its voting rights initiative.

Predating the three main Selma marches, Reverend C.T. Vivian led a peaceful march to the courthouse in Marion, Alabama on February 18, 1965, to protest the arrest of DCVL member James Orange. On the way to the courthouse, Alabama state troopers attacked the marchers, shooting Jimmie Lee Jackson in the process. Jackson died eight days later, prompting James Bevel of SCLC to call for a march from Selma to Montgomery to speak with Governor George Wallace about Jimmie Lee Jackson's death.

The first march set out on Sunday, March 7, 1965**,** led by SNCC Chairman John Lewis and SCLC's Hosea Williams. About 600 nonviolent protesters left Brown Chapel AME Church that morning, intending to walk 54 miles to Montgomery (History & Culture, 2023). When the marchers reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Alabama State Troopers and sheriff's deputies blocked the path. Without warning, troopers charged with nightsticks and tear gas. The

demonstrators – mostly unarmed clergy and laypeople were driven back across the bridge and into Selma, many beaten and some hospitalized. At least fifty marchers required medical attention. This brutal onslaught – captured by television crews – became known as "Bloody Sunday," and it outraged Americans nationwide. John Lewis suffered a fractured skull, and other leaders (like Amelia Boynton) were beaten; the images of club-wielding police attacking peaceful protestors galvanized public opinion and drew even more activists and clergy to Selma. (History & Culture, 2023)

King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, along with organizations like CORE and FOR, held nonviolence workshops to prepare participants for protests. These sessions included role-playing, where activists practiced facing threats, insults, and physical abuse without reacting violently. Civil rights activist James Lawson, who trained under Gandhi's followers in India, led many of these sessions and was a key teacher of nonviolent resistance. Before you can have a nonviolent movement, you must have nonviolent people," Lawson often said .

Figure 16: An Alabama state trooper swings a club at John Lewis, right foreground, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to break up a civil rights voting march in Selma, Ala., on March 7, 1965.

Two days later - on Tuesday, March 9 (later called “Turnaround Tuesday”) - Dr. King led a second attempt. He mustered roughly 2,000 marchers (more than triple the first group) to walk to the Pettus Bridge again. Once the group arrived at the bridge (the site of the prior violence), state troopers again formed a barricade. King and the clergy with him knelt in prayer at the head of the bridge and then led the procession back to Brown Chapel. By then the movement had also drawn white allies from across the country, including Unitarian ministers from the North. Tragically, that night three of the visiting ministers (James Reeb and two others) were attacked by a mob and Reeb died of his injuries on March 11. Although this second march did not reach Montgomery, it showed the depth of national support and kept the pressure on the federal government. Media and activists credited King’s strategic decision to turn around (in deference to a court order) with allowing time to secure legal guarantees of protection. (History & Culture, 2023)

Figure 17: The marches were organized by Martin Luther King Jr. Turnaround Tuesday

With a federal court injunction and the presence of federal troops assuring safety, the third march began on Sunday, March 21, 1965. More than 8,000 people – Black and white, clergy and laypeople – departed Selma under King’s leadership. Camps were set up along the route for overnight stays, and on the final morning of March 25 the combined marchers (by then nearly 25,000 strong) assembled on the grounds of the Alabama State Capitol. King delivered

his famous speech *"Our God is Marching On"*, vowing "we shall overcome" as he appealed for the enfranchisement of African Americans (History & Culture, 2023). On that evening, however, violence still claimed a life: Viola Liuzzo, a Detroit schoolteacher who had driven some marchers partway home was shot and killed by Ku Klux Klan members. Despite this tragic aftermath, the Selma-to-Montgomery march had achieved its immediate aim. It reached the capitol and demonstrated the moral urgency of the movement. (Editors, 2025)

The Selma campaign had an immediate and lasting impact. The events of "Bloody Sunday" and the subsequent marches prompted President Johnson to address Congress, and on August 6, 1965, he signed the Voting Rights Act into law (Editors, 2025). This landmark legislation banned literacy tests, placed strict federal oversight on election practices in former Confederate states, and authorized the Justice Department to enforce equal registration. Within a short time voter registration among African Americans in Alabama rose dramatically. Historians agree that the Voting Rights Act – along with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – was among the most expansive civil rights laws in U.S. history, substantially "greatly reducing the disparity" between Black and white voter turnout. The Selma marches became a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement: in 1996, Congress even established the Selma-to-Montgomery National Historic Trail to commemorate the people and events of the 1965 voting rights marchnps.gov. The story of Selma – from Bloody Sunday's violence to the passage of the Voting Rights Act – remains a powerful symbol of activism, sacrifice, and the continuing struggle to secure voting rights for all. (Editors, 2025)

3.7 Conclusion:

Through a succession of brave and calculated measures that eroded institutional prejudice and motivated a nation to change, the fight against Jim Crow segregation was not won overnight. A pivotal event was the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955–56, during which Black Montgomery residents, under the leadership of individuals such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, proved the effectiveness of persistent, peaceful protest. Their tenacity demonstrated that common people might band together to demand dignity and fight injustice. The March on Washington in 1963 was the culmination of the energy from Montgomery that continued into the following ten years. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life came together to demand economic and civil rights at this historic event. Dr. King's "I Have a

Dream" speech, which articulated an egalitarian vision that is still relevant today, represented a turning point in American history.

