Chapter 2 Section 1 Notes—The Civil Rights Movement

I. Early Demands for

A. After the Civil War, Congress passed a series of civil rights laws, & the states ratified 3 amendments to the Constitution to protect former slaves. A combination of economic depression & underhanded tactics by southern politicians, prevented former slaves from taking advantage of these freedoms. As a result, many southern blacks returned to virtual economic bondage as sharecroppers working for white landowners, while “black codes” kept them in a position of social inferiority. The black codes as well as literacy tests, poll taxes, & widespread violence from the prevented blacks from voting. While conservative Supreme Court decisions ruined any chances for social equality. As a result, nearly a century after emancipation, African Americans still sat at different tables than whites, used different bathrooms, made far less money, & had little chance for universal integration.

B. Events in the 1940s & 1950s prompted some blacks to push harder for equality than their predecessors. Segregationist policies in the South & the need for more skilled workers in the North had driven many blacks to move to northern cities. African Americans also benefited greatly from the postwar economic boom during the 50s & received additional support from unions & the Democratic Party.

C. — A term for racist laws & social orders in the South that kept blacks separate from whites. The Jim Crow laws that appeared after the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896 forced blacks to sit, eat, sleep, study, & work in separate facilities.

D. In 1896, in the landmark decision, the conservative Supreme Court upheld the racist policy of segregation by legalizing “separate but equal” facilities for blacks & whites.

E. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ()—An organization founded by W. E. B. Du Bois & several white northerners that sought to achieve legal victories for blacks, especially the reversal of the “separate but equal” doctrine established by the Supreme Court in the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision.

F. In 1951, the Supreme Court accepted the case of Oliver Brown of Topeka, Kansas, who wanted his daughter to be able to attend an all-white elementary school near his house rather than a black school several miles away. The case— eventually worked its way up to the Supreme Court, where Thurgood Marshall argued that racial segregation relegated African Americans to 2nd class citizenship.

G. After decades of legal work, finally managed to overturn the “separate but equal” doctrine (established in Plessy v. Ferguson) in Brown v. Board of Education. Supreme Court chief justice convinced his fellow justices to declare unanimously that segregated public schools were inherently unequal.

H. Warren announced that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

I. Americans’ Reaction to Brown—Some Americans disagreed with the Brown decision & accused Warren of having the Constitution in favor of his personal opinions. Other Americans defended Warren’s decision by arguing that he had rightly used his authority to make up for Congress’s failure to protect black civil rights.

J. —A college-educated seamstress who effectively launched the 1st peaceful protest of the civil rights movement. The peaceful protest began when Parks boarded a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus on December 1, 1955, and refused to give up her seat to a white man who was looking for a seat. Police arrested her for defying the city’s law, prompting outraged blacks to start the Montgomery bus boycott later that year.

K. President lack of support for the civil rights movement convinced many blacks that they could not rely on the federal government to right racial wrongs. Rather, many came to believe that change
Rosa Parks

would have to originate within the black community itself. Parks’ arrest outraged the black community & prompted its local leaders, including young Baptist preacher __________________________, to organize the __________________________, refusing to ride any city buses & crippling the bus company financially. The boycott continued for more than a year, ending when the Supreme Court issued a ruling in declaring segregated bus seating unconstitutional.

L. Meanwhile, King, in taking charge of the boycott, became a major figurehead in the blossoming civil rights movement. An amazing speaker, he quickly became the leader of the civil rights movement. He hoped to desegregate the South & protect blacks’ political rights through “________________________” & peaceful protest. In 1957, he founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (__________________) to rally southern churches behind the movement. On countless occasions, he purposefully provoked violence by racist southerners against blacks in order to win sympathy from moderate white Americans. A talented writer, King penned many of the finest essays about the movement, including his 1963 “__________________ from Birmingham Jail.” He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, which boosted global awareness of the civil rights movement & put pressure on the federal government to address racial inequality in the U.S.

M. The __________________________—In 1957, Arkansas governor Orval Faubus chose to ignore a federal court order to desegregate the state’s public schools & used the National Guard to prevent 9 black students from entering Central High School in Little Rock. Although President Eisenhower personally opposed the Brown decision, he sent federal troops to integrate the high school by force & uphold federal supremacy over the state. Still defiant, Faubus closed all public schools in the city for the remainder of the year to prevent “disorder.”

N. Greensboro Sit-In—A 1960 protest in which 4 black college students sat at an all-white lunch counter in a __________________________ store in Greensboro, North Carolina, & demanded service. When the clerks refused, the students continued to sit quietly at the counter & refused to leave. The students returned each subsequent day w/additional supporters until 100s of people had joined them. City officials eventually agreed to desegregate Woolworth’s & other local stores, but only after blacks had waged a long & costly boycott. The Greensboro sit-in encouraged other student leaders to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (__________________) & inaugurated the sit-in movement that spread across the country.

O. The SNCC goal was to organize students on campuses across the country. The SNCC was one of the most active groups of the civil rights movement & participated in nearly every major peaceful campaign.

P. Nonviolent Campaigns—The success of the Greensboro sit-in prompted thousands of blacks to launch similar campaigns in other cities throughout the South. Although police arrested thousands of protesters, most sit-ins succeeded. In addition to demanding equality at city lunch counters, the students called for better jobs, better education, & social services. Martin Luther King Jr. joined the students & was even among those __________________________ series of protests aimed at the desegregation of buses in the South. The SNCC organized several interracial Freedom Rides to win sympathy from whites in the North by provoking racist southerners. Freedom Riders met violent mobs throughout Alabama who burned buses & nearly beat several of the riders to death. Southern police also arrested riders for inciting violence & disturbing the peace.

Q. __________________________—One of the largest political rallies in American history, during which more than 200,000 blacks & whites gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963, to demonstrate their support for more civil rights legislation from Congress. Empowered by their success in Birmingham, SCLC leaders joined forces with the SNCC, CORE, & the NAACP in organizing the march. Martin Luther King Jr. ended the rally with his famous “___________________” speech.