

# 1. Topeka, Kansas

Until the 1950's, many states had separate schools for white and African-American children. Usually, the schools for white children were far better than the schools for black children. This unequal system was called **segregation**. Seeking change, African-American families sued schools systems for equality. One case from Topeka, Kansas went all the way to the Supreme Court. The ruling in *Brown Vs. the Board of Education of Topeka*, changed schools in the US forever.



The named plaintiff in the case, Linda Brown was a third grader and had to walk six blocks to her school bus stop to ride to Monroe Elementary, her segregated black school one mile away, while Sumner Elementary, a white school, was just seven blocks from her house.

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in her favor in 1954. The ruling stated that school segregation was illegal and violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. They ordered states to end segregation and open public schools to all students regardless of race.

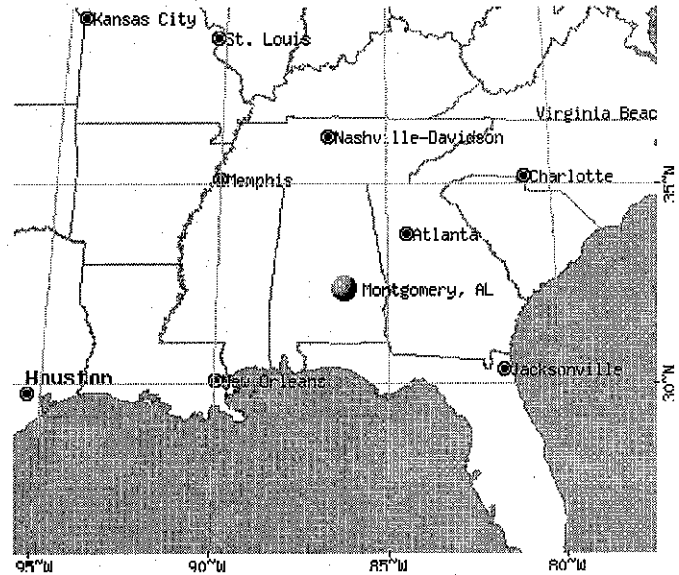


## 2. Montgomery, Alabama

Throughout the South, African-Americans had to sit on the back of all public buses. If the bus was full, they had to give up their seats to white people by law. Refusing to do so would result in their arrest. In December, 1955, an African-American woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery. She was arrested and fined.

Fed up with these racist laws, African-American citizens of Montgomery rallied around her and organized a boycott, refusing to ride the city's buses until the policy was lifted. Their boycott lasted 13 months during which African-Americans organized car pools, ride-sharing and walking rather than using the city buses. The bus company was losing lots of money and was in danger of going out of business.

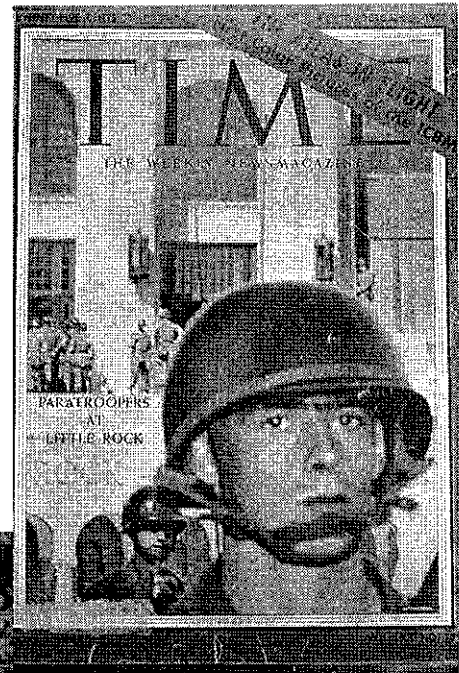
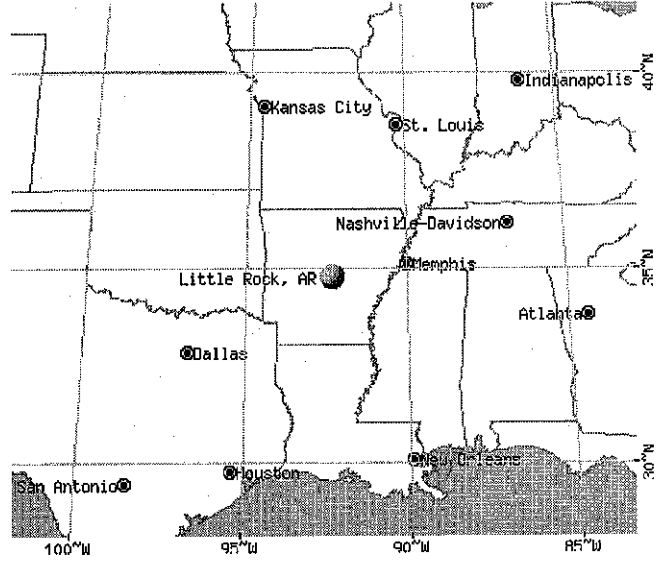
A year later, the Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was illegal and unequal and ordered Montgomery to integrate their buses.



