

Abstract

The struggle against racism is as old as the United States itself. Although the Civil Rights movement accomplished a significant transformation of the social and political system, it left many things unresolved. For this reason, the main argument of this thesis is that the movement did not really end in the 1960s but still continues to this day. The method used is that of comparison, where I compare the present “new” movement, which spans from the 1970s, with the original one. In this sense, the thesis also focuses on three major activists from the original movement, Martin Luther King Jr, James Baldwin and Malcolm X, to further analyze the attitudes in the original movement and compare them with the current ones later. However, the main focus of the thesis is on four personas who made a significant contribution to the “new” Civil Rights Movement in the era starting from the 1970s and who can be considered as ones of many rightful representatives of it.

Firstly, Toni Morrison and Angela Davis are two prominent writers who adapted writing as an instrument for their activism. In the late 20th century, the general readership rapidly changed. Both writers were able to take this opportunity immediately as they focused their writing on portraying the harsh realities of slavery, racism, and its impacts on black communities. Even though they both focus on prevalently women’s perspectives, their approaches differ significantly. While Davis develops her arguments through non-fiction writing, Morrison uses fiction and non-fiction to present the issues. Another major difference that the thesis considers is the overall approach and ideologies used by the women because Davis offers the problems of the society through the Marxist perspective. By this, the thesis shows how their activism spreads through all types of writing and highlights the differences between the said approaches.

The second comparison is that of two activists, Al Sharpton and Patrisse Cullors. In the thesis, Cullors is considered one of the most recent representatives of the “new” movement. She is mainly recognized as one of the co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement. For this reason, she is an excellent example of a major change considering the nature of movements in general. Rev. Al Sharpton, a civil rights activist and politician, was first chosen by Jesse Jackson in 1969 to work on Operation Breadbasket and has participated in many protests ever since. He is also famous for leading several marches and demonstrations and writing numerous works where he addresses activism and his fight against racism. He is an activist of the “old school” who experienced the Civil Rights era and took his experiences from there.

The aim is to prove that even after so many years, the systemic racism that African Americans face is still a big issue in a country where “all men are created equal”¹ and that because of that, the Civil Rights Movement did not really end, it just expanded to adapt to the new era.

Key words: activism, Al Sharpton, Angela Davis, Black Lives Matter, civil rights, Civil Rights Movement, James Baldwin, literature as activism, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., New Civil Rights Movement, Patrisse Cullors, present-day activism, racism, Toni Morrison

¹ Thomas Jefferson, et al, “Copy of Declaration of Independence,” *Library of Congress*, accessed July 4, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/>.