

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

In 1963 the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the New York Yankees 4-0 in the World Series. Loyola won the NCAA basketball championship, and Texas was the nation's best college football team. *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Dr. Strangelove* were on at the movies. Beatlemania rocked the U.K., and the Beach Boys' "Surfin' U.S.A." rocked American radio. Sylvia Plath wrote *The Bell Jar*, and James Baldwin's book, *The Fire Next Time*, was published. Valium was developed by Roche labs. Robert Frost and Aldous Huxley died. William Faulkner won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Reivers*.

In 1963 there were 3.2 billion people in the world and more than 189 million people in the United States. The cost of a first class postage stamp was four cents. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was president, and he sent 15,000 military advisers to South Vietnam. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no locality could require students to recite the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in the public schools.

In 1963 Kenya won its independence, Fidel Castro visited the U.S.S.R, and a hurricane and tsunamis killed 22,000 people in East Pakistan. Valentina Tereshkova became the first female astronaut in space, and Tigran Petrosian won the world chess championship.

In 1963 there were twenty million African Americans in the United States, and twelve million of those lived in the South. Almost a decade after the Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, had ordered the integration of the public schools with "all deliberate speed," not one single Black child attended an integrated public school in South Carolina, Mississippi, or Alabama. Segregationists vowed to block the integration of the public schools with a "century of litigation." At the pace that school integration was taking in the South, schools would not be integrated until the year 2054.

In 1963, one hundred years after Abraham Lincoln signed the *Emancipation Proclamation*, African Americans lived in a racial caste system. Vice President Lyndon Johnson said that "Emancipation was a Proclamation, but not a fact." In the South, the Jim Crow segregation laws required not only separate schools, but separate housing, hotels, restaurants, bathrooms, beaches, and drinking fountains. At the supermarket, there were four bathrooms, the doors labeled *White Men*, *White Women*, *Colored Men*, *Colored Women*. Two water fountains stood side by side, the sign above one saying *White*, and the sign above the other saying *Colored*. On the job, White employees and Black employees ate lunch in separate rooms.

In 1963 African Americans were excluded from the democracy; White voting registrars rejected voting applications from African Americans, and even closed the registration doors when Black citizens arrived. Not one of the 6,085 Blacks of voting age were registered to vote in Wilcox County, Alabama. Not one of 9,000 Blacks had ever served on a Jury in Mitchell County, Georgia. Black citizens who attempted to change the segregated political structures were sometimes beaten or even murdered. There were no Black mayors in any American city.