

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS REVOLUTION

### The Rising Tide of Protest

With the sit-ins, college students for the first time stepped onto the stage of American history as the leading force for social change. In April 1960, Ella Baker, a longtime civil rights organizer, called a meeting of young activists in Raleigh, North Carolina. About 200 black students and a few whites attended. Out of the gathering came the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee** (SNCC), dedicated to replacing the culture of segregation with a “beloved community” of racial justice and to empowering ordinary blacks to take control of the decisions that affected their lives. “We can’t count on adults,” declared SNCC organizer Robert Moses. “Very few . . . are not afraid of the tremendous pressure they will face. This leaves the young people to be the organizers, the agents of social and political change.”

Other forms of direct action soon followed the sit-ins. Blacks in Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi, engaged in “wade-ins,” demanding access to segregated public beaches. Scores were arrested and two black teenagers were killed. In 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) launched the **Freedom Rides**. Integrated groups traveled by bus into the Deep South to test compliance with court orders banning segregation on interstate buses and trains and in terminal facilities. Violent mobs assaulted them. Near Anniston, Alabama, a firebomb was thrown into the vehicle and the passengers beaten as they escaped. In Birmingham, Klansmen attacked riders with bats and chains, while police refused to intervene. Many of the Freedom Riders were arrested. But their actions

### • CHRONOLOGY •

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| 1960  | Greensboro, N.C., sit-in<br><br>Young Americans for Freedom founded   |
| 1961  | Bay of Pigs<br><br>Freedom Rides<br><br>Berlin Wall constructed   |
| 1962  | Port Huron Statement<br><br>University of Mississippi desegregated<br><br>Rachel Carson's <i>Silent Spring</i><br><br>Cuban missile crisis      |
| 1963  | Betty Friedan's <i>The Feminine Mystique</i><br><br>King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"<br><br>March on Washington<br><br>Kennedy assassinated |
| 1964  | Freedom Summer<br><br>Civil Rights Act passed<br><br>Gulf of Tonkin resolution  |
| 1965– | Great Society   |
| 1967  |   |
| 1965  | Voting Rights Act<br><br>Watts uprising<br><br>Hart-Celler Act  |
| 1966  | National Organization for Women organized   |
| 1968  | Tet offensive<br><br>Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated<br><br>American Indian movement founded<br><br>Richard Nixon elected                   |