

Addison Vance

Mrs. Robbins

Honors English

30 November 2021

Land of the Free, Home of the Brave

The Constitution of the United States of America was created to ensure peoples' basic human rights were upheld. What if the ones in charge of upholding these rights were against it? Even if they were only biased against a certain group, those people are still citizens of the U.S. Who would stop them? Who would be willing to stand up to authority; to ensure the safety of their friends, family, and even strangers for years to come? This is exactly what the many brave heroes who participated in the Civil Rights Movement did. They fought for the equal rights of all African Americans. Although the people of this movement followed and respected the constitutional laws, they were still harmed by the very people who were supposed to protect them; however, their efforts were not in vain. Later on there would be additional laws created to ensure that a tragedy like this would never happen again.

The Civil Rights activists knew their rights and weren't going to take the blatant abuse lying down. They proved they could fight back even without being unconstitutional. To quote our constitution's first amendment, "Congress shall make no law.. abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." An example of them following this law is the Selma to Montgomery March. The name has no underlying meaning. The protesters didn't march around breaking or vandalizing things. They merely attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery. According to Stanford University's King Encyclopedia, they didn't even make it all the way to

their goal. Stanford University's Encyclopedia also refers to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Again, this wasn't an instance where the people sabotaged the buses or attacked the drivers. They simply didn't ride the bus anywhere. Could you imagine it being against the law to choose how you went to work? It isn't now and it wasn't back then. Despite not breaking any laws, these protests elicited a response from the authorities.

The way the government reacted to these peaceful protests wasn't exactly ethical. Sure whether something is ethical or not can be a debate, but here they are talking about nearly or actually killing an innocent being. For instance, at the Selma to Montgomery march the activists didn't even pass the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma without meeting resistance. Writers for history.com discuss how the protesters merely approached the bridge and were then maliciously beaten and even tear gassed by local police. This led to dozens of protesters being hospitalized. For walking and asking to not be killed, these people were attacked. Writers for the Constitutional Rights Foundation detail a similar occurrence that happened because of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The government's reaction to this was even more dramatic than the last. This time, for not using the bus, African Americans were arrested for just walking on public sidewalks and it gets even worse. Four black churches were bombed as well as the well known Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s own house. Personal property and lives were destroyed. For what purpose? The very article that the government and police swore to uphold also applied to the people they were then attacking. These offenses didn't stop them. If anything it fueled the fire and will in these brave citizens, to keep fighting so that the generations to come wouldn't have to face the hate they did then.

Despite how futile it may have looked, mere humans facing up against an entire justice system, the efforts of the Civil Rights activists did not fall upon deaf ears. In fact, this movement

inspired several amendments to the constitution, including the 14th. The 14th amendment says that anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. are citizens of the United States as well as the state in which they reside and no state can create or enforce a law to remove these citizens of their rights. This got rid of the argument that African Americans were not considered citizens of this country; ensuring that no future law could be made that would say otherwise. Another amendment that was made was the 15th, which states that no citizen of the U.S. can be denied the right to vote based on their race or color. This makes sure the voices of all colored people across America will never be silenced again.

Reading back on the Civil Rights movement, it sounds like a scene or conflict from a dystopian novel, but it was indeed reality and it happened in the very country we call the land of the free. It's a good thing that there are people in our country that refuse to tolerate injustice and are willing to fight tooth and nail for the rights of the people they care about, despite the ones they are fighting being the people who were meant to protect those rights. Even though new laws were created to guarantee that there would be no need for another movement similar to this, laws haven't stopped the authorities from discriminating against people before. As Americans we must look after our brothers, sisters, and everyone around or in between, because if those in charge are taking advantage of that power, it is the responsibility of the people to fight back. This country isn't named the home of the brave for nothing and the brave will always ensure this country is free.

Works Cited

“United States of America 1789 (Rev. 1992).” *Google Search*, Google,

https://www.google.com/search?q=first%2Bamendment&rlz=1CAXJDX_enUS967US967&oq=first%2Bammende&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i10i433j0i10j0i10i433j0i10l6.5992j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&safe=active&ssui=on.

“Selma to Montgomery March.” *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute*,

Stanford University, 28 June 2018,

kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/selma-montgomery-march.

History.com Editors. “Civil Rights Movement.” *HISTORY*, 17 May 2021,

www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement.

Constitutional Rights Foundation. “Social Protests.” *Constitutional Rights Foundation*,

www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/social-protests. Accessed 14 Nov. 2021.

“Slavery and Civil Rights | Boundless Political Science.” *Lumen Learning*,

courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/chapter/slavery-and-civil-rights.

Accessed 14 Nov. 2021.