

Good example of essay on first leaders against lynching and racism

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



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What strategies and tactics did African Americans use to fight oppression and discrimination and to gain their rights during the years 1865-1955? Your answer should include, but not to be limited to, a discussion of African Americans leaders and the formal organizational efforts undertaken during these years.

Introduction:

African Americans were mostly a subjugated lot in the years leading up to the Civil War. They had to suffer almost daily injustices and in extreme cases, severe punishment and death. After the war, blacks enjoyed an almost unlimited amount of freedom although this was pretty much short lived since post reconstruction efforts did not take very long to uphold and the black man ended up subjugated again. The most important leaders during those times were the black senators Hiram Revels and Jerome Hinds who, in their all too short legislative life did quite a lot to improve the lot of the black man. However, the almost immediate institution of the Black Codes

led to the Jim Crow laws which saw blacks subjugated to ritual humiliation as well as horrendous discrimination.

One of the most important blacks who fought tooth and nail against institutionalised racism and brutalization was the woman Ida B Wells. Wells was an important figure, especially in the latter years of the 19th century. Wells criss-crossed the country in her efforts to raise awareness on lynching which was extremely common in the South and which occurred at almost a rate of one incident per day up till the mid 1920's.

Wells also toured Great Britain in her efforts to stir up a campaign against lynching. Her accounts of the Jim Crow segregation laws shocked British audiences to the hilt. Wells went on to found the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples or the NAACP which was the first really organized effort by blacks to do something about their terrible situation. The NAACP focused intensely on an anti-lynching campaign although its voice was quite a lone one during the early decades of the 20th century where such events continued unabated and with impunity. Another important campaigner in those early days was Walter White who co-chaired the NAACP for a number of years with Wells working alongside him. A favoured publicity stunt used by the NAACP was the hoisting of a flag over the New York office with the words, ' A Man was lynched today', undoubtedly an effort to raise consciousness over the steady stream of daily lynching in the United States.

The NAACP

The NAACP grew considerably in importance from the years 1910 to 1920 when it increased its membership by a staggering amount. In fact, members

increased from just 9, 000 in 1916 to 90, 000 in 1920 and it was deemed viable to take the anti-lynching fight to Congress. The group began mobilizing its membership. In direct response to the violence which was occurring on an almost daily basis, the NAACP sponsored more than two thousand public meetings across the country. These took place in various churches, lodge halls and school basements, at which no less than twelve thousand dollars were collected with thousands donating nickels and quarters in donations.

Another important black community organizer and later chairman of the NAACP was WEB Dubois who was known for taking a rather moderate stance against lynching since he preferred diplomacy. A memorable conference which took place in New York in 1919 saw several thousand people attending to listen to Charles Evans Hughes who was a former Republican governor of the state as well as a Presidential candidate. James Weldon Johnson who was the NAACP's chief legal counsel and who would lead the legislative effort against lynching provided the argument that for an federal anti-lynching law to be enacted, it was important to debunk the myth that the practise of lynching was necessary for the controlling of black men to protect white women from their advances.

Although the time seemed auspicious for obtaining federal action, the successful results obtained by other reform movements such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon league, were not to be a mirror for the anti-lynching cause. Efforts to introduce a bill in the House of Representatives had started as early as 1911 when a representative from Missouri, Leonid C Dyer had proposed several bills to

Congress but these never made it out of committee. In the meantime, lynching and racism continued unabated with the Minnesota city of Duluth being the scene of a triple murder in 1920. This incident debunked the myth that racial discrimination and violence was the sole prerogative of the Southern states.

Further efforts to organize blacks against racism

The 1920's passed without much incident as regards efforts to outlaw lynching although President Warren Harding had spoken out against the practise. Another case which was to galvanize public opinion on the Jim Crow laws was the infamous Scottsboro Boys case where eight boys were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman. Although the NAACP mounted a spirited and excellent legal defense, the boys were all convicted and given lengthy jail terms. However, the case gained widespread publicity on all counts and the shocking unfairness of the sentence brought further exposure to the cause of the anti-segregationists.

The post war scenario leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

' We begin to see', WEB Du Bois wrote in a prominent article in The New York Sunday Times magazine in November 1948, ' that the Negro is fighting a slow, determined battle and is not going to give up. He proposes to reach full equality as an American citizen. And by equality, he means abolition of separate schools, the disappearance of Jim Crow travel and other similar discriminatory rules'. This article appeared to be prophetic since one after another the racial barriers started to fall.

An important development in the long and arduous road of racial equality was the adoption of a formidable Civil Rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Convention. This was achieved due to judicious lobbying by liberal Democratic senators such as Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota in conjunction with black leaders such as White and DuBois who worked assiduously towards this important goal. The assiduous legal defense in the Brown vs Board of Education case in 1954 immediately threw open the doors to desegregated schools and the rise of one Martin Luther King led to another important event in the history of Civil Rights which was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The courage of a black seamstress Rosa Parks, who managed to stand up to the innate racism of the Southern transport system was pounced upon by the NAACP to further their goal of complete desegregation. The organization of the boycott was the brainchild of a young pastor from Alabama, one Martin Luther King who was to rise to great prominence within a few years and who was instrumental in achieving the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Works Cited:

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