

The Children's March: A Story of Courage

Naomi Cramer

Junior Division

Individual Exhibit

Process paper: 489

Student-composed words: 500

Process Paper

I have always cared about and valued justice. When things aren't fair for me or others, it troubles me. So naturally, I am very interested in civil rights movements. I like knowing what people are doing to stop injustice, and how it is effective. The Children's March is also especially moving to me because it shows that young people can also be part of the struggle, and that they do make a difference.

I first heard about my topic in fifth grade from a picture book. I thought it was fascinating, how the child protesters went to jail and how they stayed strong throughout the whole affair, and how, at the end, the march was successful. When it was time to choose topics, I dove deeper and found that this was actually a very critical movement, although not very well known. It was key to breaking the political barrier of segregation, although attitudes were not thoroughly changed.

I used a large variety of primary sources in this project, most of which I came across on our class's field trip to the Boise State University library. I found several newspaper articles that were written during the march, as well as telegrams stating various people's thoughts and perspectives on the event. I also used numerous websites and a couple of books with quotes and interviews from the march participants. I found that the most helpful sources were the primary sources written during the protests, because they included more detail than the secondary ones.

I chose to make an exhibit because I love to craft as an outlet for my creativity. I was able to use my original artwork to represent my topic, and take advantage of my resources to make something neat, organized, and imaginative. The Children's March played a key role in outlawing segregation in Birmingham, one of the most racist cities in America. It was organized by Dr. King and other church leaders and was meant to be a nonviolent protest against injustice. However, when authorities reacted unfairly to the children participating, and footage of the police brutality was shown all around the world, President John F. Kennedy decided to assist the civil rights movement. He called a civil rights bill, which was later signed after his assassination. It gave African Americans more rights, and helped in breaking the barrier of segregation in public life and employment, at least in one very segregated city.

As I was making my project, I learned both about the march and myself. I found that when I attempt something, it really can turn out great. I haven't done many contests before, because I felt I wouldn't be good enough to win. Now I know that I *am* good enough, and that winning isn't the contest. I have enjoyed my NHD experience so far, even though things took an unexpected turn, and am excited to have progressed all the way to nationals.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Andrews, George. Telegram to George C. Wallace. 13 May 1963. Documents on Human Rights in Alabama.

I used this telegram in my exhibit to show another point of view about the march. It helped me understand that some critics were opposed to Dr. King's presence in Birmingham, and how they wanted to potentially remove him.

"Birmingham Jail Is So Crowded Breakfast Takes Four Hours." New York Times (1923-Current file); May 8, 1963; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 29

I used this newspaper clipping in my exhibit to show the impact the march had on the jail, and how it effected the city. It helped me understand a little bit more of what it was like to be an imprisoned protester.

"Birmingham's Use of Dogs Assailed." *The New York Times* [New York], 7 May 1963. *JSTOR*. Accessed 14 Feb. 2020.

I used this newspaper clipping in my exhibit to show what other people thought about the use of police dogs against nonviolent protesters. It helped me understand other perspectives of the march.

"Civil Rights Movement Photographs the Children's Crusade: Birmingham — 1963." *Civil Rights Movement Archive*, www.crmvet.org/images/imgbham.htm. Accessed 7 Feb. 2020.

I used this website to get pictures for my exhibit. It helped me understand the point of view of the spectators, and It helped me see why the violence was worthy of such an outrage.

Foster, L. H. Telegram to George C. Wallace. 13 May 1963. Documents on Human Rights in Alabama.

I used this telegram in my exhibit to show yet another perspective on the protests, in this case one that agreed with the intentions of the march. It helped me understand what critics thought should be done about the violence.

Hailey, Foster. "Birmingham Talks Pushed; Negroes March Peacefully." *New York Times* [New York], 6 May 1963.

I used this newspaper article in my exhibit to show that Dr. King believed that the crusade would be a success. It helped me understand his point of view on things.

