

Black American's Dilemma and Black Movement in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

Z a k a r i a

Abstract

This article presumably considered as manifestation of real condition and racial protest under the discrimination in the United States. It was a phenomena that happened in the first and half of the twentieth century. Black civil right movement is a real form of the struggle in the era 1950s and 1960s. The resistance of African Americans represents black people's struggle in the segregated country of America. They come into the fighting for equality in every aspect of living, socially as well as politically. In 1960s more radical political leader viewed white society oppressive inhumanly made him to protest and preached separation and also transmitted a growing sense selfhood. This article was conducted by interdisciplinary approach; it has become the basic principles in American studies. In order to have significant history and society, so the approaches have been used are historical, sociological, political and literary approaches. This article applied descriptive qualitative research.

Keywords: *separation, black movement, equal rights, human rights, and social justice.*

Introduction

In the early 1910s, cotton plantations in the South were devastated by a sudden influx of beetles called boll weevils. These cotton-eating insects entered the United States through Mexico and gradually ate their way eastward, ravaging crops throughout the South and dramatically reducing the already limited holdings of black tenant farmers. Consequently, black people began moving to the North during World War I and continued to move during the 1920s.

In the same period, in the North, factories that manufactured military equipment had to increase their productivity, and unskilled and semiskilled laborers found themselves in great demand. Northern manufacturers even sent industrial agents into South to search for men to fill the positions left vacant by those who had gone to war.

In the World War I, black Americans joined the armed force in great numbers, more than two million registered for the draft, established in 1917, and ultimately, 367,000 African Americans entered military service during the World War I, and 42,000 saw combat.

As World War I ended, jobs became harder to find as manufacturing slowed and as soldiers returned, ready to rejoin the work force. Black Americans who had fought in the World War I came home with the hope their wartimes sacrifices would be rapid by gains civil rights. But job-seeking whites felt threatened by the great number of blacks also looking for work, and white racists in particular believed that military-trained blacks would be too powerful to control. Far from diminishing, racial friction increased after World War I. By 1919, one year after the end of World War I, racial relation in America had seriously deteriorated.

A. Black Americans Dilemma

Under the Jim Crow Laws which appeared in 1881, these laws had legally treat blacks in the lowest positions in United States. Laws established white supremacy over the blacks. At those times blacks were not mentioned as humans by the whites who were implementing the Jim Crow Laws, African Americans were certainly considered as savage society and divided southern society into a two caste system with white occupying position of power and blacks reduced to second-class citizenship. It makes America look ridiculous to stand up in the world conference and refer to herself as a leader of the free world.

Here, America is a country which standing up and pointing a finger to colonizers, but there are millions of black people in this who are still confined to second-class citizenship, million people in this country who are still segregated, America preaches one thing and practices another.

Almost all blacks were subject to some type of discrimination which was the legacy of the reconstruction experiences, and genuine white fear toward the potential empowerment of blacks. Many Americans during this period would have considered today's veneration of the proclamation misplace.

B. The Conditions of Black Americans under the Discrimination

1. The Social Position of Black Americans

The American Civil War began with high hopes and high ideals on both North and South, thousands of men enthusiastically enlisted in local regiments and went off to war. The war strengthened the North's economy, giving a spur to industry and railroad development. Southerners had gone to war in part because of their fears of growing northern dominance. The war itself, ironically, confirmed and strengthened that dominance. But most of all, the Civil War was a victory for millions of African American slave.

When the black American was freed from Civil War, the southern states passed hard laws, called *Black Codes*, intended to put black Americans in an inferior social position. They were forbidden to carry firearms or to appear as witnesses in courts, although they could be arrested for begging or being without work. Since the 1890's this treatment has continued. The black Americans must be use different public facilitations. They must stay in separate Jim Crow sections on trains and buses. They always low to sit only in special galleries in theaters. Even the black heroes of the World War I, least they become proud but the reality, they were immorally treated on their return.

The extreme treatment of the black Americans have been carried in the South has been lynching, hanging of person suspected of crime by a mob which takes the law into its own hands. In the West, first used lynching to deal with outlaws, but in the South, lynching has been used mainly against black Americans.

2. Political Rights of Black Americans

After the black Americans were freed from slavery by the Thirteenth Amendment, two more amendments were added to the Constitution to give him the same political, economic, and social rights as the white citizens. The black Americans would have been in a position to challenge white political rule of the South. Southerners hurried to prevent this by making the qualification for voting too difficult for the black Americans to meet.

