

WHITNEY

Romare Bearden  
in Black-and-  
White:  
Photomontage  
Projections 1964

January 16 - March 20, 1997

**Teacher Guide**  
pre- and post-visit materials

## **Romare Bearden in Black-and-White: Photomontage Projections 1964**

January 16 - March 20, 1997

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Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to ***Romare Bearden in Black-and-White: Photomontage Projections 1964***, an exhibition of works that fuse personal, historical, and social elements in a visual narrative of African American community life during the 1960s.

When you and your students visit the Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, you will be given a tour of the exhibition with a museum educator. The enclosed information consists of pre-visit materials designed specifically for you to use with your students in the classroom prior to your museum visit. In addition, we have included post-visit projects to use with your students after you have seen the exhibition.

To make your museum experience enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource and work with your students in the classroom before your museum visit. The pre-visit materials will serve as the starting point from which you and your students will view and discuss the exhibition.

Please ask your students to think about these themes in the classroom:

1. The civil rights struggle and the socio-political climate in the United States during the 1960s
2. Autobiography, memory, and history

When you visit the exhibition, you and your students will see a series of black and white photomontages that portray images of the city, the South, ritual, and religion. For these photomontage *Projections*, Romare Bearden constructed small collages of cut paper, photographs, and paint that he enlarged into black and white Photostats. Drawing on childhood memories and current events, Bearden merges autobiography and history to document African American experience during the civil rights struggle.

This packet contains a selection of two pre-visit projects to choose from in preparation for seeing the exhibition, and one post-visit project. It includes topics for discussion, and activities which introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. We have included writing and art projects in the packet so that you and your students can explore ideas about the exhibition in ways that relate directly to students' lives and experiences. Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to ***Romare Bearden in Black-and-White: Photomontage Projections 1964***.

Sincerely,

Dina Helal  
Head of School and Family Programs  
Whitney Museum of American Art

## Romare Bearden, 1912-1988: Biography

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“My purpose is to paint the life of my people as I know it.”  
–Romare Bearden

Various accounts of Romare Bearden’s birthdate range from 1911-1914. Most texts state that he was born on September 2, 1912 in his great-grandfather’s house in Charlotte, North Carolina. His family migrated North, spending time in Pittsburgh and Harlem. Bearden’s mother was an activist and newspaper editor. By the 1920s the Bearden home in Harlem was a gathering place for many artists of the Harlem Renaissance such as musicians Paul Robeson, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway, and writers like Langston Hughes, and W.E.B. Dubois. Summers were spent with family in Pittsburgh and Charlotte.

Bearden studied a variety of subjects, including mathematics, philosophy, art, calligraphy, and art history. He explored Old Masters, modern art, Byzantine mosaics, African art, Japanese and Chinese painting and prints, and Chinese philosophy in a search for what he called the “universals” of the human condition. He referred to these art forms as he made his work.

Although he received some recognition as an artist, Bearden’s artistic career developed slowly as he struggled for many years with the medium of painting. He continued to experiment with different styles, including abstract expressionism in the 1950s, and was still making abstract paintings when he started to work with collage. Bearden’s discovery of collage in the early 1960s coincided with his involvement in the civil rights movement. He became involved in the civil rights struggle through a group called Spiral, which was composed of artists who aimed to redefine the role of the African American artist in the community and the world at large. In 1964 Bearden began to produce photomontages after proposing a collaborative collage mural to the Spiral artists which was never executed.

From 1967-1988 Bearden combined montage and painting in large, often monumental works depicting life-size figures, and conveying Bearden’s memories of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and the rituals of African American life. In 1968 Bearden established the Cinque Gallery in New York with artists Ernest Crichlow and Norman Lewis as a showplace for young African American artists. The Museum of Modern Art gave Bearden his first retrospective exhibition in 1971, entitled *Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual*. Bearden wrote and published books and essays, and received a Guggenheim Fellowship. He received many awards, including the National Medal of Art in 1987, and honorary doctorates from universities and art institutes. His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions nationwide and worldwide, and is in the permanent collections of most major museums in the United States.

