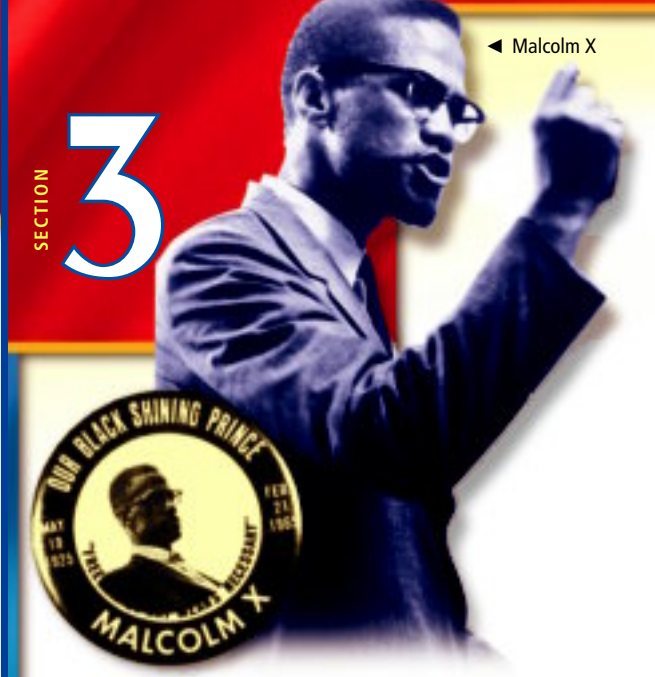
SECTION 3



◄ Malcolm X

▲ Button honoring Malcolm X

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Entering a New Era

Although the Civil Rights movement was making headway, many black activists were impatient with King's nonviolent methods and his emphasis on integration. Some believed that integration was not the solution. Others felt that more needed to be done to remove what they saw as oppression by white society.

Malcolm X (also known by his religious name, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) became one of the most prominent voices for this faction. As a minister of the Nation of Islam, he preached a message of self-reliance and self-protection. He called for black pride and spread the idea of black nationalism, a belief in the separate identity and racial unity of the African American community. Malcolm was a "charismatic speaker who could play an audience as great musicians play instruments." His dynamic speeches won many adherents to his cause. The Civil Rights Movement had entered a new era.

New Successes and Challenges

Objectives

- Explain the significance of Freedom Summer, the march on Selma, and why violence erupted in some American cities in the 1960s.
- Compare the goals and methods of African American leaders.
- Describe the social and economic situation of African Americans by 1975.

Terms and People

Freedom Summer
Fannie Lou Hamer
Voting Rights Act
Twenty-fourth Amendment
Kerner Commission
Malcolm X
Nation of Islam
black power
Black Panthers

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Summarize Complete an outline to summarize the contents of this section.

I. Push for Voting Rights
A. Freedom Summer
1.
2.

Why It Matters During the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement made great strides forward. Yet racial injustice was not fully eradicated. Frustration with this situation led some African Americans to turn to more radical and sometimes violent methods. African Americans achieved further successes, but for some the radicalism of the times left a bitter legacy. **Section Focus Question: What successes and challenges faced the civil rights movement after 1964?**

The Push for Voting Rights

None of the federal court decisions or civil rights measures passed through 1964 fundamentally affected the right to vote. The problem was a southern political system that used literacy tests, poll taxes, and intimidation to keep blacks from voting. In Mississippi, in 1964, for instance, not a single African American person was registered to vote in five counties that had African American majorities. All of the major civil rights organizations sought to overcome these political injustices.

SNCC Stages Freedom Summer SNCC had spent several years organizing voter education projects in Mississippi. It met with little success and a great deal of violent opposition. But in 1964, it called for a major campaign, known as **Freedom Summer.** About 1,000 volunteers, mostly black and white students, were to flood Mississippi. They would focus on registering African Americans to

vote. They would also form the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), an alternative to the state's all-white regular Democratic Party.

Even before most of the volunteers had arrived, three civil rights workers—Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman—disappeared. SNCC claimed that they had been murdered; state authorities denied these charges. President Johnson ordered a massive search for the three, which ended when their bodies were found buried in an earthen dam. All had been shot at point-blank range. Yet, despite the obvious dangers, almost all of the other volunteers remained in the state.