---. "Dogs and Hoses Repulse Negroes at Birmingham." *The New York Times* [New York], 4 May 1963, archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/national/race/050463race-ra.html. Accessed 8 Jan. 2020.

I used this website in my exhibit to collect more details and specifics from the march. It helped me understand how the marchers and onlookers reacted to the violence and to being imprisoned.

---. "U.S. Seeking a Truce in Birmingham; Hoses Again Drive off Demonstrators." *The New York Times* [New York], 5 May 1963.

I used this newspaper article in my exhibit to further explain the setting of the marches. It helped me understand what it would have been to be a marcher, police officer, or spectator.

"Javits Denounces Birmingham Police." *New York Times* [New York], 5 May 1963.

I used this newspaper article in my exhibit to express how Americans felt about using fire hoses and dogs against peaceful demonstrators. It helped me understand what a big impact the march had on the world.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." 16 Apr. 1963. *African Studies Center - University of Pennsylvania*,
www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html. Accessed 31 Jan. 2020.
Letter.

I used this letter in my exhibit to gather quotes from Dr. King from around the same time as the march. It helped me understand Dr. King's motives and the events that had happened shortly before the march.

"Outrage in Alabama." *New York Times*, 5 May 1963.

I used this newspaper article in my exhibit to show how people reacted to the "outrage." It helped me understand their feelings towards the Birmingham police.

Raines, Howell. "The Birmingham Bombing." *New York Times* [New York], 24 July 1983.

I used this newspaper article in my exhibit to show some of the contrasting negative effects that came from the Children's March. It helped me understand that while the march was mostly beneficial, it also caused people to become angry and bitter.

Ramsley, Paul. "Using Children in Alabama." 6 May 1963. Letters to The Times. Letter.

I used this letter in my exhibit to show that some people who agreed with the purpose of the march disagreed with the idea of using children, and therefore were not happy when the police used violence against the participants. It helped me understand that the Children's March sparked many different ideas about what should have been done.

Street Map of Birmingham. 1963. *Birmingham Public Library: Digital Collections*,
bplonline.cdmhost.com/digital/collection/p15099coll3/id/1611. Accessed 11 Feb. 2020.
Map.

I used this map in my exhibit. It helped me understand what the city itself was like, and brought the story to life.

Secondary Sources

"Alabama, 1963: The Heart of Civil Rights in America." *The New York Times*,
www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2011/07/10/opinion/sunday/20110710_Alabama/s/20110710_Alabama-slide-1ZUL.html. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

I used photographs from this website in my exhibit to show examples of segregation. It helped me understand what the children were marching against.

"The Children's Crusade." *National Museum of African American History and Culture*,
Smithsonian, nmaahc.si.edu/blog/childrens-crusade. Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

I used this website in my exhibit to get a general idea of what happened during the first days of the Children's March. It helped me understand the violence presented by the police.

Gilmore, Kim. "The Birmingham Children's Crusade of 1963." *Biography*, 24 June 2019,
www.biography.com/news/black-history-birmingham-childrens-crusade-1963-video.
Accessed 2 Dec. 2019.

I used this website to learn about what the goal or purpose of Children's March was, and how it led to government action towards the civil rights movement. I also learned how the authorities responded to the children protesters. This source helped me understand what it was like in a segregated city like Birmingham, and what kinds of things people were doing to stop racial segregation. I used it in my exhibit.

Greenbaum, Jon. "Looking Back on 1963 Fifty Years Later." *Human Rights*, vol. 40, Dec.-Jan. 2013. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24630105. Accessed 7 Jan. 2020.

I used this article in the timeline of my exhibit. It helped me get a sense of the immediate and gradual effects of the march.

Hunter-Gault, Charlayne. "Fifty Years after the Birmingham Children's Crusade." *The New Yorker*, 2 May 2013, www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/fifty-years-after-the-birmingham-childrens-crusade. Accessed 5 Dec. 2019.

I used this website to learn about the violence that the police showed, and how the children reacted. It helped me understand how segregated Birmingham was, and how much the protests were needed. I used it in my exhibit.

