

Advocacy Success: The Civil Rights Movement as a Legacy of Race and Democracy in Legal Advocacy

The civil rights movement was impactful by local empowerment of African-Americans in the southern U.S. enhanced by outside intervention to reverse generations of discrimination in education, housing, zoning, voting, transportation, and eating facilities. This paper argues that the civil rights movement, the most successful NGO in U.S. history, rose internally and became successful politically as the culmination of more African-American power in the aftermath of New Deal and World War II. Additional support came from the shocking Jewish Holocaust, emerging role-models such as Jackie Robinson, the insult to national consciousness in the abuse perpetrated by whites against Emmett Till, TV coverage of lynching, and independent reportage.

This is a pattern that should be a guideline for contemporary worldwide NGO-led equity movements promoting women, gay equality, and protecting labor rights, in addition to environmental protection. Human rights have multiple facets that are not mutually exclusive.

Combining the following three streams of direct activism will be productive:

1. African-American jurists working WITHIN the legal system (Thurgood Marshall, Robert Lee Carter);
2. African-American collaborating with white activists to challenge the structure of powers (Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, MLK Jr., Abraham Joshua Heschel, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph, Walter Reuther and Andrew Goodman), especially in the South (but also in the North—note Malcolm X); and
3. Federal intervention as President Eisenhower ordered the National Guard to implement *Brown v. Board of Education*, Topeka, Ks, as education is the key to success in society, deemed distinguishable from railroad travel that was the core of the 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that validated the false notion of “separate but equal.” In addition, healthcare blends investing in multiple agendas: Civil Rights such as various freedoms of political expression and assembly or the ability to vote form the first generation (“liberty”) subset of human rights. Justice issues are at the core of the other two. Economic, social, and cultural rights (“equality”) constitute the second generation. Rights to international order, development and environmental (“solidarity”) shape the emerging third generation.

While African Americans fought hard to accomplish the first generation, many members of society are not yet ready to treat blacks as worthy of the other two. That strategy, their tactics, and the ultimate goal provide a role model for advocates.

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