

African americans and the cold war. assignment

[History](#)



Compare the two articles and comment on how the Cold War impacted upon African Americans during the asses. Historically, the treatment of African Americans was atrocious: unfair and dehumidifying. Throughout the asses, this racial discrimination was noisily protested against and the recognition from governments allowed the African American voice to reach its zenith.

The Cold War and the intense ideological disputes between the United States and the Soviet Union aided in the strengthened awareness towards his inequality and led to a slight advancement of the societal position for African Americans. However, with the improvement of the African American voice, coinciding with the war at hand, came governmental fear, resulting in public manipulation and covert force. African American's lived in a consciously limited and divided world, which stifled their individuality and independence.

Richard Wright, a Negro who lived through this mistreatment, became the first Negro to highlight the injustice through protest writing. Wright " was the angriest, most honest and outspoken black writer" I f the time and his books offer insight into the lengths of racial discrimination and inequality he and other Blacks were subjected to. He made it " clearer than any black American writer had ever done that as a black man he was not allowed and not able to feel that he was a full-blooded' American" 2, but was expected to adhere to the enforced racial hierarchy and " live his life acting out a demeaning and ludicrous role" 3.

Life for African American's consisted of constant degradation, with " daily insults and petty humiliations" 4, and customary segregation - the Blacks of America ere inhibited from employment opportunities, denied good

education, forced to sit behind Anglo-Saxons (Whites') in public transportation, with enforced racially segregated public housing and most hotels and eateries being closed to those of African descent. Ultimately, the possibilities for African Americans were limited and they were generally treated as inferior beings.

The Cold War tactically exposed the United States' practice of gross inequality and discrimination. The conflict between political ideologies (Communism vs. McCarthy/Democracy) during the War established a central foundation for the movement towards racial equality. In an attempt to gain more party members, the Communist Party capitalized on the African American's protests - " circulating petitions on police brutality, employment discrimination, and anticipating legislation... Trying to gauge individuals' openness (to the Communist Party)" 5.

They vigorously and passionately lashed the United States for their treatment of the Blacks while " actively promoting a racial Justice agenda" 6: pushing for unions to include Negroes, campaigning for the desegregation of housing, encouraging black writers and artists and providing opportunities for black leadership. With the promise to combat racism, and being " the only white organization in the country that paid serious attention to the issues of race and civil rights" 7, Communism attracted more membership, especially from those of African descent with the proportion of Black members doubling.

With the numbers supporting the American government declining and the " difficulty sustaining the smooth image of racial progress" 8, the government

made every effort to counter the Soviet's propaganda. The American politics depraved the Soviets assertions with a public declaration stating that “ despite certain inequalities and conditions which exist, the American way of life provides ample opportunity to correct these conditions through democratic processes...

The American Negro, down to the poorest sharecropper, is better off than the vast majority of Stalin's subjects” 9 while the “ US embassies and consulates throughout the world distributed booklets showing the great progress that had been made on race matters” 10. As the propaganda hostility dominated newspapers and generic conversation, the United States' developments awards civil rights were largely and continuously broadcasted, with the “ American's... Making much mileage out of the Supreme Court's school-desegregation decision in 1954”11.

Essentially, the Cold War heightened the awareness of racial discrimination and made the unfairness an international issue. The open rebellion against racial prejudice in the United States, meshing with Cold War concerns, evoked fears within the United States' government. The American government grew suspicious of internal communist subversion and as a result the loyalty of all free men', and especially the loyalty of African American's was deemed questionable.

With this anxiety, came the intrusion of the loyalty program. This program, introduced by President Harry. S. Truman and adopted by Senator Joseph McCarthy, established a framework for a wide-ranging and powerful government apparatus – the Federal Bureau of Investigations – to perform

loyalty checks on every employee. If the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) had 'reasonable grounds' to doubt an employee's allegiance, he or she would be dismissed.

The FBI "could not tolerate independent thinkers either, as there was one thing considered every bit as bad as being a Red (communist), and that was being a Black who spoke out against American racism" 12, thus "individuals who had been active in progressive causes, particularly in the African American freedom struggle, were targeted and disproportionately affected" 13. Richard Wright and Annie Lee Moss are two African American's who were subjected to the subtle terror of the Loyalty Programs investigations.

Both Wright and Moss held supporting attitudes towards the progression of civil rights. In the early '50s Wright was under US government surveillance, assumed for his books protesting against racial scarification, and "one Sunday in April 1953, Wright was questioned by a member from the Senate Judiciary Committee about his subversive books and his association with the Communist Party, asked to inform on others... Receiving a warning that he could be subpoenaed in front of McCarthy committee" 14.

Wright's books were, and all rebellious books, were removed from the United States Information Service libraries - a subtle way the government silenced opponents. Annie Lee Moss, whom experienced accusations of disloyalty, was used and still remains "an enduring symbol of Cold War politics" 15. Annie Lee Moss was a clerk in the General Accounting Office (GAO), working in close proximity to sensitivity information, and was, "it seemed, living proof of the possibilities of the American (African) dream".

Moss encountered several accusations of being a member of the communist party, and was suspended from her job twice, only to be reinstated when the “ GAO Loyalty Board determined there were no ‘ reasonable grounds’ to believe that she was disloyal” 16. The allegations and innocence of Moss was biblically broadcasted on “ March 1954, when Edward R. Morrow dedicated an episode of his television news show, See It Now, to her appearance before Senator Joseph McCarthy Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations” 17.

The broadcast “ demonstrated that McCarthy carelessness threatened the rights of American citizens, but that there were others in the American government committed to defending those rights” 18. With the increased amount of hope for African American’s, came new forms of discriminatory struggles. The Cold War had a pivotal impact on life for African American’s. Though the Blacks of America were victims of new forms of discrimination, ultimately, the Cold War revealed the contradictions in American democracy: how could the United