

Racism in America: Black America's Real Problem

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore, understand, and evaluate the issue of racism in America. Since the Proclamation of Emancipation in 1863 through the race riots and peaceful marches of the 1960's, this problem continues to plague America in the twenty-first century.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act represents a clear turning point in history - a point at which America made a genuine attempt to resolve its contradictions and its constrictions. However, while the nation echoes, "All men are created equal," in every corner of the United States there are still small pockets of racism and hate and within these pockets they believe that the "other" race is inferior to them.

Keywords: African Americans, Civil Rights Act of 1964, racism

Importance of 1964 Civil Rights Act

The American civil rights movement in the 1960s and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are doubtlessly unmatched in the United States history.

Even today, after so many years, the images from that time illustrate surprising contrast in American society and in human behavior. Black and white, naked violence and courageous nonviolence, rage and forbearance, dignity and dehumanization, such forces met and illustrated what has been characterized as the "Law that Changed a Nation". (Thornton-Hencke, 1988, p. 14)

The 1964 law, passed on July 2 of that year, was not the first U.S. civil rights law. Such laws date back as far as 1866, and just a few years prior to the 1964 act, civil rights legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1957 and in 1960. However, Washington attorney Joseph Rauh, who played a major role in drafting the 1964 legislation, stated that these two laws were very weak and ineffective, they had only symbolic significance. Both laws had little enforcement capability and did virtually nothing to change the actual living and working conditions of black people in America.

What made the Civil Rights Act of 1964 so noteworthy and so effective was its comprehensiveness. It sought to eliminate the vestiges of discrimination. It addressed voting, public accommodations, public facilities, and public schools, it also addressed the questions of U.S. government aid, employment, statistics and courts; moreover, it prohibited discrimination in employment.

Within the signing of the law, discrimination in public accommodations was outlawed, and blacks could not be barred from hotels, theaters, city parks, and

other places.

Clearly, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was more than a law that simply created an office in the U.S. Department of Justice to help solve racial disputes. It attempted to redress the great contradiction of America: a country predicated on liberty, equality, opportunity, and justice and yet another America divided and embittered about race.

Rauh considered that the Civil Right law inaugurated a legal revolution, it paved the way for the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Prior to these statutes there was a legal system that supported segregation. By outlawing segregation, these laws caused a legal revolution in America.

The Dean of the District of Columbia School of Law in Washington, William Robinson, emphasized that in 1964 the United States was a segregated society; black people were regularly and routinely denied basic services. He considered that, "the problems of racial discrimination and racial inequalities in our society are part of a legacy that was and is hundreds of years old, there continues to be a basic separation between the citizens in our society ..." (Thornton-Hencke, 1988, p. 15)

President Kennedy urged the U.S. Congress, in June 1963, to pass civil rights legislation. Politically, civil rights was a loaded issue, even for the president. If Kennedy was to win reelection in 1964, he would need the support of the white south; many of his advisers feared that he would not get it because of alienating the white southern Democratic leadership in Congress and the white public throughout the South.

In August 1963, some 250,000 blacks and whites gathered peacefully in the capital to demonstrate for

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jobs, equality, and passage of the civil rights bill pending in the U.S. Congress.

But three months after the march, the bill still had not been passed. Then, on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. A new president Lyndon Johnson urged the Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a memorial to the slain president.

Professor of political science at Colorado College Robert D. Loevy who worked on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as an American Political Science Association fellow, stated that presidents, Kennedy and Johnson were both key players in the passage of that bill but in different ways: "Kennedy's great contribution was to write a bill that would get through both houses of Congress. He had just gotten that bill out of the rules committee when he was assassinated. When Johnson became president he changed the situation because he was a southerner who had to run for reelection and needed northern and minority support. In his state of the Union address in January 1964, President Johnson called for the end of all segregation in American society. No president had ever done that before in American history." (Thornton-Hencke, 1988, pp. 18-19)

When Martin Luther King made his now famous "I Have A Dream" speech at the 1963 march in Washington, he spoke of his hopes for a better America. "I Have A Dream", he said, "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." (Thornton-Hencke, 1988, p. 19)

Racism is a Disease that needs a Cure

Throughout the U.S. history the problem of racism and discrimination against African Americans has been a long issue in American society. For the black African, America has always been associated with two hundred and fifty years of slavery (Yahoo Voices, 2009).

