

## Chapter 47

# The Widening Struggle

*Why and how did the civil rights movement expand?*

### 47.1 Introduction

As a schoolteacher in the 1950s, Dolores Huerta taught the children of farmworkers in California's San Joaquin Valley. Huerta had grown up in the valley and knew about the hardships endured by farmworkers and their families.

Huerta liked teaching, but she wanted to do more to help the farmworkers. So she decided to give up her teaching job. "I couldn't stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes," she explained later. "I thought I could do more by organizing farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children."

Together with farm labor organizer Cesar Chavez, Huerta formed the National Farm Workers Association. As a small union for migrant farmworkers, the NFWA seemed powerless next to the large corporations that ran farming operations in the San Joaquin Valley. Nevertheless, in 1966 it won a major victory by negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with the Schenley Wine Company. It was the first time a farmworkers' union had signed a contract with an agricultural corporation. Later that year, the NFWA merged with another group to become the **United Farm Workers (UFW)**.

In the decades that followed, Huerta expanded her focus. Through her UFW work, she became an advocate for Latinos. In time she joined the struggle for women's rights, too.

Many groups of Americans experienced discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these, like farmworkers, were mounting their campaigns for equal rights while the black civil rights movement was growing in the South. That movement inspired many groups to carry on with their own struggles.

This chapter continues the story of the civil rights movement as it expanded to include more Americans. Following the example of African Americans, other groups—including women, Latinos, American Indians, and Asian Americans—fought for their rights. Disabled, gay, and older Americans began to organize for equal treatment, too.



Dolores Huerta helped to found the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez and other labor activists in the late 1960s. She became a powerful advocate for workers' rights.

## 47.2 Women Demand Equality

Like Dolores Huerta, many women who fought for civil rights and workers' rights later became active in the movement for women's rights. More than a century before, in the 1830s and 1840s, many women abolitionists had followed a similar path. In fighting to end slavery, they had come to recognize their own status as second-class citizens. These early advocates of women's rights held the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention and launched the women's suffrage movement. In the same way, many women who were inspired by the black civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s went on to forge the women's movement.

**One Half of America** Although women make up half the American population, in the early 1960s many women felt they were being treated like a minority and denied their rights. They wanted equal opportunity and the same rights as men.

In 1963, author Betty Friedan exposed the unhappiness of many middle-class women in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. She described women who had the things they thought they wanted—marriage, home, family—but were still dissatisfied. As Friedan wrote, the typical housewife wanted something more:

As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this all?”

—Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963

Many middle-class wives had attended college, but few had entered professions. Although the number of women in the workforce was rising, most held what were considered to be “women’s jobs.” They were secretaries or bank tellers, for example, while men might work as lawyers, doctors, or business executives. Because they held lower-status jobs, they earned less than men. In 1965, they made only about 60 cents for every dollar men earned. Even women in higher positions were paid less than male colleagues. Although the gap has narrowed, it remains significant. In 2004, women earned about 76 cents for every

### Highlights of the Struggle for Women's Rights

**1845** Seneca Falls Convention is held, launching the women's rights movement.

**1848** At the Seneca Falls Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton reads the Declaration of Sentiments, which states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.”

**1865** The Thirteenth Amendment is ratified, abolishing slavery.

**1869** The National Woman Suffrage Association is founded.

**1885** The National American Woman Suffrage Association is founded.

**1889** Stanton and Susan B. Anthony found the National Woman's Suffrage Association and campaign for a constitutional amendment for women's suffrage.

**1905** The National American Woman Suffrage Association is renamed the National Woman's Party.

**1920** The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified, giving women the right to vote.

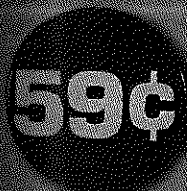
dollar men earned. Meanwhile, relatively few women have been promoted to upper management. The invisible barrier to women's professional advancement has been called the **glass ceiling**. This term has also been applied to minorities.