## Romare Bearden and Spiral

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In the summer of 1963, 200,000 people marched on Washington, D.C. determined to fight racism, oppression and inequity. Black-and-white images of the march were shown on television screens and in newspapers. The discourse unleashed by the march found its way into backyards, street corner discussions, artists' studios, and onto typewriters.

A. Philip Randolph, a labor leader, called for artists to help bring about "a new visual order" through participation in the civil rights movement. He asked Romare Bearden and Hale Woodruff to organize a group of artists to help define the artist's role in the movement. The group met in Bearden's loft on Canal Street. Their initial discussions focused on how artists could find a way to fulfill their social responsibility without turning their art into propaganda. At Hale Woodruff's suggestion, the group adopted the name Spiral, "because, from a starting point, it moves outward embracing all directions, yet constantly upward."

Spiral sought to resurrect the communal spirit of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1930s which had brought artists and writers together. The group first considered organizing an exhibition with "Mississippi 1964" as its theme, commemorating the violent struggle and murder of the three civil rights activists who were murdered near Philadelphia, Mississippi in the summer of 1964. Many of the artists felt that this would be too pointedly political, and Bearden suggested that they change the theme to "Black and White", a topic that was filled with political and symbolic implications. Inspired by the social advocacy of the Mexican muralists, Bearden suggested that the artists of Spiral collaborate on a mural.

Bearden had collected an enormous picture file, all cut out in shapes and stuffed in a bag. He brought it to the Spiral meeting space on Christopher Street and spread it out all over the floor, suggesting that we make a collaborative piece.  
-Emma Amos

Richard Mayhew and Reginald Gammon began to work on the mural with Bearden, but soon lost interest. Bearden proceeded on his own to create his photomontage *Projections* series.

## In Black-and-White: Romare Bearden's Photomontages

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Beginning with small boards about 8 1/2 x 11," he added cut paper, photographs, and paint. Working with a resin emulsion adhesive, he pressed the pieces down with a printmaker's brayer, or hand-roller. At the end of the day, the boards were weighted down to prevent them from warping. At the suggestion of Reginald Gammon, Bearden enlarged the small collages into Photostats, which he then mounted on masonite.

The photomontage series of 1964 that Bearden called *Projections* documented his childhood memories of Mecklenburg County in North Carolina, and his family's migration to Pittsburgh and later to Harlem. Scenes of daily life in urban and rural settings are drawn from his memories of Southern sharecroppers, journeys, ceremonies, family gatherings, and jazz music.

"I have incorporated techniques of the camera eye and the documentary film to, in some measure, personally involve the onlooker."

—Romare Bearden

Collage was not a new medium when Bearden started to use it. The collage process involving scissors, paper, and glue had been used by early modernist artists. However, Bearden was the first to use the medium to create figurative works, and to depict a full-fledged narrative about African American community life. Bearden's iconography assimilated traditional classical and religious symbols, and his compositions reveal his knowledge of the vocabulary of modernist painting. In his early photomontages, small areas of realistic space are created by photographic imagery of textiles, water, cloth, wood, leaves, grass and metal, combined in sophisticated designs of shapes and patterns. A large, superimposed human eye often dominates a face to jolt the viewer's perception. All elements are placed in reference to a simple structural scheme or a vertical or horizontal line, a right angle, a curve and countercurve.

In most instances in creating a picture, I use many disparate elements to form a figure, or part of a background. I rarely use an actual photograph of a face but build them, for example, from parts of African masks, animal eyes, marbles, corn and mossy vegetation. I then have my small original works enlarged so the mosaic-like joinings will not be so apparent.... I have found, when some detail, such as a hand or an eye, is taken out of its original context and is fractured and integrated into a different space and form configuration, it acquires a plastic quality it did not have in the photograph.

—Romare Bearden

Through the photomontage technique, Bearden developed a powerfully expressive visual narrative.

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## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1960s-1990s

### Objective:

To examine the social and historical context in which Romare Bearden made his photomontage *Projections*

. . . I do not need to go looking for “happenings”, the absurd, or the surreal, because I have seen things that neither Dali, Beckett, Ionesco, nor any of the others could have thought possible; and to see these things I did not need to do more than look out of my studio window above the Apollo theater on 125th Street. –Romare Bearden

### Suggested Discussion with Students:

Look at the chronology at the end of this document with your students.

