

HISTORICAL
FACT

Among those expelled from Palm Island after the 1957 strike were the grandparents and mother of Olympic gold medallist Cathy Freeman.



Activity 2.6

- 1 Describe the main differences between Aboriginal organisations founded before and after World War II.
- 2 What impacts did the Woomera rocket tests and the Emu/Maralinga atomic tests have on Aboriginal people in South Australia and Western Australia? (You may need to do some further research.)
- 3
 - a Explain why the Palm Island people launched a general strike in 1957.
 - b What was the outcome of this strike?
 - c Using the internet, research the 2004 death in custody on Palm Island. What does this incident tell you about life for Aboriginal people on Palm Island today?
- 4 Explain the differences between assimilation and integration.

calls. When Bartlam ordered the deportation of Aboriginal leader Albie Geia for ‘answering back’ in June 1957, the other 1400 residents called a general strike. When even the Island’s Aboriginal police joined the strikers, the superintendent understood that he had lost control.

After five days, the uprising was heavily suppressed by squads of mainland police. Many strike leaders were seized and banished to other reserves statewide. Although the Palm Island strike was broken, it drew national media attention once more to the oppressive Queensland system. It also gave Palm Islanders great encouragement in realising they could stand together in defence of their rights and not surrender to fear.

As early as 1958, southern Aboriginal activists were beginning to highlight the downside of assimilation. As Herbert Groves of the FCAA

observed, although assimilation promised citizenship and equal status, the price could be ‘the disappearance of the Aboriginals’, both culturally and physically. ‘We feel the word “integration” implies a truer definition of our aims and objects,’ he concluded.

The US Civil Rights Movement



Origins

In 1892, an African-American shoemaker, Homer Plessy, refused to leave his seat in a racially segregated train carriage in New Orleans. This led in 1896 to the US Supreme Court’s fateful decision in the case of *Plessy vs Ferguson*, which held that

separate but equal a concept where facilities were divided but supposedly equal in quality (usually they were not)

American Civil War a war between the Northern (Union) states and the Southern (Confederate) states of the United States, fought between 1861 and 1865 and won by the North

1908, which upheld the racial segregation of schools, ushered in what is known as the **Jim**

Jim Crow a policy of racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans, named after a stage dance of the 1840s

vilify to verbally attack

lynching an illegal killing by a mob, usually by hanging and/or burning

Throughout the United States, they faced heightened discrimination in housing, education and employment; they were racially **vilified** across white culture and their oppression was reinforced by police abuse and campaigns of violence and terror, including destructive riots, cross-burnings and **lynchings**. Between 1882 and 1930, 3386 African Americans, mostly males, are known to have been lynched by white mobs. No whites were criminally charged in any of these cases.

Following white rioting and lynchings in the African-American sector of Springfield, Illinois, in August 1908, the National Association for the

racially segregated public spaces were legal upon the principle of **'separate but equal'**. This was despite the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, introduced following the **American Civil War** and the ending of slavery, which guaranteed all African Americans citizenship and equal protection under the law.

This, along with the *Berea College vs Kentucky* decision of

1908, which upheld the racial segregation of schools, ushered in what is known as the **Jim Crow** era in the American South.

During this time, African Americans were reduced to the status of second-class citizens under state law. They were assigned separate (but not equal) places in all public facilities including hotels, theatres, restaurants, libraries, schools and restrooms, as well as being denied voting and other legal rights.

Throughout the United States,

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed by white liberals and African-American activists to press for racial justice. Its leading African-American spokesperson was the Harvard intellectual W.E.B. Dubois, who ran the NAACP's official journal, *The Crisis*. The association waged long campaigns and court battles against racial segregation and lynching, and its membership grew to nearly half a million by 1946.

The NAACP was successful in fighting African-American voter discrimination in Oklahoma in 1915. In the same year, it mounted a forceful **picketing** campaign against the epic, racist film,

Birth of a Nation (which glorified the white terrorist organisation, the Ku Klux Klan). After a threatened march on Washington, the NAACP also convinced President Roosevelt to establish the Fair Employment Practices Committee in 1941 to make thousands of jobs available to African Americans, especially in the armed services. The long campaign against lynching, however, failed to achieve a federal ban, due to opposition from white **Southern Democrats**.

The NAACP's greatest success was in winning the *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* case in the US Supreme Court in May 1954. The action, begun in 1951 by African-American high school students in Virginia, led to the unanimous legal decision that separate educational facilities were 'inherently unequal' and psychologically damaging to African-American children. This case is considered by many American legal scholars to be the most significant in the twentieth century. It found that racial segregation, in **conferring**

picketing a group protest outside a workplace to disrupt business or work

Southern Democrats Democratic politicians representing the Southern segregation states of the United States

conferring giving to, bestowing upon

HISTORICAL FACT

Under US Jim Crow laws, African Americans had to use separate drinking fountains and taxis from white people. They also had to swear on separate Bibles in court and to be buried in separate cemeteries in the American South. Park signs read: 'Negroes and dogs not allowed'.



Times gone by ...

Now there isn't any more hang-dog looking at a white man. We face him. We've got a proud look. The Supreme Court brought us one thing we needed: hope. For a long time it seemed as if the only way we'd ever have justice was to die and go to Heaven. But suddenly, back in 1954, it began to look like there might be a way-station on the road to Heaven. The Court had given us a place to find justice, now.

Source 2.14 African American James Stokely comments on the *Brown vs Board of Education* ruling (1954)

- 1 Why did the *Brown vs Board of Education* ruling give hope to African Americans?
- 2 After the ruling, did African Americans gain equal civil rights throughout the United States?

a 'badge of inferiority' upon African Americans, had no valid purpose in a just society and was therefore unconstitutional. The 1896 *Plessy vs Ferguson* ruling was thereby overturned and the major Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s began.

The Movement: 1955–68

In December 1955, an African-American seamstress and civil rights activist named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a racially segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Four days earlier, she had attended a meeting at the local Baptist Church, where a young Reverend Martin Luther King Jr and others spoke of the recent racial murder of a 14-year-old African-American teenager named Emmett Till. While visiting Mississippi from Chicago in the North, Till had accepted a dare to touch and proposition a white female. For this, he was tortured, mutilated and shot by a mob of white men. Though his killers admitted to abducting him, they had been acquitted in September 1955 by an all-white jury. Parks later stated that she was

thinking about Emmett Till when she refused to give up her bus seat.

Parks' action and subsequent arrest led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was organised by King and the NAACP. Approximately 42000 African-American citizens united in solidarity, refusing to use the bus service until seating was de-segregated. The protest continued for 381 days and almost bankrupted the city before success was achieved.

Parks became known as 'the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement', while King, who had employed the tactics of non-violent **civil disobedience** during the campaign, became its leader and global figurehead. By the time he was assassinated in April 1968, he was broadening the fight into an all-out attack on poverty, disadvantage and discrimination against all **marginalised** people, as well as opposition to America's military activity in Vietnam.

During the 1960s, the movement advanced from seeking legal equality to demanding

civil disobedience
peaceful refusal to obey certain laws, or pay taxes and fines

marginalised treated as insignificant