

PARAMOUNT
EDUCATION PRESENTS



***When I Rise*, the documentary**

When I Rise is a documentary about Barbara Smith Conrad, a gifted University of Texas music student who becomes a lightning rod for civil rights and ultimately ascends to the heights of international opera. *When I Rise* was created by the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, directed by Mat Hames from Alpheus Media.



When I Rise, the documentary

The film had its world premiere at the Paramount Theatre on March 14, 2010 during the SXSW Film Festival. One year later it received its television premiere on PBS Independent Lens. It is now available to stream as part of the line up of PBS Documentaries on Amazon Prime Video Channels.



***When I Rise* Director, Mat Hames**



Mat Hames is an Emmy-winning director, writer and producer. In addition to *When I Rise* (2010), Mat is known for his documentary, *Thirst for Power*, and the series *Power Trip*, both adapted from books by Dr. Michael E. Webber. He also directed the PBS Independent Lens documentary *What Was Ours* (Amazon Prime Video, 2017). His films have screened at SXSW, HotDocs, and SundanceTV. He founded Alpheus Media in 2009 with his wife, Beth.

When I Rise Q&A Panelists



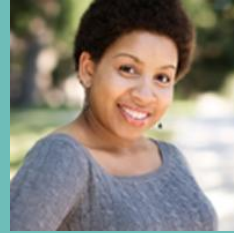
Dr. Don Carleton, Producer of *When I Rise*, Executive Director of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at UT Austin



Mat Hames, Director of *When I Rise*, Founder of Alpheus Media



Eva Goins Simmons, Member of The Precursors (the first Black undergraduate students to attend UT Austin)

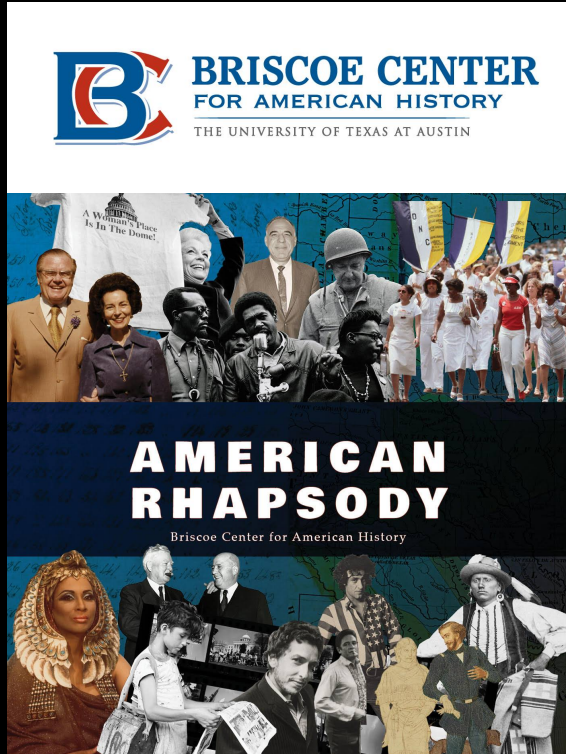


Icy Simpson-Monroe, Opera singer featured in *When I Rise*



Dr. Dwonna Goldstone (moderator), Director of the African American Studies Program at Texas State University

The Briscoe Center for American History



When The University of Texas at Austin opened in 1883, it began collecting materials documenting the history of Texas and the South. In 1991, under the leadership of Dr. Don Carleton (the producer of *When I Rise*), the university established the Center for American History, building upon the foundation of these collections as well as other emerging collections such as photojournalism and news media history. It was named in honor of Governor Dolph Briscoe in 2008.

Today, the Briscoe Center for American History is one of the nation's leading research centers for historical study. The center's archives, libraries, museums, and historic buildings are part of UT's commitment to collecting, preserving, and making available the evidence of the past. The center fosters public exploration of history through research services, exhibits, books, public programs, and digital humanities projects inspired by archival holdings.

[Learn more about the Briscoe Center.](#)

Capitalizing Black

Throughout this Discovery Guide you will notice that Black is capitalized whenever the word refers to people of African ancestry. In the summer of 2020, after the death of George Floyd and subsequent protests, several major publications made the change to capitalize the word, and that style has become commonplace.

