

Developments in america: equal rights



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Undoubtedly, America is believed to be one of the most influential countries globally. Many view it as a utopia with a wide array of opportunities.

However, the brutal and inhumane force that was used to bring this great nation into existence is often overlooked. According to Howard Zinn's book "A people's history of the United States," the country was previously ridden with slavery, inequality, and oppression. A far cry from its modern society now fully enlightened and filled with liberal minded individuals. Furthermore, the current day American citizens believe that every individual should be accorded their equal rights regardless of their gender, religion, or race.

However, before such humane and philanthropic beliefs gained roots in the country, its previous occupants used a brutal force and discrimination to build it. This essay discusses how America has improved over the past decades. It does so, by highlighting previous inequalities that taint the nation's heritage such as women rights violation, cruel land eviction of Native Americans, forceful grabbing of Mexican land, slavery of black Americans, and the oppression of middle-class citizens.

First, unlike today's America, where women have professional careers and run businesses, in the past decades, American women were viewed as inferior. In the past, teenagers were shipped into the country for the purpose of giving birth; their place was expected to be at home taking care of their family members. The lowest class out of all, however, was black women who were both slaves to their masters and their families. Religion was used to pressure dependence and submissiveness from the female gender, one such sermon in New York 1808 claimed that " the duties devolved on females as wives . . . the counsellor and friend of the husband; who makes it her daily

study to lighten his cares” (112). Sexual virtue and compliance was expected from all women and deviance, punishable by law. For instance, according to Zinn, in 1747, for the fifth time, Miss Polly Baker was punished for conceiving outside wedlock despite her successfully taking care of her other children as a single mother (106). Moreover, educating women was purported to cause rebellion against their husbands; it was, therefore, extremely discouraged (108). Nevertheless, during the 1800s, after the introduction of industrialization, women became more enlightened and abolished these beliefs. Sarah Grimke, an example of a liberated woman, wrote that “whatsoever is morally right for a man to do, it is morally right for a woman to do” (119). In the years that followed, after violently fighting for their equal treatment, women gained many rights such as the right to vote, use birth control and occupy professions such as lawyers and doctors.

While the modern USA believes that every race has the right to own property, the American ancestors believed that the land occupied by any uncivilized race was meant to be conquered. The red Indians, who were the native occupants of the country, were brutally evicted from their ancestral land. Women and children of the Cherokee tribe, for instance, were forcefully marched west where they died of starvation and diseases (129). Additionally, the country’s leaders such as Andrew Jackson who was a trendy political leader used false claims such as the Indians lack of integration of their culture to justify their unjust actions (128). Similar to the native Americans, the states’ leaders and elites also took Mexican land by unfairly declaring war on them. The land thirsty wealth individuals saw combat as a way of acquiring cheap land, while the poorer middlemen viewed it as a way to earn

more money. Eventually, the U. S paid Mexicans 20 million dollars for their territory, false fully claiming in one of the newspapers that, “ We take nothing by conquest... thank God.” It is clear that America previously acquired most of its land by conquering and killing its initial occupants.

Slavery was also uncontrolled in America’s history. Black people were regarded as property, and of inferior biological makeup. They were brought to the country and sold to work in farms and industries without pay (182). Various activists, however, fought for black people’s rights and won. Several books by black educated individuals were also published to air out their complaints; for example, Fredrick Douglass wrote, “ Why am I a slave? Why are some people, slaves, and other masters? Was there ever a time when this was not so? How did the relation commence?” (176) The abolition of slavery, unfortunately, did not mark the end of racism. On the contrarily, previous slave owners more viably carried out cruel acts of hate against the African Americans (190). Common examples of cruelty faced were unlawful imprisonment of the black community, seclusion from the rest of the country and limited access to government offices. Eventually, such heinous acts against the race ceased, and the state adopted black American leaders in Congress. This change of attitude shows how the country’s inhabitants have changed from their previous slave trade days.

As women rights violation, slavery and civil wars ended, capitalism followed suit. The elite greatly oppressed the common man. The author illustrates this by stating that,” these poor could not be counted on as political allies of the government. But they were like slaves or Indians-invisible ordinarily a menace if they rose.” (213). This unfair treatment led to uprisings and

rebellions as workers and middle-class individuals fought for their rights (217). An example of this was an 1830's movement against the unjust Hudson valley rent system (218). The elected leaders who were meant to protect the lower class citizens instead further aided the rich man's cause. However, newspapers and other media outlets helped create a voice for the people. The press gave way to more strikes that sought to demolish the poor working conditions and low wages that working folks in the 19th century were awarded in factories. The government, however, rather than help its citizens sent out troops to disrupt the strikes despite the workers attempt to make them peaceful (220). As the brutality of capitalism extended over the years, the elite earned more money while their inferior counterparts suffered starvation. Today's communist system and labour unions help guarantee that no worker's rights are violated .

In summary, the 21st century American society we currently know is more humane than in previous years. Howard Zinn's book gives a detailed account of all the brutal acts executed during the state's founding days. Inequalities such as women rights violation, cruel land eviction of Native Americans, forceful grabbing of Mexican land, slavery of black Americans, and the oppression of the middle-class citizens are all a far cry from the peaceful and racially diverse country that is now the United States of America. However, an extensive line of thought would be that Americans have perhaps learnt from their ancestors' previous mistakes and strived to create a better nation for all.

Works cited

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