Joiner, Lottie J. "How the Children of Birmingham Changed the Civil-Rights Movement." *Daily Beast*, 2 May 2013, www.thedailybeast.com/how-the-children-of-birmingham-changed-the-civil-rights-movement. Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

This website taught me about the specifics of what happened to the children, and what it was like for them. It helped me understand how much courage participating in the march required, and what the protesters thought about it. I used it in my exhibit.

Levine, Ellen. *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*. Puffin Books, 1993.

I used this book in my exhibit to show how the children themselves felt about joining the marches, and to gather personal stories and details. It helped me understand their feelings on the matter, and why they joined.

Levinson, Cynthia. *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*. Atlanta, Peachtree Publishers, 2012.

I used this book in my exhibit to show what it was like to participate in the marches, and to add things from specific children. It helped me understand how the protests effected the children and their families.

London, Grace. "Children's Crusade." *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, 6 Oct. 2017,
www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3944. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019.

I used this website to further understand how the marches happened, and specifically what the protesters did. It also taught me how bystanders and other adults responded to the violence towards the children. I used it in my exhibit.

"Martin Luther King Jr.: His Life in Pictures." *NBC News*, NBC Universal, 20 Jan. 2020,
www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/martin-luther-king-jr-n707546. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

I used this website to get pictures of Dr. King. I used it because he was an important part of the movement.

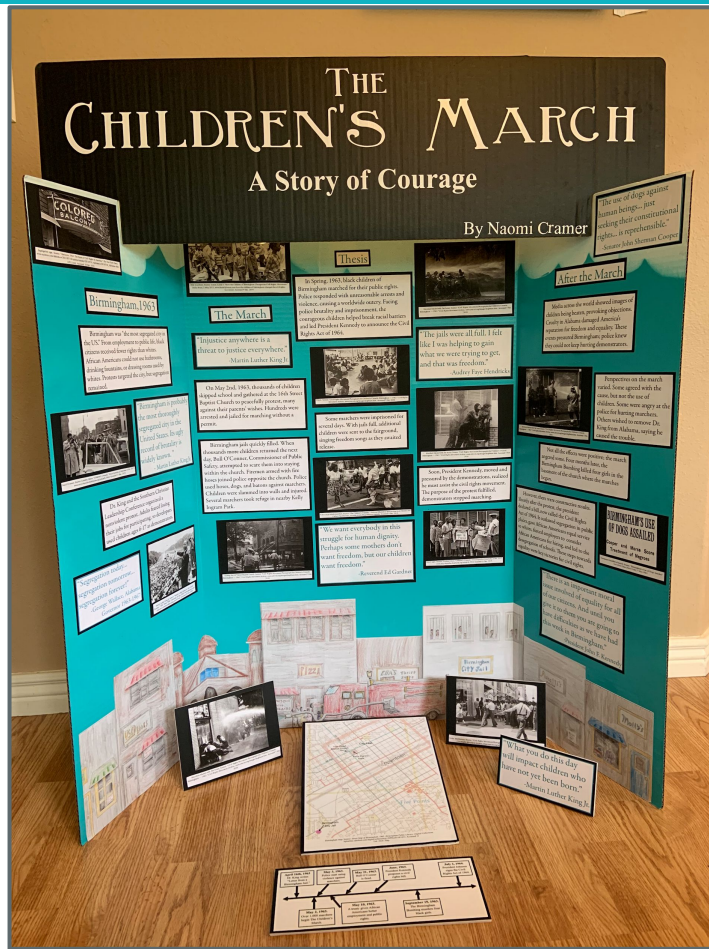
Stewart, Denise. "Children's March 1963: A Defiant Moment." *The Root*, 1 May 2013,
www.theroot.com/childrens-march-1963-a-defiant-moment-1790896253. Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

I used this website to learn about adult and family member reactions to the choices of the children. It helped me understand that the adults were not always pleased when they found out that their children wanted to participate in the marches. It also showed me that the children were defiant and made their own decisions. I used it in my exhibit.