Why is it important to capitalize Black? Marc Lacey, The National Editor for The New York Times offers, "It seems like such a minor change, black versus Black. But for many people the capitalization of that one letter is the difference between a color and a culture."

[Read more about this important change.](#)



Paramount Theatre marquee on May 31, 2020

The Musical Influences of Barbara Smith Conrad



Barbara Smith Conrad (August 11, 1937 – May 22, 2017) was a mezzo-soprano singer whose distinguished career touched the lives of audiences around the world.

Barbara grew up in Center Point, Texas, a community in northeast Texas settled in 1865 by freed slaves. Barbara attended services and performed in her local Baptist church and credits that with instilling her love of music.

What did your hometown instill in you? Is there something that you love to do, like singing, that you learned as child?

The Musical Influences of Barbara Smith Conrad

Barbara had many musical influences during her life, from the Baptist church of her youth to opera houses around the world. Draw a line to match each person's description with their name & photo. **Check your answers on the next slide!**



Henry Purcell



Harry Belafonte



Julius Rudel



Marian Anderson



Hall Johnson

He had a 35 year career as the conductor of the New York City Opera where he invited Barbara to perform.

She was the first Black singer to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in 1955. In 1977, Barbara played her in the ABC movie, "Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years."

When Barbara's opera casting and subsequent firing made national news, this popular American singer reached out to her and they formed a lifelong friendship.

The English composer of *Dido and Aeneas*, in which Barbara was cast in at UT before the role was taken away from her.

An American composer and arranger of African American spiritual music.

Answers: The Musical Influences of Barbara Smith Conrad



Henry Purcell



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Opera Crossword

Test your knowledge of opera by using the clues below:

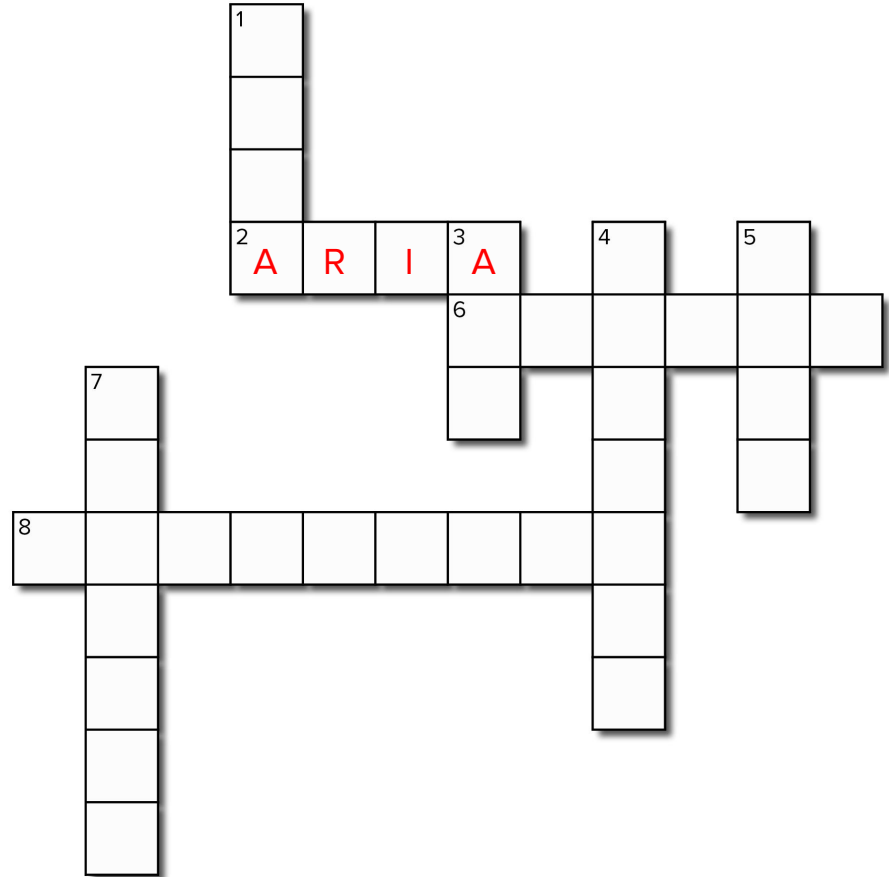
DOWN

1. This word literally means, “goddess,” it refers to an important female opera star. In modern times it is often a word used to describe someone that is unnecessarily difficult or demanding.
3. A section of an opera, used by the composer to divide the work into dramatic sections often with breaks for the audience in between.
4. Barbara Smith Conrad was a mezzo-_____. The term for the classical female singing voice whose vocal range lies between the highest and the lowest vocal type.
5. Music written for two performers to sing together.
7. The use of multiple pitches, or chords, at the same time in music.