**Organizing for Action** In the early 1960s, Congress passed two laws banning sex discrimination, but neither had much impact. The first, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, outlawed "wage differentials based on sex" in industries that produced goods for commerce. This law only affected jobs that were nearly identical, however. Since women and men generally did different types of work, the law had little effect on women's wages. The second law, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, also prohibited discrimination based on sex. This law set an important precedent, but it brought few immediate benefits for women.

To advance women's rights, Betty Friedan and other activists formed the **National Organization for Women (NOW)** in 1966. This group pledged "to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society." NOW was made up mostly of middle-aged, middle-class women. Like the more moderate organizations of the civil rights movement, NOW placed much of its focus on legal reforms and workforce discrimination, demanding equal opportunity for women.

On August 26, 1970, NOW organized the Women's Strike for Equality. The date marked the 50th anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. The strikers urged women not to do their usual domestic tasks that day. Their slogan was, "Don't iron while the strike is hot." That day, 50,000 women marched in New York City. Altogether, more than 100,000 people around the country took part in the strike, making it the largest action for women's rights in American history.

A more radical branch of the women's movement arose in the late 1960s. It was made up of younger women who had worked in the civil rights movement. They coined the term **sexism** to describe oppression of women in the workplace and home. They used the term **women's liberation** to describe their goal. They wanted to emancipate women from customs and laws that kept them subordinate to men. Many of these ideas became part of the broader women's movement.

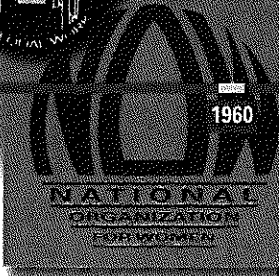


1945

1945 The number of women in the workforce is rising, but women are still earning substantially less than men.



1966 Betty Friedan and others form the National Organization for Women and launch the modern-day women's liberation movement.



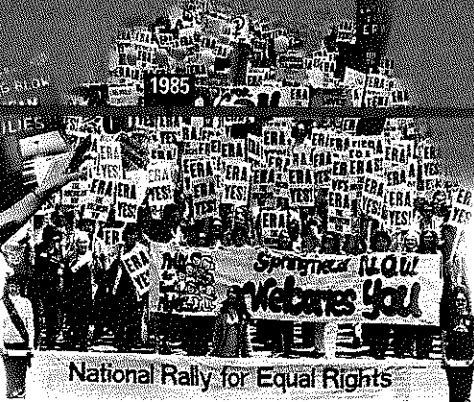
1960

1965

1966



1972 The equal rights amendment is passed by Congress, yet fails to gain the approval of three-fourths of the states. Supporters continue to rally for its approval into the 21st century.



1985

2005

National Rally for Equal Rights



Phyllis Schlafly was a key leader of the opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. She argued that the ERA would devalue traditional roles for women and harm the American family. Some opponents also feared that women would have to serve in the military and take on other roles normally associated with men.

Despite the growing prominence of the women's movement, many Americans at the time opposed feminism, the movement for women's equality. They believed that feminism posed a threat to traditional values and would undermine marriage and weaken the American family. They claimed that traditional roles for women gave them a strong and respected place in society and argued that feminists wanted to make women more like men.

**Working for Equal Rights** One of the main goals of the women's movement was to win passage of the equal rights amendment to the Constitution, or ERA, which stated that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." The ERA had been submitted to every session of Congress since 1923. In 1972, for the first time, Congress passed the ERA and sent it to the states to be ratified.

At first it seemed certain that three fourths of the states would ratify the ERA and it would become law. But the amendment provoked a backlash. Some Americans feared that the ERA would devalue the roles of mother and homemaker. Some also believed it would lead to requiring women to serve in the military. As a result, the ERA failed to achieve ratification by the 1982 deadline set by Congress, falling 3 states short of the required 38 states.

Despite that loss, women's efforts to attain equal rights succeeded on many fronts. Some clear examples came in education. Between 1969 and 1973, the number of women law students nearly quadrupled, while the number of women medical students almost doubled. By 1997, women made up the majority of college students and earned the majority of master's degrees. Women's opportunities in education were enhanced by federal legislation. A law called Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in any school program receiving federal funds, including school athletics.

