

7 Ways that Studying US  
History 1877 to Modern Times  
History Shapes the Way You  
Think About Progress

By: Jace Frank

**PROGRESS**  
**AMERICA**

[\(Progress America\)](#)

# 1. The women's movements of the 1960s transformed the country for women to have more rights. (Feminism and Women's Movements, 3/27)



(Bev Grant, [The Life and Death of a Radical Sisterhood](#))

In this picture women are meeting together for a feminist meeting. We can notice that they are a group of diverse women that generally all have the same goals in mind and that is to change the lives of women. The women's movement of the 1960s allowed for many women to gain freedoms not previously granted to them. They progressed in such a way that they were no longer just considered working housewives, but now they were becoming an actual part of society that is able to have their own opinions. Many things contributed to this change like the fight for equality in the workplace exemplified the Civil Rights Act Title VII which stated that employers could not discriminate based on sex, race, color, national origin, and religion ([feminism and women's movement, 3/27](#)). Along with the Civil Rights Act's inclusion of sex in its non-discrimination inclusions was the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which tried to get rid of the wage differences between the sexes ([Crash Course #40: 1960s in America](#)). Another thing that contributed to them progressing as humans in society was their ability to stand up for themselves and determine what was right or wrong. They were fed up with being treated like lesser. From a quote from the *Feminine Mystique*, a book published by Betty Friedan in the 1960s, she says

that, “It is no longer possible to ignore that voice, to dismiss the desperation of so many American women.” (Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* 1963)

## **2. The Black Freedom Movement slowly tried to discontinue the idea of African Americans being lesser people.** (The Black Freedom Movement, 3/18)



[\(Robert Russa Moton High School\)](#)

In the image above is the Robert Russa Moton High School which has since been turned into a museum in Prince Edward County. This was an all African American high school and in 1951 students of this school went on strike to demand equal facilities to the white school, Farmville High. When separate, but equal was overturned instead of integrating the schools Prince Edward County shut down the public-school system for years on end ([Robert Russa Moton Museum](#)). This was one of the big starts to the Black Freedom Movement. African Americans were fed up with the constant injustice that they faced and started to fight for themselves instead of just taking everything that was being thrown at them. Students in Raleigh, North Carolina also expressed their feelings towards sit ins and their overall goal of their fight at the Student Leadership Conference. A lot of them voiced the opinion of being fed up with their current position in society ([Baker, Bigger than a Hamburger, 1960](#)). Their fight and determination

eventually led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 being pushed through congress at an extremely fast rate due to President Lyndon B. Johnson's determination. While sitting down with a civil rights leader, the president leaned forward and said to him, "I want that bill passed," in reference to the civil rights bill (MacKenzie, *The Liberal Hour: Top Down Determination*). This shows tremendous progress from African Americans being segregated and school as well as being denied certain rights to having the president of the United States fight on their behalf.

### 3. Women During the Second World War.

(World War II, 2/20)

([Margaret Bourke-White, TIME](#))



In the image above, we can see women welding during the period of World War II. They took over a lot of the men's jobs while they were at war simply because someone had to do the work so women stepped up. This time also permitted higher wages for women working and even opportunities in factories for women of color to also work ([WWII, 2/20](#)). The problem with this however is even though they were granted jobs during the war once the men returned all their opportunities were taken away again. They were expected to simply return as housewives and to serve their veteran husbands ([Crash Course #36: World War II Part 2- The Homefront](#)). Other than jobs women took charge in their personal lives as well and we see the early beginnings of an even marriage. In an article, "Family Life", it shows

how a husband could not get a job and the wife was now in charge of the money ([Family Life, 1939](#)). This shows a complete role reversal that comes partially because of the second world war occurring. The women in this country were becoming more independent and self-sufficient, but they would have a long time to go before making any real progress.

## 4. Vietnam was Opposed Heavily and Should Not Have Ever Been a War. (Vietnam, 4/1)



[\(We Are The Mighty\)](#)

In the image above, we see a man spinning a wheel in order to pick out draft numbers for who would be enlisted next. They operated these things as a lottery system which is very wrong when it comes to American's lives. The 1960s saw America's investment and eventual entrance into the Vietnam war. Their goal was to save democracy from communism, but sacrificed thousands of men to achieve that. This idea of preventing communism and preventing the "domino effect" has been around for a few decades by this point. Dwight Eisenhower in a speech as president said that, "You have a row of dominos set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." ([Eisenhower, President Dwight Eisenhower Warns of Falling Dominoes, 1954](#)) This means that as soon as one country falls to communism, every country around them will follow suit.

