

SQUEAKY CLEAN

PRESENTS

**OUR NEW PROGRAM FOR THE MARTIN LUTHER KING
HOLIDAY, BLACK HISTORY MONTH OR ANYTIME**

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

A MULTIMEDIA HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 1954 - 1968



SQUEAKY CLEAN has been presenting musical, multimedia history programs in area schools since 1988.

Our newest program presents the tumultuous events of the American Civil Rights movement in an engaging, uplifting manner. Narration, still photos and videos are skillfully combined with live musical performances of songs from the era. The audience will join in singing and clapping along to the many “Freedom Songs” featured in the program.

The program has been designed for both children and adult audiences. The narration uses simple language and includes brief explanations of unfamiliar terms, such as “segregation,” “boycott” and “NAACP.” Younger elementary school audiences will benefit from classroom preparation in which the history of racial discrimination in America can be discussed. Many children, growing up in an America governed by an African-American President, may need support in order to understand the racially-divided America of past generations.

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The recorded narration of the program is the voice of an African-American grandmother reflecting on all the changes she has witnessed during her lifetime. As she watches the inauguration of Barack Obama, she says :*"I was wondering how to tell my grandchildren how all this changed in my lifetime; all about the strange way of life that kept blacks and whites apart in the South; about the brave men and women who risked their lives fighting for justice...."* [Song: "A

Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke]

The narrator talks about aspects of life in the South and explains the meaning of "segregation" and "Jim Crow." She then speaks of the changes that occurred when the black soldiers who returned from World War II moved to Northern cities in search of a better life. [Song: "A Place In The Sun" originally performed by Stevie Wonder] During the song, we show pictures of "The Great Migration" that brought many blacks out of the South.

The program then presents the concept of "separate but equal" schools that was upended by the brave families who were the plaintiffs in the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. This is where we present one of the central themes of the program: *'The law must treat everyone the same.'* Segregation did not end right away, of course, but black and white children started to make friends once they shared a classroom. Among their shared interests was a new style of music called "Rock and Roll." [Song: "Tweedledee" originally performed by Laverne Baker]. We show photos and videos of the many black performers (and even some integrated vo-



cal groups) that were popular with young people in the early years of rock and roll.



The story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott may already be familiar to many students. We emphasize her courage and the perseverance of the black community that eventually brought an end to segregated public transportation in the city. [Song: “Sister Rosa Mambo” written by Glenn Manion, adapted from the Neville Brothers’ “Sister Rosa” and the Hawkettes’ “Mardi Gras Mambo”]

The brave black students who were the first to integrate their schools faced terrible hardship and abuse. The narrator tells the story of the Little Rock Nine, who integrated Little Rock High School in 1957, and the story of Ruby Bridges, who was the only black student in her New Orleans elementary school. We are careful to balance the troubling scenes of hatred with incidents of triumph and compassion: Ernest Green’s 1958 graduation, the eventual reconciliation between the Little Rock Nine and their tormentors and the friendship between Ruby Bridges and her first grade teacher. [Song; “Why Am I Treated So Bad” originally performed by the Staple Singers]

The next scene tells the story of the sit-ins that led to desegregated lunch counters in the South. [Song: “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table” a Freedom Song adapted from an African-American spiritual] This is followed by the story of the Freedom Riders, who risked their lives to bring attention to segregation in Interstate travel.



Many were arrested and kept their spirits up by singing songs like “We Shall Not Be Moved.” *“In November 1961, new laws were put into effect that removed “white” and “colored” signs from bus terminals and made*

sure that all travelers were treated equally,” [Song: “If You Miss Me At The Back of the Bus” written by Carver Neblett and popularized by Pete Seeger]

1963 was the most climactic year of the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King and his associates began an effort to end discrimination in Birmingham, Alabama, widely viewed as “America’s Most Segregated City.” The campaign was met with



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er resistance from local authorities, in the person of the brutal police commissioner “Bull” Connor and by the shadowy terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan. Newspaper images of Bull Connor’s use of firehoses and police dogs against unarmed demonstrators provoked universal moral outrage. We used great care to select images that avoid graphic depiction of violence while still presenting what happened. [Song: “What The World Needs Now” written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David]



The March on Washington in August 1963 was a triumphant demonstration of the power of American democracy to bring justice to the oppressed. The peaceful gathering of a quarter of a million people of all races raised many hopes. We excerpt the video of Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech and recreate Peter, Paul and Mary’s stirring

performance of “If I Had A Hammer.” But the euphoria of the summer came crashing down that fall, with news of the fatal church bombing in Birmingham and the death of President Kennedy.

But triumph was born of tragedy, as President Johnson forcefully championed passage of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which put an end to Jim Crow, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. [Song: Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody

Turn Me Round” Freedom Song recorded by The Roots for the PBS Special “Soundtrack For A Revolution”]

Dr. King then turned his attention to the economic issues that challenged poor people, regardless of their race. In a Memphis speech in 1968, he hinted that he might not live to see the day when his work would be completed and the following day, his name was added to the list of those who gave their lives in the struggle. [Song: “Blackbird” written by Paul McCartney of the Beatles as a response to racial tensions in the United States]



But the work of Dr. King to bring justice to the oppressed continues to this day. His legacy is best symbolized by our leading the audience in singing the song most closely associated with the Civil Rights Movement: “We Shall Overcome.”

Suggested resources:

Anderson, J. (2012). *The Civil Rights Movement (Essential Events series)*. Edina, MN: ABDO Publishing Company.

Bjornlund, L. (2013). *The Civil Rights Movement (Understanding American History series)*. San Diego: ReferencePoint Press.

Brimmer, L. (2010). *Birmingham Sunday*. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek.

Capek, M. (2014). *Civil Rights Movement (Essential Library of Social Change series)*. Edina, MN: ABDO Publishing Company.

McWorter, D. (2004). *A Dream Of Freedom*. New York: Scholastic.

Shelton, P. & Colon, R. (2010). *Child of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Wade Books.