

BIRACIAL IDENTITY COMPLICATIONS DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Introduction

Racial and gender alienation triggered cultural difficulties for many, which caused people to feel out of place. A sense of belonging comes from similarities in identity, but differences in racial features and gender had people segregate. For example, as shown in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* by Adrienne Kennedy, Sarah, the main character, was discriminated during the Civil Rights Movement simply for being an African American and a woman. To be more specific, she was biracial, meaning that she was both white and black, which made it more difficult for her to find her identity. Thus, individuals like her were faced with hardships regarding segregation and discrimination, but also expectations that symbolizes the prejudice. For instance, Sarah was expected to maintain natural hair in order to meet the standards of how people defined African American women. Although some suffered for being black or female, Sarah, who represented Adrienne Kennedy, had to deal with all of the above. This exhibit will portray the hardships and adversity, such as discrimination and inequality, that African Americans, women, African American women, and biracial individuals had to overcome.



Rowland Scheerman
Civil Rights March on Washington
1963
Photograph (No Color: Black and White)

This is a photo of the march from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial during the Civil Rights Movement. Through this march, the African Americans wanted to achieve many things, such as overturn the “Separate but equal” doctrine. As seen in the photograph, many African Americans are marching to protest and claim their rights and equality. Thus, this portrays the hardships that African Americans had to deal with because it is evident that they are trying to gain their equality. Just as the posters state, they want to be able to vote, have the same opportunities with jobs, be paid equally, and end segregated rules in public schools. These are just a few examples that can be seen at the front of the march. Education, job opportunities, income, and anything along those lines are necessary for raising a family, but African Americans were not able to have any of those. To be more specific, they were not able to have as much as the whites did. The discrimination and segregation they were experiencing were detrimental for individuals and families, which shows the complications of African Americans.



Anonymous
*THE 1960S-70S AMERICAN
FEMINIST MOVEMENT: BREAKING
DOWN BARRIERS FOR WOMEN*
1964
Photograph (No Color: Black and
White)

This photo is from a time during the American Feminist Movement. It was around the same time as the Civil Rights Movement, but focused on the idea of feminism. In the photograph, a large group of women are seen walking down the street trying to protest and fight against female discrimination. One of the banners read, “women want equality”. This is important because while the African-American Civil Rights Movement was taking place, the American Feminist Movement was also an issue. Inequality and discrimination were not only an issue for African Americans, but also for women. Additionally, this proves how difficult the situation would have been for African American women since they had to deal with both at the same time.

African American Women (Group Label)

African American women were victims of racial as well as female discrimination. To be more specific, they were treated unequally due to the fact that they were both African American and women. They had to experience and deal with the issues on both sides, whereas white women were concentrated solely on the complications of women. Comparatively, it is fair to say that African American women were going through twice as much, which made it more difficult to overcome. Each of the artifacts below are related in that they expound and convey the oppression of African American women, who tried to stand up for themselves, but as a result, achieved very little prominence.

<http://www.makers.com/moments/common-ground-between-civil-rights-and-feminism>

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Common Ground Between Civil Rights And Feminism
No Date
Video (Interview)

"Black women were unable raise a family if two people didn't work..."

"The Civil Rights Movement was necessary in order to get basic freedom..."

"'Help-wanted' advertisements in newspapers were divided into males and females. They got rid of black and white, but still bad for black women."

"The notion of double problem...it is that we cannot work on one problem without working on the other."

- Eleanor Holmes Norton

In this video, Eleanor Holmes Norton, a delegate to the United States Congress, was speaking in an interview on the common ground between civil rights and feminism back in her time. She explained the segregation and inequality that were posed on citizens like herself, who were born as black women. She stated that black women were simply not being paid enough to raise a family alone, nor were they able to find themselves a job opportunity. Eventually, they got rid of the categorization of black and white on the newspaper, but started one that separated men and women. Either way, it was unfair for the African American women who were impacted by both. This was why she believed that the Civil Rights Movement occurred, so that they could gain basic freedom. The unequal opportunities and distressing experiences she had to deal with signify the complications during this time.