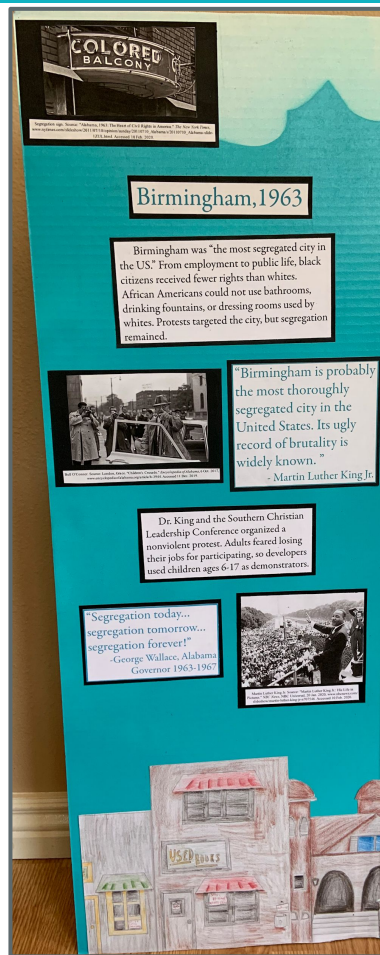
Exhibit Entry Information

Title:	The Children's March: A Story of Courage
Name(s):	Naomi Cramer
Division: (Junior/Senior)	Junior
Individual/ Group:	Individual
Number of Student Composed Words on Exhibit:	500

Picture of Entire Exhibit



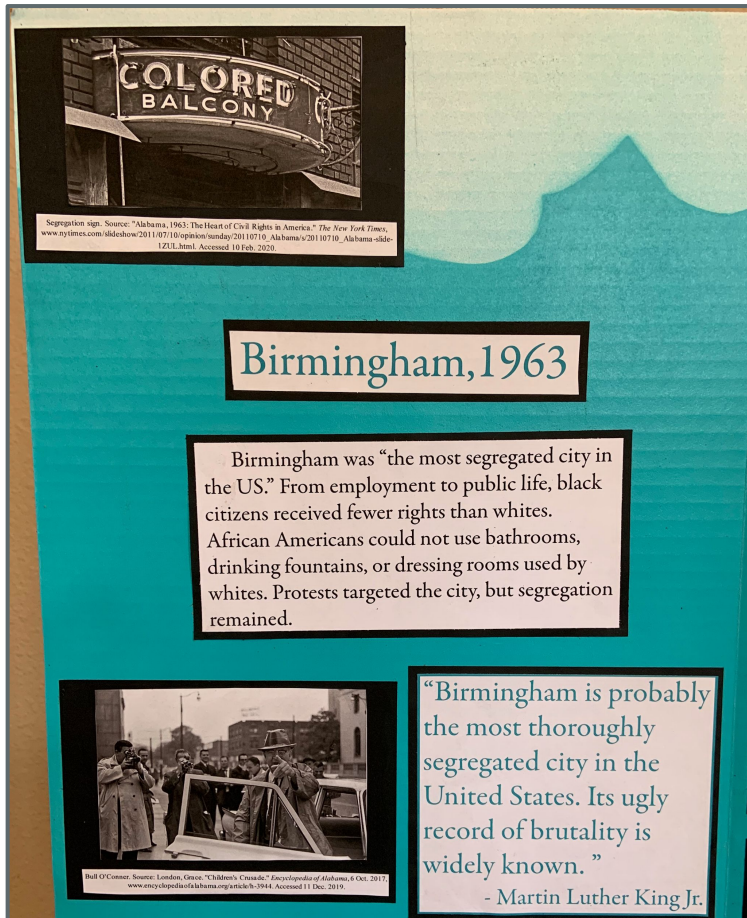
Picture of Left Panel of Exhibit



Thesis

In Spring, 1963, black children of Birmingham marched for their public rights. Police responded with unreasonable arrests and violence, causing a worldwide outcry. Facing police brutality and imprisonment, courageous children helped break racial barriers and led President Kennedy to announce the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 1 of 3



[Birmingham, 1963]

Birmingham was "the most segregated city in the US." From employment to public life, black citizens received fewer rights than whites. African Americans could not use bathrooms, drinking fountains, or dressing rooms used by whites. Protests targeted the city, but segregation remained.

"Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known."

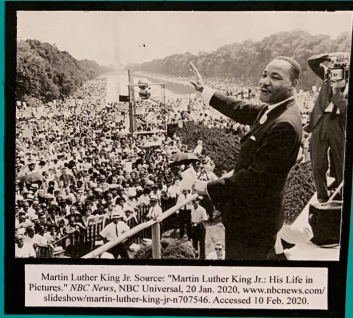
- Martin Luther King Jr.

Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 2 of 3

Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized a nonviolent protest. Adults feared losing their jobs for participating, so developers used children ages 6-17 as demonstrators.

“Segregation today...
segregation tomorrow...
segregation forever!”

-George Wallace, Alabama
Governor 1963-1967



Martin Luther King Jr. Source: "Martin Luther King Jr.: His Life in Pictures," NBC News, NBC Universal, 20 Jan. 2020, www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/martin-luther-king-jr-n707546. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.

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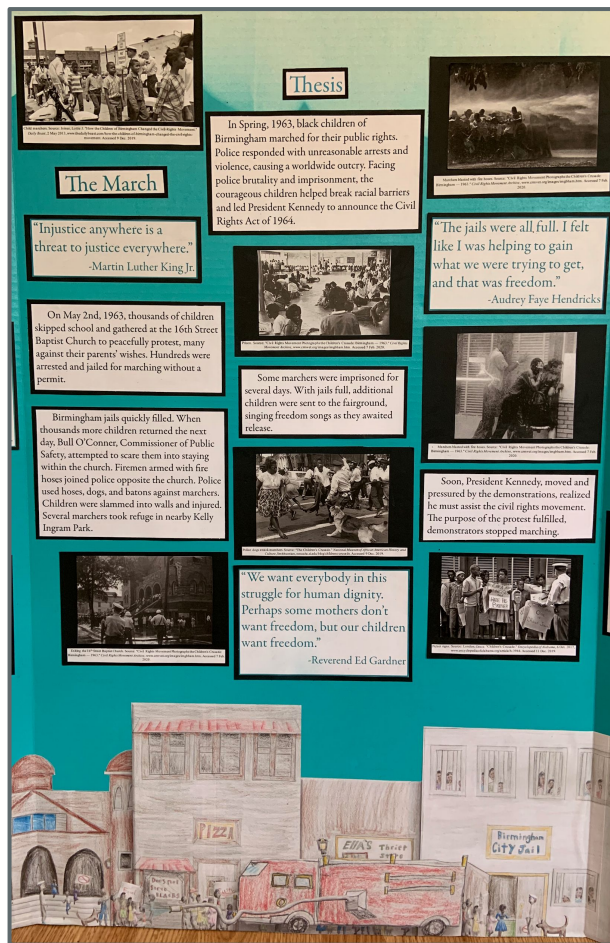
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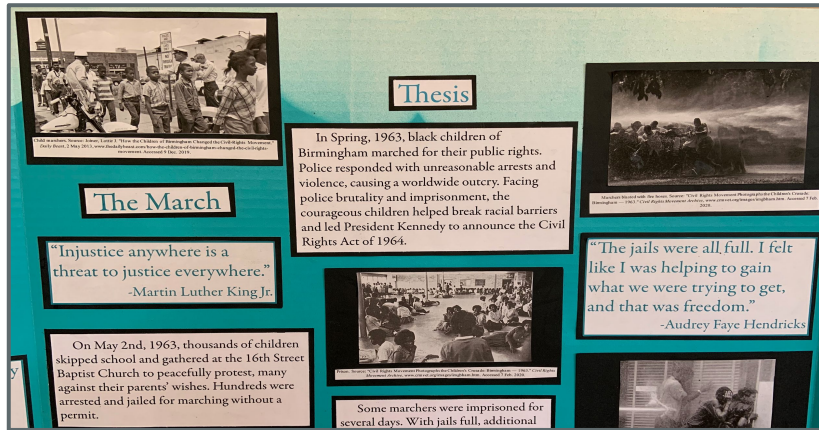
Art on Left Panel of Exhibit 3 of 3



