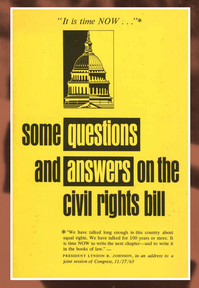
Davenport's Civil Rights Movement

1964-1968
Ferment at High Tide

PUTNAM



On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlaws racial segregation in schools, public places and employment. This Act is passed in reaction to Martin Luther King Jr.'s direct action campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, which was met by excessive police force to the horror of most Americans watching on TV. It is also aided by the 1963 March on Washington and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, who had introduced the bill to Congress before his death.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, Chouteau Collection)

1964 – Davenport resident Carol Gross, former Davenporter Anne Lindsay and 13 other students from the State University of Iowa travel to Harmony, Mississippi, to be part of "Freedom Summer" and conduct a school for Black children. Local residents, led by Cecile Cooper, hold ice cream socials to raise funds to help with this work.

1965 – The CIC plays a major role at the state level in lobbying for passage of the Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965. This act establishes the Iowa Civil Rights Commission which investigates cases of discrimination in housing, employment and other areas. Charles Toney becomes the first of several Davenporters to serve on its Board.

In March 1956, Quad Citians held marches, like this one in East Moline, in response to the police attack on a peaceful voting rights march in Selma, Alabama. Following the election of 1964, civil rights activists worked for the enforcement of Black voting rights in the South. The Selma incident and protests like this prompted the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This Act eliminates the legal barriers some states, especially in the South, have erected to circumvent the right to vote given to Black people by the 15th Amendment.

(Photo courtesy of Quad-City Times)

1966 – The NAACP and CIC work hard to get the City of Davenport to inspect substandard homes and enforce the Health and Building Code. This includes complaining about rats. A local resident helps these efforts by presenting the city council with a dead rat. They are also instrumental in successfully lobbying for an Open Housing Ordinance against fierce opposition led by the local realtor's organization.

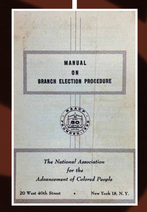
In 1967 Thurgood Marshall becomes the first African American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. President Johnson nominated him due to his successful efforts in litigation for civil rights for Black people.

(Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC- U9- 10278-11)

On April 11, 1968, President Johnson signs the Fair Housing Act of 1968 as a direct response to Dr. King's murder. It would be the last major piece of civil rights legislation during the civil rights era. Both Davenport and Iowa anticipated this Act by passing an Open Housing Ordinance and an Open Housing Act in 1967.

1964 – As part of a national program, the CIC sponsors Home Visit Days for Whites and Blacks to meet each other in their respective homes to break down racial barriers. With over 1000 members by 1964, it was the largest civil rights organization in Iowa. CIC leaders see to it that the local civil rights movement would not implode due to rivalries between the various organizations as happened nationally. The CIC also helps make sure that local tensions never lead to violence and riots which convulsed so many American cities during the long, hot summers of the mid to late 1960s. Temple Emanuel and the Unitarian Church aid the CIC in its efforts.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, Chouteau Collection)



1965 – The CIC's leadership leads an internal coup of Davenport's NAACP, which did not have a sterling record in advancing civil rights issues. The local NAACP had been in the hands of the leadership of the Third Missionary Baptist Church. The congregation splits between supporters and opponents of that leadership. William Cribbs becomes the new President of Davenport's NAACP, serving from 1965 through 1969.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, Jack Schneiders Collection)

1965 – The CIC holds the Civil Rights Banquet each year starting in 1964 with an annual Pacem in Terris Award given to leaders on the national and international scene. In 1965, the main recipient is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, Chouteau Collection)

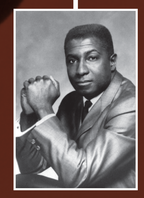
1965 – The efforts of local civil rights workers are met with resistance and intimidation, including sniper shots fired at the local NAACP office. Two organizations, the American Nazi Party and the John Birch Society, are a thorn in the side of the local civil rights movement. The American Nazi Party organizes an office in Davenport and soon claims to have 3,000 members. The John Birch Society, a far-right political organization, saw the Civil Rights Movement as a Communist conspiracy. The Davenport NAACP condemns the John Birch Society in an October 1965 resolution.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, Jack Schneiders Collection)

1967 – Kathryn Kirschbaum wins the election for 8th Ward Alderman – Davenport's first woman alderman. In 1969, she will become Alderman-At-Large and then will be elected Davenport's first woman mayor in 1971.

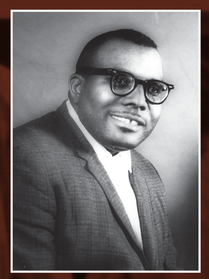
(Photo courtesy of Davenport Public Library Special Collections)

1968 – The NAACP and CIC begin working with developers and the city to create a low-cost housing development called Horizon Homes. The proposed site is located along Clark Street between 13th Street and Waverly Road, south of the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds (to the right of the oval track).



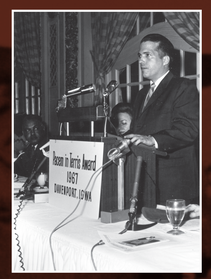
1968 – Henry Philmon becomes the first Black person to serve on Davenport's School Board.

(Photo courtesy of Quad-City Times)



William (Bill) Cribbs was one of Davenport's key civil rights leaders. In 1957, he was a founding member of the CIC. He served as President of Davenport's NAACP from 1965 to 1969 when he became the first Director for Davenport's Human Relations Commission. He was also a successful businessman as owner of Cribbs Landscaping and a barber at Charles Toney's barbershop.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, CIC Collection)

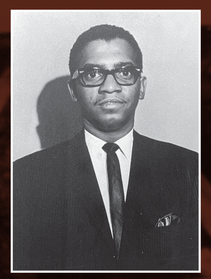


Jack Schneiders, an IRS agent, contributed to the Civil Rights Movement in many capacities during the 1960s before moving to the Des Moines area. He served as Vice President of the NAACP and then became CIC President in 1969 when Charles Toney stepped down after a decade in that capacity. He led the CIC's fight against substandard housing.

(Photo courtesy of Putnam Museum Archives, CIC Collection)

Cecile Cooper worked tirelessly on civil rights issues, including helping to organize the August 1963 March on Davenport. She helped organize key groups like Semper Fidelis Federated Women's Club and served on the executive boards of the NAACP, CIC, Quad City Council for Human Rights and Iowa's Civil Rights Commission.

(Photo courtesy of Quad-City Times)



Lysanias (L. A.) Broyles worked his way up in the ranks at the Arsenal to become an important leader in the civil rights movement. He and others at the Arsenal worked to improve employee relations. His barbershop was highly successful, winning accolades for excellent service. He also served as Vice President of the local NAACP.

(Photo courtesy of Quad-City Times)

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