

AMERICAN ETHNICITY AFRICAN AMERICAN



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THE AFRICAN BACKGROUND, RACE, AND SLAVERY

Along the history of American, we know that virtually American has been distinguished by two races, black and white. When we are talking about black race, we will consider them as African American. In this section, we will discuss about what have happened in this minority group of race. We will concern a lot in the slavery which becomes the historical characteristic of African American.

As we know that, there are a lot of historical fight and struggle from Black American considering the inequality they had received. One of the important events is civil right movement in 1960s which represented persistent tradition in African American historic struggle for freedom, social justice, and equality. Moreover, that struggle became the basis for the expansion of liberties of all Americans.

The very popular African slave trade became the most beneficial business in America, even in Africa. They did it legally even though it violated human rights. This thing happened because African people had abilities in the cultivation of subtropical agricultural commodities which was needed by the American to manage their new land.

In 1700, 20,500 Africans were brought into the English American communities and became slaves. When the legal slavery was ended in 1808, there had been 546,000 Africans were there in America. In the first census in 1790, Africans Americans ranked second number after English and for four centuries, African Americans would remain the nation's largest minority.

The fact of African American slavery raised many questions and presumptions of the cause and effect relationship of racism and slavery. Now, the historical reality argues the statement of Eric William (economist) that "slavery was not born of racism, rather, racism was the consequence of slavery." This statement is argued because however, race, as opposed to class, would make the difference in determining a racial group's future. It showed by the social presumptions and supported by judicial decision established that only people of African would be enslaved. This horrible facts lead into any other inequality which African American have experienced.

But gradually, the suffering of African people disappeared. It was proved by the emerging of the task system where the slaves have their own provision ground, which they used not only for their food cultivation but also to produce surplus that was used for trade and marketing. The system of this task is that after completing their task, they had the remainder of the day to work their provision grounds. This one proof has brought a big effect of African American struggle to reach their freedom. By the 1640s the black family of Anthony Johnson had acquired freedom and participated in the colonial economy as commercial farmers. In the eighteenth century, the free black population then expanded slowly. This statement was supported by the fact that there were a lot of black American became slaveholders, including black plantation holders, black craftsmen, and blacks in the construction trades. However, there were still many problems that they received due to the inequality caused by the racism, one of the difficulties is the whites didn't want to give them credits and even give them means of a common education.

In the revolutionary war at Lexington and Concord, the black people participated to join the army after the British Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore promised them a freedom if they joined British Army. During this war, almost 70,000 slaves escaped from South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, and latter losing 75 percent of its slave population. The Revolutionary War era marked the beginning of the First African American Emancipation.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The institutional development of the black community began during the Revolution. It included mutual aid, fraternal organization, school, churches, and cultural improvement societies. Among these institutions, the most significant black institution was the independent black church. Its leaders were Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. The black church and its leaders became the forefront. It promoted the rights of black Americans, providing services for the poor.

ANTEBELLUM SLAVES AND FREE BLACKS

By 1860, only 10% from 4.5 million African-American were free. Almost 4 million were slaves; they work on cotton plantations, tobacco plantations, rice plantation, sugar plantations, hemp farms, industries, etc.

The antebellum slaves shared a tradition of self-help economic activities. Some of them become urban slave vendors, hawkers, itinerant peddlers and slave entrepreneurs. Many free blacks established self-help organization, for example the *Female Benevolent Society of St. Thomas*, the first black women organization founded in 1793. There was also an antebellum black press that protest against slavery. It was *Freedom's Journal*, founded in 1827. In addition, there was a leading black organization against slavery, the National Negro Convention.

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE RECONSTRUCTION

When the war begins in 1961, the American military had initially continued its practice of rejecting lack participation. The emancipation proclamation, however, changed the focus of the war, and it now became a war to free the slaves. Ironically, two months before the war ended, the Confederate states approved the enlistment of slaves.

The thirteenth amendment, ratified in December 1865, abolished slavery. The 1866 Civil rights acts granted citizenship, with the provision that the federal government would intervene to ensure that "citizens of every race and color except Indian were given the same legal rights as white man. Attempting to ensure that these rights of blacks would be protected". Congress drafted the fourteenth amendment, ratified in 1868 (a century later it provided the constitutional support for the 1964 civil war right act.). then, in 1867 congress acted to provide for black political right with the first reconstruction act.

The significance of the black vote was clearly recognized by the Republican Party, which pushed through the fifteenth amendment (ratified in 1870), guaranteeing hat no one could be deprived of the rights to vote because of race,

color, or previous condition of servitude. From the beginning of reconstruction, white terrorist group, inspired by the Ku Klux Klan, embarked on a devastating reign of terror and violence, first to force black subordination and compliance to unjust laws and then to force blacks out of electoral politics. In the Exodus of 1979, many blacks fled to the south, including those who subsequently established black town.

THE AGE OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON. 1895 – 1915

In 1895, the message of Booker T. Washington had given blacks in his infamous Atlanta “compromise” speech, when he urged blacks to accommodate to the rise of Jim Crow. He warned African American “agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and the emphasized, regarding race relation between blacks and whites, that in all thing that are purely social we can be as separate as fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress. He then advised blacks, “cast down your bucket where you are,,,,, cast it down I agriculture, mechanics. I commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions, by arguing so, Washington, was catapulted into national and international prominence by the nation white’s power structure, emerge g as the leader of black America.