**The Fight over Birth Control and Abortion** The struggle for women's rights also focused on birth control and abortion. Many feminists believed that to control their lives, women must be able to control when, or if, they had children.

The development of the birth control pill was a major step in this direction. In 1960, the Food and Drug Administration approved the pill, and by 1965, five million women were using it. The pill had a tremendous impact on women's lives, and on society, by allowing women greater control over reproduction.

Some Americans disapproved of the pill. They favored abstinence as a form of birth control and argued that family-planning centers should not advise couples on other methods to avoid pregnancy. But in 1965, the Supreme Court ruled that married couples had a "right to privacy in marital relations" that included access to counseling on birth control, including use of the pill.

Several years later, the Supreme Court extended this right of privacy to the question of abortion. In 1973, the Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that the "right of privacy . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." Feminists considered this ruling a major advance in the struggle for women's civil rights, but the ruling has remained controversial. Opponents argue that life begins at conception and see abortion as murder. Supporters say women have the right to control their bodies and that abortion should remain legal.

### 473 Latinos Organize to Be Heard

In 1967, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales published a poem called “Yo Soy Joaquin” (“I Am Joaquin”). The poem describes the difficulty of retaining a Mexican identity while living in American society. Part of the poem reads,

I am Joaquin . . .  
lost in a world of confusion,  
caught up in the whirl of a  
gringo society, confused by the rules,  
scorned by attitudes,  
suppressed by manipulation,  
and destroyed by modern society.

—Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, “I Am Joaquin,” 1967

For many Latinos, the poem struck a chord. They saw it as a cultural and political statement, and it became a rallying cry for Latino rights.

Gonzales was one of many Spanish-speaking Americans who cried out for equal rights in the 1960s. As the civil rights movement expanded around the country, Latinos also lent their voices to the struggle for equality.

**Diverse People Speaking One Language** Latinos, or Hispanics, are a diverse group. They include Mexican Americans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and people with origins in Central and South America. Some were born in the United States while others migrated here. Despite their different backgrounds, however, most share some similar cultural traits, including the Spanish language.

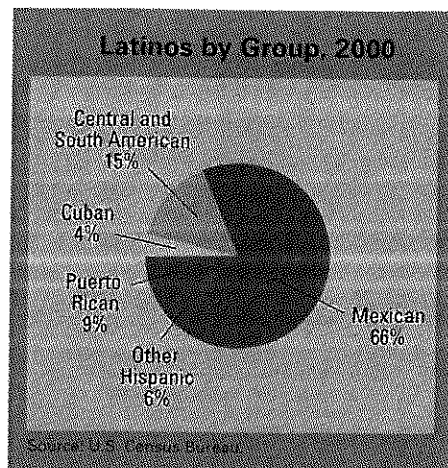
In the 1960s, Latinos also faced similar issues. For example, they often experienced employment discrimination. Many had low-wage jobs with few benefits. Many also struggled with language problems in school, where most classes were taught in English.

At the same time, the various Latino groups had their own distinct concerns and perspectives. In the mid-1960s, many Mexican Americans began to identify themselves as Chicanos. This term had originally been used as an insult, but young Mexican Americans embraced the name as an expression of pride in their culture.

Cuban Americans in the 1960s differed in many ways from Mexican Americans. Most lived in Florida, and they tended to be better educated and more affluent than other Latino groups. Most had fled their homeland after the Cuban Revolution and were recent arrivals in the United States.

