

Accomplishments of black rights activists



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Part 1

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Black Americans organized to challenge the effects of de jure segregation and the racial injustices brought forth by institutional racism in America. For this essay, identify three individuals of your choosing as highlighted by the textbook and discuss what they are best known for as well as their goals and accomplishments as leaders. With this, be sure to highlight the differences between these individuals in how they sought to remove the barriers established by white supremacy. Finally, what do these differences tell us about the wider struggle for civil rights?

Resilient intellectual, Ida B. Wells, held numerous titles throughout her life. Born enslaved during the civil war in the year of 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, she had much to overcome. In her lifespan, she was known as an educator, a civil rights activist, a researcher, as well as a journalist. She is exceptionally known for her work as trailblazer in the anti-lynching crusade.

Her parents not only instilled the importance of education into her, but they also inspired the activist within her. During the Reconstruction Era, her parents became active with the politics going on at the time. She grew up in a space where she understood the importance of speaking up and fighting for what's right.

Before she became a Journalist, she was an educator in a segregated public school. Wells believed in equality and found herself fighting to achieve it even if that meant putting herself at risk. In the end, she ended up getting fired due to how vocal she was. After being fired, Wells found a new outlet

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that would expose the system for what it really is. As co-owner of a newspaper in Memphis, she “ used her paper as a platform to crusade against lynching, gathering statistics and collecting testimony” (Gates 155). After receiving an extensive amount of backlash and threats, it was made impossible for Ida B. Wells to stay safe while working towards making great change. She moved from Memphis to Chicago and used her voice to continue the work she had started.

Her ability to create such a movement as a woman of color during that time was incredibly impressive. Though one of her most important accomplishments was the anti-lynching crusade, her work to empower other women of color also stands out. In 1914, she was determined to show African American women the power their vote has. Her determination led to her creating, the Alpha Suffrage Club. A couple years earlier she had co-founded the NACW which was also for women of color. She believed “ the struggle of black women was part of the greater struggle of American women” (Gates 156).

Much like Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington found the importance of lifting up the African American community through the use of organizations and education. Booker T. Washington was focused on ensuring the African American community knew their worth and knew they could create a new path despite the one they had been placed on. He was a great leader who wanted to work towards getting rid of racial injustices.

He is well known for his thoughts on how best to thrive politically and economically. He believed hard work and development in crafts like farming

and industrial skills could become very useful in the practice of other skills. He firmly believed hard work was the key to gaining financial independence and advancing as a community; he also hoped that if the white Americans saw that they did this on their own they would respect and accept them.

Booker T. Washington is best known for his part in the establishment of Tuskegee University. With his help and leadership, the university became a leading University. He allocated some of his time to raise money for the school in addition to promoting it and the importance of education and the influence it would have on their development. It is important to note Washington also had some radical views some disagreed with. Unlike many other activists, Washington was comfortable with waiting patiently for results. His logic was to pose as little threat to the whites as possible. During the development of the university he even went out of his way to ensure the Tuskegee program would not interfere with the power or economy of the white American community. He said the subordination they faced by these white Americans was a temporary but necessary evil in order to get where they needed to go.

In total opposition, W. E. B Du Bois was radical in his own right. A common theme amongst these incredible leaders during this time is that in the end they are all searching for equality from the economic, social, and political standpoint. They all fought for their rights during a time when no one else was willing to put up a fight. They are also all quite radical in their own way. People like Du Bois wanted results right away whereas people like Booker T. Washington find that it will take time to get there.

Du Bois did not understand why Washington did not demand equality. During his life he helped found the NAACP which is a civil rights organization that was for the advancement of people of color. The goal behind all of the organizing was to eliminate all forms of injustice that was race-based within this system “designed” to protect but “coincidentally” hurt people of color.

In the end, these differences suggest the fight for civil rights was not an easy one. None of the progress that has been made could have been done without the help of these individuals with so much motivation and fire in their hearts to achieve and fight for what was rightfully theirs. There were many different approaches taken by all of these leaders and they have all played a role in the movement. The differences in the approaches taken are likely due to the experiences had as well as the research done, it is also a reflection on the person. Some people are just generally more patient whereas others are not, and we see that in the attempts to eliminate the injustices that were occurring in that time as well as the injustices occurring now. Many activists now look to see what past activists have done in order to improve their approach and achieve the best results possible.

Part 2

While some Black Americans used political tools in their fight against the effects of institutional racism, others used art. The Harlem Renaissance, or New Negro movement as it was also known by its contemporaries, was a cultural movement that was crucial in establishing black identity. For this essay, identify and discuss three specific examples and the individual(s)

associated with it as highlighted by the textbook in Chapter 7. How did these contributions impact both popular culture and the Black community at large?

There have been many different tactics that have been used throughout history in order to fight against institutional racism. A large part of this involved understanding one's identity. It was important for African Americans to establish their black identity and the cultural roots that come along with this. When dealing with racial discrimination, it is important to have a cultural movement that establishes black identity because while dealing with constant discrimination and trying to fight against it, it helps to be confident in the identity they are trying to tear down. Black identity and the culture that comes with it helps strengthen and revitalize that inner warrior to combat the injustices and fight for what is right without faltering.

Ida B. Wells used her power and voice as a journalist to tell stories no one else wanted to share. She wanted to vocalize the wrong doings of the whites who felt they could get away with everything because they felt they were the only ones who had a voice. Fortunately, powerful and brave women like Ida understood the importance of using her voice to make great change. In many of her pieces, she wrote about the injustice lynching's that had been occurring.

There were also other voices like Booker T. Washington that believed educating was the best way to uplift people of color. His tool of choice was by advocating for education. He did this by going place to place and informing them about Tuskegee University and all it could do for them.

For some, it was the Jazz movement during the Harlem Renaissance that moved them to get more in touch with their roots. Louis Armstrong was a trumpeter during this era. Jazz was used as somewhat of a coping mechanism during the really rough times. Jazz was a form of expression that exemplified some of the rough periods faced and it helped many get through and keep searching for justice.

- Louis, Henry, and Donald Yacovone. *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*. Carlsbad, California, Smileybooks, 2016.