ACROSS

2. A piece for one voice in an opera; a song for a solo singer.
6. A group of singers who sing together, portraying unnamed characters.
8. The group of musicians who perform the non-vocal music of the opera.

Check your answers on the next slide!



Opera Crossword Answers

DOWN

1. DIVA
3. ACT
4. SOPRANO
5. DUET
7. HARMONY

ACROSS

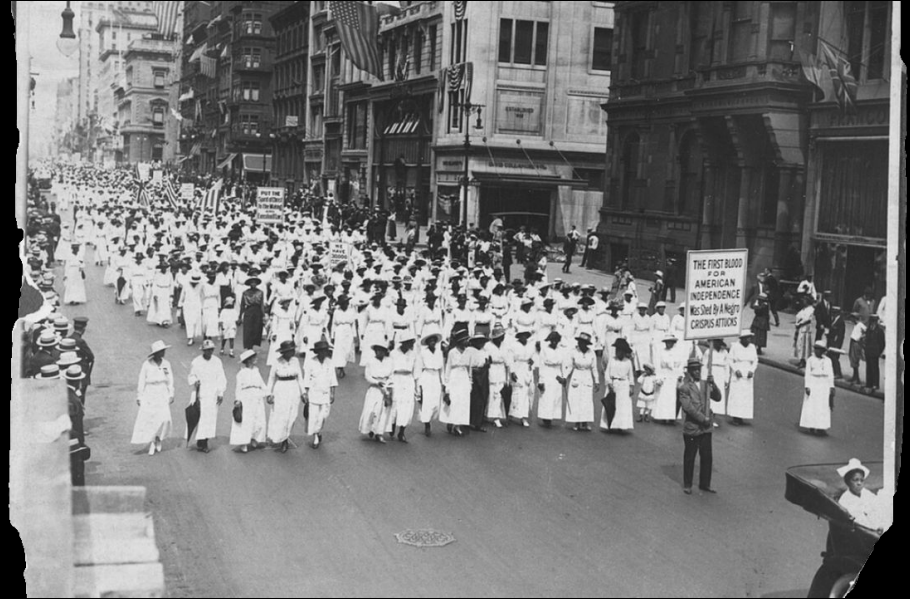
2. ARIA
6. CHORUS
8. ORCHESTRA

The Civil Rights Movement in America

Slavery in the USA was abolished in 1865, which marked the beginning of a period called Reconstruction (1865-1877).

During Reconstruction, Black people attempted to gain better paying jobs and improve their social standing, but despite gains, they did not have equality. Many rights like voting were prevented by the creation of the Jim Crow Laws, which segregated Black people from the white population and allowed for white supremacy to rule in the American South. Black American activists such as Ida B Wells and W.E.B. DuBois engaged in many kinds of protests against lynching, police brutality, and poor economic conditions faced by Black people.

From the BBC's Bitesize Learning platform



The Civil Rights Movement in America

The Civil Rights Movement was a struggle for social justice that took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s for Black Americans to gain equal rights under the law in the United States. It is sometimes called “The Second Reconstruction.” Let’s find out what you know about this important period in American history...

[Use this link if you need help.](#)



What do you know about the Civil Rights Movement?

1. In 1954, Rev. Oliver Brown won the right to send his child to a white school when the Supreme Court finally ruled that segregation could never be equal. What's the name of this landmark civil rights ruling?

2. In 1955, Rosa Parks demonstrated tremendous courage with a personal act of protest. What did she do?



3. Rosa Parks' act inspired a 381-day strategic and courageous boycott by the African American community in Montgomery, Alabama against what form of transportation?



