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Empowering African Americans

Over the years, the battle for racial equality is one that African Americans are still continuing to overcome today. During the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans were met with violent threats from whites, trying to scare them away from the progress they were trying to make. Through the interviews of C.T Vivian, Alvin Poussaint, and Stokely Carmichael, they elaborate on the ideas and the effects of the “black power”, non-violence, and black consciousness movements.

In C.T. Vivian’s interview he discusses his experiences with racist violence and his role in the Civil Rights Movement. C.T. recalls the time that a white man burned his grandmother’s house down, because she took in his wife after he threw her out of his house. Acts of kindness, such as this were almost always meet with violence from whites. He mentions other times where peaceful movements brought violence, such as the Freedom ride busses that were ambushed by southern racist in 1961. What began as peaceful bus rides from Washington D.C. into southern states, turned into violent acts of hate, when white southerners began to beat the African Americans on board. C.T. explains how even after the busses were ambushed, they refused to let the freedom rides stop, because they “would not allow nonviolence to be destroyed by violence”. There were other powerful leaders that preached nonviolence, such as Stokely Carmichael.

During the Civil Rights Movement, the idea of “black power” became a huge movement through the black community as a way to empower blacks. In his article “What We Want”, Stokely Carmichael states that “Black Power” means that African Americans are not afraid of white America. Carmichael states how “our country is driven by power” and that the only way for blacks to be accepted by white’s is for them to become white, and “for racism to die, a totally different America must be born”. In his article he states that African Americans want the right to make decisions for themselves and have the same abilities as white Americans.

In his interview, Alvin Poussaint discusses the beginning of “black power” and “black consciousness”. The idea was that black people would gain strength through “black consciousness”. Poussaint wanted people to realize the power in being black and to see how that was a good thing.

The Civil Rights Movement altered the 1960’s because of African Americans continuous fight for equality. Through non-violent protest such as sit ins, bus boycotts, and marches, African Americans continued to push for equality and stand strong amidst the hatred from racist whites. Through ideas like “black power”, African Americans begin to feel empowered and there becomes a larger fight for equality.