The various states made rules requiring a voter to be property owner, put taxes for the privilege of voting, and often required that the voter be fairly well educated. These rules kept

black Americans from voting but also excluded the poor and ill educated whites. Most white men were able to find an ancestor who had done so, but few black Americans could.

Another method to preventing the black Americans from voting has been to bar him from the Democratic primary elections, since the candidate nominated by the Democrats is usually sure to win the regular election. Southerners have been quite open in admitting this discrimination against black Americans. They have maintained that the black Americans have been educated well enough to know how to vote properly.

Southern blacks usually voted for the Republican Party until 1932, since their freedom was granted by a Republican president and congress. As black Americans have moved northward, they have been able to vote much more freely. Many of those in the North now tend to support the Democratic Party. For the first time in history, the majority of actual black voters supported the Democratic Party in 1932.

3. Black Americans and Education

Although black Americans have not received education opportunities equal to those whites after the World War I, it is encouraging to find only 16.3 per cent of black Americans were illiterate in 1930, whereas 97 per cent were unable to read and white in 1880. In the North, less than 5 per cent of the black population is illiterate. There are now over two and one-half million black pupils in public school. In the South, where blacks have separate schools, the teachers have been poorly paid, the school year short, and the buildings usually poorly equipped.

C. Black Americans in Reconstruction Era

During the reconstruction, there are three amendment of the constitution were passed by Congress in purposing to prepare social condition after Civil War. In the 1866, Reconstruction produced Thirteenth Amendment. It was an Emancipation Proclamation which abolished slavery system which stated that slavery or involuntary was forbidden by Constitution in 1866.

Next, in the 1869, Reconstruction produced Fourteenth Amendment which offered the first constitutional definition of American citizenship. There stated that everyone born in the

United States, and everyone naturalized, was automatically a citizen of the United States. Life, liberty, and property were protected by the constitution.

And the last, Fifteenth Amendment, passed in 1870, guaranteed for voting right of citizens of the United States which forbade the states and the federal government to deny suffrage to any citizens on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. But the effectiveness of Supreme Court decision didn't play in protecting blacks from discrimination of whites.

Civil liberty and voting right of black people denied by most of whites, and the Court didn't have power to protect blacks' liberation and also their political right. For example, after a few years of widespread black voting, the forces of white supremacy forced most African Americans to the margins of the southern political world, where they would mostly remain until the 1960s. As Brinkley remarked that: "In other states, where blacks were a majority or where the populations of the two races were almost equal, whites used intimidation and violence to undermine the Reconstruction regimes. For example, secret societies—the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camellia, and others—used terrorism to frighten or physically bar blacks from voting" (Brinkley, 2004:415).

Furthermore, Supreme Court's decision on Plessy v. Ferguson in 1869, decided "separate but equal" policy that made African Americans far from their right like sated in Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution, and even that this condition had made African American returned to slavery times.

African American played a significant role in the politics of the reconstruction in the South. Reconstruction become a struggle to define the meaning of freedom both whites and blacks. To Du Bois, Reconstruction was an effort by freed blacks to create a more democratic society in the South, and it was responsible for many valuable social innovations (Brinkley, 2004: 404). But the former slaves and the defeated whites had very different conceptions of what freedom meant.

Some blacks believed the only way to secure freedom was to have land and equality of right away from white people, but it was just like a tyranny. Even though blacks have been in the United States from its beginnings they still don't possess the economic, education, or political

power resources to apply their influence for an independent existence and legal protection like real equality but "... Most black men and women who continued to live in what came to be known as the New South had little power to resist their oppression for many decades" (Brinkley, 2004: 397). African Americans to be forced to create some new institutions and some important legal precedents that helped them survive.

The greatest problem in race relation in the United States has been the variable of color, so that there has been a clustering of nonwhites at the bottom half of the stratification system. Yet the system classifies people into human/subhuman, master/servant, owner/owned, and superior/inferior. And since they were defined as subhuman, they could be completely dominated by their master and used in whatever he or she chose. In the post-Reconstruction, blacks were a comparative term. On one hand, they were freer than slave, but on the other hand, they were surrounded by restrictions created by white society.

The South was a brutal country at the end of the Civil War. Reconstruction of the area seemed far more important the civil rights and living condition of the newly emancipation. Moreover, the brutal Southerners still maintained their feeling about the inferiority of their former slaves, and violence, both legal and illegal, was a common solution to racial problems. The Black Codes specified conditions of work, property rights, rights to public assembly, ownership of firearms, and other aspects of black life. "They attracted by the promise of more jobs and better social opportunities. But the blacks discovered that racism was not confined to the South, and that northern white behavior was less than "Christian." Laws, customs, standards, and rationalization established barriers and created segregated areas often as stringent as those in the South" (Kitano, 1985: 111).

