

US History

An Age of Civil Disobedience

Learning Target:

I can explain how the showdown in Birmingham was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement and analyze the Letter From a Birmingham Jail.

7. Civil Rights – Birmingham (April – May 1963)

Background –

- Birmingham, Alabama had decided to close all parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and golf courses in 1962 rather than integrate them
- King decided to define the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham
 - He knew that if they were successful in Birmingham they would break the back of segregation throughout the entire south

The Plan –

- Nonviolent demonstrations would gradually increase in frequency and size
- The goal was to keep the eyes of the media on the protests unlike in Albany earlier

The Opponents –

- Civil Rights Movement –
 - MLK Jr. and the SCLC
- City of Birmingham –
 - Police commissioner Eugene Bull Connor
 - Took great pride in halting integration and would shock the world with his tactics

The Protests –

King Arrested –

- The demonstrations began with King being arrested on Good Friday
- Wrote famous letter from Birmingham Jail
 - Tried to explain his use of civil disobedience
 - An answer to local white ministers calling for him to stop

School children Protest –

- King and the SCLC controversially use school children to protest
- Very controversial tactic
- Children had same or more dramatic effect with less economic effect on the family
- First day over 1000 children arrested
- Second day dogs and fire hoses used on protesting school children

Public Opinion –

- Attacks on children shock the US
- Public opinion sways in favor of the protestors in Birmingham
- Local businesses agree to desegregate
- King's hotel room firebombed on May 11 after he already checked out