After Freedom Summer ended in August 1964, an MFDP delegation traveled to the Democratic Convention in New Jersey, seeking to be recognized as Mississippi's only Democratic Party. At the convention, **Fannie Lou Hamer,** one of the MFDP's leaders, gave powerful testimony. She described how she and other activists had been beaten, fired from their jobs, and displaced from their homes all because, as she put it, they wanted "to register" and "live as decent human beings."

Despite Hamer's testimony, the Democrats refused to seat the MFDP. Instead, party officials offered a compromise: They would seat two MFDP members as "at-large delegates" and reform the nomination rules to guarantee greater minority representation in the future. The MFDP rejected this offer. Ironically, Mississippi's regular Democratic delegation left the convention in protest because the national party had made the offer to the MFDP.

Marching on Selma Early in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the SCLC organized a major campaign in Selma, Alabama, to pressure the federal government to enact voting rights legislation. The protests climaxed in a series of confrontations on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, on the main route from Selma to Montgomery. The first of these confrontations took place on March 7, 1965, a day that became known as "Bloody Sunday." Heavily armed state troopers and other authorities attacked the marchers as they tried to cross the bridge. Sheyann Webb, a six-year-old girl at the time, recalled the scene:

Primary Source "I heard all of this screaming and . . . somebody yelled, 'Oh God, they're killing us!' . . . And I looked and I saw the troopers charging us . . . swinging their arms and throwing canisters of tear gas. . . . Some of them had clubs and others had ropes and whips. . . . It was like a nightmare. . . . I just knew then that I was going to die."

—Sheyann Webb, *Selma, Lord, Selma*

Vocabulary Builder
confrontation–(kahn fruhn TAY shuhn) *n.* situation in which there is angry disagreement between opposing people or groups

Standoff in Selma
Police officers block the path of protesters attempting to march to Selma, Alabama.

African American Voter Registration

(Percentage of voting-age African Americans)

State	1964	1968
Alabama	23.0	56.7
Louisiana	32.0	59.3
Mississippi	6.7	59.4
Texas	57.7	83.1
Virginia	45.7	58.4

SOURCE: Stanley, Harold W. *Voter Mobilization and the Politics of Race: The South and Universal Suffrage, 1952–1984*

Voting Rights Legislation Takes Effect

The table shows voter registration rates in some southern states before and after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The women shown above are learning how to mark the ballot at a voter education class in Alabama in 1966. *Which state listed in the table had the greatest increase in voter registration between 1964 and 1968?*

Webb survived, but the rampage continued. Television coverage of the violence outraged the nation. On March 15, President Johnson went on national television and called for a strong federal voting rights law. Historically, regulation of voting rights had been left to the states, but Johnson argued that "it is wrong to deny any of your fellow citizens the right to vote." He added, "Their cause is our cause too, because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And, *we shall overcome.*"

New Legislation Guarantees Voting Rights Spurred by the actions of protesters and the words of the President, Congress passed the **Voting Rights Act** of 1965. The act banned literacy tests and empowered the federal government to oversee voting registration and elections in states that had discriminated against minorities. In 1975, Congress extended coverage to Hispanic voters in the Southwest.

Another legal landmark was the **Twenty-fourth Amendment** to the Constitution, ratified in 1964. It banned the poll tax, which had been used to keep poor African Americans from voting. In addition, the federal courts handed down several important decisions. *Baker* v. *Carr* and *Reynolds* v. *Simms* limited racial gerrymandering, the practice of drawing election districts in such a way as to dilute the African American vote, and established the legal principle of "one man, one vote."

These laws and decisions had a profound impact. Particularly in the Deep South, African American participation in politics skyrocketed. In Mississippi, the percentage of African Americans registered to vote jumped from just under 7 percent in 1964 to about 70 percent in 1986. Nationwide, the number of African American elected officials rose from fewer than 100 to more than 6,000 by the mid-1980s.

✓ **Checkpoint** **What impact did the protests in Selma, Alabama, have on the nation?**

Frustration Explodes Into Violence

Many celebrated the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet for some African Americans, things had not changed much. In many urban areas, there was anger and frustration over continuing discrimination and poverty. That anger exploded into violence in several cities.

Racial Violence Plagues Cities Less than a week after Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, one of the worst race riots in American history erupted in the predominantly African American neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles. Violence, looting, and arson spread for several days before National Guard troops restored order.