For a short time after Civil War, blacks gave the rights of American citizenship, liberty, and property on Fourteenth Amendment and guaranteed blacks participated actively in the political arenas in the South, the rights to vote on Fifteenth Amendment as a series of reconstruction acts, but however violence against blacks was a constant problem. "The disputed election of Republican President Rutherford Hayes, which resulted in the Compromise of 1877, was a turning point for the freed slave. Rather than advancing toward equality, they were moved

back to the pre-Civil War era. Federal troops were withdrawn from the South, and the old Southern leadership rapidly return” (Kitano, 1985:109).

One of the problems with the American melting pot was its equivalence to Anglo conformity, to become white, Anglicized society, so to call for pluralistic position for America’s minorities is difficult to understand if it comes from a dominated position. In the case of African Americans in the South, for Wendell Philips, a radical emancipationist, argued that America which would be integrated, a nation in which there would be no Yankee, no Buckeye, no Hoosier, no Sucker, no native, no foreigner, no black, no white, no German, no Saxon—only American citizens, wit one law impartial overall (Rozwenc, 1972: 575). To think of Philips’ mention in the statement above, it was even if we say that migrants who came from several countries whose different cultures, colors and languages must be unified to be one nation named “America” only.

D. The Reasons of the Rising of Black Movements

Perhaps the greatest stimulus to the changing racial climate in the United States was the two of world wars, and many of people believed that most severe challenge to American democracy lies in the struggle for equality. The problem of civil rights for nonwhite Americans has been a major issue in the domestic life of America in early seventieth to twentieth century. Such as remarked by W. E. B. Du Bois in Volkomer that:

.... racial issue was the major problem of the twentieth century. But racial prejudice in America began in the seventieth century, when Indians and Europeans first met. The Indians were driven from their lands and denied access to European culture as it was taking root in American soil. Race relations in the colonies were complicated by the arrival of another group—captive African blacks (Volkomer, 1986: 301).

After the Civil War, many African Americans migrated to large northern cities. Between 1910 and 1940, the vast majority blacks lived in the South population of New York City leaped from 60,000 to 450,000. Out of these expanding black communities emerged a number of prominent African American citizens, including doctors and lawyers, who gained political influence. They were able to form alliances with political machines.

And because after the war African Americans not treated as equals by a large portion of American society, however, the campaign for civil rights began to accelerate. Millions of black people believed that the time had come to demand that the nation live up its promise that all are created equal before the law. Such as stated in Volkomer's *American Governmen* below:

The movement away from racial equality was clearly reflected in two major decisions by the United States Supreme Court during the last decades of the nineteenth century: Civil Rights Cases and Plessy v. Ferguson. Civil Rights Act of 1975. This law had made it both a crime and a civil wrong for any person to deny another "the full and equal enjoyment of any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color (Volkomer, 1986: 302).

In the period following World War II, thousand of ordinary Americans worked to end racial and ethnic injustice in the United States. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a grass-roots effort of ordinary citizens determined to end racial injustice in the United States. Although no central organization directed the movement, several major groups formed to share information and coordinate civil rights activities. Each of these groups had its priorities, strategies, and ways of operating, but they all helped to focus the energies to thousands of Americans committed to securing civil rights for all citizens. They shared the same goal of securing equal rights for all Americans. Several factors contributed to rise of African Americans protest in these years, at least, there are three causes which motivated to increase civil rights struggle during the times.

1. The Legacy of World War I and II

The legacy of the two of world wars was most important of blacks' protest. These factors contributed to the intensification of the drive for equality that culminated in the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. The two world wars increase awareness on the part of Negroes and many white Americans of the disparity between the principle of equality and the actual practice. Million of Negroes migrated from the rural South to the urban South and North. By 1960s more than one-third of the nations' 20 million Negroes lived in the twelve

metropolitan areas of the United States. Disappointed by the lack of adequate housing, employment, and education opportunities in their new surroundings, Negro American became more determined than ever to fight for their rights (Woodward, 1968: 170, 171).

For Negroes themselves, after the wars, their sacrifice during the wars has never been served by country, but they isolated into second-class citizens in segregated system. Hartman in *America, Land of Freedom* stated, "When World War II came to an end, there was rejoicing in all lands. People wanted to live in peace and to feel sure that such a terrible conflict would never again. But the ending of the war was followed by a time of uncertainty and anxiety in which many new conditions had to be met" (Hartman, 1961: 702). Millions black men and women had served in the military or worked in war plants during the war and sacrifice their lives for their country, but only as second-class citizens in segregated units.