### 3. Little Rock, Arkansas

After the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown Vs. Board of Education*, many communities in southern states refused to integrate their schools. Three years after the ruling in 1957, 9 African-American students tried to attend the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Many of the city's white residents protested. Some threatened and harassed the students and threatened to lynch them.

The governor of Arkansas even sent the state's National Guard to the school to block the black teens from entering and enrolling in school. In the end, President Dwight Eisenhower had to send US troops to protect the students on their way to school and force the school to open for them and integrate.



## 4. Prince Edward County, Virginia

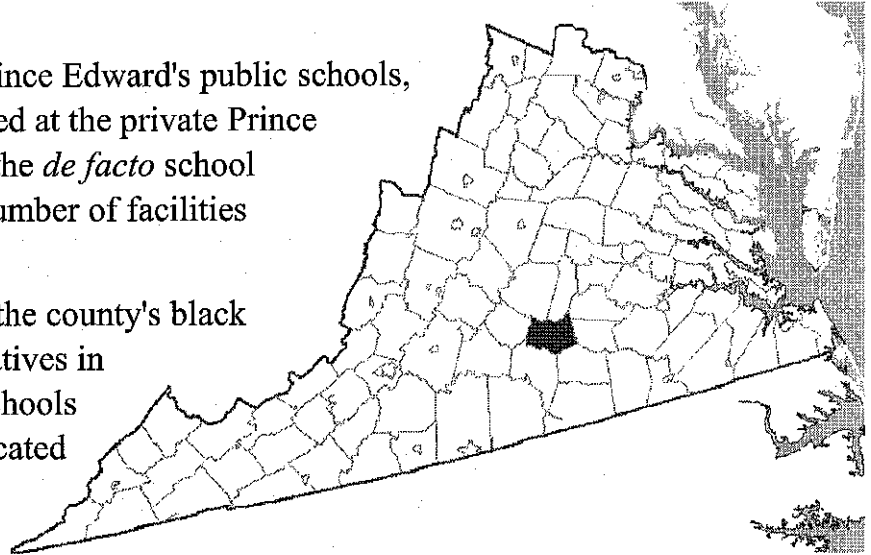
After the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, Virginia Senator Harry Byrd declared a policy of **Massive Resistance** to prevent public school desegregation. This meant that school systems would do whatever it took to avoid integrating blacks and whites in the same schools.

When faced with an order to integrate, Prince Edward County southwest of Richmond closed its entire school system in September 1959 rather than integrate. In 1963, schools were ordered to open, and when the Supreme Court agreed in 1964, school leaders gave in rather than risk prison, and public schools were reopened after 5 years of being closed throughout the entire county.

During the interruption in access to Prince Edward's public schools, white students were able to get educated at the private Prince Edward Academy, which operated as the *de facto* school system, enrolling K-12 students at a number of facilities throughout the county.

