

Are the problems
faced by the feminist
and sexual
emancipation
movements similar ...

[History](#)



Full The Civil Rights and Feminist Movements (Similarities and Differences)

13 May (History and Political Science)

The Civil Rights Movement came out as a result of the so-called unfinished business in the struggle against racial discrimination engendered by slavery. The Civil War was thought to have ended slavery in the South but discriminatory practices persisted all throughout into the late 1950s and 1960s. Many black Americans thought they need to raise new awareness of this continuing discrimination manifested by lack of equality in their civil rights, education, health care, job opportunities, housing, and in practically all spheres of American life. Blacks came to realize that if they are to attain their full emancipation from slavery, discrimination is to stop also, and hence the Civil Rights Movement came into being for this very reason.

It took a while for the Civil Rights Movement to become unified, because many of its early leaders pursued their own agenda on a piece-meal basis. Until influential leaders like Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King came along, the movement was fragmented and due to this situation, it lacked the cohesion necessary to achieve its stated political and social aims. It is admittedly and doubly difficult for any mass movement to achieve any objective if leaders are not united, and this was the case during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. The entrenched interests of the white supremacists and the political establishment are not going to give way that easily, and many of them saw blacks as a threat to the American way of life. In this regard, the early Feminist Movement was strikingly similar to the Civil Rights Movement in that it was also fragmented, with no clear articulation of what it tries to achieve. Many feminists pursued different agendas on their

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own, although feminism owes its origins to the early Suffrage Movement to give women the right to vote. Early feminists cannot agree on what they want; whether it is equality in the workplace, at the home, or in the political arena.

On the other hand, there are significant or major differences between these two big movements. Feminism is a fight for equality, but only with regards to women's rights. It is not just a fight for recognition, but also a struggle between the two sexes in which there is often a rampant form of sexism, a form of gender discrimination (Paludi 12). In a sense, feminism is a form of gender politics and pits man against woman, male against female protagonists. While the Civil Rights Movement was a struggle against the political and social establishment, feminism can be seen within the context of human rights, the fight for women's rights against the generally-accepted form of patriarchy and male power seen today.

Moreover, feminism is a struggle to regain the rights of women to own their bodies; a particular point of contention is their demand to have the right to have a safe abortion despite the objections and misgivings of some sectors of civil society, and in particular, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations which see it as a form of murder of the innocents. In addition, the medical profession is also against abortion as a violation of human rights too. In this connection, the struggles of feminism is much narrower and more focused on particular issues only, when compared to the Civil Rights Movement which is much broader in agenda.

Another major difference in the feminist movement is it joined women of all races or ethnicities, because they all share the same gender; whereas in the

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Civil Rights Movement, it was a struggle between the black people for their deserved rights, a fight for full assimilation. While the latter drew its lines along skin color, the former divided the fight along gender lines regardless of race because the struggle was to change cultural beliefs (Worrell 461).

The similarity in the two mass movements is in their use of the same techniques or strategies to attain their objectives, such as prayer rallies, sit-ins, protest marches or vigils at the United States Supreme Court while their differences were in their scope and aims. To this extent, both activist movements (Black 183) attained varying degrees of success.

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