

After Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat for a white man, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr supported non-violent resistance against segregation, civil-rights advocates began to hope that public transportation in Southern states might soon be integrated.

The legal process, however, was taking time.

By 1961, laws were already in place which prohibited segregated travel between states. Those interstate travel laws, however, were not being enforced - including by the federal government - so it seemed as though Jim Crow laws were still alive and well.

Against the advice of more senior civil-rights leaders, a group of men and women - of different backgrounds - decided to take an interstate journey on a bus. Calling themselves "Freedom Riders," most would sit where they pleased and would ignore "Colored" and "Whites Only" signs in bus-terminal restaurants and waiting rooms.

They agreed to remain non-violent at all times, no matter what happened.

The first group of Freedom Riders left Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961. Heading to New Orleans, thirteen people (seven black and six white) knew law enforcement officials, in the segregated South, might arrest them for various reasons.

They hoped such incidents would make the national news, thereby calling attention to the unfairness of Jim Crow travel laws.

Their plan ultimately worked, but not before the Freedom Riders were arrested, severely beaten, refused treatment and negatively portrayed by members of the press (including the national media).

Because of their actions, new laws were passed and existing laws were enforced.

This clip, from "Freedom Riders," explains the strategy employed by a group of activists who had grown weary of unfair laws and segregated practices.

Credits:

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See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Freedom-Riders-Challenge-Jim-Crow-Travel-Laws>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Freedom-Riders-Challenge-Jim-Crow-Travel-Laws>