The brutality and disenfranchisement African Americans experienced in the South were further brought to light by the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches. The violent assault on nonviolent demonstrators on "Bloody Sunday" stunned the country and sparked intense public indignation. One of the most important pieces of legislation passed during the Civil Rights Movement, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, was passed as a result of the pressure these events put on legislators to take action.

These three turning points—the March on Washington, the Selma marches, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott—combine to form the core of the struggle against Jim Crow. They serve as a reminder that when people band together for justice, progress can be made and honor the courage of many people who opposed bigotry and injustice. These incidents' legacy keeps motivating continuous attempts to create a society that is more inclusive and equitable.

General conclusion

This dissertation aimed to explore and evaluate Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent direct action during the Civil Rights Movement in 1965. The central research problem revolved around understanding the efficacy and consequences of King's strategic nonviolence, particularly during the Selma to Montgomery campaign, and whether these actions contributed meaningfully to the broader struggle for racial justice. The research was guided by two main questions: Was Dr. King's nonviolent direct action effective in achieving the goals of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965? And were the outcomes of such action valid and beneficial for African Americans and American society at large?

The study employed a qualitative, historical-analytical approach, drawing from a wide range of secondary sources, primary documents, and scholarly analyses to reconstruct the ideological underpinnings and political impacts of King's activism. Through this lens, King's campaigns were analyzed not separately but rather as a part of a larger historical cycle of Black resistance, reaching from colonial enslavement and the transatlantic slave trade to emancipation and reconstruction, and ultimately to the current Civil Rights era. This long historical view allowed for a deeper appreciation of how King's philosophy of nonviolence emerged, evolved, and ultimately transformed the civil rights landscape in 1965.

This research was based on the hypothesis that nonviolent direct action, when strategically applied within a morally grounded and disciplined framework, can serve as an effective catalyst for achieving substantial political, legal, and social change even against deeply entrenched systems of injustice.

Several key findings emerged from the analysis. First and foremost, the research confirmed that King's nonviolent direct action in 1965 was highly effective in achieving both symbolic and legislative outcomes. The Selma to Montgomery marches, in particular, catalyzed national outrage over voter suppression and police brutality, compelling President Lyndon B. Johnson and the U.S. Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Branch, 1988). This legislation was one of the most significant civil rights laws in American history, eliminating discriminatory practices such as literacy tests and grandfather clauses that had long suppressed Black political participation. King's ability to convert moral protest into political capital was a testament to the strategic depth and ethical strength of his nonviolent approach.

Second, the study found that King's nonviolent philosophy, rooted in Christian theology and Gandhian principles, successfully framed the Civil Rights Movement as a moral crusade rather than a political rebellion. This framing helped attract broad national support, including from

white liberals, religious groups, and international observers. Nonviolence therefore served not merely as a method but as a transformative narrative force, altering how Americans perceived racial injustice and moral responsibility.

Third, the research revealed that the 1965 campaigns were not isolated acts of heroism but part of a larger ecosystem of organized resistance, involving churches, student groups, community organizers, and everyday citizens. While King served as the moral and strategic leader, the success of the campaigns depended on collective discipline, planning, and sacrifice. This underscores the importance of examining the movement not only through the lens of individual leadership but also through the grassroots networks that sustained it.

However, the study was not without limitations. One key constraint was the broad historical scope that began with the Age of Exploration and extended through centuries of Black resistance. While this approach provided valuable context, it also limited the depth of analysis possible for later 20th-century developments, particularly those occurring after 1965.

Additionally, the focus on major public figures and nationally recognized events may have overshadowed the contributions of local activists, women, and less-publicized grassroots efforts that were equally vital to the movement's success. Finally, while the research confirms the legislative triumphs of nonviolent action, it also recognizes that social, economic, and systemic inequalities persisted long after the passage of civil rights laws—an area that deserves further exploration.

In light of these findings, several recommendations can be made for future research. To begin with, scholars may benefit from studying the post-1965 period to assess how King's nonviolent philosophy was adapted or challenged by subsequent movements, such as the Poor People's Campaign or Black Power initiatives. In addition, comparative research could analyze nonviolent movements in other global contexts, such as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa or contemporary climate justice movements, to evaluate the universality and adaptability of King's model. Following that, future work should strive to incorporate the voices and experiences of underrepresented actors in the movement, including women, youth, and regional leaders whose stories are often overshadowed in mainstream civil rights narratives.

In final reflection, this study affirms that Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy and practice of nonviolent direct action in 1965 remain among the most powerful examples of moral leadership and democratic protest in modern history. At a time when violence seemed to dominate the political landscape, King showed that disciplined, strategic nonviolence could awaken a nation's conscience and move its institutions toward justice. His legacy endures not only in the legal reforms he helped achieve but in the vision he offered: that love, when organized and courageous, can indeed be a force for lasting social change. As contemporary movements grapple with new forms of inequality and injustice, the lessons of 1965 remain urgently relevant, a call to resist without hatred, to protest without destruction, and to believe, still, in the redemptive power of nonviolence.

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