

The social movement essay

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



From a sociological perspective social movement has been conceived as collective actions organized by informal groups for a formal purpose. Usually, they consist of a large number of individuals with an identical social issue to be resolved. Characteristically, they can be distinguished from gangs since the group's goal to legitimately pursue their cause in a dignified manner based on a principle or philosophy, as against gangs, which are organized for criminal activities. (Bantjes, 2007).

Basically, a social movement has distinct features embodying a scope, innovative or conservative intervention; target; method and range. Its cycle encompasses creation, growth, achievement and dissolution. (Chesters, 2006). It must be noted that even though these may be the general characteristic features of a social movement, groups vary in the way they conduct their action to achieve goals.

' Freedom Riders' offered pertinent examples of how social movements operate. Their scope confronted change in the social structure as it particularly affected blacks in the society. These confrontations were rather innovative demonstrations through marches and sit-ins in places designated exclusively for whites. (" Freedom riders," 2011)

The obvious target was reclaiming their freedom, which was eluded when all freedoms granted in Amendment 13 of the American constitution were ignored and Jim Crow segregation laws were instituted instead. The method used were adaptations of Mahatma Gandhi's attitude of non- violence, which was a marked philosophical principle of the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of the Freedom Riders. (" Freedom riders," 2011)

Initially, the range of this movement was confined to United States and the states, which promoted segregation practices the most such as Mississippi and Montgomery Alabama. However, when Dr. King examined the long-term objective of the movement the range travelled outwards into other parts of the world, which were similarly affected by inhumane segregation practices. Thus, the dynamics as revealed in the episode, Freedom Riders, extended from creation towards, development into a strong civil rights movement attracting international attention, achievement of voting rights for African Americans and removal of many segregation laws around the nation. Eventually, the movement dissolved and is now merely history lessons and theoretical concepts to be embraced in a sociology classroom.

Essay. Social Change

Both classical and contemporary sociological theorists have posited that social change is inevitable and to some extent conflict is synonymous with change. (Harper, 1993). In its definition regarding alteration to social order, conflict theorists such as Marx describe its inevitability as a climax, which must culminate in the working class fight for acknowledgement from their oppressors regarding their freedom to become owners of the means of production as well. (Haralambos, 2004).

“ Freedom Riders,” offered perfect examples of the working class struggle and their interpretation of change. The theme song ‘ we shall overcome’ was a relentless demand for social change in the presence of obvious social injustice. A conflict between blacks and whites ensued.

Further, conflicts emerged between whites and whites who became sensitized to the human injustices and joined in the struggle to change the

existing social order, which was no order really. It is worthwhile developing an understanding of the social structure, which was thought to be fair for free whites and justifiable for ex-slaves. This in itself was dysfunctional. (“ Freedom riders,” 2011)

As such, civil right activists who were tired of this segregation nonsense decided to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of their children, which many enjoy to some extent in the New American society. From the ideology of ‘ Freedom Riders’ more change is needed, which is imminent. (“ Freedom riders,” 2011)

One wonders, however, as constitutional changes occur daily among us whether the prejudices which existed in 1960’s giving rise to the civil rights movement was really racial in origin; class distinction struggle or both. African- Americans even today still foster feelings of hatred for whites who killed and battered blacks during that era as was witnessed in Freedom Riders. (“ Freedom riders,” 2011)

In this sense, then the struggle between blacks and whites according to Marxism could be interpreted as being economic. Why were blacks targeted? As the episode continued it was clearly identified that they were at the bottom of the social ladder in terms of class stratification, which meant limited access to quality education, social services, job opportunities. They were looked at thinking as incapable humans. (“ Freedom riders,” 2011)

The social change sought by this movement was to have policy makers who owned wealth in society recognize this segregated group for what they were worth. In no way, as was projected, did their potential to succeed and

participate in the economic structure any less than those by which they were subjugated. (“ Freedom riders,” 2011)

Freedom Riders assumed the change and never gave up until it was achieved. A classic example was given when they sat in the only white restaurants and were spat upon or brutally removed. They returned the next day and the next day until it was legislated that there would be no more segregation between blacks and whites in terms of eating houses bathrooms and water fountains in the country. (Haralambos, 2004).

References

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