No provision was made for educating the county's black children. Some got schooling with relatives in nearby communities or at makeshift schools in church basements. Others were educated out of state by groups such as the Society of Friends. In 1963-64, the Prince Edward Free School picked up some of the slack. But some pupils missed part or all of their education for five years.

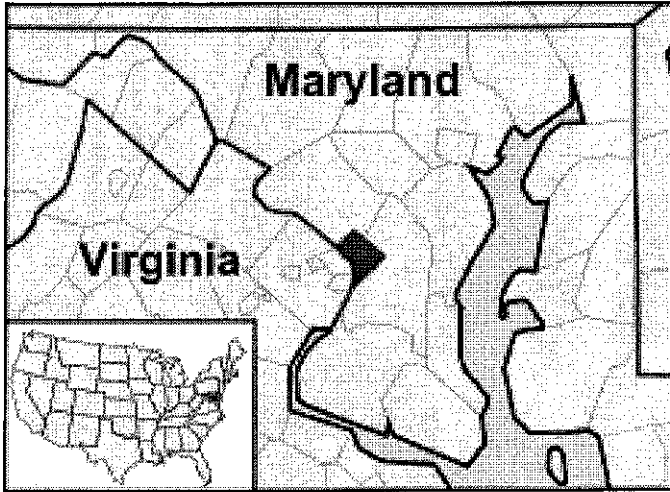
Other counties, such as Surry County chose to close only their white schools. White students attended the Surry Academy, and blacks continued to attend the public schools.



## 5. Washington, DC

A quarter of a million people gathered on the National Mall in August 1963 as part of the March on Washington for jobs and freedom. The man who would speak was Martin Luther King, Jr and the speech he gave is perhaps the most famous in American history.

“I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character, said King from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The nation listened. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act to ban discrimination in schools, public places, and the workplace.



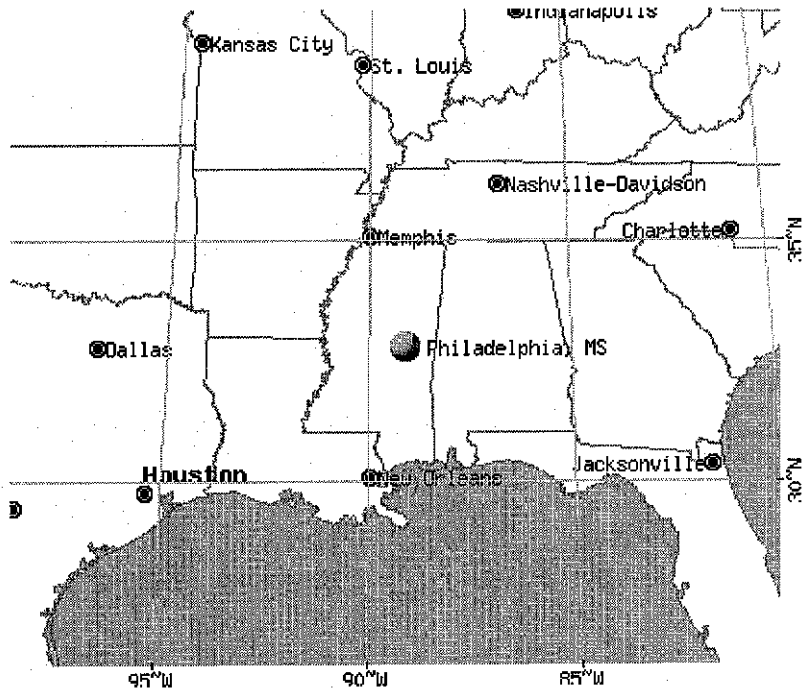
In 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act to protect the voting rights of African Americans and ban poll taxes and grandfather clauses.