Picture of Center Panel of Exhibit



Picture & Text on Center Panel 1 of 3



[The March]

On May 2, 1963, thousands of children skipped school, gathering at the 16th Street Baptist Church to peacefully protest, many against their parents' wishes. Hundreds were arrested and jailed for marching without a permit.

"The jails were all full. I felt like I was helping to gain what we were trying to get, and that was freedom."

-Audrey Faye Hendricks

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Picture & Text on Center Panel 2 of 3

against their parents' wishes. Hundreds were arrested and jailed for marching without a permit.

Birmingham jails quickly filled. When thousands more children returned the next day, Bull O'Conner, Commissioner of Public Safety, attempted to scare them into staying within the church. Firemen armed with fire hoses joined police opposite the church. Police used hoses, dogs, and batons against marchers. Children were slammed into walls and injured. Several marchers took refuge in nearby Kelly Ingram Park.



During the 1963 Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, thousands of children gathered in front of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Source: "Civil Rights Movement Photographs of Children's Crusade Birmingham - 1963." Civil Rights Movement Archive, www.civilrights.org/pictures/birmingham.htm. Accessed 7 Feb. 2020.

Some marchers were imprisoned for several days. With jails full, additional children were sent to the fairground, singing freedom songs as they awaited release.



Black girls attend morning prayer, "The Children's Church," between sessions of protests, during the Birmingham Children's Crusade. Source: "Civil Rights Movement Photographs of Children's Crusade Birmingham - 1963." Civil Rights Movement Archive, www.civilrights.org/pictures/birmingham.htm. Accessed 7 Feb. 2020.

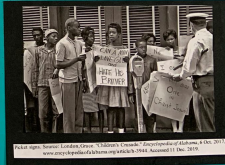
"We want everybody in this struggle for human dignity. Perhaps some mothers don't want freedom, but our children want freedom."

-Reverend Ed Gardner



Marchers lined up with the buses. Source: "Civil Rights Movement Photographs of Children's Crusade Birmingham - 1963." Civil Rights Movement Archive, www.civilrights.org/pictures/birmingham.htm. Accessed 7 Feb. 2020.

Soon, President Kennedy, moved and pressured by the demonstrations, realized he must assist the civil rights movement. The purpose of the protest fulfilled, demonstrators stopped marching.



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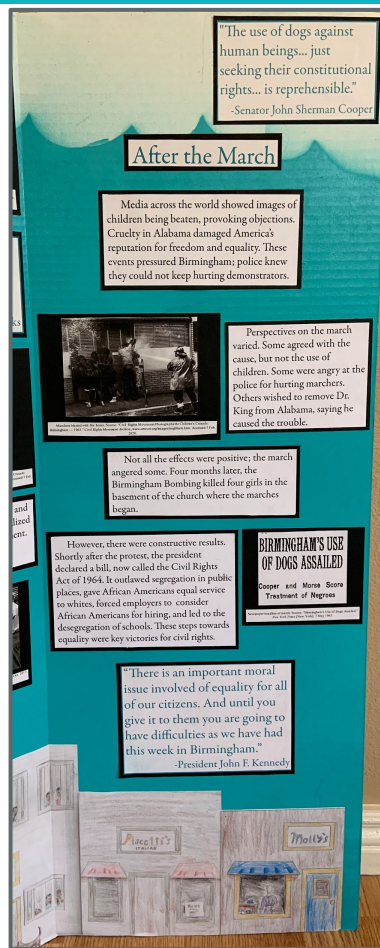
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Picture of Right Panel of Exhibit



Picture & Text on Right Panel 1 of 3

"The use of dogs against human beings... just seeking their constitutional rights... is reprehensible."

