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Racial Discrimination

No human fingerprint is the same. Just as no fingerprint is the same, no person is the same. Every person has something that separates them from the next. Whether it would be the color of their skin, shape of their nose, size of their bodies or the color of their eyes, each person has a unique quality. However, although this is true to some, throughout history it has not been accepted by many. Sometimes, “different”scares people. And that fear brings hate, and that hate brings discrimination. Racial discrimination has been prevalent in societies all around the world for hundreds of years. There are extremely large key moments in history where racial discrimination has led to segregation, violence and even death. However, these actions have violated millions of people’s human rights. Historical events such as the Holocaust and the Civil Rights Movement are key examples of both racial discrimination and the violation of human rights.

Many lives were lost during WWII. Soldiers from various countries lost their lives fighting for what they believed in. However, their death toll was not just the number of soldiers lost, but also the number of innocent lives lost in the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler had a vision, an extremely dark vision. Determined to do whatever he could to create an “Aryan”world, he put his public speaking skills, propaganda and the army to his use; he created the Nazi party and create a genocidal plan to get rid of all of those who did not fit into his vision. He based this decision on the way people looked and what they believed in. He decided that if a person had dark hair, dark eyes, dark skin, was a part of the Jewish religion, had a disability, or looked remotely different, they weren’t worthy to live among the rest of society. In his eyes, they belonged in work and death camps, which he eventually put into place, creating one of the world’s largest genocides. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the number of deaths were: death of Jews, up to 6 million; death of soviet civilians, around 7 million; death of non-Jewish Polish civilians, around 1.8 million; death of Serb civilians, around 312,000; death of people with disabilities in institutions, up to 250,000; death of Gypsies, up to 260,000; death of Jehovah’s witnesses, around 1,900 and many more. These deaths were taken through the use of shootings, poisonous gassing, starvation, overworking, beating and many other violent ways. Innocent people, living their everyday lives, ripped from society purely because they weren’t a certain race or religion.

Events such as the Holocaust led the United Nations’implementation of the International Convention of on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted and opened for signature in 1965 and placed into force in 1969. This document talks about how the United Nations was built to “promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”(International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965). The document also takes into account that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights shows that all humans are born free and are equal in rights. Because of this, discrimination should not be present in society. However, even years after the Holocaust, racial discrimination continued in various countries, including the United States.

Racial discrimination in the United States fills up a large portion of American history. From segregated armies, bathrooms, buses, schools and even water fountains, to race-inspired violence, and to marches demanding for integration and equality, racial discrimination in America fueled an extremely large movement for both Americans and humans overall: the Civil Rights Movement. African Americans mostly suffered from racial discrimination in Southern states because the “Jim Crow”laws at local and state levels were still in effect. This laws prohibited African Americans from classrooms, bathrooms, theaters and more. However, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the “separate but equal”doctrine that allowed for discrimination to take place, and this action brought much attention to African American’s rights. After this, the Civil Rights Movement began to move forward. In the 15 years that followed, activists began to protest, using civil disobedience, in the hopes of bringing about change. Although they were confronted with much oppression, they kept fighting for equality, soon leading to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was adopted and opened for signature in 1966 but put into force in March 1976. This Covenant recognizes “inherent dignity and and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”(International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976) and says that equality can be achieved if certain conditions are created where people can enjoy both their civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights.

Today, there have been many laws and changes in the United States, however racial discrimination is still an issue in both America and around the world. It may not be as obvious as a sign saying “whites only”but it is present in other parts of society; some believe through police brutality, others believe through equal pay and some believe through hate crimes that still happen to this very day. The United Nations creates many laws and regulations to help participating countries come to mutual agreements to make a better world. Countries governments also make laws and regulations to do the same thing, however, is it possible that history can repeat itself - or that it never ended? Racial discrimination has been seen throughout hundreds of years of history and many people have lost their lives at the hand of it. Will it ever end?

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