In the World War II, nearly 60 percent of women took industrial jobs to replace male workers serving in military. Female work, like male work, was also categorized by race, black women were usually assigned more menial task, and paid at a lower rate than their white counterparts. In military, pressure for change was also growing. The armed forces maintained their entirely from the Marine Corps and Army Air Force, sent into combat, but the end of the war, the change did not come easily.

During the war, 367,000 of blacks marched down the main streets, they believed that the glory of black heroism in the war world make it impossible for white society ever again to treat African American as less than equal citizens, but the fact, that black soldiers had fought in the war had almost no impact at all on white attitudes, so increased determination of blacks to fight for their rights.

2. Rising of Popular Culture

The last reason of black movement during those time were television and other forms of popular culture, they were another factor in the rising consciousness of racism among African Americans. More than any previous generation, postwar blacks had constant, vivid reminders of how the white majority lived, of the world form which they were effectively excluded. Television also conveyed the activities of demonstrators to a national audience, ensuring that activism in one community would inspire similar protest in others.

Television was the result of a series of scientific and technological discoveries, but its impact was largely social and culture. It was quickly became the most powerful medium of mass communication in history. In the 1950s and 1960s created a common image of America life. “..... in an attempt to deal more forthrightly with racial diversity and ethnic pluralism, a number of radio and television network introduced comedy program with “inter-group” themes. First there was “Amos and Andy” (with its minstrelized “Negroes”), “Abie’s Irish Rose,” Life with Luigi,” The Goldbergs,”.... “Good Times,” and The Cosby Show.” Then there was the much more sophisticated and controversial “All in the Family.” The show, based on an English program about working-class life called “Til Death Do Us Part,” pulled few punches. It (purposely) dealt directly with contemporary issues—the role of women, sexual deviance, and especially, ethnic interaction.... Used by demagogues ethnophaulisms serve well as vehicles for venting the wrath of the bigot, for stirring up latent prejudice, for fomenting hate, and for calling people to take action against their “foes” (Rose, 1997:141, 145).

One of the most important culture developments for American youth in the 1950s was the enormous popularity of rock ‘n’ roll, and of the greatest early rock star, Elvis Presley. Presley became a symbol of a youthful determination to push at the borders of the conventional and acceptable (Brinkley, 2004: 792, 795).

3. The Rising of Black Organizations and Leaders’ Protest

Another factor was the growth of an urban black middle class, which had been developing for decades but which began to flourish after the war. Much of the power for the civil rights movement came from the leaders of urban black ministers and educators, and much of it came as well from students at black colleges and universities, which had expanded significantly in the previous decades.

Black leaders with education and a stake in society were often more aware of the obstacles to their advancement than poorer and more oppressed people. And urban African Americans had considerably more freedom to associate with one another and to develop independent institutions than did rural blacks, who were often under the very direct supervision of white landowners. So in during twentieth century, there are many

organizations and leaders which took part and attended to the struggle for blacks' freedom in those times, such as listed below.

a. National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP)—An Interracial and Antiracism Organization (1909)

One black intellect of the time named W. E. B. Du Bois, activist and editor for the *Crisis*, the widely read journal published by the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), the nation's leading anti discrimination organization, an interracial organization. NAACP focused on challenging the laws that prevented African Americans from exercising their full rights as citizens. He proclaimed that it would finally put end to the South's old order of black oppression with racism.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), stayed back the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, one of the oldest civil rights organization in the United States. The main subject is to secure for colored people, and particularly for Americans of Negro descent, free and equal participation in the democracy of modern culture.

The NAACP succeeded in getting two anti-lynching bills passed by the House Representative in the 1930, so southern leaders in the Senate prevented the bill from becoming law. The NAACP was more successful in its lawsuits that challenged segregation laws. In the 1920s and 1930s, it won a number of legal battles in the areas of housing and education. And also, the NAACP appealed mainly to educated, middle and upper-class African Americans and some liberal white Americans.

b. Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)—Racial Separatism (1914)

This organization founded by Marcus Garvey. UNIA is an organization which intent to promote black pride. In 1918, Garvey, a former printer, had begun publishing *Negro World*, a weekly newspaper for the UNIA. Filled with information on events and issue of interest to blacks, the paper was distributed in the United States, Canada, the West Indies, Latin America, Europe, and Africa, with a peak circulation of more than 600,000.

By 1919, the UNIA had found its supporters, claiming a worldwide membership of two million, with branches in Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. In the late 1919, Garvey invited all UNIA branches and other black organizations around the globe to send delegates to UNIA headquarters in New York for huge display black solidarity.

