

# The Civil Rights Act: 60th Anniversary

## [B1]

Sono passati sei decenni da quando la discriminazione razziale è stata ufficialmente abolita negli Stati Uniti, un traguardo legale che ha portato alla lotta per la parità dei diritti in molti altri ambiti della società.

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Sixty years ago, US congressmen [passed](#) a new law to end discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex and national origin. The Civil Rights [Act](#) of 1964 was the [crowning achievement](#) of the civil rights movement. It marked a new era of legislative equality. The [landmark](#) (importante, fondamentale) law continues to protect voter rights and prohibit racial segregation and employment discrimination. Its introduction, however, was the result of a long and difficult journey.

## RACIAL TENSION

After the American Civil War, the abolition of slavery did not create equality in the United States. The 14th [Amendment](#) was added to the Constitution in 1868, [granting](#) citizenship to formerly enslaved people. It also gave citizens equal protection under the law. However, over a century later, despite many additional acts, laws and executive orders, discrimination was still [rife](#). There was massive resistance to desegregation in the southern states. There, the Jim Crow laws considered racial segregation as constitutional. When prominent civil rights activist Medgar Evers was murdered by a member of the white supremacist, segregationist organisation White Citizens' Council, in Jackson, Mississippi in 1963, racial tension reached [boiling point](#).

## MORAL CRISIS

John F. Kennedy declared a moral crisis on national television and promised new legislation. In the second term of his presidency, he presented the most [comprehensive](#) civil rights [bill](#) ever written. He said: "The United States will not be fully free until all of its citizens are free." The new Civil Rights [Act](#) was going through several [drafts](#) when tragedy [struck](#): Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in November 1963.

## FILIBUSTER

Vice-president Lyndon B. Johnson [was sworn in](#). He immediately made the [bill](#) a priority. Creating a bi-partisan coalition, he managed [to overcome](#) strong opposition from the South. This included the longest [filibuster](#) in US political history, which occupied the Senate for sixty working days. The [bill passed](#) by a vote of 73 to 27. It was then approved in the House of Representatives. Just over a year after Kennedy's proposal, on 2 July 1964, the [bill](#) was signed into law. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. called it a "second emancipation."

## LEGAL EQUALITY

The Civil Rights [Act](#) also inspired further legislation, such as the Voting Rights [Act](#) of 1965, to ensure [unbiased](#) voting practices, and the Fair Housing [Act](#) of 1968, to prevent discrimination in the buying or renting of property. The fight against racism was far from over but, legally, at least, segregation had been defeated in the United States.

## JIM CROW

The Jim Crow laws [enforced](#) racial segregation in the southern states from the late 1800s until 1965. The name comes from a popular [minstrel show](#). A white performer [in blackface](#) played a lazy, ridiculous black person called Jim Crow. He spoke with a funny accent and acted [outrageously](#) to make audiences laugh. The caricature came to represent discrimination against African-Americans. When the statutes of segregation [passed](#) in the south, they became known as the 'Jim Crow laws'.

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# Glossary

- **filibuster** = ostruzionismo
- **minstrel show** = spettacolo di menestrelli
- **Act** = legge
- **rife** = diffusa
- **comprehensive** = esauriente
- **drafts** = bozze
- **was sworn in** = prestare giuramento
- **passed** = approvare
- **Amendment** = emendamento
- **boiling point** = punto di ebollizione
- **struck** = colpire
- **granting** = concedere
- **bill** = progetto di legge
- **to overcome** = superare
- **unbiased** = imparziale
- **enforced** = fare rispettare, applicare
- **in blackface** = con la faccia dipinta di nero
- **crowning achievement** = massimo raggiungimento
- **landmark** = di riferimento, fondamentale
- **outrageously** = oltraggiosamente