What were the effects of segregation and discrimination on American society during the 1950s and 60s?

What were important civil rights issues during the 1950s and 60s?

How did the civil rights efforts of the 1950s and 60s change American life?

What progress was made?

What legacy did these changes leave? How do they continue to affect the way we live?

In what ways are the struggles of the civil rights movement remembered today?

Have civil rights issues changed since the 1960s? How?

What civil rights challenges does the United States face today?

### Suggested Project:

Ask each student to look at a newspaper or magazine and find an article about civil rights issues that is important to them. Topics could include issues of equality, race, gender, freedom of expression, or protection of individual rights.

Ask students to write about the topic they have chosen:

What civil rights issues are discussed in the article?

Why are they important?

What inequities do you see here?

What would you do to change these inequities?

## Pre-visit Project 2: Autobiography, Memory, History

### Objective:

To explore autobiography, memory, and the construction of history and identity

Sometimes I remember my grandfather's house  
A garden with tiger lilies. my grandmother  
waving a white apron to passing trains  
On that trestle across the clay road.  
—Romare Bearden

From "Sometimes," a poem by Bearden, published in *Romare Bearden in Black and White: Photomontage Projections*, 1964. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1997, 73.

In his *Photomontage Projections* of 1964 and subsequent paintings, Romare Bearden merged autobiography and history, drawing from his childhood memories to immortalize the rituals of African American community life. The *Photomontage Projections* centralize and document the activities of shared experience and black culture of the 1960s—rural baptisms, a burial, sharecroppers at work, jazz music, and urban street scenes of Harlem and Lenox Avenue. His poetry also draws on autobiography and memory to record his own history and heritage.

### Suggested Discussion with Students:

Is it important to preserve memories? Why or why not?  
What kind of memories are important to you?  
Do they include memories of family? friends? particular places?

How do you preserve or record important events in your life?  
In writing? Photographs? Video?  
With whom do you share your memories or experiences? How?

Do your memories change over time? How?  
In what ways do your memories define your history and who you are?

## Pre-visit Project 2: Autobiography, Memory, History (continued)

### Suggested Project:

#### Supplies

Paper, pencils or pens

Choose an event in your life that is special and important to you.

Spend five minutes doing an uninterrupted writing exercise about this event. Describe the people, place, sights, colors and sounds that you remember.

What details did you remember?

If this event is recorded in photographs or video, compare your writing with the images. What are the similarities between your memories and the visual record? What are the differences?

### Suggested Project:

“To me, music gives ordinary life a sense of color, fire, and elemental emotion.”  
–Romare Bearden

Ask students to think of a piece of music that they listened to a year ago or further back in time.

Where did you first hear this music?  
Do you have this music on tape or CD?  
Was it played on the radio?

Does this music have lyrics?  
What meaning do the lyrics have for you?  
What memories or associations does this music conjure up for you?

Listen to this piece of music at home.

Have your associations with this music changed over time? How?

Write a short piece about the memories or associations this music has for you.

## Pre-visit Project 3: Ritual, Memory, Music

For younger students:

### Objective:

To explore rituals in students' lives

### Suggested Discussion with Students:

#### Ritual

An activity or ceremony carried out or regularly repeated in a particular way, and determined by custom, etiquette, or beliefs.

Ask students to think about and discuss some of the rituals or ceremonies that they have experienced. Think about everyday activities and special occasions, such as:

- Brushing your teeth
- Going to school
- Hanging out with friends
- Eating a meal
- Watching TV
- Celebrating a birthday
- Having a party
- A family reunion
- A wedding
- A holiday celebration

Which of these activities are carried out in  
(a) a special way? (b) the same or similar way each time?

Which activities or rituals are important to you? Why?  
Which activities or rituals include family? Relatives? Friends?

What helps you remember important events in your life?  
Family stories? photographs? video?  
Which details do you remember most? Food? Customs? Clothing? Objects?

What do these events and rituals tell you about yourself? Your community? Your culture?

## Pre-visit Project 3: Ritual, Memory, Music (continued)

### Suggested Project:

#### Supplies

Paper, pencils, crayons or markers

Think of a special event like a birthday, party, wedding, family reunion, or holiday celebration.