4. In 1957, nine Black students, with military protection, attended a white school in what city in Arkansas?



5. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into law. This act was meant to help protect Black Americans' right to what?

[Empty dashed box for answer]



6. In 1960, this six-year-old was escorted by four armed federal marshals as she becomes the first student to integrate William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. What was her name?

[Empty dashed box for answer]



7. In 1963, a quarter of a million people marched in the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” to hear a now famous speech from what civil rights leader?



8. What famous phrase was spoken frequently during that speech in 1963?



9. Which U.S. President signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, preventing employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin?

[Empty dashed box for answer]

10. What is the commonly known name of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that guaranteed equal housing opportunities regardless of race, religion, or national origin?

[Empty dashed box for answer]



Civil Rights Movement Answers

1. Brown v. Board of Education
2. Rosa refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man. She was arrested and briefly jailed.
3. Bus. It is regarded as the first large-scale U.S. demonstration against segregation, and culminated in the desegregation of public transportation in Alabama and throughout the country.
4. Little Rock. Their attendance at the school was a test of Brown v. Board of Education.
5. Vote. It empowered federal officials to prosecute individuals that conspired to deny or abridge another citizen's right to vote.
6. Ruby Bridges. Her actions inspired Norman Rockwell's painting The Problem We All Live With (1964), which hung in the White House during the presidency of Barack Obama.
7. Martin Luther King, Jr.
8. "I Have a Dream"
9. President Lyndon B. Johnson
10. Fair Housing Act

[Read more about the Civil Rights Movement from the ADL \(Anti-Defamation League\).](#)

“The civil rights movement is extremely complex in its history, but the general memory of the struggle naturally focused on the most horrific examples of violence, like lynching or the three freedom riders killed in Mississippi. [The story of When I Rise] doesn’t compare in terms of human misery and cost, but it shows that racism was so pervasive it touched all aspects of our culture.” – Dr. Don Carleton, New York Times (Feb 7, 2011)



The University of Texas at Austin Precursors

“I did not come as a pioneer. I did not come as an activist. I came as a 17-year-old kid who wanted to get an education.” – Leon Holland, 1961 UT graduate

The Precursors are the first Black undergraduate students to enroll at UT in 1956. As wide-eyed teenagers and 20-somethings, they arrived just one year after Emmett Till was lynched in Mississippi. The civil rights movement was in its infancy, and Martin Luther King Jr. wouldn't give his “I Have a Dream” speech for another seven years. Although the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* had mandated that public schools desegregate two years earlier, the pace of change was glacial. Classrooms were virtually the only place on the UT campus where Black students could go, with dormitories, student organizations, sports teams, and nearby businesses all still separated by race.

[From Alcalde, the official publication of the Texas Exes](#)

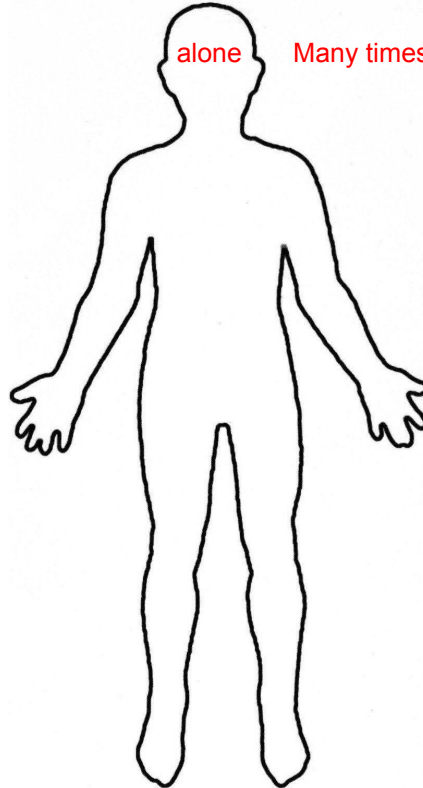


What was it like to be a Precursor?

What do you imagine it was like to be a Precursor in 1956? On one hand, you are making history, forming lifelong friendships, and receiving an education at one the country's best universities. Still you face peers who hurl racial epithets at you, professors who refuse to call on you in class, and even the difficulty of finding a place to eat dinner when all the restaurants surrounding campus are whites-only.

