**Learning Objective:**

Explain how and why various groups responded to calls for the expansion of civil rights from 1960 to 1980.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Social categories, roles, and practices are created, maintained, challenged, and transformed throughout American history, shaping government policy, economic systems, culture, and the lives of citizens.*

1. Seeking to fulfill Reconstruction-era promises, civil rights activists and political leaders achieved some legal and political successes in ending segregation, although progress toward racial equality was slow.
2. During and after World War II, civil rights activists and leaders, most notably Martin Luther King Jr., combatted racial discrimination utilizing a variety of strategies, including legal challenges, direct action, and nonviolent protest tactics.
   1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s goal was a peaceful integration of the races in all areas of society. King’s theory of nonviolent civil disobedience was influenced by the writings of Henry David Thoreau. King was head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).
   2. Following the arrest of Rosa Parks in 1955, King helped galvanize the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
   3. Students staged the first sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, to protest segregation in public facilities. The sit-ins provide an excellent example of nonviolent civil disobedience. Sit-ins appeared throughout the South and led to the formation of SNCC, whose aims included the end of segregation in public places and winning voting rights.
   4. In May 1961, Whites and Blacks known as the Freedom Riders, sponsored by the Congress on Racial Equality, boarded buses in Washington, D.C. and traveled across the South to test federal enforcement of regulations prohibiting discrimination.
   5. In April 1963, King led a campaign against segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. Within a few days, Police Commission Eugene “Bull” Connor arrested King and other marchers. Connor ordered his police to use attack dogs and high-pressure fire hoses to disperse civil rights marchers. Millions of horrified TV viewers watched what King called a “visual demonstration of sin.” In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” King argued that citizens have a “moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” King believed that civil disobedience is justified in the face of unjust laws.
   6. In August 1963, Dr. King led a massive march on Washington, D.C. to show support for civil rights legislation. Appealing for racial harmony and justice, King declared, “I have a dream that my four little 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.”
   7. On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis by James Earl Ray. Riots in more than 100 cities followed.
   8. The Black Power movement of the late 1960s advocated that African Americans establish control of their political and economic life. Many advocates also favored Black Separatism, emphasizing a greater sense of Black nationalism and solidarity. Many Black Power leaders, including Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, opposed Martin Luther King’s strategy of nonviolent demonstrations.
3. Continuing resistance slowed efforts at desegregation, sparking social and political unrest across the nation. Debates among civil rights activists over the efficacy of nonviolence increased after 1965.
   1. Debates among civil rights activists over the efficacy of nonviolence increased after 1965.
   2. Race riots erupted each summer in black neighborhoods of major cities through 1968 with increasing casualties and destruction of property.
   3. Following the murder of King by a white man, massive riots erupted in 168 cities across the country, leaving 46 people dead. The violence did not reflect the ideals of the murdered leader, but it did reveal the anger and frustrations among African Americans in both the North and the South.
   4. The violence also led to a growing white backlash, especially among blue-collar voters, to the civil rights movement. George Wallace was the former governor of Alabama. He was a long-time champion of school segregation and states’ rights. Running as the candidate of the American Independent Party, Wallace’s campaign appealed to Americans who were upset by the violence and civil disobedience associated with antiwar and civil rights demonstrations. Wallace won five states in the South and received strong support in some Northern states.

**Learning Objective:**

Explain the various ways in which the federal government responded to calls for the expansion of civil rights.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Debates fostered by social and political groups about the role of government in American social, political, and economic life shape government policy, institutions, political parties, and the rights of citizens.*

1. The three branches of the federal government used measures including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to promote greater racial equality.
   1. Civil Rights Act of 1964
      1. Outraged by racial violence, President Kennedy called upon Congress to pass a comprehensive civil rights bill that would end legal segregation on the basis of race. On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act.
      2. The landmark legislation prohibited discrimination because of race, religion, national origin, or gender. The act banned racial discrimination in private facilities such as restaurants and theaters that accommodate the public.
   2. Voting Rights
      1. In 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. announced a voter registration drive. With help from the federal courts, he dramatized his effort by leading a march from Selma, Alabama, to the capital of Montgomery. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 authorized the attorney general to appoint officials to register voters.
2. Liberalism influenced postwar politics and court decisions, but it came under increasing attack from the left as well as from a resurgent conservative movement.
3. Liberalism, based on anticommunism abroad and a firm belief in the efficacy of government power to achieve social goals at home, reached a high point of political influence by the mid-1960s.
   1. John F. Kennedy was a Roman Catholic—the first to be nominated since 1928 and first ever to become president. Kennedy’s Catholicism was a major issue until he told a group of Protestant ministers that he accepted the separation of church and state and that he would not allow Catholic leaders to tell him how to act as president. The 1960 election was the first to include televised debates. Audiences estimated at 60 million or more watched each of the four debates between Kennedy and his opponent Richard Nixon. The debates helped create a positive image for Kennedy and served as a turning point in the 1960 campaign. John Kennedy was the youngest elected president in American history. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, presided over a glamorous and elegant White House that was soon nicknamed Camelot after the legendary court of King Arthur.
   2. JFK challenged Americans to boldly enter the “New Frontier” of the 1960s. Kennedy proposed plans for federal aid to education, urban renewal, medical care for the elderly, reductions in income taxes, and the creation of a Department of Urban Affairs. None of these proposals passed.
   3. Kennedy was unable to get much of his program through Congress because of an alliance of Republicans and Southern Democrats.
4. A series of Supreme Court decisions expanded civil rights and individual liberties.
   1. A liberal activist Supreme Court under the direction of Chief Justice Earl Warren became an important instrument of social and political change, particularly in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties.
   2. The case of *Baker v.* Carr (1962) established the principle of “one man, one vote.” The Supreme Court required the reapportionment of districts for some state legislatures.
   3. In *Gideon v.* Wainwright (1963), the Court ruled that a defendant in a felony trial must be provided a lawyer for free if he or she could not afford one.
   4. In the case of *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), the Supreme Court struck down a state law prohibiting the use of contraceptives. The Court proclaimed a “right to privacy” that soon provided the basis for decisions protecting women’s abortion rights, notably *Roe v. Wade*.
   5. This controversial Warren Court ruling in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) established a criminal defendant’s “Miranda Rights.” The Court ruled that no confession could be admissible unless a suspect had been made aware of his or her rights and the suspect had then waived them.