- Where did this event take place?
- What special ritual(s) happened during this event?
- Who was there?
- What was everyone wearing?

Use your memory and imagination to write a story or poem about this event. Describe the people, sights, and sounds, where this event took place, and the special ritual(s) that happened. When you have written your story or poem, draw a picture of this event. Ask students to share their special event with the class.

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### i live in music

#### Objective:

To explore the influence of music and sounds on students' lives

Music has always been important for me the way it has been important for many blacks. Blacks have made their own sound, their own musical language like jazz. It is theirs and they identify with it. In a world of constantly changing identities, certain forms of music represent a solid identity for blacks.

—Romare Bearden

Romare Bearden's love and knowledge of music—jazz, spirituals, big band, ragtime, and gut-bucket blues—defines both thematic and formal aspects of his collages and paintings. Bearden referred to the “call and recall” of the blues and jazz tradition in the way he would paint a theme numerous times. Each time the arrangement of shapes, forms, colors, and textures reinterprets the same subject. In the *Projections* photomontages, Bearden creates visual rhythms and a sense of sound through color and the arrangement of figures and objects in space.

## Pre-visit Project 3: Ritual, Memory, Music (continued)

### Suggested Discussion with Students:

Read this poem with your students.

Ntozake Shange  
*i live in music*

<http://www.afropoets.net/ntozakeshange10.html>

What does the poet mean when she says “i live in music”?  
What sounds would music make if it was “cold like winter”? or “hot like peppers”?  
How could the poet “walk round in a piano”?  
How could the poet “wear sound on (her) fingers”?  
What sounds would you hear if you washed in music or smelled it?  
What sounds do you hear on the street where you live? at school?

What kind of music do you listen to?  
What is your favorite music? Why is it your favorite?  
Which musical instruments do you hear in your favorite music?  
Does your music also have words? What do they say?

What sounds do you hear when you wake up in the morning?  
On the way to school?  
At school?  
When you have breakfast, lunch, or dinner?  
When you go home?  
When you go to bed?  
At night?

Which sounds do you hear all the time?  
What kind of unusual sounds do you hear?

### Suggested Project:

Write a sound poem!

Think of all the sounds that you hear from when you wake up to when you go to sleep.  
Say the sounds out loud.  
What would they look like in words?  
Invent words for your sounds. Make a list of your sound words.  
Use your words to describe how you live in music.

## Post-visit Project 1: Memory Photomontage

### Suggested Project:

“The artist needs to be like a whale swimming along with his mouth wide open, absorbing everything that happens along the way.”  
–Romare Bearden

#### Supplies

Photographic images from magazines or newspapers, 8 1/2 x 11” paper or card, colored paper scraps, fabric, wallpaper, paint, scissors, glue, glue sticks, photocopy machine, 11 x 17” paper

Ask students to use their memory writing from Pre-visit Project 2 or think of an event or celebration that they were part of, such as a birthday, wedding, party, holiday celebration, family reunion, or award ceremony. Have them make a photomontage of this event.

While students are making their photomontages, play a selection of music. Include students’ choices of music and jazz, eg: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines. Ask the music teacher for additional suggestions.

Select and cut out photographic images from magazines and newspapers.

If you have access to a photocopy machine at school, find photographs of yourself and your family to copy and incorporate into your photomontage. Experiment with enlarging, reducing, cropping, or repeating images. Combine the images with paint to make your photomontage.

Think about composition, colors, textures, patterns, and how the parts of your piece will be arranged:

Where does the event take place? indoors or outdoors?  
Will your composition consist of vertical, horizontal or diagonal lines? curves?  
What will you include in the background?  
Will you include soft or hard, smooth or jagged edges? Geometric or organic shapes?  
What shapes, patterns and textures could represent buildings? a room? vegetation? objects?

Think about rhythms, and how you could express sound in your piece.  
Experiment with cutting and tearing the images.

Arrange and rearrange your shapes, images and patterns like a musician would arrange musical notes. Think about how shapes and images stand out or weave together.

## Post-visit Project 1: Memory Photomontage (continued)

### Suggested Project (continued):

Think about how you can construct people from different images:

- Which details or fragments will you use?
- Eyes, mouths, hands, feet, clothing, shoes, hats?
- What scale will they be? Enlarged or small?
- What sounds would you hear?

