

# U.s. history-cultural changes in the 1960s essay sample

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The 1960s, with the Camelot Kennedy administration and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, was a decade in which many cultural changes took place. The United States itself was amidst the disheartening Cold War and the heartbreaking assassination of President Kennedy. During the period, feminism was revived. The Civil Rights Movement brought change to African Americans with their pursuit for Black Power. Other minorities such as Hispanic Americans and Native Americans organized unions or militant groups to protest for their rights in economic and political issues. Thus, two of the most profound cultural changes were the further development of gender roles, and the emphasis on race relations.

The role of women in society changed dramatically in the 1960s. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 required employers to pay women the same as men for the same work, and the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of sex as well as of race. As a result, more women had the opportunity to work rather than maintaining their traditional rolls as nurtures and housewives. In addition, women gained reproductive rights. FDA approved the sale of birth control pills, which gave women more sexual freedom and the opportunity to make their own decisions about their bodies. With the changes that took place, the Feminine Mystique was being explored. Betty Friedan was able to reach thousands of women when she formed NOW. Minority women such as the American Indians, Hispanic Americans and Black feminists also formed separate organizations.

While the evolution of gender rolls took place, influence and importance of race relations also brought cultural change. Black leaders were emerging as <https://assignbuster.com/us-history-cultural-changes-in-the-1960s-essay-sample/>

effective agents of change. Martin Luther King Jr. supported non-violent resistance. College students performed the strategy of nonviolence by performing sit-ins in restaurant lunch counters until the owners agreed to serve food to the colored students. The freedom riders showed proof of southern racism by attempting to travel through the south using only public transportations. With the effect of television and other media attention, the mob violence and burning of Freedom Rides shocked the nation. As a response to the sit-ins and demonstrations, in 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act with the forbid of segregation in hotels, motels, restaurants, etc. In addition, the 1965 Voting Rights Act suspended literacy tests and guaranteed the right for black citizens to vote. As a result, more blacks voted to help win elections for African American officials and reform laws that would benefit them.

Changes in racial relations took place among African Americans as well as other minorities. For the minorities, a major political issue was representation. In some border towns, Hispanic American voters outnumbered other voters two to one, but few Hispanic American candidates were in the office. Although African Americans in the south had a huge population, few served as representatives. With changes such as reapportionment, more candidates of the minorities were elected. Also, with President Johnson's Great Society in focus on the poor, the minimum wage law in 1966 helped poor minorities with low paid jobs in raising the rate from \$1. 25 to \$1. 40. Young Native American activists formed militant organizations such as the American Indian Movement. The militant groups demonstrated and focused the nation's attention on the deplorable living

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conditions of Native Americans. In addition, under Cesar Chavez's leadership, farm workers became unionized for the first time in successful boycotts of grape and lettuce against their growers.

In general, the 1960s was a time of profound cultural change in both gender roles and race relations. Women gained more individualism in their new roles with more working opportunities and the freedom of choice. African Americans, along with the civil rights struggle, suspended the voting literacy tests and achieved some racial integration. In addition, with President Johnson's Great Society, changes such as reapportionment, the establishment of organizations, and boycotts of farm products were among the minorities.