

Black History Month

A Florida Focus

A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

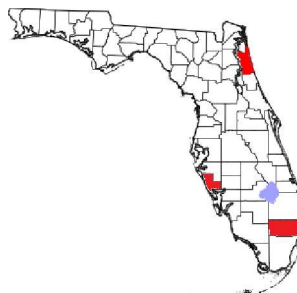
Spotlight #13: Wade-Ins

When studying examples of [civil disobedience](#) during the [Civil Rights Movement](#) of the 1950s and 1960s, we often learn about bus boycotts, marches, and sit-ins. But in Florida, another form of peaceful protest was widely used to bring attention to the inequities of the time: wade-ins. Florida has over 825 miles of beaches. Prior to the passage of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), less than 2 miles of those beaches were open to Blacks. The beaches designated for black residents and visitors were often difficult to access, had no amenities like picnic tables or bathrooms, and the water was often too polluted or rocky to even swim. To challenge this, civil rights leaders and organizations in coastal cities such as [St. Augustine](#), [Sarasota](#), and [Fort Lauderdale](#) introduced the wade-in movement. Similar to a sit-in, a wade-in involves groups of protesters walking the shore and swimming in the water at whites-only beaches to assert their right to access these public spaces and draw attention to their cause. Similar to other types of civil disobedience, they were often met with violent backlash from other beachgoers and local police. Many of those who participated in wade-ins were arrested, which allowed organizations like the [NAACP](#) to continue to fight segregation of public facilities in the courts. Despite the challenges these protestors faced, the popularity of wade-ins grew throughout Florida and other coastal areas around the United States, shining a strong spotlight on the need for equal access to city leisure spaces.

This also included public pools. Most famously, on June 18, 1964, a wade-in, co-organized by [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), occurred at the [Monson Motor Lodge hotel pool](#) in St. Augustine, Florida. Part of a larger series of civil disobedience events, the pool wade-in made headlines around the world as the hotel owner, James Brock, poured acid in the pool to burn the protestors. Becoming one of the most memorable images from the Civil Rights Movement, this wade-in, along with all those before, is often cited as the catalyst for ending the U.S. Senate's historic 75-day [filibuster](#) against the Civil Rights Act and advancing the legislation to [President Johnson's](#) desk.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- What foundational principles and constitutional guarantees were those participating in wade-ins fighting to uphold?



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