**The Long Journey to Equality**

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**Introduction**

Native Americans, African Americans, and women are three groups that have historically been disadvantaged in America. Native Americans occupied the Americas before the arrival of Columbus. As more explorers arrived to colonize the land, the natives reacted in different ways. By the 19th century, the population of Natives had significantly reduced, and their removal from ancestral lands limited their territory. On their part, African Americans have suffered from the legacy of slavery. Educated women in the period 1500-1800 got a chance to pursue math and science, but their fortunes shifted between the 1850s and 1870s (Blakemore, 2017). When science started to professionalize, women were regarded as a threat as they could not be professionals. Native Americans, African Americans, have historically used the power to organize, litigate, and aggressive means to champion equality.

**Native Americans**

Among Native Americans, the 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn, pitting them against federal troops, marked an important part of resisting the confiscation of their land. The discovery of gold on Native Americans' territory led to efforts to relocate natives from the said lands (HISTORY.COM a). However, the affected tribes resisted to leading to a conflict in which the federal army was defeated. Some have contended that the US government has sought to do away with the native's culture through assimilation. For instance, the first Boarding school in the natives’ territory was set up in 1879. This system has been blamed for killing the "Indian" by assimilating the native children into the American culture.

Another confrontation, the Wounded Knee Massacre, took place in 1890, where 150 Native Americans were surrounded by the US armed forces who demanded a surrender of the former's weapons. The refusal led to a deadly confrontation. There were notable wins for natives in attaining equality. For instance, in 1924, Congress enacted the Indian Citizenship Act, allowing all natives born within the country’s territory be granted citizenship (HISTORY.COM a). Previously there were more stringent requirements, including the percentage of one's Native American ancestry. On its part, the Indian Civil Rights Act came into force in 1968, granting the natives many of the benefits spelled out in the Bill of Rights. In March this year, Representative Deb Haaland becomes the secretary of the Interior (HISTORY.COM, 2021 b). She became the first Native American to head a cabinet agency. This position represents a bold statement by the Biden Administration in not only recognizing natives but also granting them equality in access to government positions.

**African Americans**

It is a historical fact that the fate of enslaved persons divided the nation during the Civil War (1861-1865). Slavery had a legacy of racism and led to different movements post the war to correct this reality as African Americans fought for equality. In this history, the separate but equal principle under the "Jim Crow" laws features prominently (HISTORY.COM a). In 1896, in *Plessy v Ferguson*, the Supreme Court upheld a decision requiring segregation of passengers in railroad cars and, by extension, entrenched segregation in other spheres. In 1905, WEB. Du Bois led protests demanding civil rights for blacks under the Niagara Movement. The protests were a reaction to violent hostilities that blacks faced- as increasing urbanization led to a shortage of housing and employment, and the lynching of blacks while illegal become common (HISTORY.COM a). The movement joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The latter championed the enforcement of both the 14th and 15th Amendments, doing away with all forms of segregation and complete enfranchisement of all Black men.

A notable win in the fight for equality among African Americans was the Supreme Court’s ruling in Brown v Board of Education. The court ruled that segregation in public schools was contrary to the 14th Amendment (HISTORY.COM a). Despite the challenges in implementing the ruling, it eventually led to the dismantling of the segregation system. Blacks have also been disproportionately represented in the justice department and correction facilities. Government policy, particularly the "war on drugs," has had a negative impact on them compared to other racial groups. The 1995 'million man march' sought to assert the principles of Black separatism and lead to spiritual renewal and a sense of personal responsibility among blacks.

In 2008, Barrack Obama won the presidency to become the first Africana American President. This occurrence was a milestone in progress towards equality. In recent years, institutional racism has been blamed for rising racial tensions. In 2013, the Black Lives Matter movement began to highlight the increasing deaths of Africans at the hands of the police (HISTORY.COM a). In 2020, the group’s followers were particularly vocal after George Floyd was killed by a police officer while unarmed and not resisting arrest on camera. The death sparked protests across the country for weeks. In the 2020 presidential elections, the win of Joe Biden meant that Kamara Harris became the first black vice president. This milestone is another win in this journey to equality for minorities and women in the US.

**Women**

Women have also had to mount a consistent fight for equality over the years. Immediately after the Civil War, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) was founded, demanding the right to vote for all women, an end to discrimination in the workplace based on sex, and lenient divorce laws. The American Woman Suffrage Association was also founded in the same year, championing the same rights but adopting a state-by-state approach. As a result of these efforts, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming extended the right to vote to women in the late 19th century (Lumen, n.d). These lobby ground joined together in 1890, and their advocacy assumed more radical tactics, including protests and picketing outside the White House and hungers strikes (Lumen, n.d). Efforts led to the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, granting all women the right to vote.

However, discrimination in education, employment, and other spheres of life persisted. In the 1960s, a second movement arose to address the persisting problems. Its efforts led to Congress enacting the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibited discrimination in employment based on race, color, national origin, and sex (Lumen, n.d). Two years later, the reluctance to implement the Act led to the National Organization for Women (NOW) formation to lobby for workplace equality. Currently, there are more women than men attending college today and having a greater likelihood of graduating. Women also have a significant representation in all professions. However, they are underrepresented in certain jobs, particularly in STEM fields, and have a lower likelihood to hold executive positions (Lumen, n.d). Recent legislation on equal pay for similar jobs seems not to have addressed these gaps.

**Conclusion**

Aggressive tactics, the power to organize and protest, and legislation are the different ways Native Americans, women, and African Americans have employed to pursued equality. On their part, Native Americans have finally attained representation in the federal government's administration and are entitled to citizenship. Women have a representation in all spheres of society but are underrepresented in STEM fields and executive positions. African Americans have attained equality in many spheres but still are victims of institutionalized racism, particularly with regard to their interaction with the justice system.

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