

# Civil Rights Leaders





All Americans have the same civil rights thanks to leaders like Rosa Parks, shown on a bus in 1955.

## Civil Rights

In the United States, people have certain private, or civil, rights. Today, people of all races, genders, and religions have civil rights. These rights include the right to vote in elections and to be treated fairly.

When the United States broke away from England, its leader wrote that “all men are created equal.” At that time, however, not everyone in the new nation was treated fairly. Men of some races and women of all races could not vote. They were treated unfairly in other ways, too.

Since that time, amendments have been added to the United States Constitution. These amendments promise civil rights to people of all races, genders, and religions. It wasn’t always easy to make these amendments into law. They exist today because some people worked very hard so that all Americans could have the same civil rights.

### Key Notes:

What are civil rights?

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**This sculpture is of Susan B. Anthony, who spent her life working on equal rights for all men and women.**

## Equal Rights for Women

In 1850, Susan B. Anthony was a teacher. At that time, women could not own land or vote, and most African Americans were slaves with no civil rights. Anthony thought this was wrong, so she decided to do whatever she could to win equality for all men and women.

In 1870, the 15th amendment gave men who had been slaves the right to vote. However, women still did not have this right. Anthony held meetings, gave speeches, and asked people to support women's right to vote. She took 10,000 names of people who wanted equality for women and went to the U.S. Senate. However, the Senate would not listen to her.

When Susan B. Anthony died in 1906, women still were not allowed to vote. However, that changed in 1920, when women finally were given the right to vote.

### Key Notes:

**What did Susan B. Anthony do to help women get the right to vote?**

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**U.S. Supreme Court  
Justice Thurgood  
Marshall worked for  
equal education.**

## Equal Education

In the 1950s, some places in the United States had separate schools for white and black children. Often, white children's schools had better facilities than black children's schools. A lawyer named Thurgood Marshall believed that this was not fair. He argued that because many black children's schools had poor facilities, they did not have the same rights as white children.

Marshall decided to do something about this, so he argued for children's rights to equal education before the Supreme Court. Marshall argued that all children should have the same education, at the same time, in the same place. The Supreme Court agreed, ruling that separate schools for children of different races were not allowed.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first African American judge on the Supreme Court. As a Supreme Court judge, Marshall strongly supported equal rights for all people.

### Key Notes:

**What did Thurgood Marshall work for?**

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The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that protects everyone's right to vote.

## Equal Treatment

Even with amendments to the U.S. Constitution, all people were still not treated equally. Some people were not allowed to vote. Some people were treated unfairly at work and in public places. President Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th president of the United States, worked with Congress to pass two acts that made these practices unlawful.

Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, some business and public places refused to serve or hire people because of their race, gender, or religion. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made such practices unlawful.

Before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, some places required people to pass a reading test or pay a tax to vote. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 made practices like these unlawful. Today, many of our civil rights are protected because President Johnson wanted all Americans to be treated equally.

### Key Notes:

Break the word unlawful into three parts. How do all three parts help you define the word?

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