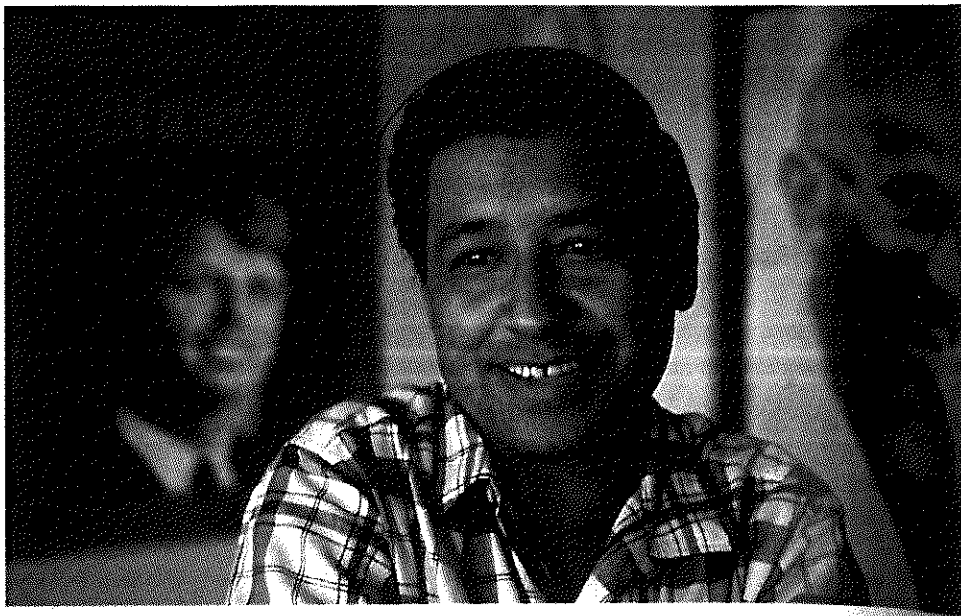
Puerto Ricans were already U.S. citizens when they came to the mainland because Puerto Rico is an American commonwealth, an unincorporated territory of the United States. However, they suffered some of the same injustices as other Spanish speakers. They sought better education and improved conditions in the cities where they lived. They also wanted to end discrimination.

**Boycotting Grapes for Recognition** One of the most notable campaigns for Latino rights in the 1960s was the farmworker struggle in California. Cesar Chavez, a farmworker born in Arizona, was one of the principal leaders of this effort to improve the lives of migrant workers.



People of Mexican ancestry make up the largest share of the U.S. Latino population. In 2000, about two thirds of all Latinos in the country fell into this group. “Other Hispanic” refers mainly to people with roots in Spain or the Dominican Republic.

Cesar Chavez was a major figure in the struggle for farmworkers' rights. Having grown up in a family of migrant workers, he understood the hardships they faced. A skilled organizer and leader, Chavez headed the United Farm Workers for many years until his death in 1993.



Chavez helped found the United Farm Workers, along with Dolores Huerta and other labor activists. The union was made up mostly of Mexican American migrant workers. In 1965, the union—then known as the National Farm Workers Association—joined a strike against grape growers. The strike, or “La Huelga,” lasted five years. During this time, Chavez organized a national boycott of table grapes that won widespread support. Finally, in 1970, grape growers agreed to a historic contract that granted most of the workers’ demands, including union recognition and higher wages and benefits.

Like Martin Luther King Jr., Chavez relied on nonviolence in the struggle for equal rights. Among other tactics, he used hunger strikes as a political tool. He fasted several times over the years to draw attention to the plight of farmworkers and to pressure employers to improve working conditions.

**La Raza: A People United** In the late 1960s, young Chicanos also began to organize a political movement called La Raza Unida, or “The People United.” They used the term *la raza*, meaning “the people” or “the race,” to identify themselves and connect with their roots in ancient Mexico. They claimed this heritage, particularly their links to the Aztec people, as a common bond among Chicanos. La Raza Unida became a political party in 1970 and ran candidates in state and local elections across the Southwest.

A key issue for Chicano activists was **bilingual education**, or teaching in two languages. In 1968, President Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act, legalizing instruction in languages other than English. The courts later ruled that schools must address the needs of non-English speakers, including teaching in students’ native languages. Spanish-speaking students continued to face discrimination, though. In 1968 and 1969, Chicano students throughout the Southwest boycotted classes to protest poor education in their schools.

During this time, the Brown Berets also fought for Chicano rights. Founded in East Los Angeles, this group modeled itself on the Black Panthers. It worked to improve housing and employment and instill pride in Chicano culture.

As Mexican Americans fought for civil rights, so, too, did other groups of Latinos. Gradually, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos began to find greater opportunity in American society.

