**Civil Rights in the USA: Government intervention and legislation 1945-1968**

*29 October 1947: “To secure these rights” report was published.*

President Truman had authorised the establishment of a committee on civil rights to investigate the state of race relations in America. The report offered three main reasons why civil rights abuses should be redressed in the USA on moral grounds. It stated that discrimination was morally wrong; on economic grounds – discrimination harmed the economy; and on international grounds – discrimination damaged US foreign relations. The report went on to make 35 recommendations for action, including: a federal anti-lynching law and the establishment of a permanent FEPC.

*26 July 1948: President Truman issued Executive Order 9981.*

Designed to bring an end to segregation in the armed forces.

*17 May 1954: Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas legal case.*

Chief Justice Earl Warren ruled that separating white and coloured children in public schools had “a detrimental effect upon the coloured children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group.” This landmark legal decision called for the desegregation of all public schools throughout the nation.

*1955: Brown II*

This called for the desegregation of US schools “with all deliberated speed.”

*June 1956: Browder v Gayle*

In June 1956 the Supreme Court ruled that "the enforced segregation of Negro and white passengers on motor buses operating in the City of Montgomery violates the Constitution and laws of the United States," because the conditions deprived people of equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment.

*The 1957 Civil Rights Act:*

The Commission shall ... investigate allegations in writing under oath or affirmation that certain citizens of the US are being deprived of their right to vote and have that vote counted by reason of their colour, race, religion, or natural origin: which writing, under oath or affirmation, shall set forth the facts upon which such belief or beliefs are based.

No person, whether acting under colour of law or otherwise, shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten or coerce any other person for the purpose of interfering with the right of such other person to vote or to vote as he may chose, or of causing such other person to vote for, or not to vote for, any candidate for the office of President, Vice President, presidential elector, Member of the Senate, or Member of the House of Representatives, Delegates or Commissioners from the Territories or possessions, at any general, or primary election held solely or in part for the purpose of selecting or electing any such candidate.

* A bipartisan Civil Rights Commission to investigate violations of the law was established also.

*The 1960 Civil Rights Act:*

Whoever transports or aids and helps another in transporting in interstate or foreign commerce any explosive, with the knowledge or intent that it will be used to damage or destroy any building or other real or personal property for the purpose of interfering with its use for educational, religious, charitable, residential business, or civic objectives or of intimidating any person pursuing such objectives, shall be subject to imprisonment for not more than one year, or a fine of not more than $1,000, or both: and if personal injury results shall be subject to imprisonment for not more than ten years or a fine of not more than $10,000, or both; and if death results shall be subject to imprisonment for any term of years or for life, but the court may impose the death penalty if the jury so recommends.

* This provided for the enrolment of qualified blacks by voting referees appointed by Federal district court judges.

*1960: Boynton v Virginia*

It held that racial segregation in public transportation was illegal because such segregation violated the Interstate Commerce Act, which broadly forbade discrimination in interstate passenger transportation

*The 1964 Civil Rights Act:*

All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services and facilities and privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, as defined in this section, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, colour, religion, or national origin.

Each of the following establishments which serves the public is a place of accommodation within the meaning of this title if its operations affect commerce, or if discrimination or segregation by it is supported by State action:

1. Any inn, hotel, motel, or other establishment which provides lodging to transient guests, other than an establishment located within a building which contains not more than five rooms for rent or hire and which is actually occupied by the proprietor of such establishment as his residence;
2. Any restaurant, cafeteria, lunchroom, lunch counter, soda fountain, or other facility principally engaged in selling food for consumption on the premises, including, but not limited to, any such facility located in the premises of any retail establishment; or any gasoline station;
3. Any motion picture house, theatre, concert hall sports arena, stadium or other place of exhibition or entertainment ...

The provisions of this title shall not apply to a private club or other establishment not in fact open to the public.

*The 1965 Voting Rights Act:*

Section 4 of the Act abolished literacy tests, poll taxes, and all other devices used to discriminate against minority voters.

Section 5 of the Act mandated that any change in election law, including something as small as moving a polling place, must be pre-cleared or officially approved beforehand, either through the US Justice Department or through the Federal district court in the District of Columbia.

*29 July 1967, President Johnson issued Executive Order 11365:*

This established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder, also known as the Kerner Commission to investigate the reasons for the urban riots which occurred in 1965 and 1966.

*March 1968: Kerner Report*

This blamed the urban summer race riots post 1965 on “pervasive discrimination and segregation in employment, education and housing.” The Kerner Report advised that further racial tension could be avoided only by huge Federal government efforts to create jobs, improve education and clear the slums. The report concluded that the nation was “moving towards two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal.”

*1968: Civil Rights Act aka The Fair Housing Act*

Prohibited racial discrimination in the sale or letting of housing.

**Points to consider**

* What rights did these pieces of legislation secure for blacks?
* What limitations were there to these pieces of legislation (if any)?
* Identify the key events which led to the passing of each piece of legislation /government intervention.
* Who or what was the most responsible for securing de jure rights for blacks in this period?