

## Atlanta's History as Inspiration for IALL's 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Course

[Atlanta, Georgia](#) has quite the storied past since its founding in 1836 as a critical railroad hub connecting the port of Savannah with the “Midwest states” of the U.S. In the 180 years since the Zero Mile Post was set and the city became known as “Terminus,” Atlanta has been at the center of an amazing number of important and historic events that truly shaped the United States of America as we know it today. Before you venture to Atlanta this October for our program, ***Civil Rights, Human Rights, and Other Critical Issues in U.S. Law***, we thought we'd share a little bit of Atlanta's rich history with you to hopefully enhance your experience here with us this fall.

### **Brief History of Atlanta – The Capital of Georgia**

Georgia, named after King George, was established in 1733. It was the last of the original 13 colonies and in 1788 was the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution. Eighty years later, after the election of [Abraham Lincoln](#) as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Georgia was one of the original seven states to declare secession from the United States as President Lincoln campaigned on a platform to end slavery. This new “[Confederate States of America](#)” was never officially recognized by the United States of America ([The Union](#)) as an independent country thus triggering the [American Civil War](#) (1861-1865), the bloodiest war in U.S. history.

Atlanta's birth as a city began in 1836 with the Georgia General Assembly's decision to build a railroad to move goods imported through Savannah into the Midwestern states. Originally named “Terminus” (meaning “end of the line”) Atlanta became an established railroad hub for the Southern United States with several rail lines originating from an area now known locally as “Five Points.” Most historically, Atlanta's position as a major railroad hub, and thus a military hub for the Confederacy, made it a critical target for destruction by Union troops in order to secure victory in the American Civil War.

In the summer of 1864, the “Atlanta Campaign” led by [Union Major General William T. Sherman](#) was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. By eliminating the railroad, General Sherman could cut the supply lines to the Confederacy and force a retreat out of Atlanta. After taking Atlanta, General Sherman ordered the civilian population to leave Atlanta and his men to burn the city to the ground to signal the beginning of his punitive [March to the Sea](#) (also the setting for Margaret Mitchell's best-selling novel, [Gone with the Wind](#)). The Confederacy ultimately surrendered in April 1865, one week before the assassination of President Lincoln. “[Reconstruction](#)” of the United States of America thus began and the city of [Atlanta emerged from the ashes](#) to become the great city we know it as today.

Designated the capital of Georgia in 1868, Atlanta became the industrial and commercial center of the New South. Also a center of black education, Atlanta University (forerunner of Morehouse College), Clark University, Spelman College and Morris Brown College (all founded between 1865 and 1881) contributed to the establishment of one of the nation's oldest and best educated African American populations.

Today, Atlanta is home to several major global corporations such as [The Coca-Cola Company](#) (established in 1886!), [United Parcel Service](#) (1907), [Delta Airlines](#) (1924), [Turner Broadcasting System](#) (1970), and [The Home Depot](#) (1978). Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport has repeatedly been designated the busiest airport in the world, and Atlanta has also become a major location for television and film production. From the ashes of destruction during the American Civil War, Atlanta was reborn and continues to evolve in new ways every day.

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### Civil Rights in Atlanta

With the end of the American Civil War and the [emancipation](#) of more than 3 million slaves, resistant southern states that had been part of the Confederacy worked hard to establish political systems and laws designed to maintain whites' positions of superiority over the freed slaves and their descendants. Atlanta was no stranger to this activity, and racial tensions in the city escalated during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These growing tensions occasionally led to violence, including the [Atlanta Race Riot of 1906](#) which required the assistance of the Georgia militia to restore order in the city.

The [Civil Rights Movement](#) (1954-1968) sought to end racial discrimination and segregation in the United States, particularly in the southern states where such discrimination was most common. Sparked by the United States Supreme Court decision in [Brown v. Board of Education, 347 US 483 \(1954\)](#), the movement sought to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans and to secure legal recognition and federal protection granted in the United States Constitution to all Americans, regardless of race.

[Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#), one of the Civil Rights Movement's most important figures, used Atlanta – [his home](#) – to organize events during the fight for equal rights and desegregation. On October 16, 1960, Dr. King and several students from Atlanta's historically black colleges and universities arranged sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in Atlanta as part of the [nonviolent sit-in demonstrations](#) occurring throughout the south. This year's Annual Course includes an educational outing to the Center for Civil and Human Rights which includes a powerful [interactive lunch counter sit-in exhibit](#).

### Human Rights in Atlanta

Atlanta is home to a number of organizations that seek to protect basic human rights throughout the world. Among these organizations, two that have particularly close ties to Emory University are the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [The Carter Center](#).

The CDC in Atlanta is located adjacent to the Emory University campus. Though the CDC is a United States federal agency under the Department of Health and Human Services, their efforts to protect America from health threats leads them to locales around the world. Medical research and treatment of diseases outside of the United States, such as the treatment for Ebola, are aimed at prevention of outbreaks within America, but the treatments and knowledge gained benefit people around the globe. This year's Annual Course includes a session dedicated to the CDC and access to health care as a human right.

The Carter Center, founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, partners with Emory University in a "*commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering*" and "*seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health.*" The Carter Center is a nonpartisan organization that works with other organizations, governments, and communities to help actively improve people's lives. Their motto, [Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope](#) summarizes their fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering. This year's Annual Course includes a session on [The Carter Center's Global Access to Information Program](#) as well as an educational outing to the [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum](#).