

Race relations annotated bibliography

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



Hall, J. D. The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past. *The Journal of American History* 4 (Vol. 91, Mar. 2005): 1233-1263.

In the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, Hall (2005) examines the ways in which the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s has been used to further political and ideological causes. Through its use to portray certain ideologies and causes, the dominant narrative of the movement is said to be somewhat distorted and suppressed as an historical event. Despite the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr. and others who fought in the Movement, resegregation of black and Latino youths is occurring, the prison-industrial complex continues to be perpetuated, and more - the Civil Rights Movement, meanwhile, is cited as evidence that these attitudes have changed and improved.

Robnett, B. African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership and Micromobilization. *American Journal of Sociology* 6 (Vol. 101, May 1996): 1661-1693.

Robnett (1996) analyses the role of gender in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, noting the importance of expansion and mobilization of both genders of oppressed groups in order to make social movements more mobile. In the Civil Rights Movement, Robnett argues that women primarily occupied an intermediate leadership role, providing moderate leadership while neither being in charge nor just following. To that end, the author notes the importance of these intermediate layers of local leadership in order to

further a social movement and keep it more closely organized. This aspect of the Civil Rights Movement helped to bring substantial agency to black women in the 1950s.

The Rothman article compares the Tuskegee syphilis experiment to the Willowbrook experiments of the 1950s and 1960s and discusses their ethics, or lack thereof. Arguing these experiments as mad science Rothman states that these types of research methods are ambivalently feasible as studies in nature, where researchers are examining diseases that they can currently not stop in any way. The Tuskegee experiment in particular is chalked up to bad science, as the research had no formal protocols, it was sloppily executed and did not provide any findings of value.

S. B. Thomas, S. B. & Quinn, S. C. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1932 to 1972: Implications for HIV education and AIDS risk education programs in the black community. American Journal of Public Health, 11 (Vol. 81, 1982): 1498-1504.

Thomas & Quinn (1991) believe that the aftereffects of the Tuskegee experiments have wide-reaching implications for the risk education programs involved in HIV and AIDS. By having such a long-standing blind bias against the Tuskegee Study, many African-Americans believe that AIDS was created as a form of genocide against blacks. Only through clear and honest discussion of the Tuskegee study in AIDS education programs can these rumors be dispelled and the ethnically acceptable and scientifically plausible

supply of information about these diseases to the black community can be facilitated.

Following on the theme of race relations and the Civil Rights Movement, two topics were selected: the organization/effects of the Civil Rights Movement, and the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. These two events are presented as evidence of the uniquely difficult sociopolitical status African-Americans had in the 1950s; the treatment of blacks by whites was negative to the point where African-Americans were actually experimented upon without significant need for research and medical ethics¹.

Given the importance of civil rights, the way in which these initiatives are organized and used after the fact (in political narratives) must be examined.

The Tuskegee study is an important footnote in African American history due to the stigmatization of African Americans it demonstrated in the eyes of many Americans in the 1930s and beyond; by studying them instead of treating them, they were denied the help they should have gotten, and also singled out blacks as carriers of sexually transmitted diseases². This placed a significant setback in race relations, as African-Americans were literally treated like lab rats, and was a frightening instance of the flexible ethics of some scientists at the time.

The existence of the Tuskegee syphilis study denoted the necessity of the Civil Rights Movement, as significant changes to the black narrative needed to occur in order to prevent these unethical experiments³. These were performed through dramatic action and powerful organization, using grassroots initiatives and the participation of women in the leadership

process (though only at an intermediate level)⁴. That being said, despite the hard work of those who fought hard to make civil rights a possibility, the movement itself is used as a balm - there is significant backlash that occurs against further racism due to the fact that the Movement happened. Though it is generally agreed that it made significant progress in civil rights, the fact of its existence is used to downplay contemporary discriminatory practices, as racism " was limited to the South" and is not considered to happen anywhere else⁵.

Both of the articles on the Tuskegee experiment take different approaches to the implications of the Tuskegee syphilis study. In the case of Rothman, he looks at the feasibility of the study from a scientific point of view - in his eyes, the way in which the experiment was performed was not only unethical, it was also incorrect and sloppy, making the 'study in nature' completely useless⁶. However, Thomas & Quinn place a higher emphasis on how the political fallout from the study led to an increasing distrust of whites on the part of African-Americans, and how that can negatively impact AIDS education⁷. When combined, however, the experiment itself appears to have been highly racially motivated and damaging for race relations; the study was performed almost strictly to stigmatize blacks, and the fallout from this experiment has made it difficult for African-Americans and whites to move forward.