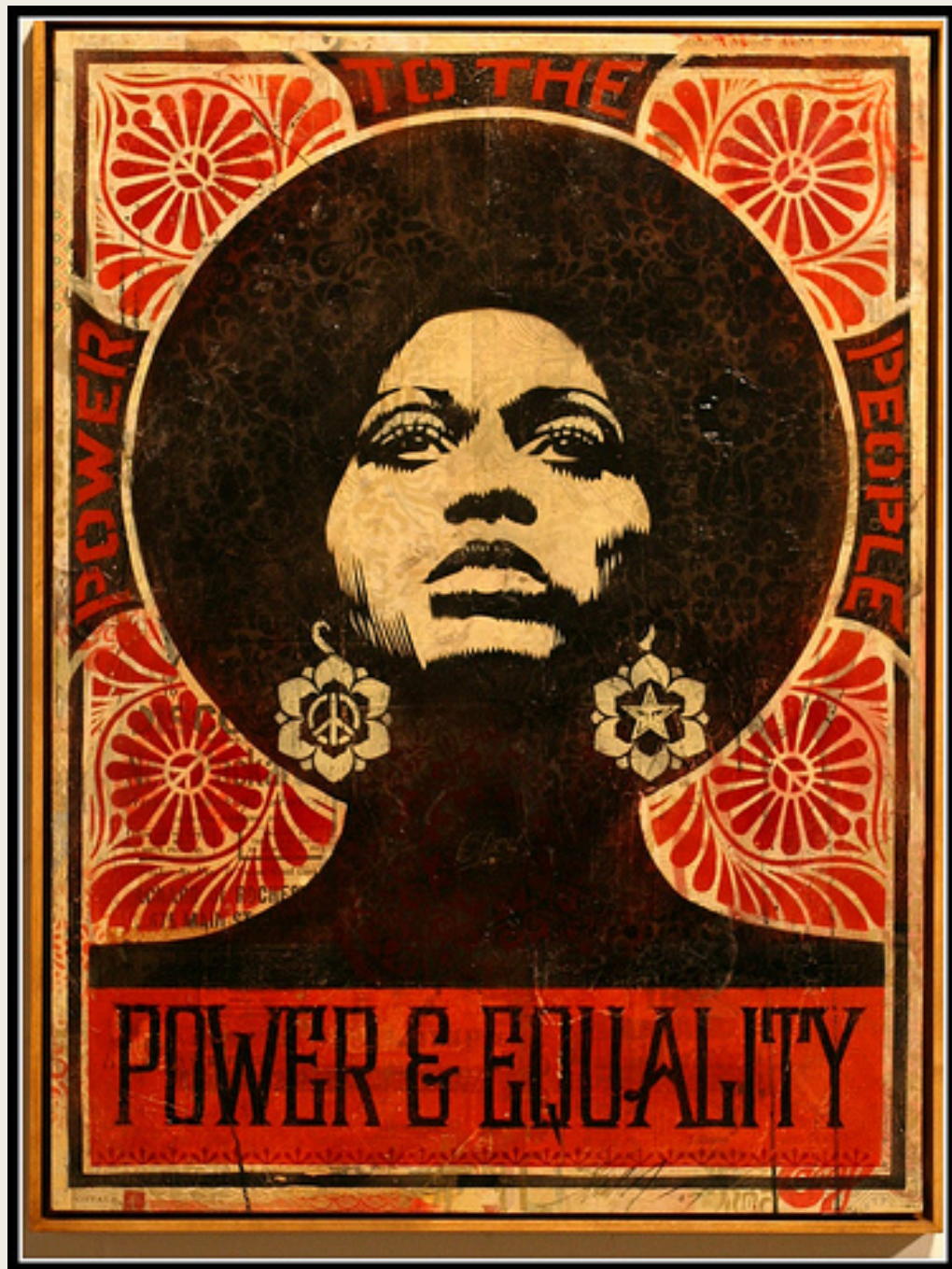
Anonymous
Untitled
1965
Photograph (No Color: Black and White)

In this photo, an African American woman is holding a microphone to speak to a group of African Americans in Ruleville. She is speaking to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party sympathizers just outside the Capitol in Washington. She was trying to speak up on the issue of African Americans being rejected and prejudiced by the House of Representatives in the election. This photo clearly represents the unfairness that the African Americans had to deal with, as well as the fact that women had key roles in the Civil Rights Movement. However, although they played an important role in society, few achieved prominence. It is evident that African Americans and women experienced difficulties with inequality, but those who were identified as both, suffered even more. Noticing the key roles, African American women put in the effort to make a difference, but failed to make a big impact on society. Not many listened or geared toward African American women.



Anonymous
Untitled
1964
Photograph (No Color: Black and White)

This photo from 1964, shows an African American woman being led away by police after trying to enter a segregated lunch counter in Nashville, Tennessee. The fact that there was separation for eating shows the extent of segregation within the different races and genders. African Americans were discriminated and divided from the whites, but it was especially worse for African American women. As seen in the other artifacts, it is also evident here that women played an important role in society, but were not able to achieve much prominence. The effort and risks they took to fight against the unfair regulations mostly ended up being ineffective in the long run.



Shepard Fairey
Power & Equality
2007
Canvas (Image)

This is a piece of artwork in a form of a poster/propaganda representing power and equality of African American women. First off, the artwork captures attention to the lady and the words under her portrait. The lady is looking up, which represents hope and justice. Power and equality represents a direct way of saying they want to fight for power and equality. Looking around the lady, another phrase can be seen: power to the people. This also sends out the same message saying that they hope and will fight for power to the people. All African American women wished and hoped for equality, which is why they wanted power. To a large extent, although not shown directly from the artwork, inequality and segregation affected African American women, which proves the severity of the complications. Artifacts such as this is the result of the unresolved issues.



Masha Tsimring
Funnyhouse of A Negro
2013
Photograph

Sarah, from *Funnyhouse of a Negro* by Adrienne Kennedy, represented the playwright in this play. However, this is not from the original play, but a remake of the play recently.

Notice the condition Sarah is in. This represents the state of mind she is in. In addition, her hair shows the prejudice and expectation of African American women. From this, it is evident what she is going through. In short, she experienced all the complications of African Americans and women. Since she was both, this meant that she faced all the complications that the African Americans dealt with along with what women experienced. However, one more problem was added: her biracial identity. Although she looked African American, she was actually a mix of black and white. This caused her to find herself lost in that she was not able to fit in anywhere. She felt as if she did not belong in either side nor did others welcome her. She just was never accepted.

Her state of mind, frustration, crisis, and pain is the result of all of the complications of African Americans, women, and African American women, and biracial individuals compiled.