

Free argumentative essay on american populist movement

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Introduction

Any form of social movement requires active involvement of the stakeholders. In addition, social movements have the characteristics of providing general solutions to common problems. These social movements are, therefore, crucial in our day to day life affairs. In the United States of America, the pioneer social movements faced out racism and its attendant segregation and oppression of the Black minority. The Populist Party and the Black Freedom Movement reshaped the political landscape of both North and South of America. In the long run, it is such that promoted social cohesion and coexistence in the plural society that defines the United States of America.

The Populist, also known as the People's Party, was one of the ancient America's political unions that existed between 1891 and 1908. Under the stewardship of the United States first senator, William Peffer, the movement took over the control of Kansas state legislature in 1890. Besides his outgoing attitude, Peffer still ensured that the Southern and Western Populists gained support. The party, however, was officially founded in 1892 as a result of the partnership between the Knights of Labor and Farmers' Alliance as well as the victory of its presidential candidate, James B. Weaver. Unfortunately, the party's downfall began as a result of intimidation, violence and fraud by the Southern Democrats.

The 1877 ending of Reconstruction brought an end to the African Americans era of holding high political powers in the South. Similarly, there was Segregation, which was majorly enforced by the society customs and not any statutory law. However, the Populist Party tried to bring a change of the

scenario by imposing new dimensions of controlling the economy. The party aimed at hiking farm prices and challenging the economic powers of both railroads and banks. Particularly, the party planned to fight the Southern Democrats through partnering the economic interest of the poor African Americans with white farmers. As such, the populists believed that they could entirely control the South.

However, not everything went according to the party's plan since the elite plotted to stay in power by stopping the African Americans from voting. The Fifteenth Amendment tried to shun those restrictions, but the white supremacists twisted the laws in order to bar African Americans from voting. They imposed high rates of poll taxes that were not readily affordable to the poor blacks and whites. Similarly, they organized literacy tests that would obviously phase out the African Americans. There were also brutal racial manipulations as well as economic orders that aimed at intimidating the blacks during voting. Such actions, however, pushed the African Americans towards retaliation. For instance, Ida Wells Barnett and many other blacks organized protests against racial injustice. Such outcries, however, never materialized since nobody ever took any notice of them. Instead, the whites only responded by enforcing new racist laws through the Jim Crow Legislation.

The legislation was widely manifested during the 1890s when all public facilities were segregated. The law gained the favors of the United States Supreme Court, which eventually endorsed it as one of the state laws. The law was set up in a manner that would bar the African Americans from voting

for a period more than sixty years. This also meant that they would have to wait for the same period to have access to any civil right.

Black Freedom Struggle

Just like any other historical encounter, the Black Freedom Movement has always been subject to reviews and revisions. Many historians have had to revise almost all phases of the actual nature of the union. Often, this includes the revision of the trajectory, timeline, and evidences used to support its existence. As a result, they have improvised a practical way of analyzing the entire spectrum of the Black Freedom Movement. This includes analyzing the reasons behind its onset, all issues related to its existence, the roles played by women, and its manifestation. The traditional views of the Civil Rights Movements, therefore, have led to the emergence of new scholarships.

Having begun in the mid ' 50s, the Civil Rights Movement organized multiple boycotts against the racial segregations of the South. The movement targeted the Supreme Court for its enforcement of racial laws as well as *Brown V. Board of Education* for improvising racial policies in public schools. One of the major movement's protests was the Alabama's Montgomery Bus Boycott that was held in 1955. Having been spearheaded by Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, the junior, the boycott successfully stopped the segregation of Montgomery's city buses for more than a year. Thereafter, demonstrations for equity in accessibility of public facilities and ballot took the center stage at the South. The protests also catered for sit-ins, displays of non-participatory direct actions, and public marches. Having noticed that

the demonstrations paid dividends, the movement resorted to conducting more protests in '60s. Eventually, the protests resulted to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Civil Rights Act of 1964. Even though the passage of these two Acts has always been overlooked, it is also evident that they had been clouded by racial manipulation. The fact that they were enacted during the demonstrations means that they were, equally, subject to racism.

Whether the passage effectively improved the living conditions of the African Americans is still subject to debate. Notionally, many activists believed that the government seconded the racist movements that were used to oppress the blacks. For instance the government's stance against use of violence when there had not been any federal invention during the oppression of black activists.

On the contrary, black activists resorted to self-defense, which often involved violence. As a result, most advocates of the Black Power called for nationalism and black solidarity against the white support and participation in the movement. Similarly, the activists started to pay special towards the living conditions of the northern families. They resorted to addressing particular issues such as lack of job opportunities, segregations in residential areas, and harsh treatments by the police. The Black Freedom Movement also underwent certain reforms that transformed its political ambitions. Actually, those reforms finally led to its downfall.

