



Language

'Jim Crow' – the system of racism and segregation in the southern states – was legally enforced from the late 19th century until the 1960s. A classic account of the emergence and consolidation of Jim Crow, after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, is

, [The Strange Career of Jim Crow](#) [1] [1955] updated and reissued by Oxford University Press Oxford, Oxford University Press, , 1966, pp. 272

In the 1940s and 1950s, Jim Crow practices were outlawed at the federal level, partly through the legal challenges pursued by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – culminating in the 1954 ruling that segregated schools were unconstitutional – and the pressure exerted by A. Philip Randolph, leader of the black trade union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. However, in practice Jim Crow remained in force, Southern blacks suffered not just from segregation and exclusion from voting and other rights, but from organised white violence and intimidation.

The year-long 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which brought Martin Luther King to prominence and gave rise to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), began the more militant movement of nonviolent direct action. There had been earlier, small scale, direct action challenges to southern segregation, especially by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) which organised the first freedom rides, but in 1960 large numbers of African American students began to engage in sit-ins and occupations of segregated facilities, and many other forms of civil disobedience. These tactics spread throughout the South, taken up by all sections of the black population, including school pupils, and were supported by white sympathizers, often from the North. From 1964 there was also a concerted attempt, despite racist violence and intimidation, to register black voters. From 1961 onwards, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which played a major role in organising lunch counter sit-ins and other protests, was active in vote registration, including organising the 1964 Freedom Summer School in Mississippi.

The March on Washington in 1963, where MLK made his 'I have a dream' speech, perhaps represented a peak in the mobilization for civil rights. Subsequently, especially after 1965, the movement splintered. The 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act failed to address the discrimination, unemployment and poverty of the African American ghettos in the north, or the disproportionate numbers of poor blacks drafted and killed in the Vietnam War. From 1966 onwards, 'Black Power' became a dominant slogan. Both SNCC and CORE began to restrict the involvement of whites and also moved away from advocacy of nonviolence, many SNCC activists joining the Black Panther Party (founded in 1966).

Civil Rights and Black Power have been exceptionally well documented by journalists, contemporary historians, social movement theorists and many activists themselves. The books listed below try to cover key political and theoretical issues, represent a range of important organisations, campaigns and personalities in the struggle for African American equality, give a voice to women activists, and reflect differing ideological perspectives. There are now increasing numbers of local studies, including oral histories, that indicate the extent of activism and suffering. See for example <http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org> [2]. The complete works of Martin Luther King Jr are available at: <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive> [3].

Abernathy, Ralph D., [And the Walls Came Tumbling Down](#) [4], New York, Harper, 1989, pp. 638

One of King's closest associates from 1955 onwards, Abernathy took on greater prominence after King's assassination.

Anderson, Jervis, [A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait](#) [5], Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 398



Study of black trade union leader who played key role in pressuring presidents Roosevelt and Truman to ban discrimination in federal and defence employment. In 1963 headed the March on Washington.

Baldwin, James, [The Fire Next Time](#) [6], [1963], New York, NY, The Dial Press, 1992, pp. 120

This now famous work contains two essays written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation - "My Dungeon Shook. Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation," and "Down At The Cross. Letter from a Region of My Mind". It provides a three-point dissection on "The Negro Problem", an expression not owned by Baldwin that he refers to while discussing the roots of racial tensions of his time and how to overcome them. (To know more about the use of and debate on this expression by Baldwin himself, please see: <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830326,00.html> [7] and <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2934484.pdf> [8]).

In the first essay, Baldwin focuses on the central role of race in American history, and specifically addresses himself to his 14 year-old nephew who was confronted with anger and outrage. Through his nephew, Baldwin aims to address any Black young Afro-American.

In the second essay, Baldwin discusses relations between race and religion. He addresses Christianity with particular regard to its meaning for US society and to its use for the oppression of Black people.

A common thread to the whole book is Baldwin's call to both Whites and Blacks to use compassion, communication and mutual understanding to transcend tensions and overcome the legacy of racism.

James Baldwin was an iconic essayist, novelist, playwright and critic, who worked primarily about the Black American experience, racial tension, homosexuality and religion. He was active in the Civil Rights Movement, but spent his last years in the more congenial society of France.

Branch, Taylor, [Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63](#) [9], Vol. 1, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988, , 3 volumespp. 1064

Part 1 of the trilogy. Episodes extracted from this readable narrative have been compiled into one volume – Taylor Branch, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*, New York, Simon and Schuster, pp. 256.

Branch, Taylor, [Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965](#) [10], Vol. 2, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1998, , 3 volumespp. 746

Part 2 of a trilogy. Episodes extracted from this readable narrative have been compiled into one volume – Taylor Branch, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*, New York, Simon and Schuster, pp. 256.

Branch, Taylor, [At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68](#) [11], Vol. 3, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2006, , 3 volumespp. 1056

Part 3 of a trilogy. Episodes extracted from this readable narrative have been compiled into one volume – Taylor Branch, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*, New York, Simon and Schuster, pp. 256.