Some three years late, at the 1898, the fourth Atlanta conference, W.E.B. Dubois, soon to be known more for this promotion of the “Talented Tenth” and his emphasize on civil right protest, stressed the importance of black business and called for “the organization I every town and hamlet where colored people dwelled, of negro business Men’s league (NNBL) and the gradual federation”. In 1900 Washington organized the National Negro Business Rights (NNBL). By 1915 membership was estimated from 5000 to 40000 with over 600 chapters in thirty-four states and in west America on the Gold Coast. While Washington’s philosophy of promoting political accommodation was quite well known, few people knew that behind the scenes, he supported fight against segregation and discrimination, a policy that Dubois, however pursued openly. Still, both men viewed the business activities of lacks as taking place within the existence of a separate economy, and both promoted cooperated efforts for the survival of black’s economy life.

THE GREAT MIGRATION AND THE RISE OF URBAN BLACK GHETTO

Great migration occurred between 1910 and 1920. It was a migration from the South to the North. There were several factors contributing to the migration. They were:

- Intensification of racism in the South.
- Differences of wages in the North and South.
- Better health care in the North.
- Declination from European immigration due to wartime.

The black people coming to the North from the South felt very grateful since they could do everything better there. They could have a better life in the north. However, their existence triggered the establishment of an Urban Black Ghetto (a part of a town occupied with minority group). This area triggered the increasing of racism in the north.

- It includes zoning laws (black residence were surrounded by industrial areas so that they would be isolated inside their residence)
- Redlining (discrimination in terms of housing market)
- Restrictive covenants (the property deeds could not be sold to a certain racial or religious group)
- The refusal of financial institutions, banks, and saving loan companies to approve the mortgage loans for blacks

Everything was inside the Urban Black Ghetto such as black churches, clubs, social and civil organizations, black lower-class residence, black middle class residence, and even the wealthiest one. Self-help organizations were once again revived to provide services for black people.

Blacks were still hardly recognized to assert their rights to defend their nation during WW I. It caused some riots in the North cities. The biggest one is the Red Summer that occurred in Chicago 1919. Another riot called Tulsa riot occurred due

to the same issue during WW II. It was the most devastating riot that destroyed the blacks' economy.

The new Ku Klux Klan also revived to add the amount of riots. The new Ku Klux Klan not only detested the blacks, but also immigrants, Catholic, and Semitic.

The detested movement was responded by the blacks with a movement called Harlem Renaissance. It reflected black's pride for their race and culture. The movements consisted of three phases:

- New Negro : They stated their disillusionment with racist America
- Jazz Age : A new music genre invented by blacks in 1920s
- Black Literature : Expressing black's rage not merely about blacks despair

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND NEW DEAL

There were several factors that made blacks' economy face downfall during 1920s:

- White people replaced blacks in heavy industries
- Traditional industries employing blacks such as mining, textile, shipping, and shoe faced depressions.
- Agriculture was also in a depressed state (80 percents of black population still lived in South worked as farmworker)
- The New Deal offered by F. D. Roosevelt (1940) showed racism. Overall, blacks were not treated equal.
- The number of blacks unemployment were still high compared to whites by 1940
- The number of blacks gaining success were also incredibly low, only 2 percents who were considered professional
- Blacks still got prejudice for being scabs and strikebreakers.
- Social Security Acts did not protect blacks

- Funds were hardly gotten by blacks living in the South but it was so easy for the whites

The most promising business for blacks to gain wealth was through lotteries-like business. Yet, it was an illegal one. Many blacks' gangsters emerged to control the game. The base was on Chicago. Aside from these blacks' negative achievements, there were also positive ones gained by black people in Olympics.

THE WAR AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS

In American military, before Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, segregation of black people was very popular. Although the first black general, Benjamin Davis appointed in 1940, blacks continued to serve in segregate unit. It happened at home as well as abroad.

A question came out of nowhere asking, "Is U.S. a communist or democratic nation? U.S. government then showed more appreciation to black's affairs. Black people fought to end segregation long before U.S. Government concerned more to them. For example, in 1950 the NAACP Legal Defense Fund decided to directly challenge segregation in public school with the Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeca case.

Supreme Court issued The Fourteenth Amendment stating that separate but equal was unconstitutional. In 1957 Civil Right Acts was issued to investigate discrimination and segregation in violation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment. Even so, racism still occurred in American society.

FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO BLACK POWER

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded in 1942 by black activist James Farmer was the one of the four major protest organizations in the civil rights movement. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) became the most prominent organization in the civil rights movement after Martin Luther King Jr.

became the president. In May of the year he headed 15,000 participant demonstration in support of a voting act. Finally, Congress passed **Voting Rights Act of 1957** strengthened 3 years later with **1960 Voting Rights Act**. This strengthened movement of the black was countered with the increasing vandalism done by whites e.g. destroying black churches, homes, business, etc.

