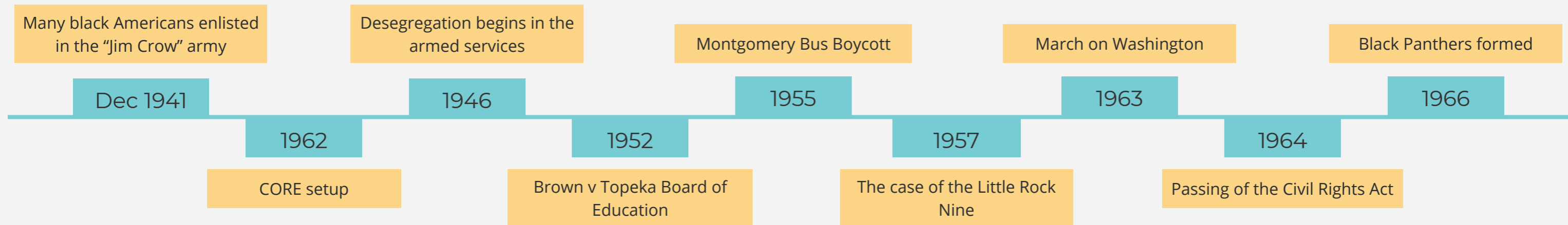


Key Question 3 : Why was it difficult for black Americans to gain equal rights between 1941 - 1970?

Timeline of events



Key words

Segregation	enforced separation of racial groups in society
Jim Crow Laws	laws aimed to segregate and discriminate
Jim Crow Army	segregated regiments in the US armed forces
Sit-in	occupying an area as a form of passive resistance
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
Supreme Court	highest judicial body in the USA
Nation of Islam	African-American political and religious movement
Black Power	A movement based on racial pride and empowerment

The contribution of black Americans to the war effort

- On the outbreak of the war, many black Americans enlisted in "**Jim Crow**" segregated regiments carrying out menial tasks and dangerous work rather than seeing active service.
- As the war progressed, black Americans began to see action and served with distinction namely the **Tuskagee airmen** and the **761st Tank Battalion**
- **General Eisenhower** showed his support for integrated units and by the end of the war black American servicemen were serving in mixed units.
- By the end of the war many black Americans had become officers.
- De-segregation in the navy happened in 1946 and other branches of the military by 1948.
- With many black Americans on active service, opportunities improved for male and females in factories. They were still treated as second class citizens which gave rise to the "**Double V**" campaign – victory abroad and victory at home.
- Awareness of discrimination during the war led to increased membership of the **NAACP** and numbers rose from 50k to 450k.
- **CORE** was formed in 1942 and advocated peaceful resistance.

Civil Rights Legislation

- Civil Rights Act 1964 – banned racial discrimination in employment and gave black Americans equal rights to enter public places.
- Voting Rights Act 1965 – stopped racial discrimination over the right to vote and ended literacy tests.
- Supreme Court Ruling 1967 – ruled that state laws banning interracial marriages were unconstitutional.
- Fair Housing Act 1968 – racial discrimination made illegal in the property market.

Important concept

The war furthered civil rights but the pace was slow. After 1945, there were legal test cases that declared segregation unconstitutional but change remained slow and was regionalised. Racism continued even after governmental legislation was implemented.

I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear. - MLK

The issue of education

The injustice of segregation was highlighted in the issue of education:

- The first test case to challenge segregation occurred in the mid-west state of Kansas. The father of Linda Brown wanted her to attend a nearby white school and with the help of the **NAACP** took on the **Topeka Board of Education**. After losing in the state court the NAACP took the case to the **Supreme Court** who ruled that racial segregation in public places was **unconstitutional**.
- In September 1957, nine black American students attempted to enrol at the white-only **Little Rock High School**, Arkansas which was their right. The governor called in National Guardsmen to prevent the students from entering prompting **President Eisenhower** to send in federal troops to protect them.

Both cases showed that the issue of civil rights was now central to US politics and could no longer be ignored.

The roles of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X

Martin Luther King was a dominant figure in the fight for civil rights:

- His beliefs were based on non-violent, passive resistance rather than violence and favoured sit-ins, marches and boycotts.
- He came to prominence during the **Montgomery Bus Boycott** of 1955 which resulted in the **Supreme Court declaring** that segregation on buses was unconstitutional.
- King was a gifted orator and became the main voice of the **SCLC**.
- The high-mark of his ministry was the **March on Washington** in 1963 where he delivered his "I have a dream" speech to over 250k black and white supporters which put pressure on the president to consider the issue of civil rights.

Malcolm X had a huge impact on young black Americans:

- In 1952, Malcolm Little joined the **Nation of Islam** and, rejecting his "slave" name, changed his surname to "X".
- Rejecting King's peaceful approach he advocated violence and race war in order to achieve a separate black state.
- In 1964 he left the Nation of Islam and formed the Muslim Mosque Inc and the Organisation for Afro-American Unity.
- He encouraged black Americans to be proud of their heritage and to improve self-esteem and his ideas formed the basis of radical movements such as Black Power and the Black Panthers.