Watts was one of many race riots that erupted in the 1960s. The worst violence occurred in Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan, in the summer of 1967. In Detroit, 43 people died, and property damage reached $50 million. The outbursts frightened many white Americans. In most previous race riots, whites had used violence to keep African Americans "in their place." But now, blacks were using violence against police and white business owners in black neighborhoods.

Increasing Militancy
Black Panthers (above) demonstrated outside the courthouse where Huey Newton was on trial, charged with killing a police officer.

The Kerner Commission Seeks the Cause To determine the causes of the riots, President Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the **Kerner Commission.** It concluded that long-term racial discrimination stood as the single most important cause of violence. The commission also recommended establishing and expanding federal programs aimed at overcoming the problems of America's urban ghettos.

Primary Source "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal. . . . Segregation and poverty have created the racial ghetto and a destructive environment totally unknown to most Americans."
—National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report,* 1967

The Kerner Commission's findings proved highly controversial. A number of conservative commentators argued against expanding federal spending. They said that this amounted to rewarding the rioters. Others noted that the black-white split that the report described ignored other minorities.

President Johnson did not follow up on the commission's recommendations, largely because the Vietnam War was consuming enormous sums of federal money. The riots also fueled a white backlash. Many whites opposed further reforms.

✓ **Checkpoint** **Why was the Kerner Commission formed?**

New Voices for African Americans

The racial rioting of the mid-1960s coincided with the radicalization of many African Americans, particularly young urban African Americans. Rather than advocating nonviolence and integration, they called for another approach.

Malcolm X Offers a Different Vision The most well-known African American radical was **Malcolm X,** who was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. He adopted the *X* to represent his lost African name. Little, he argued, was his slave name. Malcolm had a difficult childhood. In his teens, Malcolm moved to Boston and then to New York City, where he became involved in drugs and crime and landed in prison on burglary charges at age 21.

While in prison, Malcolm became a convert to the **Nation of Islam,** a religious sect headed by Elijah Muhammad. The group prescribed strict rules of behavior, including no drugs or alcohol, and demanded a separation of the races.

Olympic Protest
At the 1968 Summer Olympics, U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised gloved fists in protest against discrimination.

After his release from prison, Malcolm became the Nation of Islam's most prominent minister. In 1964, however, he broke away from the Nation of Islam and formed his own organization. He then made a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city of Islam. Returning to the United States, he seemed willing to consider limited acceptance of whites. In February 1965, however, Malcolm X was shot and killed. Three members of the Nation of Islam were convicted of the murder.

Young Leaders Call for Black Power Many young African Americans saw themselves as heirs of the radical Malcolm X. They began to move away from the principle of nonviolence. They also began to question the goal of integration. As SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael put it:

> **Primary Source** "Integration . . . has been based on complete acceptance of the fact that in order to have a decent house or education, blacks must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces the notion . . . that 'white' is automatically better and 'black' is by definition inferior."
> —"What We Want," 1966

Carmichael first used the term **"black power"** in 1966. In that year, James Meredith had set off on a "March Against Fear" across the state of Mississippi to encourage African Americans to register and vote. Meredith traveled only 20 miles before he was shot and left for dead by a white supremacist. SNCC, CORE, and SCLC members vowed to continue the march.

When they reached Greenwood, Mississippi, Carmichael and some other marchers were arrested. After his release, Carmichael told a crowd that African Americans needed "black power!" He later said that black power meant African Americans should collectively use their economic and political muscle to gain equality. Yet, many white Americans felt threatened. They believed that black power meant black violence.

Militants Form the Black Panthers Not long after Carmichael's "black power" speech, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. Almost overnight, the **Black Panthers** became the symbol of young militant African Americans. The Black Panthers organized armed patrols of urban neighborhoods to protect people from police abuse. They also created antipoverty programs, such as free breakfasts for poor African American children. The Black Panthers gained national attention when they entered the state

