

The Importance of Protest

When you think about America, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

Freedom? Fireworks? Politics? When one thinks of America, it is typically freedom. The First Amendment guarantees the right to the freedoms of speech, religion, petition, press, and to assemble peacefully. All of our civil liberties have been put to good use over the decades since the Constitution was first created. These freedoms have been challenged and people have died to protect these rights. The freedoms we are given should not be taken for granted. The civil rights movement, starting with Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white male, began on December 1, 1955. It would later be known as the most peaceful protest to happen in America.

Before this time, African Americans had began fighting for more rights because as minorities they did not have nearly as many rights as other races, such as white people. Prevalent racism taught that African Americans were illiterate, foolish, and unintelligent. African Americans were tired of the segregation and division between the different races. Bathrooms, restaurants, movie theaters, and even schools would either not allow African Americans to enter or they would completely separate the blacks from where the whites would sit and eat or watch a show. These minorities just wanted to be viewed as people too.

After Rosa Parks went to jail for refusing to give up her seat for a white male, there was a 381-day bus boycott for the Montgomery bus system ("*The First March*"). It also led to the Supreme Court to ban transportation segregation. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was instrumental in the fight to end segregation. With his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, he led both blacks and supportive whites to help end this dehumanizing time in history. King believed that the protestors should only take nonviolent actions to attain the justice that was desired by

hundreds and hundreds of people. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "We must use the weapon of love," and that is what was used during the whole movement.

All of the different kind of protest, from the bus boycott to the lunch counter sit-ins to the marches, took over the media. It was all over television and on the newspapers and magazines, soon the citizens of American turned towards these protest and supported the fight to end segregation. Media was a ginormous factor into why others started to stand behind the people who were getting treated unfairly. It helped bring awareness to this cause and is why the Civil Rights Movement is such a known time in history.

After this fight to end such an inhumane act, segregation was finally ended. If activists did not have that right to peacefully assemble, this goal would have never been achieved. The freedom to assemble had such a huge impact on the civil rights movement. Since African Americans did all of this peacefully and without violence, we now have equal rights no matter what race or gender. And that is what America truly means, freedom for everyone.

The civil rights movement was a difficult time for the people of America. It brought division across our great nation and led to more protests and boycotts than America had ever seen. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and other supporters and advocates of equal rights led to who we are as the people of America today. Although not everything is perfect, we are far better as a strong nation than ever before. The freedoms and the rights stated in the First Amendment allow the people to make America into the amazing country we know today.

Works Cited

The First March From Selma, www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/modern/jb_modern_parks_1.html.