

Name research paper

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‘ Instructor’s Name’

‘ Subject’

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or NAACP, as it is popularly known, is one of the major political groups, which fought for the equality of African Americans. Founded in 1909, the association is one of the oldest groups fighting for the cause of, improvement of the political and social status of colored people. NAACP occupies an important place in the American history, because it made the country aware of the need for racial equality and played a vital role in the civil rights movement.

The NAACP was formed at the wake of the race riots that took place in the year 1908, in Springfield, Illinois. William English Walling, a journalist, wrote a column titled ‘ Race War in the North’ in the New York Independent, in which he described the horrific nature of the crimes committed against the colored people during the riot. Walling described in detail the life and property losses, which took place during the riots, and called for a powerful body of volunteers to help the Black people.

The article, which was published in September 3, 1908, caused Mary White Ovington, a volunteer, to understand the need of the colored people, and she along with another social worker Dr. Henry Moskowitz met Walling in London. They decided to call for a National Conference for launching a campaign for the rights of the Blacks, on the centennial birthday of President Lincoln.

Many people responded to their call and this led to the formation of NAACP.

The NAACP had many prominent personalities as office bearers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Oswald Garrison and Ida B. Wells. It was started as a group of

multiracial activists, but majority of the members joined were African Americans. The founding document of the NAACP listed many objectives such as, the colored people should be given their rights guaranteed under the constitution, they should be provided with equal educational opportunities, and the right to vote given to the colored people should be exercised throughout the country.

The first Annual report of the NAACP declared that,
“ it abhor[red] Negro crime, but still more the conditions which bre[d] crime, and most of all the crimes committed by mobs in the mocking of the law, or by individuals in the name of the law”.

Though the NAACP led a campaign against all segregation practices followed under the Jim Crow Laws, its first target was the racial inequality in education. The organization helped a black student to obtain admission in the University of Maryland Law School, and immediately Virginia and other Southern states started offering scholarships to black students who chose to study outside the southern states. This move was condemned by the Supreme Court saying that the decision severely jolted the educational system, and it ordered Missouri’s all White law school to accept African American students.

The main focus of the NAACP during the initial years was towards, putting an end to the lynching practice. Though the congress did not yield to passing anti-lynching laws initially, the publication of Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, a report prepared by NAACP, convinced President Wilson to condemn mob violence. The NAACP continued to attack segregation practices through intense lobbying and litigation.

Beginning in 1915, NAACP was able to procure many important judgments on housing and voting rights, through its litigation activities. The 1954 case of *Brown vs. Board of education* was a landmark victory for the litigation activities of NAACP, as the court ruled that segregated education was unconstitutional.

The year 1955, marked a turning point in American civil rights movement, as this was the year when Rosa Parks, a NAACP member refused to give away her bus seat to a White person. On December 1, 1955, Parks refused to give up her seat in the colored section of the bus, when the White segment of the bus filled up to capacity. The bus driver James F. Blake asked Parks, and three others, to move back so that the standing white passengers can sit down. When she refused, the driver called the police and got her arrested, and she was bailed in the evening by Edgar Nixon, president of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP.

The arrest led to the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott, whereby Black residents of Montgomery boycotted the local buses for 381 days, despite great inconveniences. They refused to board the buses in defiance to the existing laws, which were demeaning and humiliating to the African Americans. The city council repealed its law of segregation according to the Supreme Court ruling in the *Browder v. Gayle* case, almost one year after the boycott began, and this was a major milestone in the civil rights movement. When in 1950s, violence was used to curb the civil rights movement, most noticeably by mobs such as the Ku Klux Klan, some members of NAACP began practicing armed self defense. Robert F. Williams, the leader of Monroe NAACP Chapter, was the first to do so by actively training his recruits

in self defense. When Dr. Albert Perry, a NAACP member, was attacked by the Klan during 1957, the militia trained by Williams exchanged cross fire with the attackers. This incident prompted the city council to pass legislation against the KKK, and was a severe blow to their tactics of using violence as a form of social control.

In 1958, the NAACP Youth Council organized sit-ins in the Dockum Drug Store, Kansas lunch counter and forced it to abandon the segregated seating arrangements. NAACP also played a huge role in voter registration of colored people. Thus, through their leadership, lobbying, and legal actions, the NAACP played a pivotal role in the American Civil Rights Movement.

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