Try different arrangements of your images before you glue them onto the paper or card. Think of a title for your photomontage.

Use the photocopy machine to make enlarged black and white copies of each students' photomontage. Use the photo option on your Xerox machine and 11 x 17" paper.

Discuss student pieces with the class.

- What are the predominant shapes, textures, and patterns in your photomontage?
  - What mood does your piece convey? How?
  - What memories does it portray?
  - Does your photomontage have a rhythm?
  - Does it communicate sounds or music?
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## Post-visit Project 2: Neighborhood Photomontage

For younger students:

“To make art, you must become a blues singer--only you sing on the canvas. You improvise--you find the rhythm and structure as you go along--then the song is you.”

–Romare Bearden

### Suggested Project:

#### Supplies

Tape/CD player, tapes or CDs, magazines, newspapers, colored paper scraps, fabric, wallpaper, scissors, glue, glue sticks

Make a photomontage of the neighborhood where your school is, including the buildings, people and sights that you see on the streets.

**(a)** Ask your students to divide into groups of 4-6.

Ask each group to choose a block or street in their school neighborhood.

If possible, take your students on a tour of the neighborhood. Spend some time observing, discussing, taking notes, and collecting information about what you see.

What kind of buildings do you see? What is their purpose?

What other structures do you see?

What are people doing on the street?

How do people interact?

Look at what people are wearing.

What styles do you see?

You could choose one item of clothing to look at, such as shoes or hats.

When students have gathered their information, ask them to discuss and summarize their observations to present to the class.

What did you learn about the neighborhood?

What do the buildings tell you about the neighborhood?

Was there anything you hadn't noticed before?

**(b)** In the classroom: give each group a piece of railroad board or colored card (c. 20" x 30") for their photomontage.

## Post-visit Project 2: Neighborhood Photomontage (continued)

### Suggested Project (continued):

While students are making their photomontages, play a selection of music, including jazz. eg: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines. Ask the music teacher for additional suggestions.

Cut out images, shapes, textures, and patterns from magazines, newspapers, colored paper, and fabric.

If you have access to a photocopier at school, ask your students to find photographs of themselves and their families to copy and incorporate into their photomontage. Experiment with enlarging, reducing, cropping, or repeating images.

Think about colors, textures, patterns, and how the parts of your piece will be arranged:

Will your piece have vertical, horizontal or diagonal lines? curves?

What will you include in the background?

Will you include soft or hard, smooth or jagged edges? Geometric or organic shapes?

What shapes, patterns and textures could represent buildings? vegetation? objects?

Will you include some views of what happens inside the buildings?

Think about how you can construct people from different images:

Which details or fragments will you use?

Eyes, mouths, hands, feet, clothing, shoes, hats?

What scale will they be? enlarged or small?

What sounds would you hear?

Think about rhythms, and how you could express sound in your piece.

Experiment with cutting and tearing shapes and images.

Arrange and rearrange your shapes, images and patterns like a musician would arrange musical notes. Think about how the pieces stand out or weave together.

Try different arrangements of your images before you glue them onto the paper or card. Think of a title for your photomontage.

Ask each group to discuss their photomontages with the class.

Display the photomontages together for a composite view of your neighborhood.

## Post-visit Project 2: Neighborhood Photomontage (continued)

### Suggested Project (continued):

Which colors, shapes, patterns, and textures do you see in your neighborhood view?

What rhythms does your piece express?

Does your piece communicate the sounds of the street? How?

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#### Additional Resources

<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/education/education.shtml>

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## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s

