

Saint Thomas More Black History Month 2006
African American Achievers Archives
Week 4
African American Civil Rights Leaders



1862 - 1931

Ida B. Wells, journalist
Fought against lynching

Ida B. Wells, an African American civil rights advocate, led a strong cause against lynching. In 1884 she was asked by the conductor of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad Company to give up her seat on the train to a white man . He ordered her into the smoking or "Jim Crow" car, which was already crowded with other passengers. This was before Plessey v. Ferguson (1896), the U.S. Supreme Court decision that established the racist doctrine of "separate but equal" which constitutionalized racial segregation. In fact, at the time, the 1875 Civil Rights Act had banned discrimination on the basis of race, creed, or color, in theaters, hotels, transports, and other public accommodations. Several railroad companies continues to racially segregated passengers. When railroad employees dragged her out, she filed and won a lawsuit against the railroad company. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court later overturned the decision.

.In 1889, she became co-owner and editor of an anti-segregationist newspaper, called Free Speech, but she was forced to leave Memphis because her editorials were seen as too agitating

Back then, African Americans could be killed without a lawful trial, a practice known as lynching. When three of her friends were lynched, she began a lifelong crusade against this horrible practice. Eventually, she helped found the NAACP, and in 1930, she ran for the Illinois state legislature, one of the first black women ever to run for public office.

The Greensboro Four, college students and activists
Introduced the sit-in to the civil rights movement

On Feb. 1, 1960 four black freshmen at North Carolina A&T State University – Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, Ezell Blair, Jr., and David Richmond – took seats at the segregated lunch counter of F. W. Woolworth's in Greensboro, N.C. On Feb. 1, 1960, four young college students sat down at the segregated lunch counter of the F. W. Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina.



1960

The store would not serve them the sodas, coffee and doughnuts they ordered. So they sat peacefully until the store closed. They returned the next day, along with about 2 other students, and the store still wouldn't serve them. By the end of the week, black and white college students were sitting in every seat at the counter and forming picket lines along the sidewalks.

The Greensboro Four inspired similar sit-ins across the state and by the end of February, such protests were taking place all across the South. Finally, in July, 5 months later, Woolworth's integrated all of its stores. The four have become icons of the civil rights movement.

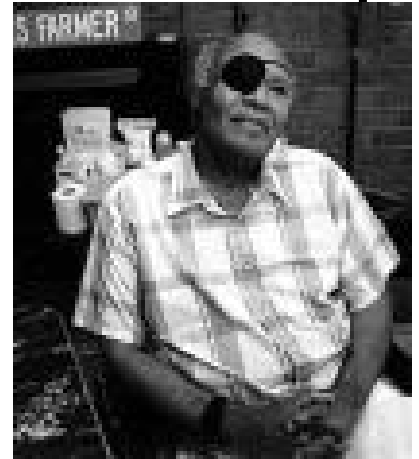
Famous African American Civil Rights Leaders

James Farmer, civil rights leader **Founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**

James Farmer was the son of a preacher. After attending Howard University's School of Divinity, he founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). CORE was the first U.S. civil rights organization to use nonviolent tactics to protest racial discrimination.

In 1961, Mr. Farmer led CORE to organize "Freedom Rides" throughout the South. Volunteers traveled on interstate buses. The African Americans used the In 1961, Mr. Farmer led CORE to organize "Freedom Rides" throughout the South. Black and white volunteers traveled on interstate buses. The black volunteers used the restaurants, restrooms, and waiting areas that were marked "white only". The white volunteers used the facilities marked for "colored only".

The Freedom riders were attacked by mobs on several occasions, but they challenged the federal government to enforce the anti-segregation legislation that had recently been passed.



1920 – 1999



1898 – 1987

Septima Clark, educator **"Grandmother of the civil rights movement"**

Septima Poinsette Clark was an American educator and civil rights activist who waged a personal war against racism long before the sit-in demonstrations and bus boycotts.

In 1919, Mrs. Clark started advocating for the right of African Americans to teach in the Charleston public schools. She joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as vice president of the Charleston branch. This cost Mrs. Clark her job.

She came to national prominence after joining the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as director of education and teaching in 1961. The following year, the SCLC and other organizations formed the Voter Education Project. This project established "citizenship schools" to teach reading to adults throughout the Deep South when laws were passed requiring reading and interpreting various portions of the US Constitution in order to be allowed to register to vote.

Her decades of devotion to the cause of freedom have earned her the title, "the grandmother of the civil rights movement."

Famous African American Civil Rights Leaders

Coretta Scott King American civil-rights leader

Mrs. Coretta Scott King fought for racial peace and nonviolent social change. She was the wife of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mrs. King was born April 27, 1927 in Heiberger, Alabama. She grew up in the two-room house her father built on land that her family had owned for three generations.

Her family was very poor. She had to pick cotton in the hot fields or do housework. However, her father moved wood, owned a country store and worked as a barber. Her mother drove a school bus and the whole family helped raise hogs, cows, chickens and vegetables. So even though they were poor, they were much better off than most African Americans in Alabama at the time.

She experienced the unfairness of racism and segregation even as a little girl. She had to walk to her one-room schoolhouse each day as buses full of white children rode past and stirred up dust that got all over her clothes. Fortunately, she was later able to attend Lincoln School, a private missionary school near her hometown. She studied piano and voice and met college-educated teachers. She made up her mind to move far away from segregated Alabama and the country.

She graduated first in her high school class and went off to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She studied education and music and after graduation went on to the New England Conservatory of Music. She wanted to become a classical singer, so she worked as a mail order clerk and house cleaner to help pay for her education.

In 1952, while still in college, she met Dr. Martin Luther King. She married him a year later. They had four children. She marched beside him in many protests and fought by his side for the rights of African Americans. She also gave more than 30 "Freedom Concerts" where she taught, read poetry and sang to raise money for the civil rights movement.

Fifteen years later, Dr. King was killed. However, Mrs. King continued to stand up for the rights of others. She fought for everything from women's rights to freedom in South Africa. She led the effort for a national holiday in Dr. King's honor and she founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change in downtown Atlanta. Dr. King is buried there and she will be, too.

Mrs. King was an inspiration around the world who never gave up fighting for Dr. King's – and her own--dream of racial peace.



1927 – 2006