## 6. Philadelphia, Mississippi

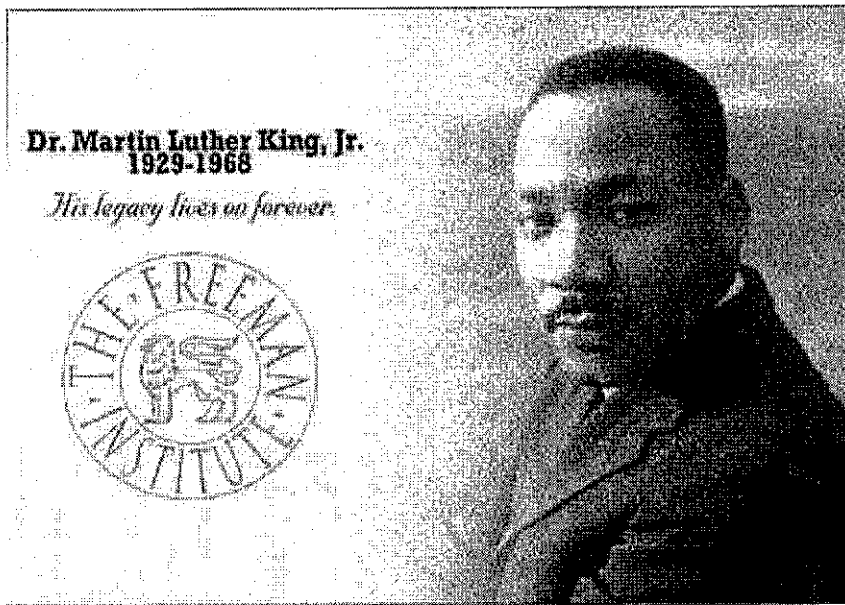
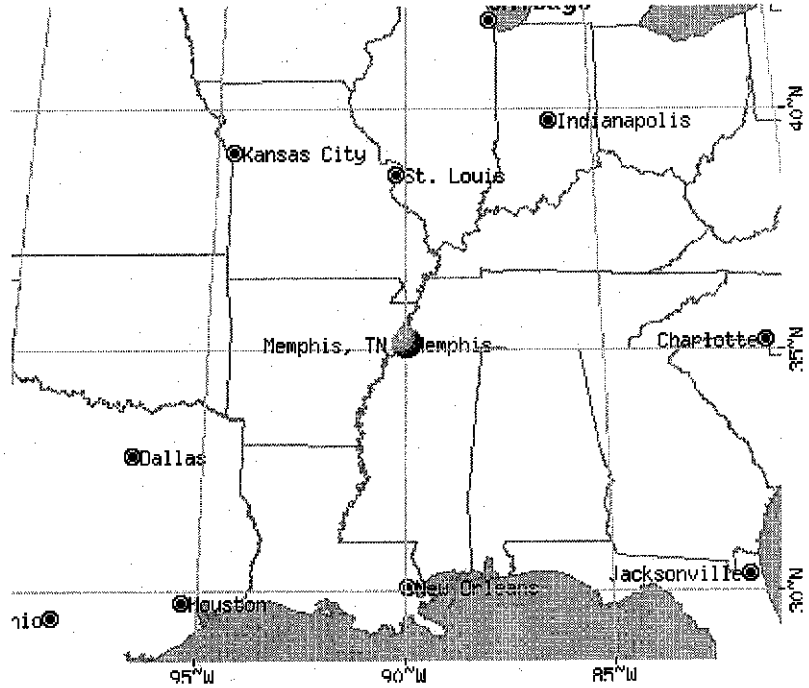
Young civil rights workers from all over the country went to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to help register African-Americans to vote and promote passage of the Voting Rights Act. Their efforts became known as the "Freedom Summer".

Some Mississippians however targeted the volunteers. They threatened them and set homes and churches on fire. Three volunteers—James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman – disappeared near the town of Philadelphia, Mississippi. Officials found their bodies weeks later. An investigation revealed they had been beaten and murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan.



# 7. Memphis, Tennessee

Martin Luther King, Jr. travelled to Memphis in April 1968 to help sanitation workers who were on strike. In the late afternoon a week after he arrived, King was standing on a balcony at the Lorraine Motel. He was struck by a bullet and died shortly afterwards. News of his assassination set off riots in cities across the country. The civil rights movement lost its most important leader.



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