

How far was peaceful protest responsible for the successes of the civil rights mo...



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How far was the peaceful protest responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement in the years of 1955-64? During 1955-64 USA was still going through racial inequality between whites and blacks. Black campaigns such as Student non-violent coordinating committee, felt that the civil rights movement was too slow and hence needed something to boost them up in order to succeed what they first rose up for, which was desegregation and equality for all. King was a highly charismatic and a gifted orator who helped promote non-violent tactics.

His first use of this ' non-violent theory' was shown through the sit-ins and hence positively influenced a lot of the black campaigners. Leaders, countless activists, campaigners and ordinary black people put their life on the line to campaign for freedom. To some extent I do agree that peaceful protest was responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement as shown in the Greensboro sit-ins in 1960. In this event four black students refused to leave the all-white Woolworths cafeteria when asked.

The black students here were violated and insulted at and at one point whites poured food all over a black and white student but still the students had resisted. Moreover the peaceful protest was effectively used here as the blacks did not fight back or even defend themselves as they were being treated with disrespect. They used non-violent tactics to help achieve what they wanted from the beginning which was desegregation. As a result the sit-ins were successful to a large extent as it helped to erode the Jim Crow laws.

This occurred due to Woolworth's loss of business which made them desegregate all its lunch counters by the end of 1961. Woolworths had failed to run their businesses successfully because when black students had refused to leave they had retained their seats, forcing Woolworths to close. Also not only did the sit-in help desegregate the lunch counters only in Woolworths but also other one hundred and fifty cities soon desegregated various public places. As mentioned before all of this was a result of the nonviolent tactics used by the student non-violent coordinating committee.

So overall one could agree that peaceful protest was responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement in 1955-64. On the other hand to some extent peaceful protest was not responsible for the successes of the rights movement as the Cold war had also hindered the civil rights movement. During the propaganda war between the USA and USSR both countries were anxious to win over new nations. The Americans argued for world peace, humanity and had said to believe in ideologies of equality for all humans. However they were contradicting themselves as blacks in America were still treated as 2nd class citizens.

So therefore Americans were portrayed as uncivilised and were denying human rights because at that time lynching and racism was still continuing throughout America. America's hypocrisy were shown through the media worldwide, where blacks were shown to be brutally attacked by the police and white mobs. USA were then anxious about appearing undemocratic and racist. So politicians tried to avoid themselves looking bad otherwise it was contradicting their ideas of peace and humanity. So in order for America to achieve this Eisenhower brought in the civil rights bill 1957.

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His aim was to increase the black vote in the 1956 election year. In order to achieve this Eisenhower had to ensure that all citizens had the right to vote. However this wasn't very successful and did little to help the blacks as 80 per cent of them were still unable to vote. This was because of the opposition the vast majority of whites had on the establishment of giving the vote to blacks. It was very hard for blacks to register as the registrars themselves prevented blacks to get in for example they used to ask blacks impossible questions such as, " how many bubbles are there in a soap? ". This was sheer racism and ignorance.

Although the civil rights bill made it clear that it would be against the law to obstruct a black voter, blacks were still unable to win over cases regarding this in court as there was always an all-white jury. Eisenhower then introduced a second civil rights act (1960) as he was concerned about the bombings of black schools and churches. The law made it a federal crime to obstruct court-ordered school desegregation and established penalties for obstructing blacks voting. Overall both civil rights act 1957 and 1960 added only 3 per cent of black voters to the electoral rolls during 1960.

Although it did little to help improve the status and position of blacks, the acts still acknowledged federal responsibility, which encouraged civil rights activists to work for more legislation. So overall this shows that peaceful protest was not responsible for the success of the civil rights movement. On the other hand I agree that peaceful protest was responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement to a large extent from the significant event of Birmingham 1963. King was largely involved in this due to the influence of non-violent demonstrations and tactics.

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King chose Birmingham as it was expected to produce a high rate of violent white opposition which was needed to gain national sympathy especially when the event was shown through mass media. Black demonstrators were attacked brutally by police and their dogs but still blacks didn't defend themselves. They continued to protest. King was a charismatic leader in which the black community had always looked up to mainly. So when king was arrested it attracted media attention, which then gained the black communities determination not to give up and to work harder as shown through the actions of their leader.

This shows that peaceful protest was not only responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement but also the need for leaders within the black campaigns would encourage unity and motivation to help achieve what they wanted. Moreover mass protest and media attention helped promote the peaceful approach. Henceforward positive media attention made Americans look like hypocrites. This significant event shocked the nation as blacks were attacked with high-pressure water hoses that tore clothes off students' backs.

The majority of the Birmingham demonstrators were students and children from schools. Thousands of them were jailed and the SCLC had succeeded in its aims of "filling the jails" in order to gain publicity so the nation can see who the 'wrong-doers' really are. This event had massively gained publicity as blacks were shown to be peaceful whilst being attacked hence it showed that they had high moral standards and this gained the nations sympathy and helped persuade the nation to realise that inequality should come to an end.

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Overall peaceful protest was responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement. In conclusion I think that peaceful protest was largely responsible for the successes of the civil rights movement in 1955-64 because events like the Greensboro sit-ins 1960 and Birmingham 1963 has proved to the nation that they have achieved the purpose of the civil rights movement through peaceful protest and the use of non-violent tactics used by the campaigners. Hence this portrayed Americans as ignorant, racist and hypocrites.

Peaceful protest helped achieve many things for the black community such as desegregation in public places and the right to vote. Although these results did little to improve the position of blacks as it took a long period of time to achieve something, results like desegregation helped motivated the black community to hold on and keep their ' eyes on the prize'. Not only did improvement occur through a long period of time but also hard work, patience, unity and strong belief was essential for the blacks in order to achieve what they first strived for.