About 300 activists gather in Seneca Falls, N.Y., to strategize on how to achieve women’s suffrage nationwide. Participants, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, sign the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, which calls for equal treatment of women and men under the law and voting rights for women.

In Roberts v. Boston, African American parents challenge Massachusetts laws that mandate separate schools for children based solely on race. After a court loss, they begin a fight for legislation to end public school segregation, succeeding in 1855.

In Dred Scott v. Sandford, the Supreme Court decides that African Americans cannot be considered citizens under the Constitution. Dred Scott, born into slavery, argued that he should be granted freedom because he had lived in free states with his owner.

After the Civil War, white Southerners institute restrictions on former slaves. These laws regulate marriage, property ownership, voting, and the right to live in certain areas. Typically, the laws required African Americans to work; anyone found not working could be arrested for vagrancy. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 outlaws some of the laws.

The 14th Amendment says that anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen and prevents states from denying “any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” The amendment also requires states to provide all citizens with “equal protection of the laws.”

A federal law that grants female federal employees equal pay for equal work is enacted. This right was not extended to the majority of female employees who work for private companies or state and local governments until the Equal Pay Act is adopted in 1963.
In Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that local, state, and federal laws that racially segregate students are unconstitutional. Writing the opinion for a unanimous court, Chief Justice Earl Warren states that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” The ruling overturns Plessy v. Ferguson, in which the Supreme Court endorsed the concept of “separate but equal” in 1896.

In the South, Jim Crow laws segregate African Americans and whites. Signs indicate separate drinking fountains, restrooms, and dining areas as “Colored” or “Whites Only.” Some laws prevent whites and African Americans from working in the same rooms.

Seventy-two years after the Seneca Falls Convention, the 19th Amendment, which gives women the right to vote, is ratified. Only one person who had signed the convention’s Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Charlotte Woodward, is alive and able to exercise her right to vote.

President Harry S. Truman signs Executive Order 9981, requiring “equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.”

In response to a federal court order to integrate schools, Gov. Orval Faubus stations the Arkansas National Guard outside Central High School in Little Rock to prevent nine African American students from entering. The students are taken through a side door, angering protesters. Fearing an out-of-control mob, authorities remove the students. Two days later, the students enter the school under the protection of the 101st Airborne Division, ordered there by President Dwight Eisenhower.

The first civil rights law enacted since 1875, the Civil Rights Act of 1957 authorizes creation of a Civil Rights Division and a Civil Rights Commission to enforce all federal civil rights laws, to coordinate the enforcement of civil rights, and to investigate complaints of civil rights violations. In 1960, the Civil Rights Act penalizes any person who prevents another individual from registering to vote or voting.
In *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that it is unconstitutional for the University of California, a public university, to impose a quota for minority applicants, meaning that a certain number of admission slots were reserved for minorities. At the same time, the court says it is constitutional for the university to consider race or ethnicity as one of many factors in deciding whom to admit.

The federal law expands workers’ right to sue for pay discrimination. Lilly Ledbetter had sued her employer when she learned that she was paid much less than her male colleagues. The Supreme Court threw out her case, saying the statute of limitations had expired. The new law amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which said discrimination complaints must be brought within 180 days of the alleged act.

The male-only draft during the Vietnam War ends, and women are integrated into all branches of the U.S. military as they become all-volunteer forces. In 1976, U.S. military academies will be required to admit women. Over the years, military policy that prevented women from combat assignments will ease. In the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, women will become more fully involved on the battlefield.

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act ensures that employment discrimination on account of pregnancy is treated as unlawful sex-based discrimination. As a result, employers cannot question potential hires about their plans to have children and have to extend benefits equally.