### Timeline

- 1951** A municipal court in Washington, D. C. rules that racial segregation in restaurants is illegal.
- 1952** For the first year in 71 years of tabulation, no lynchings are reported in the United States.
- 1953** The black community of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, begins a mass boycott of segregated buses.
- 1954** Brown vs. Board of Education: the Supreme Court declares in a unanimous ruling that racial segregation in schools is unconstitutional.
- 1955** December 1: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man and is arrested. The Montgomery (Alabama) Bus Boycott begins on December 5. This leads to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association. Led by Martin Luther King, Jr., the group forces the bus company to desegregate its facilities and marks the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.
- Emmett Till, an African-American teenager, is abducted, beaten, shot, and thrown into a river near Greenwood, Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman.
- The Interstate Commerce Commission outlaws segregated buses and waiting rooms for interstate passengers, but the order is generally ignored.
- 1956** February 3: Autherine Lucy attempts to enter the University of Alabama for graduate study, and white students riot for three days. First suspended “for her own safety”, she is expelled permanently by the trustees. The university remains segregated for seven more years.
- Southern senators, led by Harry Byrd of Virginia, sign a “Southern Manifesto” denouncing the Supreme Court’s desegregation decision.
- December 21: Montgomery buses are integrated, and the bus boycott is called off after 381 days.
- 1957** January: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLS) is founded and Martin Luther King Jr. is chosen president.
- July: Tuskegee, Alabama is redistricted in order to exclude most black voters from the city. This leads to a selective buying campaign against white merchants, lasting four years. The vote is restored to black citizens in 1961.
- Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas calls out the National Guard to prevent nine black students from entering all-white Central High School in Little Rock. A court order requires Faubus to withdraw them. After threats of mob violence, President Eisenhower sends federal paratroopers to enforce integration and places 10,000 National Guardsmen on federal service. The troops remain for the rest of the year to protect the students, who are guided by Daisy Bates, president of the state NAACP.
- Congress approves the first civil rights bill for African-Americans since Reconstruction. The Civil Rights Commission is established.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

- 1958** A successful voter registration drive in Fayette and Haywood counties, Tennessee, leads to severe economic reprisals. Many black sharecroppers are evicted. In 1960 “tent city” is set up and a national appeal for aid is made.
- 10,000 students, led by Jackie Robinson, Harry Belafonte, and A. Philip Randolph, participate in a youth march for integrated schools in Washington, D.C.
- 1960** February 1: Students protest segregation by nonviolent sit-ins at whites-only lunch counters. Four black students—Ezell Blair, Jr., Joseph McNeil, David Richmond, and Franklin McClain—sit in at the Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The action is repeated by college students throughout the South. Sympathetic picketing and boycotts occur in the North. Within a year and a half, demonstrations have been held in more than 100 cities and towns in every southern and border state.
- April 15-17: Student demonstrators meet at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded.
- October 19: Dr Martin Luther King Jr. is jailed in Atlanta. John F. Kennedy telephones Coretta Scott King to express concern. This act is credited with gaining him the election in November.
- 1961** May 4: Freedom Riders, led by James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) leave Washington, D.C. by bus in order to expose illegal segregation practices in terminal accommodations.
- May 14: A white mob burns a Freedom Riders’ bus near Anniston, Alabama. Klansmen in Birmingham beat Riders aboard a second bus. The Freedom Rides continue.
- September: Segregation in all interstate transportation facilities is declared illegal by the Interstate Commerce Commission.
- 1962** James Meredith becomes the first black student at the University of Mississippi. 3,000 troops are called in to quell riots. Troops remain at the university until Meredith graduates in 1963.
- 1963** Fannie Lou Hamer passed her voter registration test, but was arrested and badly beaten in jail. In 1968 Fannie Lou Hamer was the first black woman to run for Congress from the second district in Mississippi.
- Sit-ins, wade-ins, freedom rides, limited boycotts, and other types of creative disorder gain public acceptance and convince many whites of the legitimacy and morality of blacks’ demands.
- The last state to maintain total university segregation, South Carolina agrees to integrate Clemson College.
- February: The Supreme Court reverses a conviction of 107 African-Americans arrested in a 1961 integration demonstration in Columbia, South Carolina.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

