

The passage of the civil rights act: racial equality

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Racial Equality Racial equality is the practice and belief that all people, regardless of their race are equal morally, politically and legally and it explains the relationship between different races. Racism on the other hand is when there is prejudice, oppression and unfair practices and atrocities carried out against one group or class of people against another group. It is a big hindrance to world's endeavor to have a universally harmonious society. The African American race has undergone racism from the White European population who settled in America in 1600. It was the White European population that brought the African Americans to America as slaves which explains the origin of the Black populace. Slaves were the property of the white Americans and, they could be subjected to harsh conditions. They could be caned, be branded or be harmed physically in other brutal ways without any fear of legal redress from anyone or any authority. The killing and raping of slaves and rape was not an unusual but the offenders were not punished just for the mere fact that they were White. The masters were free to separate families and even to sell the children as slaves and this was booming business in these times. The slaves were forced to work under threat of dire consequences if they did not toil, and this was one of the triggering causes of the American civil war. Though slavery ended with the civil war, the impact of the racist mentality it had created did not end then and its effects are being experienced in other forms of manifestation in the United States even today.

After the abolition of slavery, oppression against the African Americans continued, where intimidation, threats and corruption were used to prevent them from voting. In 1867, the Ku Klux Klan, an all white group to terrorize the Blacks was formed and they brutally murdered many Blacks to prevent

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their ascendancy (Fredrickson, 2003). The period between 1890 and 1940 saw the passage of the Jim Crow laws of segregation of facilities like transport and schools where the Blacks and Whites were not supposed to associate in any avenue (Fredrickson, 2003). The 14th amendment of the United States constitution brought forward laws to incorporate equal protection of the law and equal rights to all citizens. The 15 amendment two years after this specifically said that the rights were applied to all, regardless of race or their color (Fredrickson, 2003). This amendments were not taken seriously and there have appeared to be what is commonly referred to second class citizenship, where some categories of citizens seem to enjoy inferior or less rights than others, and in this case the African Americans who have been discriminated against in many areas and aspects.

Laws that are discriminative are not uncommon in the United States and neither are police laws which are stricter on African American and lenient on their white counterparts. Policies that treat whites with more respect than African Americans are notable with an example of poor black Hurricane Katrina victims from New Orleans not accorded recognition as equal citizens. Rules on voter registration in some states even today seem to target the black populace to prevent them from voting. Police practices also where Blacks are more likely to be suspected of crimes and arrested than Whites and also given tougher sentences is a portrayal of second class citizen mentality. Other areas of racism are in employment and in the wages paid where it favors the Whites in many aspects. The use of dirty jokes and movies like ' Black Face' whose aim also is to demean Blacks even at very high levels of society gathering is common.

The passage of civil rights act in 1964 should have addressed the problem
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because it banned discrimination in workplaces, labor unions and public utilities (Fredrickson, 2003). It was the setting of the famous ' I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King's speech. America should strive to completely eradicate this vice if it has to become a cohesive society.

Reference

Fredrickson, G. M. (2003). *Racism: A Short History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.