Perhaps striving to help the northern communities meant that the movement had stopped addressing the political objectives. Instead, the activists decided to fight racism and poverty, improvise militant policies, and

articulate comprehensive nationalism strategies. Eventually, the 1968 unfortunate assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. led to the collapse of the movement.

The Public Opinions on American Social Movements

It is a general notion that social movements were majorly used to fight for the oppressions that people underwent. Perhaps this is only true with regards to the objectives of those movements, but not the entire public views. There are supports for the social movements and, equally, criticisms against their particular operations. Researchers, for instance, have consistently used populism as a disguise for the real situations that are affecting the nation. While most criminologists have pointed out the fact that crime rates are on the decline, most politicians and the press tend to contradict that in attempts to lure and insight people. As a result, the public continually demand for more punitive means of restoring security, yet researchers and even the politicians suggest that the utility of such measures are still far from effectiveness. Even though researchers reckon that such punitive measures advocates for moral sensibilities and penal populism, there is no clear explanation on its implementation. Political scientists, on the other hand, argue that populism is a form of government that advocates for the rights of its citizen. This is because it can be used for several political views in various ways. However, populism as a form of government is still prone to criticism. While it is viewed as a representation of democracy, it actually doesn't advocate for the opinions of the majority. The reality is that only a group of politicians are elected to represent and

making policies for the remaining majority.

Actually, they only use the citizens' votes, views and preferences to represent implement their political interests. The public gives these while expecting equal representation of rights in return. However, politicians only use those views to form public policies, which are never implemented in line with the public demands.

Populism, as a form of politics, seeks to advocate specific complexities facing different institutions. Here, political leaders maneuver their ways by trying to improvise practical measures of handling various social problems. However, these are only seen as crude ways of disguising their selfish political interests. Often, their governments are riddled with arrogant claims of good governance and consistent political failures.

Contrary to that, only a charismatic leader would appropriately represent the public interests as well as mobilize the majority sidelined by crude laws.

While the populism form of government triumphed in the ancient days, there is no vivid explanation of particular reasons that might have resulted to that. Perhaps, people were still naïve and affected by the previous downfalls of other social movements.

Public Opinions on People's Party

Evidently, the People's Party was redemption from various social vices such as racism and oppression. It took a collective responsibility to fight the previous movements that mainly catered for the interests of the whites.

Even though it did not fully succeed in obtaining all its objectives, the movement provided freedom to the blacks. It portrayed union and

togetherness to achieving a common goal. Beyond seeking freedom, the movement contributed towards fighting social ills, which also affected some whites. At least, activists were able to expose some failures and corrupt deeds that the government used to manipulate the citizens.

The Black Freedom Movement, in particular, actively participated in campaigns against racism. The fact that it covered both the southern and northern communities means that it was the leading advocate of freedom to all blacks. Those struggles eventually resulted to bypassing of Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ultimately granted freedom to the blacks. The movement also initiated some beneficial measures that eventually bore fruits. While the white movements aimed at phasing out the blacks, the black movements only fought for mutual existence. The whites mainly targeted the blacks' weaknesses such as illiteracy to manipulate them.

Similarly, they banked on racial segregations to intimidate the blacks in attempts to manipulate the state's governance. Such motives, however, only led to rebellions, protests and demonstrations that did not, in any way, give a good portrait of the state's governance. Were the whites willing to accept the African Americans as equal citizens who belong with them, there could not be oppositions.

However, all was not rosy for the black movements and this only subjected them to criticisms. They may have aimed at improving their living conditions by fighting the oppressions, but that doesn't imply that they only did right things. For example, the movements only targeted the African Americans, while there also other whites that were subjects of the oppressions. The

Black Freedom Movement, on the other, masterminded several boycotts, protests and demonstrations that also had side effects to other people. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, for instance, led to mass destruction of properties as well as loses of lives. This was only a highlight of the violence that encompassed the protests.

It may be debatable, but I believe that some of these deeds might have also contributed to the downfall of the movement. There is no denying, however, that the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. was a setback. Nonetheless, the downfall was also internally initiated by the group. For example, organizing the racism protests at the North must have diverted their attentions from the movement's political ambitions.

Conclusion

A close examination of the aforementioned factors reveals that the social movements in America shaped the lives and political structure of the state. They initiated the ongoing fights against social problems, which equally dictate the current living conditions. Generally, the social movements provided good forums for the development of quality living conditions that we currently benefit from. It must have begun in America, but its policies are applicable to every region in the world.

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