Nick Selvo

**Civil Rights One-Pager**

**KKK Mob Ambushes Buses, Beats Freedom Riders**

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<http://www.newsinhistory.com/blog/kkk-mob-ambushes-buses-beats-freedom-riders>

On May 14th, 1961, one of the most violent attacks on a peaceful protest occurred. It happened in Alabama, where segregated buses still existed, even though they were declared unconstitutional in 1955 by the ICC. Since the law was not being enforced in Alabama by the government, a protest group called the freedom riders decided to ride buses throughout Alabama. Throughout the South, the Jim Crow laws were still in effect, and it segregated most things, such as bathrooms and buses. The freedom riders left on May 4th, not knowing what would lie ahead of them.

During their trip through Alabama, the freedom riders were attacked. Some determined members of the KKK decided to try and stop the freedom riders. They used firebombs and numerous other means of violence in an attempt to stop the buses and send a message. For about 15 minutes, the police turned their backs on all the violence and pretended like nothing happened. This allowed the white protesters to throw firebombs through the window of the bus, and also slash the tires of the bus and lock passengers in the bus, attempting to burn them to death. After all this violence, the American public was upset. This led to new laws being passed about segregation and more enforcement of the existing law.

This article is important to American history because it was a major win for the civil rights movement. It showed the American public how the people who are racist would go to the extremes to support their cause. I think it made the KKK look weak by resorting to violence while the freedom riders were peacefully protesting. This protest was a reason why the segregation laws were changed and enforced throughout the United States.

**2 questions**

1. How did this event help the civil rights movement?

This event helped the civil rights movement by helping enforce the laws for desegregation.

1. Why do you think people went to such extremes to fight for segregation?

They think that using violence will send a better message than peaceful protesting, but it actually made them look weak.