In the August 28, 1963, the largest single protest demonstration in U.S history occurred. It was led by King. He orated his famous "I Have A Dream" speech which resulted in July 1964 when Congress passed the **Civil Rights Act**, the most far-reaching legislation to protect the rights of blacks. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize afterward. Black people gained their rights step by step ever since. In 1965 **Voting Rights** was passed by Congress to secure black's right to vote.

Both Civil Right and Voting Right led to a so-called movement Black Revolution of 1960s. The movement was divided into Black nationalist and Black separatist. The former agreed with the integration, the latter expected freedom and hailed the concept of "**Black Power**" promoted by **Stokeley Carmichael**. **Black Nationalist**, for example is CORE under Floyd McKissick. It disagreed with violence action to defense, concerned with the resurrection of black economic

Black Separatist, for example: **The Black Panther Party** (The extremist movement), **The Nation of Islam**. When Malcolm X led The Nation of Islam, he promoted an establishment of an independent black state within the border of U.S. He also promoted racial-separatism, black-self determination, economic self-help. He required his members to adhere to a strict moral and health code and respect women. He resigned from Nation of Islam after being censured by Elijah Muhammad. In June 1964 he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) but in February 1965 he was assassinated. Meanwhile, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 4, 1968. Black women were also very active in promoting Black's equality in many organizations that has been stated before.

THE POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Economy

By the 1970s, economic black nationalism became the focus of black leadership. It indicated the end of the Black Revolution of the 1960s. Under President Richard Nixon, the federal government then focused its attention in civil right on promoting Black economic development. However, the black economic remained gloomy as it was. Moreover, a comparative review of the annual earnings of blacks and whites exposed continuing economic inequality. Economic equality had not been achieved.

Political

The civil rights movement made an increase in black political participation. The number of black elected official always increased ever since. The number of blacks living outside the South increased rapidly. It triggered a fear of declining property values and lowering educational standard since school was no longer segregated. While there has been a reverse migration of blacks to the South, open shelter has led to an increase in black suburbanization as well. By the 1990s, some previously white suburb, particularly those close to cities with large black populations had become almost 100% black.

Employment

By the 1990s too, there was a move toward economizing in federally sponsored affirmative action initiatives, supported by several Supreme Court decisions. Equal employment opportunity policies increased black employment in many areas, and blacks were then blamed for taking jobs from whites and their seats in professional and graduate schools. In fact, the civil rights movement benefited white women more than blacks.

Education

While there had been significant progression in black education, racial equality had not been achieved. In 1940, only a few of black completed high school and college compared to white. However, what was shocking in the post-civil right

era is that there was a loss in the increasing progressions in black high school graduates going to college. Some factors can account for the refuse in black college attendance, but the greatest correlation shows that it can be attributed to the reduction of financial aid. On the other hand, there was an increase in blacks in professional schools in business, law, and medicine.

Others

The civil right movement providing greater job opportunities for black had resulted in an expanding black middle class.

The numbers of black underclass people were dramatically increased due to the changes in American economy (deindustrialization to modern)

Class rather than race determined black's life chances. For example: O.J. Simpson was verdict not guilty after killing his white wife and her white male friend. O.J. Simpson was a millionaire (high class people) hired a "dream team" to defend him in courts.

The Civil Rights Era and the woman's movement have triggered the emergence of black literary figures with African-American culture works. They are: Alice Walker 'The Color Purple' , Gloria Naylor 'The Women of Brewster Place', Terry Macmillan 'Exhale', etc. Many of those have been filmed by Oprah Winfrey.

The emergence of Hollywood black superstar:

- Actor/Actress : Danzel Washington, Whoopi Goldberg, Halle Berry etc
- Television : Oprah Winfrey Show, The Cosby Show, etc

However, much of the media sensation of these successful individuals has masked serious underlying problems. The Black culture (rap, hip-hop, baggy pants, etc) was seen lack symbolism and showed despair and filled with street language. Moreover, it was seen as a disdain and contemptuous to women. All of these signaled all was not well in America. Prejudice to black people are also in high amount.

AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE AGE OF MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY

Newcomers in the post-modern world seek to establish a place for themselves in the American historical experience. Determining who should become true American and who should be placed in the American history is premised by the context of who came voluntarily or involuntarily.

If the black experience erased from the nation's history, social degradation by color would be no longer a factor in American life. Even with the black slavery which is the reflection of racism in America, still the black's struggle for freedom has contributed the basis for the expansion of freedom and liberties for all Americans.

The parallels of both the civil rights and post-civil rights eras with the reconstruction and post-reconstruction eras are too great for race to be ignored by the nation's new immigrants in their deconstruction of American history. In 20th century, race and racism remain prevailing factors that also militate against the full inclusion of immigrant people of color. Anti immigrations has existed not only among segments of the white Americans but also among some black Americans.

In the end of the century, there has been a move toward a new societal construction of race in America. It is either one is a person of color, which in American race relations means one might as well be black. With the 'browning' of America, anticipated by 2050, it seems probable that the problem of the 21st century in America will continue to be the problem of the color line. The increasing of competitive global economy made America cannot remain a world power by providing preferential treatment and opportunities only to its white population.