



Birmingham Children's March
Birmingham, Alabama, 1963



Artwork by Leah Parsons Cook

You may copy and distribute this material for noncommercial purposes only,
so long as attribution is given to the creator. ([C BY-NC-ND](#))

Birmingham Children's March, Birmingham, AL, 1963

In 1963, Birmingham, Alabama, was the “most segregated city in the country” according to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On May 2, thousands of students walked out of schools in protest of segregation, racism, and the violent terrorization of Black people. The action was planned by youth leaders and Reverend James Bevel. They worked for weeks to organize the march, recruiting influential youth like cheerleaders and football players to mobilize students and train them in nonviolent action. Radio DJs announced the date of the walkout on air using coded language. Over 5,000 students marched to city hall in coordinated groups of 10-50. As protests continued, Police Chief Bull Connor attacked them with snarling dogs and blasted them with fire hoses. Mass arrests flooded the jails. Close to a thousand children were arrested, including an eight-year-old. The protests continued until May 10. The television footage of the attacks on children horrified the nation and prompted the federal government to take action. A 72-hr negotiation with city officials ended segregation in Birmingham and removed Bull Connor from office. This campaign led directly to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Look Closer! Check out these details:

- Is that kid jumping out the window? Yes! When administrators realized what was happening, some of them locked the school doors. Students jumped out the window to join the march.
- Can you spot the toothbrush? The girl in the center of the image is carrying a toothbrush in her hand. Many youth brought them to school, anticipating that they would be arrested during the action.
- Do you see someone clapping? Singing, clapping, and music were major parts of this campaign, along with many others in the Civil Rights Movement. Music lifted people's spirits when they faced difficult situations.
- How old do you think these students were? This image shows high school students, but children as young as 8 years old also participated. Their bold courage inspired everyone who was working for racial justice. Many adults joined them in the streets.

Discussion Questions:

- The Birmingham Children's March was a campaign for racial justice. How are people working to achieve racial justice and end racism today?
- What is one thing you can do to support racial justice?
- What other issues have students organized walkouts for?
- The cheerleaders, football players, and radio DJs all played an important role in spreading the word. How do the influencers you follow stand up for social justice?
- Is it okay to break the rules for an important cause? Why or why not?
- The Birmingham marchers faced snarling dogs and painful fire hoses. What do you think gave them courage to face the dangers in order to achieve justice?

Find more information, discussion questions, articles, documentaries, and more at:

www.paceebene.org/coloring-pages

**Artwork by Leah Parsons Cook
A project of Pace e Bene/Campaign Nonviolence**

You may copy and distribute this material for noncommercial purposes only, so long as attribution is given to the creator. ([C BY-NC-ND](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/))