- 1963 (continued)** March: Civil rights demonstrations promoting voting rights take place in Greenwood, Mississippi.
- April 3: Major demonstrations are launched in Birmingham, Alabama by the SCLS to protest segregation. They continue throughout May. Alabama officials arrest civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. after civil rights marches in Birmingham. Pickets and sit-ins at some stores in Birmingham resulted in the jailing of 2,400 people. By order of Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor, dogs and firehoses were directed at a large crowd of street demonstrators that included many high school and younger students. The photograph of a police dog leaping at the throat of a schoolboy outraged public sentiment, and mobilized widespread public support for the civil rights movement.
- May 10: Birmingham's white leaders agree to a desegregation plan. That night, Dr. King's motel headquarters and his brother's home are bombed and blacks riot until dawn.
- May: The Supreme Court rules that convictions by lower courts in cases of sit-ins to protest discriminatory practices by retail establishments were unconstitutional.
- June: President Kennedy calls for new legislation and racial integration in a nation-wide television address. He said that he was going to introduce a law that would give all Americans the right to be served in public places.
- June 11: President Kennedy federalizes Alabama's National Guard and orders Governor George C. Wallace to allow two black students to be enrolled at the University of Alabama. Three Alabama cities desegregate in the face of Governor Wallace's continued opposition.
- June 12: NAACP leader Medgar Evers, 37, is murdered in the doorway of his home at Jackson, Mississippi.
- June 19: President Kennedy asks Congress to enact far-reaching civil rights legislation that will include provisions to bar discrimination of privately owned public facilities. The Civil Rights Bill would ban segregation on all public transportation systems, force school integration, and guarantee the right to register to vote.
- More than 200,000 people march in Detroit to demand immediate steps for equality.
- July: Blacks demonstrate for jobs at New York City construction sites.
- The Civil Rights Act is passed and signed into law after a Senate filibuster was broken under administrative pressure and public indignation. A "white backlash" against the civil rights movement developed during the 1964 presidential campaign.
- August 28: A massive civil rights march takes place in Washington, D.C. More than 250,000 people demonstrate support for civil rights. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C. The speech commemorates the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

**1963**  
**(continued)** September 15: A bomb explodes at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church while 200 are attending Sunday services. Four black schoolchildren are killed and 19 people injured. This incident provokes race riots in which police dogs are used to attack civil rights demonstrators. Two black schoolboys are killed later that same day.

President Kennedy orders the Alabama National Guard to enforce the integration of the University of Alabama.

October: US Labor Department orders an end to all discrimination in apprenticeship programs.

November: Lee Harvey Oswald assassinates President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as president on the airplane to Washington, D. C.

US steel unions agree to promote more jobs for blacks.

Malcolm X founds the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

**1964** January: In his State of the Union Message, President Johnson calls for wide-ranging programs to end discrimination.

March: Two-day race riots take place in Jacksonville, Florida.

May: The Supreme Court orders Prince Edward County, VA to reopen its public schools which were closed in 1959 to avoid desegregation.

June 10: The US Senate invokes cloture and then passes a major civil rights bill. US steel companies agree to promote racial equality in the steel industry.

July 18: NLRB votes that racial discrimination by a union constitutes an unfair labor practice.

Race riot in Harlem.

Atlanta restaurateur Lester G. Maddox closes his Pickrick restaurant rather than submit to federal government orders that he serve blacks as well as whites. In 1967 he becomes governor of Georgia.

In this "Freedom Summer", the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) sends 1,000 people--among them students and teachers--to Mississippi to encourage, train, and sustain blacks in registering and voting. The freedom workers are harassed by bombs and beaten. Three civil rights workers: James Charney, Mickey Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman are abducted on June 21. Their bodies are found on August 4 near Philadelphia, Miss.

August: Race riots in Philadelphia.

September: The FBI reports that it has found no systematic organization behind the 1964 summer race riots in nine northern cities.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

**1964**  
**(continued)**      October: The FBI arrests four Philadelphia, Mississippi officials on charges of depriving blacks of their civil rights.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

December: The FBI arrests 21 white men in Mississippi in connection with the murder of three civil rights workers in June.

**1965**      Urban ghetto conditions revealed high unemployment, the stalling of poverty programs, inadequate housing, and exploitation by businesses. President Johnson outlines the Great Society Program to attack poverty.

February 21: Malcolm X is assassinated at the Audobon Ballroom in New York.

March 7: "Bloody Sunday". A march to dramatize the demand for voting rights was halted with bloodshed outside Selma, Alabama. Civil rights workers are charged by police on horses as they attempt to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In nearby Marion, a local youth, Jimmie Lee Jackson, is shot by a trooper on February 18 and later dies.

March 21-25: A massive march from Montgomery to Selma draws civil rights activists from all over the country. Viola Luzzo, a white woman from Detroit, is killed on the last day.