This organization was open to all religious services. And its movement was desire to see blacks educate themselves so that they could achieve economic independence and political power. In UNIA, Garvey argued black people to shed their sense of disillusionment, to take pride in their race, and to free themselves from dependence on white employers and institutions. He strongly opposed integration efforts, favoring black separatism instead. As time went by, Garvey promoted himself as a Black Moses striving to the lead his people back to their African homeland.

c. Nation of Islam (NOI)—Black Pride and Separatism (1930)

Nation of Islam, commonly known Black Muslims. Its aim was to pursue its program of separatism among urban Negroes. This organization was founded by Wallace Fard (Fard Muhammad) in 1930. Then until 1960s, it led by Elijah Pool (Elijah Muhammad).

After becoming chief minister of the Nation of Islam in 1933 Elijah Muhammad, he then established *Temple Number One* and set up programs to educated Black Muslims and to help them form their own businesses within the black community. They tried to lead righteous lives and worked hard to become economically self-sufficient. Beside that, NOI (Black Muslims), founded the University of Islam, an elementary school that also provided education for parents, and the Muslim Girls' Training Class to teach young women the principles of home economics and proper social behavior.

Under the NOI organization, Elijah Muhammad emphasized his movement on self-sufficiency as the key to independence from the white man. This organization didn't seek change through political means but waited for Allah to create the Black Nation. So that in movement, it was forbidden Black Muslim members to bear arms or to perform acts of violence unless directed by Allah, and also that Elijah Muhammad refused to

register for the military draft. According to Elijah Muhammad, the enemy of the Nation of Islam was a white society.

d. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)—Nonviolent Action (1957)

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929, where blacks attended separate schools and were barred from public facilities. All over the South, civil rights organization such as the SCLC and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), were challenging racial discrimination. In Its movement, advocated the practice of nonviolent protest, a peaceful way of protesting against racial policies. For King himself, his nonviolent action “..... was inspired by the words of Henry David Thoreau, who rejected the view that obedience to civil law was a citizen’s highest responsibility and who advocated nonviolent resistance to oppression (Banks, 1997: 66).

Civil rights activist like King won much praise for the courageous fight for racial integration. He led the Montgomery boycott, moved into the forefront of the struggle for equal rights. King became not only a leader in the African Americans civil rights movement whose fully integration and peaceful society in calling African Americans to fight for their constitutional rights but also a symbol of nonviolent protest the entire the world.

Many of these organizations have worked to strengthen racial consciousness. As a result, they have developed great interest and pride in their history and culture. The others such as Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded by James Farmer in 1942, which took part in challenging racial segregation in public school and theaters, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Many of these organizations have worked to strengthen racial consciousness. As a result, they have developed great interest and pride in their history and culture. In the next chapter, we will discuss a significant leader named Malcolm X, took separatism ideology down the civil rights black movement in 1960s.

e. Kennedy on Civil Right

He was born in Massachusetts in 1917. In 1960, he had an opportunity to make a powerful gesture of goodwill toward black Americans. As a senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy had voted for civil rights measures. After the crisis in Birmingham early in 1963, Kennedy had proposed a modest civil rights bill. The bill prohibits segregation in public places and advance school desegregation. “The Kennedy administration did not receive congressional cooperation in dealing with the civil rights of blacks. Nevertheless, it pushed ahead when legislative action made progress possible. Buses, hotels, motels, and restaurants were largely desegregated (Versteeg & Hofstadter, 1977: 800).

CONCLUSION

The greatest problem in race relation in the United States has been the variable of color, so that there has been a clustering of nonwhites at the bottom half of the stratification system. In the post-Reconstruction, blacks were a comparative term. On one hand, they were freer than slave, but on the other hand, they were surrounded by restrictions created by white society.

Before and during World War II, African Americans were not treated as equals by a large portion of American society. Millions of people believe that the time had come to demand that the nation will give away of freedom and equality for all American people. But the fact is African American still live under the white supremacy and whites' hegemonic power.

Because white racist still treated African Americans as second class society by discrimination and legal segregation, most of black leaders took a part in resistance movement against injustice system conducted by white hegemonic. The term is aim to ask for the reasons that why discrimination and segregation could be happened in United States as a democratic state.

Using 'equality' is aim to discuss about how principles and basis of equality in term of social and political perspective toward behavior of discrimination and segregation in the United States. The next, is term of democracy, principles of democracy, human rights, and social justice must be done in a case of African Americans in United States in 1950s to 1960s.

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