Role on the Wall Activity

Inside the outline of the person, write the feelings and emotions a Precursor might feel. On the outside, write the situations, actions, and facts that caused them. Need more space? Draw your own outline of a person on a separate larger piece of paper or on the board in your classroom!



alone

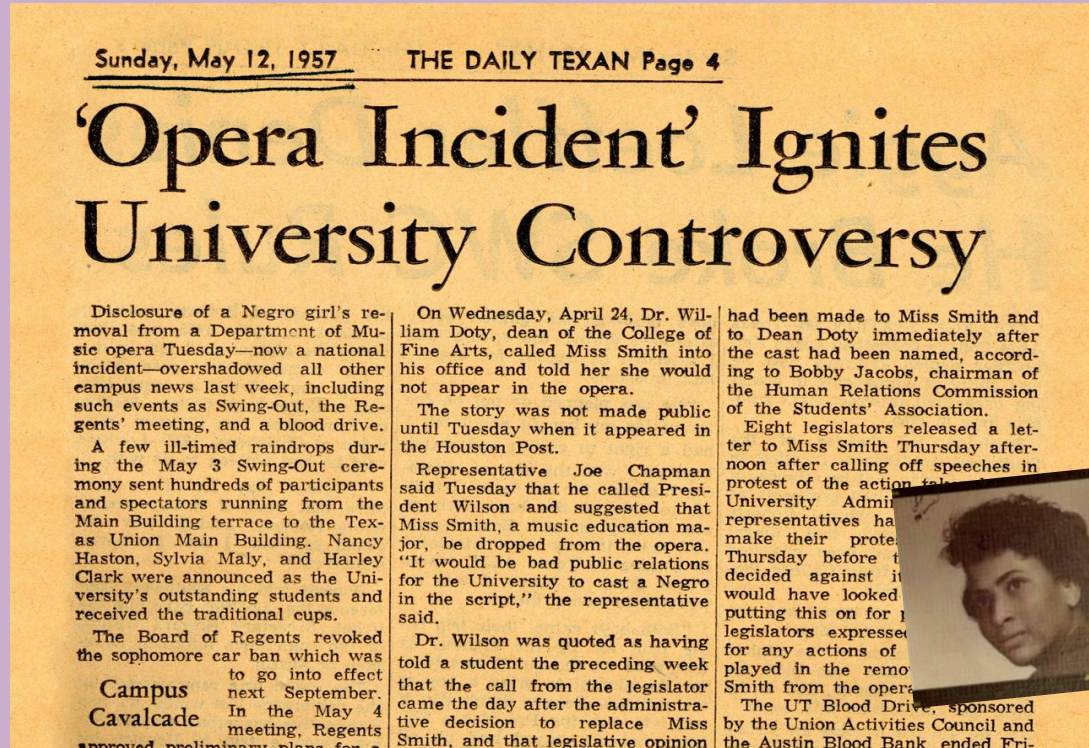
Many times I am the only Black student in class

The Legacy of Barbara Smith Conrad

Barbara was a Precursor too, starting at the University of Texas in 1956.

When she was cast as the role of Dido, the Queen of Carthage, in the University's 1957 production of the opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, opposite a white male classmate as Aeneas, a controversy erupted, escalating to the Texas legislature who advised the president of UT to remove her from the cast.

Her story became national news, as did her decision to remain at UT to finish her education.



The Legacy of Barbara Smith Conrad

Despite the injustice Barbara faced, she went on to have a celebrated music career, performing on stages all over the world. She co-founded the Wagner Theater Program at the Manhattan School of Music.

“I knew I could sing. I didn’t know if I could forgive.” – Barbara

This is what Barbara said about being invited back to UT in 1985. She returned when the Texas Ex-Students’ Association named her a Distinguished Alumna. After many years apart, and time to reflect on the injustices she faced from UT and the Texas Legislature, it is understandable that she would feel conflicted about returning to Austin.

