

# The protest marches in 1960 history essay



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Protest Marches in 1960's Civil Rights Movement as A Nonviolent Tactic. "

We will show around the world that it is a lie that rulers have said 'black people are satisfied with the present situation'" (" Electronic Journal," 2007, para. 3). This is the part of what Martin Luther King, Jr. said to explain how his nonviolent tactics work for acquiring civil rights of African Americans. In fact, nonviolent tactics contributed to several progresses of the civil rights movement, though it unfortunately shifted to violent ways later. In earlier civil rights movements, utilizing media, protest marches had big impact on the progresses of 1960's civil rights movements, and the marches was conducted as one of the most effective nonviolent tactics, which influenced later movements.

First of all, there are several features of protest marches. A protest march is a parade in which people proceed from one location to another while they hold a placard that shows their argument or objection about an issue or sing some symbolic songs. The aim of a protest march is to attract the attention of people and society and then to make them recognize and accept their argument about the issue. Eventually, the government has pressure from the citizens to make serious considerations and to take action about the issue with legal and direct effects. The government of a democratic society, especially America, strongly has pressure from the majority voice of consensus by citizens since, in a democratic society, citizens have sovereignty, and the government is represented by citizens, which brings up the government's responsibility for the voice of its citizens. Also, protest marches are usually considered more successful if more people participate,

since the more people participate, the more they can attract the attentions of society.

To attract the attention, the leaders of civil rights movements in earlier 1960's, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., utilized media well especially for protest marches. The aim of the marches includes to get the public attention, to make them clearly recognize the discrimination of black people, and to induce them to oppose it, which would encourage the government to take actions. In America, the culture of TV had grown up and spread to the public since color television was introduced in 1953 (" A TIMELINE OF TELEVISION BROADCASTING," 2009). However, in 1960's, two innovations in television technology that dramatically changed broadcast news-videotape and live satellite transmission-accelerated to get public into the culture of television (Kurlansky, 2005). Especially, live satellite transmission, which makes television broadcast live, had bigger impacts than before on the public who watched it. In this trend, television became an indispensable part of a strategy to attract the attention of society in 1960's civil rights movement with the question of how to get a television cameraman concerned for leaders of the movement (Kurlansky, 2005). The Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee's Mary King said, " The skillful use of the news media for public education is the modern equivalent of the 'pen,' and the pen is still mightier than the sword" (Kurlansky, 2005, p. 40). Next, the following are significant protest marches in earlier 1960's civil rights movement that, utilizing media, successfully gave the public an impact and result causing the government to take actions.

The 1963 March on Washington-which is the largest civil rights demonstration in American History-was successful with a great impact from media. The march had the goals that include demands for passage of The Civil Rights Act, integration of schools and the enactment of a fair employment practices bill prohibiting job discrimination. Also, the leaders of this march had to care for many unprecedented logistical problems, including moving thousands of people into Washington and out in one day, feeding them, walking with nearly 1, 500 organizations and making sure that the march was a peaceful one (Wexler, 1999). In fact, on Wednesday, August 28, 1963, more than 250, 000 protesters rallied at the Lincoln Memorial on Washington (Martin & Sullivan, 2000). They represented a coalition of civil rights workers, church groups, and labor leaders; not only black but white as well (Wexler, 1999). However, the significance is that this protest march was broadcast around America on live TV. " A. B. C. was the first network to begin live coverage of the march itself at 11: 16A. M. [...]. At 11: 30A. M. C. B. S. and N. B. C. made pickups as scheduled" (Adams, 1963, para. 4). According to the New York Times published on the next day of this march, the A. C. Nielsen Company said that between 9: 30A. M. and 3: 00 P. M., there was a 46% higher audience than in the same period the previous week (Adams, 1963). With the big impact of media on the public, this protest march helped transform the civil rights struggle from a southern to a national movement and placed it at the center of American politics, ending up with the congressional passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Furthermore, in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March as well, media was utilized well as a strategy attracting the attention of the public. Even after

the passage of Civil Rights Act of 1964, there remains another significant goal of the civil rights movement, which was to increase the number of black people registered to vote in the South. At that time, in Selma, Alabama, only 2.5% of eligible black people were registered voters. To bring national attention to police brutality and voter registration efforts in Alabama, King and local civil rights leaders decided to lead a march from Selma to the state capital, Montgomery. On March 7, 1965, the march started. However, when marchers attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met by approximately one hundred state troopers and police, ordered by the Governor to stop the march. Then, despite of no marchers' resistance, the police injured dozens of marchers. This incident, Bloody Sunday, was broadcast later that evening on national television (Singleton, 1999). As the source of utilizing media, King told photographers that they do not need to help protest marchers but " your role is to photograph what is happening to us" (Kurlansky, 2005, p. 39). The sight of Bloody Sunday encouraged hundreds of Americans to flock to Selma, eager to participate in a second march. Then, eventually, on March 15, President Johnson federalized eighteen hundred members of the Alabama National Guard to protect 3, 200 marchers as they left Selma on March 21. By the time the long walk ended four days later, 25, 000 people had participated. In this way, this march brought national attention to the plight of black people in the South, ending up with the passage of Voting Rights Acts of 1965 (Singleton, 1999).

Later in the 1960's, non-violent tactics, including protest marches, gradually transformed into a protest against the Vietnam War. A large number of the protests against the war were conducted on universities and at college

campuses by students attending these institutions. Especially the protest in Columbia University on 1968 was heated up, whose students were really motivated to be engaged in the national discussion about the war in Vietnam. On April 23, 1968, about 150 students and community members marched to the construction site and tore down a section of fencing. Then, they moved on to Hamilton Hall, taking over the building and taking as hostage Columbia's acting dean (Adler, 2008). They eventually won their goals of stopping the building of a gym on public land in Morningside Park and severing ties with a Pentagon institute doing research for the Vietnam War (Kifner, 2008).

Some people and organizations such as SNCC abandoned nonviolent tactics, including peaceful protest marches, and ironically shifted to violent tactics after the assassination of King and in later civil rights movements (Kurlansky, 2005). However, the nonviolent tactics that were initiated by King, achieved big progress of dismissing segregation-prohibiting segregation under the law-and the tactics prove that nonviolence has significant power to change society; violence could not have done those achievements. Especially the two historical marches, The 1963 March on Washington and the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, contributed to the progress of 1960's civil rights movements with great influence from media, and impacted later movements.