Brinkley, Douglas, [Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: The Life of Rosa Parks](#) [12], London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2000, pp. 248

(published in the USA as *Rosa Parks*, New York, Viking, 2000)

Parks is famous for her role in sparking the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, but had a long history of engaging in the struggle for civil rights.



Carawan, Candie ; Carawan, Guy, [Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement through its Songs](#) [13], [1992], Montgomery AL, NewSouth, 2008

Combines two earlier collections of songs and participant memoirs, *We Shall Overcome* (1963) and *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* (1968). Compiled by veterans of the Highlander Folk School (later Center), Tennessee – the adult education centre described as an ‘incubator’ for the Civil Rights movement.

Carbado, Devon W. ; Weise, Donald, [Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin](#) [14], San Francisco, Cleis Press, 2003, pp. 354

Rustin was an influential adviser to MLK and the coordinator of the 1963 March on Washington. These writings on civil rights and gay politics from 1942 to 1986 include his important 1964 essay ‘From Protest to Politics’ arguing for a policy shift towards mainstream politics through voter registration and involvement with trade unions. Rustin’s later attempts to achieve his goals through the Democratic Party made him a contentious figure in some radical circles.

Carmichael, Stokeley ; Hamilton, Charles V., [Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America](#) [15], London, Jonathan Cape, 1968, pp. 198

Makes case for black separatism in the struggle for equality, to enable black people to lead their own organisations and create their own power bases. Describes the attempts to achieve these aims through the Mississippi Freedom Democrats in 1964, and the role of SNCC in voter registration 1965-66. There is also a chapter on the northern ghettos.

Carson, Clayborne, [In Struggle](#) [16], Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 359

Admired study of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) by an activist in the Civil Rights Movement.

Carson, Clayborne ; Garrow, David J. ; Gill, Gerald ; Harding, Vincent ; Hine, Darlene Clark, [The Eyes on the Prize - Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Fighters, 1954-1990](#) [17], New York and London, Penguin, 1991, pp. 764

Comprises documents, speeches and firsthand accounts of from the black freedom struggle during this period. Published to accompany *Eyes on the Prize* TV series.

Cone, James H., [Martin, Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare](#) [18], London, Fount/Harper Collins, 1993, pp. 358

Compares two contrasting African-American leaders. Initially totally opposed, they moved closer together in the later 1960s, as King came out against the Vietnam War and Malcolm X moved away from black messianic separatism. They also worked with different constituencies: the black communities of the south and the alienated residents of the northern ghettos.

Crawford, Vicki L. ; Rouse, Jacqueline ; Woods, Barbara, [Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers – 1941-1965](#) [19], Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 290

Articles presented at 1988 conference.

D’Emilio, John, [Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin](#) [20], New York, Freedom Press, 2003, pp. 568



Shows how Rustin's gay lifestyle was repeatedly brought up by public enemies intent on discrediting the movement and by political rivals wanting to marginalize him.

Farmer, James, [Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement](#) [21], New York, Arbor House and Plume, 1998, pp. 370

Central figure in CORE outlines its origins and later campaigns (chapters 9, 10 and 19).

Forman, James, [The Making of Black Revolutionaries](#) [22], New York and Washington DC, MacMillan and Open Hand, 1972, pp. 568

Memoirs of SNCC Executive Secretary, 1961-65.

Garrow, David J., [Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) [23], New York, Morrow, 1986, pp. 800

Goodwin, Jeff ; Pfaff, Steven, [Emotion Work in High-Risk Social Movements: Managing Fear in the US and East German Civil Rights Movements](#) [24], Chapter 16, In Goodwin; Jasper; Polletta, [Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements](#) [25] ([A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements](#) [26]), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 282-302

Hill, Lance, [Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement](#) [27], Chapel Hill NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2004, pp. 363

Documents emergence of armed self-defence groups in Louisiana and Mississippi in the mid-1960s to counter the Klan and enforce civil rights legislation.

King, Martin Luther, [Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story](#) [28], London, Victor Gollanez, 1958, pp. 216

Account of year-long 1955 bus boycott which heralded a new stage of nonviolent direct action against segregation and launched King's leadership.

King, Martin Luther, [Letter from Birmingham City Jail](#) [29], Philadelphia PA, American Friends Service Committee, 1963, pp. 15

Answer to critics during the major campaign to desegregate Birmingham Alabama. President Kennedy intervened to get King released.

King, Martin Luther, [Why We Can't Wait](#) [30], New York, Harper and Row, 1963, pp. 159

Answer to white leaders urging less militant confrontation and greater patience.

King, Mary Elizabeth, [Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement](#) [31], New York, William Morrow, 1987, pp. 592

Insider account by white woman working in SNCC office. Meticulously detailed, with extensive quotes from key documents.



Lewis, John ; D'Orsa, Michael, [Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement](#) [32], ed. D'Orsa, Michael, with Michael D'Orsa, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1998, pp. 496

Lewis, who was born in Alabama, played a major role in the Freedom Rides and sit-ins, in the 1963 March on Washington and in the March on Selma that led to the Voting Rights Act. He also helped to found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

McAdam, Doug, [Freedom Summer](#) [33], New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 368

A detailed study of SNCC's Mississippi summer project in 1964.