August 6: President Johnson signs into law the Voting Rights Act, providing for federal registration of black voters to ensure their protection.

August 11-15: Race riots erupt in the Watts section of Los Angeles, in the most violent urban conflict since World War II. The riots were provoked by the forcible arrest of a young African-American driver, the clubbing of a bystander by the police, and the seizing of a young black woman falsely accused of spitting on the police. 34 people were killed, most of them African-American, hundreds were injured, and 4,000 were arrested.

#### **1966**

Black Panther Party is founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Black Power movement is promoted by Stokely Carmichael, leader of the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), which advocates militant direct action instead of nonviolence. Floyd McKissick becomes the national chairman of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and aligns it with Carmichael's Black Power movement. CORE endorses the black power concept.

June: James Meredith is shot and wounded while leading a one-man "March against Fear" in Mississippi. Leaders of three major civil rights organizations continue the march.

Stokely Carmichael popularizes the slogan, "black power".

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., SNCC, and CORE take positions opposing the war in Vietnam.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

- 1966**  
**(continued)** SCLC begins a massive campaign in Chicago, which goes through spring and summer. Urban rebellions take place in Cleveland. Riots in major cities continue through 1967.
- SNCC votes to exclude white members.
- 1967** Summer race riots in Newark, NJ, Detroit, MI., and 30 other cities leave almost 100 dead and more than 2,000 injured.
- Thurgood Marshall, the first black Supreme Court Justice, is appointed.
- Carl B. Stokes (Democrat, Cleveland, Ohio) and Richard G. Hatcher (Democrat, Gary, Indiana) are elected the first black mayors of major US cities.
- By summer, more than half of African-Americans eligible to vote are registered in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina.
- 1968** April 4: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated while helping striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, in their quest for union recognition and improved wages. Mass riots break out in more than 40 cities.
- A Civil Rights Act is passed, increasing penalties against those depriving people of their civil rights, but exempting law enforcement or armed forces personnel engaged in suppressing a riot or civil disturbance.
- Representative Shirley Chisholm (Democrat, New York) becomes the first black woman elected to the US Congress.
- May/June: The SCLC go ahead with the Poor People's campaign planned by Dr. King. Thousands camp out in "Resurrection City" in Washington, D.C.
- The Supreme Court, citing the 1866 Civil Rights Act, prohibit discrimination in the rental and sale of all housing. On August 1, another act is signed, authorizing the construction or rehabilitation of more than 1.7 million housing units within three years.
- 1969** The Nixon administration seeks to delay integration of certain Southern school districts. Tempers flare in the North and South over the busing of students from their school districts to achieve integration.
- Chicago police kill two leaders of the Black Panther Party.
- An increasing number of black officials are elected to public office. Beginning with a membership of six in the House of Representatives, the Congressional Black Caucus is formed. Over the next decade the caucus grows to more than 20 members.

## Pre-visit Project 1: The Civil Rights Struggle: A Selected Chronology 1950s-1990s (continued)

### Timeline (continued)

- 1970s** Congress passes the Equal Employment Opportunities Act in 1972, allowing for preferential hiring and promotion of women and minorities. In 1979 and 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds affirmative action hiring quotas, which promote hiring of women and minorities, as remedy for past discrimination.
- Key Supreme Court decisions in the 1970s condemn racially discriminatory hiring practices, supported awards of back pay to victims of job discrimination, and generally supported the principle that affirmative action by private employers was permissible.
- 1980s**  
The Reagan administration policies ran counter to many of the trends viewed as progressive by civil rights leaders. Administration programs called for limiting or ending school busing for purposes of integration, supporting federal tax credits for parents who send their children to parochial or private schools, and putting curbs on affirmative action initiatives. These debates continue today.
- B'Nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League study reports a sharp increase in Ku Klux Klan activities in the United States.
- 1986** The United States officially observes Martin Luther King Jr. day for the first time.
- 1991** January: The Los Angeles Police Department comes under fire following an incident in which officers were videotaped beating black motorist Rodney King, who had been stopped for a traffic violation.
- 1992** April 29-May 3 - South Central Los Angeles is rocked by riots following the acquittal of four white police officers on all but one charge in the 1991 beating of black motorist Rodney King.

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