

Then: Other Groups Struggle to have Their Rights Recognized

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how other groups, building off of the success of the civil rights movement, struggled to get their rights recognized as well. These groups included, but were not limited to, Native Americans and LGBTQ+ individuals. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Native Americans
2. LGBTQ+



BEFORE YOU START

What are the similarities and differences between the strategies used by the civil rights movement, Native Americans, and those struggling for LGBTQ+ rights?

1. Native Americans

Native Americans were the first people in the Americas yet they have been among those with the fewest legal rights throughout American history. Early colonists and settlers did not generally recognize the legal rights Native people had to the lands they and their ancestors had lived on for generations. When rights were recognized, they usually took the form of treaties which were written in ways that generally disenfranchised Native people from their ways of life. The U.S. government also generally didn't enforce treaties or broke them altogether when it was advantageous to do so.

Learning from and building off of the successes of the civil rights movement, Native people joined together to try to reclaim their natural and legal rights. In Minneapolis in 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed to address issues of systemic racism, poverty, and police brutality against Native peoples. A common tactic AIM employed was to occupy federal lands to either demand they be returned to Native people or, at the very least, to draw attention to the historic and contemporary injustice. In 1970, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) was formed to help tribes use the legal system to reclaim their rights.

Emblematic of this struggle more recently were the protests and legal actions against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). During the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, Native peoples gathered together to protest the completion of an oil pipeline that was viewed as a threat to the areas drinking and irrigation water. At the same time, Native groups gathered together to help fight the Dakota Access Pipeline in the courts.

Consider the following excerpt from Leonard Peltier's book, *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sundance* (Peltier & Arden, 1999):

Primary Source Excerpt

Type: Book

Author: Leonard Peltier

Date: 1999

I don't know how to save the world. I don't have the answers or The Answer. I hold no secret knowledge as to how to fix the mistakes of generations past and present. I only know that without compassion and respect for all of Earth's inhabitants, none of us will survive—nor will we deserve to.

2. LGBTQ+

Other minority groups also learned from and built off of the success of the civil rights movement. Women, as we saw in Challenge 2.1, came close to including the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution in the early 1970s. Throughout American history, struggles and successes of some minority groups highlight the struggles and success of others -- especially those whose membership intersected with membership in more than one group. Black women, for example, had a lot to gain from both the civil rights movement and the struggle for women's rights. This intersectionality was in full force after the civil rights movement for members of the LGBTQ+ community who often found themselves in more than one oppressed minority group.

The Stonewall riots in 1969 were a response by the LGBT community against violent police raids of the Stonewall Inn and other popular lesbian and gay bars in New York. This started a series of protests and legal fights for LGBTQ+ rights. This struggle was met with various successes and failures.

Most of the early successes started at the state or local level with some states passing laws protecting LGBTQ+ rights including the right to not be fired from a job or evicted from an apartment because of one's sexual orientation. In 1975, Pennsylvania became the first state to pass a law protecting people from being fired based on sexual orientation. By 2020, 30 other states had followed suit. In 1993, Minnesota became the first state pass a law protecting people from being fired based on sexual identity. By 2020, 23 other states had followed suit. Despite many attempts at passing similar legislation at the national level, there is currently no federal law protecting LGBTQ+ people in other states.

In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to recognize the rights of same-sex people to marry. Over the next eleven years, and despite federal legislation defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman, more and more states began recognizing the rights of homosexuals to marry. In 2015, in *Obergefell vs. Hodges*, the Supreme Court ruled all laws, state and federal, that denying homosexuals the right to marry were unconstitutional.

Below is an excerpt from *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* a book written by Alice Walker (Walker, 1984):

Primary Source Excerpt

Type: Book

Author: Alice Walker

Date: 1992

Please remember, especially in these times of group-think and the right-on chorus, that no person is your friend (or kin) who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow and be perceived as fully blossomed as you were intended.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the successes of the Civil Rights movement inspired other groups of Americans to protest against injustice and claim their rights beginning in the 1960s. These groups included **Native Americans** and the **LGBTQ+** community, among others.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.

REFERENCES

Peltier, L., & Arden, H. (1999). Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Walker, A. (1984). In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.