[Read more about Barbara’s life and legacy.](#)



Exploding Atom Activity

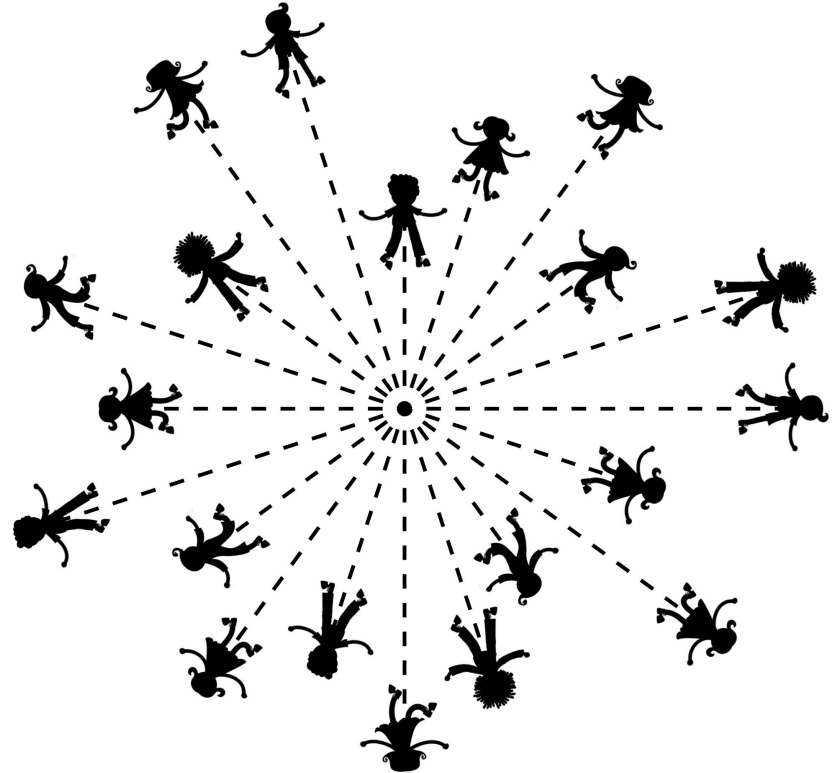
Let's reflect on the Precursors' experiences with an activity you can do with your classmates or family, or by yourself.

DIRECTIONS

Begin by standing in a circle.

Read the statements on the next page. If you agree with the statement, step towards the center. If you disagree, step away from the center. Perhaps you lie somewhere between "agree" and "disagree?" Take a smaller step and position yourself to reflect how you feel.

Remember: there is no right or wrong answer; this activity is meant to help you express an opinion.



Exploding Atom Activity

I forgive easily.

Think: Consider moments in your life where people have wronged you. How did you handle it?

I stand up for injustice when I see it happening in my community.

Think: Do you consider yourself an ally? What does that word mean to you?

My community has made strides forward towards equality.

Think: What needs to change to truly achieve equality for all?

I am proud of my school.

Think: How do you define pride?

I am proud of my community.

Think: How do you define your community?

The Paramount Theatre During the 1950s & 1960s

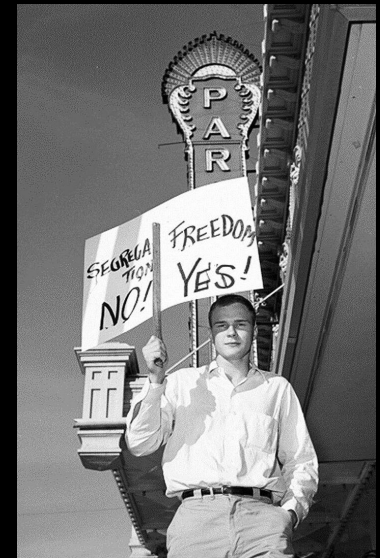
During the years that Barbara Smith Conrad attended college in Austin (1956-1959), the Paramount Theatre was segregated, like many places throughout the city. This meant that Black audience members who came to the Paramount were only permitted to sit in the balcony and had to use a separate entrance.



The Paramount Theatre During the 1950s & 1960s

Theatre desegregation efforts started on the Drag in 1960. In 1963, activists protested the Paramount and State Theatre's policies of segregated audiences by picketing the box office and chanting: "1,2,3,4 WE BROKE DOWN THE WOOLWORTH DOOR. 5,6,7,8 WE'RE HITTING INTERSTATE!"

