

How did white southerners respond to the Civil Rights Movement?

The Civil Rights movement in the 1950's aimed to remove discriminatory laws and policies, open schools to African Americans for better education, and ensure that African Americans had all of the freedoms of whites. In the 1950's Jim Crow laws were still commonplace in the South and still practiced in the North, that argued for the complete segregation of blacks and whites. With the founding of the NAACP, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr. white southerners were not willing to give up the control they had had for centuries and resisted heavily.

Most southern whites resisted African American equality through the Southern Manifesto, state laws, closing schools, spying, and force. The Southern Manifesto was a document condemning segregation signed by 82 of 106 southern congressmen and almost all southern senators. Public schools would rather close down than de-segregate and private schools were created where only whites were allowed. The local and state police spied on black activists and assassinated some of them to prevent protests.

The most famous resistance to integration was the Little Rock Central High School in 1957. The school was supposed to allow African Americans to enroll at the school. The school refused to allow this and the governor threatened to call the National Guard to prevent African American students from attending. President Eisenhower mobilized the 101st airborne from Kentucky to forcefully integrate Little Rock High School.