McAdam, Doug, [Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970](#) [34], [1982], Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1999, pp. 304

McAdam, a leading social movement theorist, has written widely on various aspects and interpretations of the Civil Rights Movement, including , [The US Civil Rights Movement: Power from Below and Above, 1945-70](#) [35] In Roberts; Garton Ash, [Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present](#) [36] ([A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements](#) [37]) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 58-74 . His influential article , [Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency](#) [38] American Sociological Review, 1985, pp. 735-754 (reprinted in McAdam; Snow, [Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics and Outcomes](#) [39] ([A. 7. Important Reference Works and Websites](#) [40])) highlights how innovative tactics of mass action broke through institutionalised powerlessness.

Meier, August ; Rudwick, Elliot, [CORE: A Study on the Civil Rights Movement 1942-1968](#) [41], [1973], Urbana IL, Illini Books, 1975, pp. 563

Extensive analysis of rise and fall of CORE drawing on interviews with key members and CORE archives. Covers the 1960 sit-ins, 1961 Freedom Ride, mass campaigns in 1963 to desegregate Southern cities, and the impact of black power ideology.

Morris, Aldon, [Black Southern Student Sit-in movement: An Analysis of Internal Organisation](#) [42], American Sociological Review, Vol. 46, issue 6 (December), 1981, pp. 744-767

(reprinted in McAdam; Snow, [Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics and Outcomes](#) [39] ([A. 7. Important Reference Works and Websites](#) [40]))

Describes the expansion of organisational capacity for direct action between 1956 and 1960.

Morris, Aldon, [The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organising for Change](#) [43], London, Collier Macmillan, 1984, pp. 563

Details continuity with pre-civil rights movement generations of protest, and studies organisational infrastructure of protest in black communities.

Payne, Charles, [I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organising Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle](#) [44], [1995], 2nd edn. with new preface, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 2007, pp. 525

Thorough study of grass-roots activism in Mississippi, with useful bibliographical essay.

See also commentary by Francesca Polletta in Goodwin; Jasper, [Contention in Context: Political Opportunities and the Emergence of Protest](#) [45] ([A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements](#) [26]) , pp. 133-152.



Peck, James, [Freedom Ride](#) [46], New York, Simon and Schuster, 1962, pp. 170

Firsthand account by white activist who participated in both in the 1947 'Journey of Reconciliation' organised jointly by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and CORE, and the 1961 Freedom Ride organised by CORE at the height of the Civil rights Movement.

Polletta, Francesca, ["It Was Like a Fever..." Narrative and Identity in Social Protest](#) [47], Social Problems, Vol. 45, issue 2 (May), 1998, pp. 137-159

(reprinted in McAdam; Snow, [Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics and Outcomes](#) [39] (A. 7. [Important Reference Works and Websites](#) [40])).

Discusses the contagious impact of the sit-ins and the spirit they generated among participants.

Raines, Howell, [My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered](#) [48], [1977], New York, Penguin, 1983, pp. 496

A range of recollections from 1955 to MLK's assassination in 1968.

Ransby, Barbara, [Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision](#) [49], Chapel Hill NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2003, pp. 470

Recounts the life and work of black woman activist who played key role in three major organisations: the NAACP, SCLC and SNCC.

Robinson, Jo Ann Gibson, [The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson](#) [50], edited and with afterword by David Garrow, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1987, pp. 208

Robnett, Belinda, [How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights.](#) [51], New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 272

Sanger, Kerran L., ["When the Spirit Says Sing!": The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement](#) [52], New York, Garland, 1995, pp. 246

X, Malcolm, [The Autobiography of Malcolm X](#) [53], [1965], (with assistance of Alex Hayley), with introduction by Paul Gilroy, Penguin, 2001, pp. 512

See also: , [Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements](#) [54] New York, Grove Press, , 1966, pp. 226 .

Youth of Rural Organising and Culture Center, [Minds Stayed On Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle In The Rural South – An Oral History](#) [55], Boulder CO, Westview, 1991, pp. 198

Oral histories from Holmes County, Mississippi, voter registration campaign, which Payne (above) says 'suggests what we may hope for' in future historical research, identifying 'themes important from an organising perspective' and based on the collective work of teenagers – 'a powerful reminder of what the movement's values were'.

Zinn, Howard, [SNCC: the New Abolitionists](#) [56], Boston, Beacon Press, 1964, pp. 246



See also:

Frances Fox Piven; Richard A. Cloward, [Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed. How They Fail](#) [57], ([A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements](#) [58]), pp. 181-263

Felix Kolb, [Protest and Opportunities: The Political Outcomes of Social Movements](#) [59], ([A. 6. Nonviolent Action and Social Movements](#) [58]), chapters 5-9

Adam Bedau, [Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice](#) [60], ([A. 1.a.ii. Theories of Civil Disobedience, Power and Revolution](#) [61]), for debates about justification of tactics

Dennis Dalton, [Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action](#) [62], ([A. 2. Gandhi and Gandhian Campaigns](#) [63]), ch. 6 'Mohandas, Malcolm and Martin' pp. 168-87

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