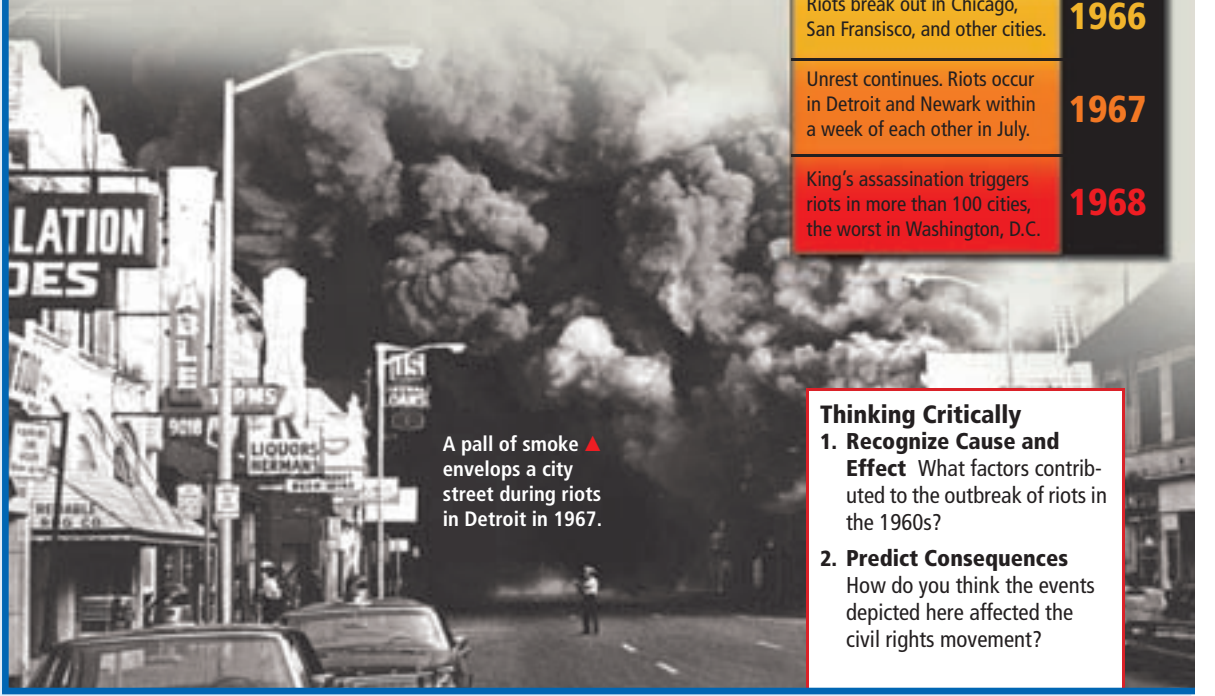
King's funeral procession in Atlanta (above). A woman weeps as she pays her final respects ▶

INFOGRAPHIC

Turbulent Times

The civil rights movement reached its peak in the 1960s but at a terrible cost. During the "long, hot summers" of 1965 to 1968, pent-up anger and frustration exploded into riots in African American communities across the nation. By the time the violence had subsided, hundreds of people had been killed, thousands were wounded, and neighborhoods lay in rubble. In addition to this heavy toll, assassins' bullets claimed the lives of key figures in the civil rights movement. Malcolm X was slain in 1965. Three years later, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., shocked and grieved the nation.

Long, Hot Summers	
Six days of arson, looting, and rioting rock the Watts section of Los Angeles.	1965
Riots break out in Chicago, San Fransisco, and other cities.	1966
Unrest continues. Riots occur in Detroit and Newark within a week of each other in July.	1967
King's assassination triggers riots in more than 100 cities, the worst in Washington, D.C.	1968



A pall of smoke ▲ envelops a city street during riots in Detroit in 1967.

Thinking Critically

1. **Recognize Cause and Effect** What factors contributed to the outbreak of riots in the 1960s?
2. **Predict Consequences** How do you think the events depicted here affected the civil rights movement?

capitol in Sacramento carrying shotguns and wearing black leather jackets and berets to protest attempts to restrict their right to bear arms.

The Panthers' style appealed to many young African Americans, who began to wear their hair in "Afros" and to refer to themselves as "black" rather than "Negro" or "colored." Some, following the lead of Malcolm X, changed their name and celebrated their African heritage. At the same time, the Panthers' militancy often led to violent confrontations with police. Each side accused the other of instigating the violence.

Checkpoint **What impact did Malcolm X have on the civil rights movement?**

Martin Luther King's Final Days

Martin Luther King understood the anger and frustration of many urban African Americans whose lives had changed little despite the civil rights reforms of the 1960s. However, he disagreed with the call for "black power" and sought a nonviolent alternative to combat economic injustice. After spending about a year in Chicago's slums to protest conditions there, King made plans for a massive "Poor People's Campaign." The campaign's goal was to pressure the nation to do more to address the needs of the poor.