Some photos courtesy of the [Austin History Center](#)



Desegregation in Austin

Overwhelming popular support for desegregation in April 1963 compelled the Austin Chamber of Commerce to adopt a resolution calling for “immediate and complete integration of all public facilities.”

The Paramount’s current historic preservation plans include protecting and restoring the unused balcony box office space to ensure the story it tells isn’t erased.

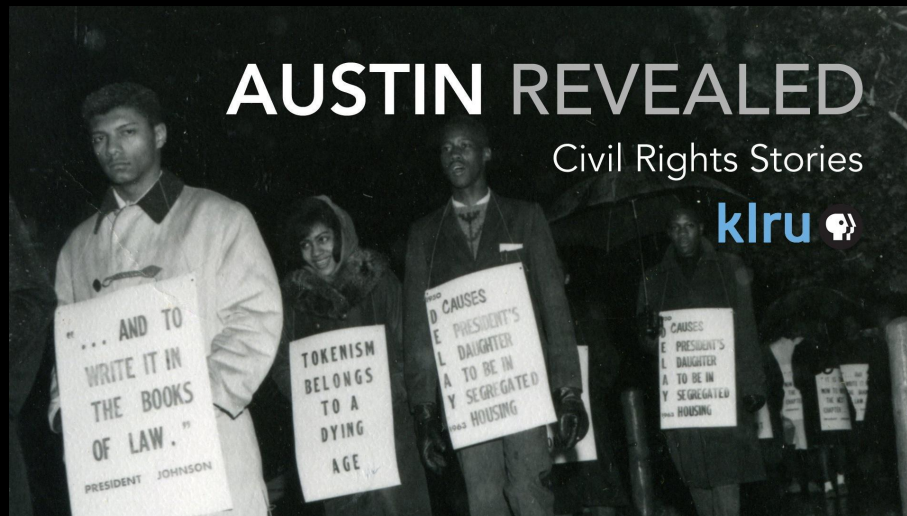
To students today, it may seem like segregation would be an issue that everyone would universally agree is morally wrong. But it faced racist backlash from many in the population, throughout Austin and the rest of the south. Can you think of an example of progress (during your lifetime or before) that at the time was a complicated issue, but now seems morally sound and uncomplicated?



Austin Revealed: Civil Rights Stories

From the 1928 “City Plan” that segregated Austin, to 21st century gentrification, this documentary explores the untold story of civil rights in Austin, Texas. Austin has a reputation for being a “progressive” city. Is Austin really progressive on race? Directed by Mat Hames. Produced by KLRU in Austin, Texas.

Watch the short film on the [PBS Black Culture Connection web page](#) or on the [When I Rise Digital Field Trip web page](#).



To explore more about Black culture and civil rights through PBS ,UT’s Precursors, and opera locally through Austin Opera, here are some suggested links for further reading.

[PBS Black Culture Connection](#)

[UT’s Precursors](#)

[Austin Opera](#)

About The Paramount Theatre

The Paramount Theatre was built 105 years ago in 1915. Back then, Congress Avenue was a dirt road and the automobile was a new invention. As one of the first examples of early theatre architecture, the Paramount has been bringing Austin families together for generations. When you visit the theatre, you enter a place that feels exciting and welcoming. From your seat, you can almost reach out and touch the performers on stage! Many famous people have performed at the Paramount. From magician Harry Houdini to the premier of the original Batman movie, the Paramount and its audiences have seen it all over the past 100 years...here's to the next century!



About Paramount Education

We inspire the intellect and imagination of young people by providing opportunities to experience, perform, and learn through the arts. We can't wait to see you again at our theatre or in our school programs! Paramount Education programs are made possible through generous donations from our community. [Learn more about us](#) or [make a donation](#). Thank you!



The image shows the interior of a grand, ornate theatre. The stage is dominated by a large, vibrant red curtain. The architecture is highly detailed, featuring gold-colored carvings, arches, and a balcony with decorative railings on the left. The ceiling is also intricately decorated with circular patterns. The overall atmosphere is one of classic elegance and grandeur.

Take a virtual tour of the
Paramount Theatre now!

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