-Senator John Sherman Cooper

After the March

Media across the world showed images of children being beaten, provoking objections. Cruelty in Alabama damaged America's reputation for freedom and equality. These events pressured Birmingham; police knew they could not keep hurting demonstrators.



Marchers beaten with fire hoses. Source: "Civil Rights Movement Photography the Children's Crusade: Birmingham — 1963." Civil Rights Movement Archive, www.crmvet.org/images/birmingham.htm. Accessed 7 Feb. 2020.

Perspectives on the march varied. Some agreed with the cause, but not the use of children. Some were angry at the police for hurting marchers. Others wished to remove Dr. King from Alabama, saying he caused the trouble.

[After the March]

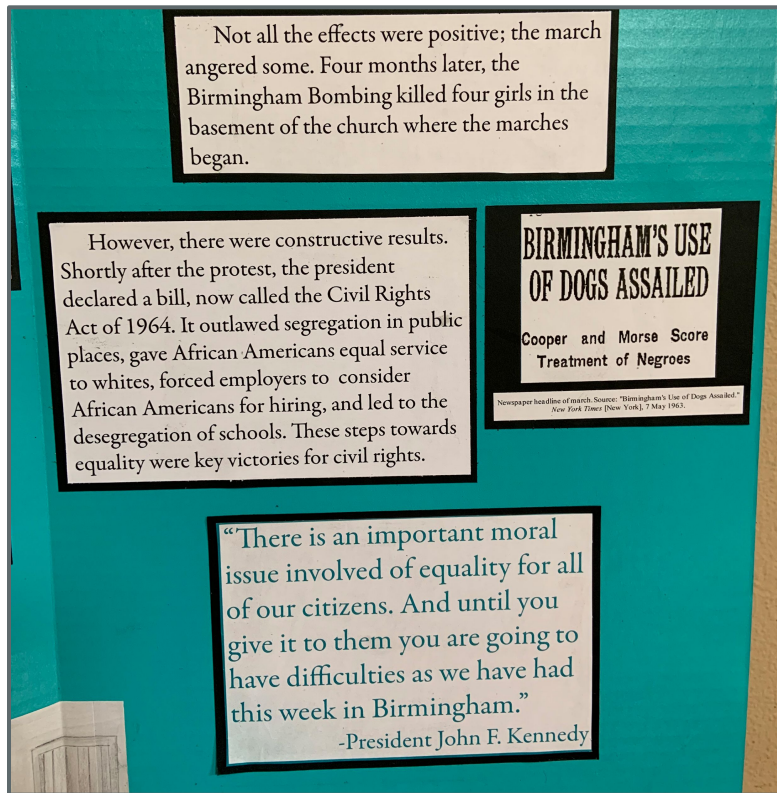
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Picture & Text on Right Panel 2 of 3



[After the March]

Not all effects were positive; the march angered some. Four months later, the Birmingham Bombing killed four girls in the basement of the church where the marches began.

However, there were constructive results. Shortly after the protest, the president declared a bill, now called the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It outlawed segregation in public places, gave African Americans equal service to whites, forced employers to consider African Americans for hiring, and led to the desegregation of schools. These steps towards equality were key victories for civil rights.

"There is an important moral issue involved of equality for all of our citizens. And until you give it to them you are going to have difficulties as we have had this week in Birmingham."

-President John F. Kennedy

Art on Right Panel 3 of 3



Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

- April 16, 1963. Dr. King writes “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”
- May 2, 1963. Over 1,000 marchers begin the The Children's March.
- May 3, 1963. Police start using violence against marchers.
- May 10, 1963. A treaty gives African Americans better employment and public rights.
- May 21, 1963. Bull O’Conner is fired.
- September 15, 1963. The Birmingham Bombing murders four black girls.
- June, 1963. President Kennedy proposes a civil rights bill.
- July 2, 1964. President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964

“What you do this day will impact children who have not yet been born.”

-Martin Luther King Jr.