This war was losing support quickly at home. By 1967, half a million soldiers were at war in Vietnam. The media began to show how awful war was over there and would play very violent, graphic clips to show Americans the brutality happening overseas ([Vietnam, 4/1](#)). The turning point in all this was really when the Tet Offensive happened. The Tet Offensive was when 5 major cities and the U.S. embassy in Vietnam were attacked by the Vietcong. Thousands of lives were lost on both side with no real change in the tide of the war. It is considered a turning point though because this is when the U.S. truly lost support from home and would lead to the withdrawal of troops in the upcoming years without the U.S. having a clear victory ([1968, 4/3](#)). When a country appears to be so all powerful, it is really a set bac when they keep sending American men into battle only to prove that they are powerful.

## 5.The Gay Rights Movement Slowly Began to Change How People Perceived Homosexuals.

(Social Movements of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> C., 3/20)



[\(Bettye Lane, Stonewall Riots\)](#)

In the image, we notice a patron of the Stonewall bar surrounded by police following the Stonewall riots. These riots were a big event in the gay rights movement of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stonewall was a gay bar located Greenwich Village of New York and was a place for many people of the LGBT community to come express themselves. Not only did it welcome gay men, but also became a place welcoming of drag queens which was not necessarily the case at other gay bars. On June 28, 1969 police raided this bar and would arrest a number of people for violating the state's gender-appropriate clothing statue. They would take them into bathrooms in order to check their sex ([Crash Course #40: 1960s in America](#)). This ended up causing a huge riot from the patrons and gained mass media attention as well as the emergence of many gay rights groups such as the Gay Liberation Front. They formed directly following the rights and

fought for sexual liberation for all people ([Social Movements of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century](#), 3/20). Along with that, they also fought against the psychotherapy of gay people to try and “cure” them of homosexuality. In a leaflet to the American Medical Association, the Chicago Gay Liberation Front stated, “We declare that we are healthy homosexuals in a sexist society, and that homosexuality is at least on a par with heterosexuality as a way for people to relate to each other.” ([Chicago Gay Liberation Front, A Leaflet for the American Medical Association, 1970](#)) This fight that people had made massive change and people began to see them as equals rather than lesser. It would be a long while for this movement to make any real progress, but it was a slow change that many people of the LGBT community and its allies fought for.

## 6. A Switch Back to Conservative Ideas Made Social Movements Take the Back Seat. ([The New Right](#), 4/8)



[\(Reagan Revolution\)](#)

Following the disapproval of the Vietnam war the U.S. saw a string of conservative presidents that would revert the country back to more traditional ideas. This truly started with Nixon as he boasted the “silent majority” which he marketed as the mass amount of people who do not agree with the changes being brought into this country and desire a revert back to more traditional values. In his presidency, we saw the start of this, but he also still kept some of the liberal things put in motion by past presidents ([The New Right](#), 4/8). The real change came about when Reagan was elected as president. This is where we saw the “Reagan Revolution”. He was

marketed as the “Great Communicator”, brought down taxes, and left New Deal and the great society programs behind. In this, he also brought the resurgence of religion in America and religious people felt more highly represented in the government ([Crash Course #43: The Reagan Revolution](#)). Many people of the social movements saw this president and these people as a huge regress in their progress that they had been making because now the traditional ideals were overriding anything they fought for. In this, there was articles being public condemning people in the LGBT community as predators. In one article it is said that homosexuals, “...want to recruit your children and teach them the virtues of becoming a homosexual.” ([Bryant, When the Homosexuals Burn the Holy Bible in Public, 1977](#)) This mentality that people had led to the ignoring of the AIDS epidemic by the president which resulted in the death of thousands of people. This era destroyed any progress made by previous groups and leaders which caused them to start all over at step one.

## 7. Imperialism Cemented America’s Status as a Global Superpower. (Imperialism and WWI, 2/6)



[\(Imperialism and Its Accomplices\)](#)

This illustration shows the bad side of U.S. imperialism and the idea that America simply took what it wanted without thinking of the repercussions. The U.S. started imperialism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as America wanted to expand outward. Imperialism helped

America's economy greatly as it helped to get out of the depression they were in as well as it allowed for them to expand trade. Through this period, America also acquired the territories of Puerto Rico, Philippines, and Guam ([Crash Course #28: American Imperialism](#)). In these territories however came backlash from America trying to help out. America stated that it had a "responsibility to help its little brown brothers." ([Imperialism and WWI, 2/6](#)) In a political cartoon by artist William H. Walker we see the people of the territories that were taken by the U.S. as well as other countries carrying the different nations that took over ([Walker, The White Man's Burden, 1899](#)). This exemplifies that America was powerful enough to overtake all these places without much backlash and generally thought they were doing good for the world. This all plays back to the cartoon and the sheer violence that this country brought to some of the places it expanded to. This intervention also displays how powerful the U.S. is and how far the country has come. It shows tremendous change as to when in the beginning it was just the thirteen colonies struggling to stay afloat.