As part of this effort, King journeyed to Memphis, Tennessee, in early April 1968. There, he offered his assistance to sanitation workers who were striking for better wages and working conditions.

On April 3, King addressed his followers. He referred to threats that had been made against his life. "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life," King declared. "But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will."

The following day, as King stood on the balcony outside his motel room, he was struck by a shot from a high-powered rifle. He died at a hospital shortly afterward, at the age of 39. James Earl Ray, a white ex-convict, was later charged with King's murder.

Robert F. Kennedy was campaigning for the presidency in Indianapolis when he heard of King's death. RFK stopped his campaign speech to give the audience the sad news. He reminded them that he had lost his own brother to an assassin's bullet. Kennedy asked those assembled to honor King's memory by replacing their anger and desire for revenge "with an effort to understand with compassion and love." Despite Kennedy's plea, riots broke out in hundreds of cities after King's assassination. Two months later, Robert Kennedy's life, too, was cut short by an assassin.

Checkpoint **Why did King go to Memphis in 1968?**

Significant Gains and Controversial Issues

King's assassination marked an important turning point. The protests for black freedom and racial equality that began in the mid-1950s crested in the late 1960s around the time of King's death. By then, the civil rights movement had made significant gains. Yet, white racism and the social and economic gap between many blacks and whites remained. New measures aimed at closing this gap tended to provoke more controversy than consensus in America.

Civil Rights Are Advanced The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s succeeded in eliminating legal, or de jure, segregation and knocking down barriers to African American voting and political participation. During the same period, African American poverty rates fell and the median income of African American men and women rose rapidly, as did the number of African

Effects of the Civil Rights Movement ✓ Quick Study

- End of legal segregation
- Passage of federal laws to protect civil rights
- End of legal barriers to African American voting and political participation
- Creation of affirmative action programs

Americans who graduated from high school. One symbol of the progress that had been made was the appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the first African American Supreme Court Justice in 1967. The following year, in the wake of King's murder, Congress passed one final civil rights measure, the Fair Housing Act, which banned discrimination in housing.

Controversial Issues Remain Attempts to increase the economic opportunities for African Americans and to integrate neighborhoods and schools encountered more difficulties. To achieve desegregated schools, the federal courts had ordered the use of forced busing. Richard Nixon, who succeeded Lyndon Johnson, criticized busing as a means of attaining racial balance.

At the same time, the Nixon administration formally established affirmative action as a means of closing the economic gap between blacks and whites. In a short period of time, colleges and universities, businesses, and local and state governments followed the federal government's lead and implemented their own affirmative action plans to increase African American representation in schools and the workforce.

Affirmative action proved controversial almost from the start. Some whites argued that it constituted reverse discrimination and violated the goal of creating a colorblind society. Justice Thurgood Marshall disagreed. "Three hundred and fifty years ago, the Negro was dragged to this country in chains to be sold into slavery," Marshall wrote. "The position of the Negro today in America is the tragic but inevitable consequence of centuries of unequal treatment."

Until the nation addressed the legacy of this unequal treatment, Marshall asserted, it would not fulfill its promise of providing equal rights and opportunities to all. This debate or controversy, as you will see in future chapters, remained unresolved.

✓ **Checkpoint** **What gains did the civil rights movement make by the early 1970s?**

SECTION 3 Assessment

Progress Monitoring *Online*
For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-1409

Comprehension

1. **Terms and People** For each of the items below, write a sentence explaining its significance:
   - Freedom Summer
   - Fannie Lou Hamer
   - Voting Rights Act
   - Twenty-fourth Amendment
   - Kerner Commission
   - Malcolm X
   - Nation of Islam
   - black power
   - Black Panthers
2. NoteTaking **Reading Skill: Summarize** Use your outline to answer the Section Focus Question: What successes and challenges faced the civil rights movement after 1964?

Writing About History

3. **Quick Write: Identify Sources** After constructing a hypothesis, historians look for evidence that might either prove or disprove the hypothesis. List three sources of information that you might use to test the following hypothesis: The drive for voting rights in the South could have succeeded without the involvement of the federal government.

Critical Thinking

4. **Recognize Cause and Effect** How did the Selma march help lead to the passage of civil rights legislation?
5. **Make Comparisons** How did Malcolm X's views differ from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s views?
6. **Identify Points of View** Why did Justice Thurgood Marshall support affirmative action?