

The 1960s vietnam, civil rights and the environment essays example

[Environment](#), [Pollution](#)



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Earth Day is celebrated on a global level on 22nd April as a holiday with its focus on spreading green awareness and imparting environmental education. It was founded as a particular holiday in 1970 with an aim to create a mass movement about environmental issues. Senator Gaylord Nelson was the innovator and creator of this particular day who got inspiration from the 1960s antiwar protests. The movement was started for the maximization of university students' numbers so that they could participate in the "teach-in on the environment" on a national level. If truth is told, Nelson had the hope to bring peoples' attention to environmental causes by making them aware of air and water pollution (Cumbler 225). It is important to note here that the origins of the stated movement are rooted in the early 1960s when Americans began to become aware of the pollution hazard and its extensive effects on the environment. In 1962, "Silent Spring" turned out as Rachel Carson's bestseller that helped in raising the phantom of the pesticides and the effects of their usage on countryside in the United States of America. In 1969, the issue of chemical waste disposal was brought in the national spotlight after a fire incident on Cuyahoga River in Cleveland. It is worth mentioning that the national political agenda did not contain the protection of Earth's natural resources as a vital part till that time. In addition, the number of environmental activists devoted to pollution and other issues was also very less. Legal jurisdictions were also negligible for pollution-causing industries. Moreover, cars that guzzled gases were regarded as a sign of wealth, affluence, and status. A

very small percentage of American citizens practiced recycling.

In 1962, Senator Gaylord Nelson was elected as a Democrat to the U. S. Senate. He had a strong determination from the start. For this reason, he made sure to prove to the federal government that the Earth had a possible environmental threat. As a consequence, Nelson introduced the idea of Earth Day in 1969. His relentless efforts gave him the position of an innovative leader of the environmental movement in the modern era. As mentioned earlier, he got the inspiration from the “ teach-ins” about anti-Vietnam wars that took place on college and/or university campuses all over the country. Nelson had the vision of an all-encompassing, comprehensive, grassroots environmental display for shaking up the political institution in the United States. In short, he wanted to force the stated environmental matter onto the national agenda.

It was in Seattle that Nelson announced the Earth day idea at a conference held in 1969 fall. Nelson gave out invitation to the entire American nation for their participation in the cause. Nelson described the situation by recalling the scenario: “ The wire services carried the story from coast to coast. The response was electric. It took off like gangbusters. Telegrams, letters and telephone inquiries poured in from all across the country. The American people finally had a forum to express its concern about what was happening to the land, rivers, lakes and air—and they did so with spectacular exuberance” (as qtd. in Cumbler 287).

Denis Hayes was chosen as the national coordinator for the Earth Day. He was a young environmental activist and organized the assigned project with the help of hundreds of volunteers and Nelson’s Senate office staff members

(Cumbler 288). According to Nelson, the Earth Day was an immediate success because of the impulsive reaction at the masses level. Nelson's team did not have enough time or sufficient resources for the organization of twenty million demonstrators and thousands of other participants from schools, colleges, and communities. However, the Earth Day was a remarkable event as the demonstrators turned out to be their own organizers (Cumbler 225).

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a number of American cities including Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and others held rallies on April 22. John Lindsay, the mayor of New York City, gave orders to close off part of Fifth Avenue to travelling vehicles for some hours. Thousands of American citizens in Washington, D. C. congregated to listen to speeches and songs of famous singers and other prominent celebrities. Congress members took a day off for participating in the events on Earth Day.

The US government involvement and the response of American population made Earth Day Movement a huge success. It is true that the environmental degradation is still a worldwide menace. However, the realization and awareness of the environmental issues may instigate people to take required essential steps to make Earth a better place to live and leave for the future generations.

Work Cited

Cumbler, John T. Northeast and Midwest United States: An Environmental History. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2005. Print.