Nowadays, most Americans probably believe that King's dream is closer to reality than it has ever been. Today, blacks are visible throughout the public and private sectors in all kinds of professions. African-Americans are elected by the thousands to state and local offices and many are now attending America's most prestigious universities.

However, despite the fact that this is 2013, and the first initial push of equality took place in the 1960's racism is pervasive in American society. The legacy of the Civil Rights Act, today, after so many years, finds that the U.S. is not free from discrimination, in truth; racism is an issue that continues to plague America. Moreover, racism in itself implies that our skin color defines who we are, however a person's skin color does not accurately represent their intelligence, wealth, or their morals. Racism is not just a viewpoint, but rather it's a disease that is often left untreated because of misguided stereotypes. There is no cure for racism because it is fueled by ignorance.

The author of the article - "Racism in America:

Racism Is a Disease That Needs to Be Cured" – had a chance to talk with Keya Woods, about her experiences with racism as an African-American woman in Charlotte (North Carolina).

In an interview, Keya Woods states that as an African-American woman, she experiences racism constantly, most frustrating for her is to see how her African-American children open their hearts and extend themselves to a Caucasian to say hello, only for them to be ignored.

When Keya has been in search of venues to host several events, she thought she could be wrong; Keya believes that her race is a hindrance in her not being able to secure a venue that is owned or run by Caucasians. Keya thinks that racism is just a way to mask the true issues in America, the issues of greed and power. "I am better than you if I have more than you do." (CBS Charlotte, 2013) They are so consumed by this notion that they are willing to destroy each other to prove its truth.

Moreover, we face another example of racial discrimination, in an interview with Jerry Davis, who worked at Fox Sports for 15 years, he was not promoted once. Now he believes that the reason of this is his African-American origin.

As Jerry tells there are roughly 34 people in top management positions at Fox Sports, and none are black, and as far as he knows, no African-American has ever held top leadership positions in the division's 19-year history. When it comes to hiring non-whites in leadership positions, Fox Sports' track record is "abysmal", he says.

Davis is suing Fox Sports for racial and disability discrimination, and wrongful termination, among other charges. Fox Sports declined to comments.

Davis was hired by Fox Sports in 1997 and worked as a music director. According to his lawsuit, he reported to a vice president, and four times over 15 years, that position was vacant. Despite Davis' "superior education, skills and performance" as well as strong recommendations from "senior-level colleagues," he says that he was passed over every time. According to the lawsuit, the reason was because "... as a Black man, he did not fit neatly into the company's corporate culture."

Eventually, Davis was seeking damages in excess of \$25,000, saying he has suffered "nervousness, humiliation, depression, anguish, embarrassment, fright, shock, pain" and anxiety.

This is not the first time that an ex-employee has sued a division of Fox, claiming racial discrimination. In 2010, Harmeem Jones sued Fox News for \$5 million, claiming that he'd been fired after complaining of race discrimination (AOL Jobs, 2013).

Conclusion

The road of passage for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a long and difficult one. It was paved by large and small acts of individual and group sacrifice and it saw ordinary American citizens, both black and white,

display remarkable courage in the face of immense turmoil and personal danger.

However, nowadays racism has become somewhat of a “hidden” issue, Americans know that racism still exists, and in order to eliminate it we must first deal with the insecurities of self in order to realize that our self-worth is not threatened by another. If people could no longer have to define a specific race, that will label one above the other.

Racism is an illness and just like any other illness, our bodies (our minds and hearts) have the ability to heal its self.

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