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## Civil Rights Movement

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## Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement remained a rallying call for equality in the United States of America in the 1950s and 1960s. African-Americans were pushing for equal rights in America. Since the Civil War, slavery was abolished, but racial prejudice targeting African-Americans persisted. African-Americans continue to experience the same cruelty of racism. A majority of the oppression was happening in the South. Around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, African-Americans had reached the breaking point; hence they started to fight the white supremacists for equality that progressed for close to twenty years. This paper aims to discuss the development and progress of the American Civil Rights Movement, the risks the movement leaders took in engaging in civil disobedience and considers whether there is a need for another Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement started in late 1940s following the 9981 executive order signed by President Harry Truman (Higginbotham & Franklin, 2017). The order was adopted on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1948 and was meant to abolish discrimination based on race, religion, or ethnicity. The Brown versus the Education Board case was determined by the Supreme Court, successfully ending ethnic discrimination in government schools (Higginbotham & Franklin, 2017). Nonetheless, many schools remained segregated. A significant milestone occurred in the Linda Brown case, who was denied entry into a white elementary school. Furthermore, in Oliver Brown's litigation, he sued inequality in school for African-American children and white students. In the following year, a unanimous verdict outlawing segregation in school was reached by the Supreme Court, impacting the movement significantly.

There were actual figures in the civil rights movement, but Rosa Parks became controversial by refusing to give a white man her seat in Montgomery. She was subsequently arrested on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1955, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott by close to seventeen

thousand African-Americans. Rosa became an icon, and her resistance became an extension of the lingering commitment to championing equality and becoming a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Even with discrimination in communal buses being unconstitutional, many towns continued to violate and discriminate against the rights of African Americans.

The most notable figure in the Civil Rights Movement was no other than Martin Luther King Junior, a church minister humanitarian, social activist, and drive leader. He is best remembered for his non-violent methods while using Christian teachings to call for boycotts, sit-ins, and marches (Higginbotham & Franklin, 2017). Dr. King wanted to achieve equality for African-Americans using peaceful demonstrations. He was also the driving force behind significant occurrences like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the walk to Washington, which led to landmark laws like the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act (Higginbotham & Franklin, 2017). King's oratory skills, while quoting the bible and the constitution, were impactful, making American citizens pressure the regime. Dr. King and other leaders of the civil rights movement, like Congressman John Lewis and Medgar Evers, took significant risks by engaging and calling for civil disobedience and protests. For instance, Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers were assassinated, but the late Congressman Lewis was attacked, leaving him with permanent scars on the head. Michael Henry, Andrew Goodman, and James Haney made minimal contributions to the movement but were kidnapped and killed for engaging with African-Americans in the fight for freedom.

Consequently, President Lyndon B. Johnson advanced the necessary bill via upper house. The prolonged protests and the hardships forced the president to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed seclusion based on color, race, sex, faith, or ethnicity. Despite the act's

passage, there were marches and protests like the Selma to Montgomery walk and other protests met by vigilante groups and the police. This march was significant because Martin Luther King participated in the protest, which achieved its goal of walking for three days to Montgomery and raising awareness regarding the struggles of African-American voters and the necessity of the Voting Rights Act. Consequently, on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1965, the president signed the Voting Rights Act that prohibited adopting a literacy test as a requirement in voting. Towards the end of the Civil Rights Movement, president approved Civil Rights Act of 1968, also termed the Fair Housing Act outlawing the discrimination against the sale, leasing, or purchase of houses based on religion, sex, or ethnicity (Higginbotham & Franklin, 2017). The act followed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and was hastily endorsed by the House of Representatives after the death of Martin Luther King junior.

In my opinion, we need another Civil Rights Movement. Decades later, gaps still exist between African-Americans and their white counterparts. Some of the issues have remained the same like they were during the 1960s. For instance, unemployment, poverty, racial discriminations, violence targeting African-Americans, and inequalities in education are still prevalent. There has not been substantive legislation to address injustices meted on African-Americans like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by the police. Though there is the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there lacks the political goodwill to implement the act. Furthermore, the current social and political environment is not conducive to discuss racial injustices. Nonetheless, the time is ripe to engage in another Civil Rights Movement.

To sum it up, the civil rights movement remains a crucial development in the United States history because it shaped American society. The movement achieved a lot; key among them was the Civil rights Act and the voting rights legislation passed by Congress and the House

of Representatives. These legislations ensured equal rights for African-Americans and other disadvantaged groups. Nonetheless, the United States needs another Civil Rights Movement since African-Americans still face segregation in different forms. African-Americans still face racial discrimination, lack of equal opportunity in education and employment, and racial abuse. The issue has been previously addressed but is starting to progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in an environment lacking political and societal goodwill. In this regard, American citizens must remember the efforts made by individuals like Martin Luther King Junior and other leaders fighting for equal opportunity.

### Reference

Higginbotham, E., & Franklin, J. H. (2017). *From Slavery to Freedom* (9th Ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

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