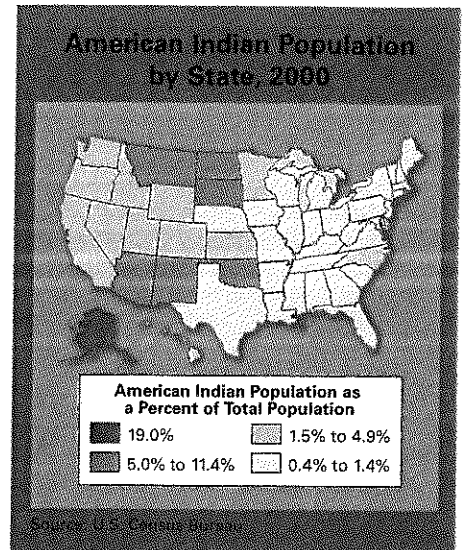
## 47.4 American Indians Seek Justice

In 1968, 10 percent of the population of Minneapolis was American Indian. However, Indians made up 70 percent of the prisoners in the city's jails. Local activists believed that this imbalance reflected police harassment of Indians. To fight for their rights, Indian activists formed the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**. For much of 1968, they monitored police radios and responded to calls that involved Indians, often arriving at the scene before the police. As a result, AIM prevented the unfounded arrests of many Indians. According to AIM, the number of Indians in jail in Minneapolis decreased by 60 percent that year.

**One People, Many Nations** Indians come from many tribes, which they often call nations. In the late 1960s, some Indian activists believed that the Indian nations had much in common, including a shared identity as native peoples. And although they lived in different ways and different places—some on reservations, others dispersed throughout society—they shared many of the same problems.

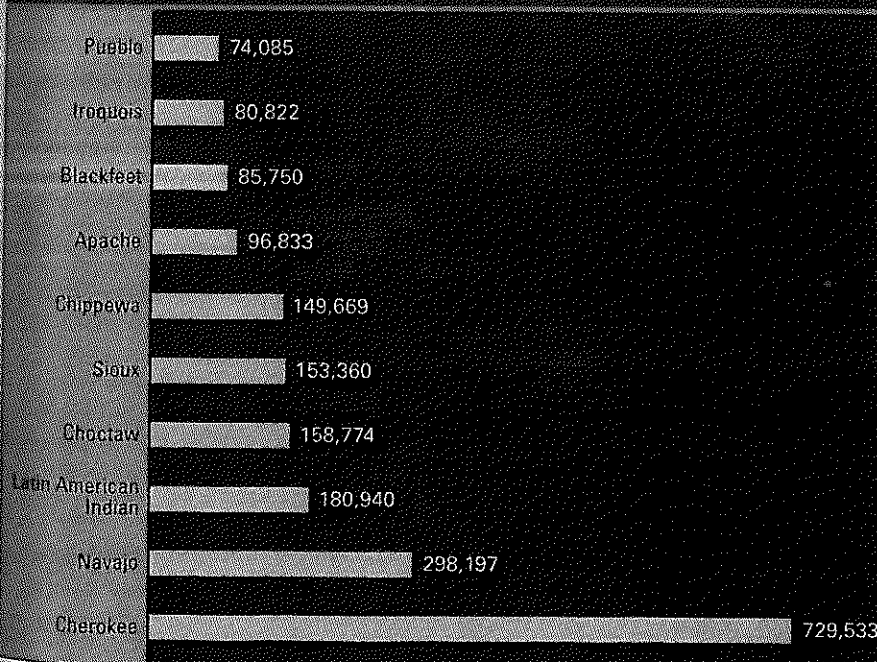
Most American Indians lived in poverty. They suffered greater economic hardship than any other ethnic group in the country. Unemployment was 10 times higher than the national average and was especially high on reservations. The average annual family income was \$1,000 less than for African Americans. Life expectancy was also much lower than the national average.

The federal government had tried to help American Indians, but with little success. In 1968, Congress passed the Indian Civil Rights Act. This law was designed to ensure equality for American Indians. It guaranteed Indians protection under the Constitution, while recognizing the authority of tribal laws. It had few concrete effects, though. In practice, American Indians still lacked equal rights and opportunity in American society, and many were losing patience.



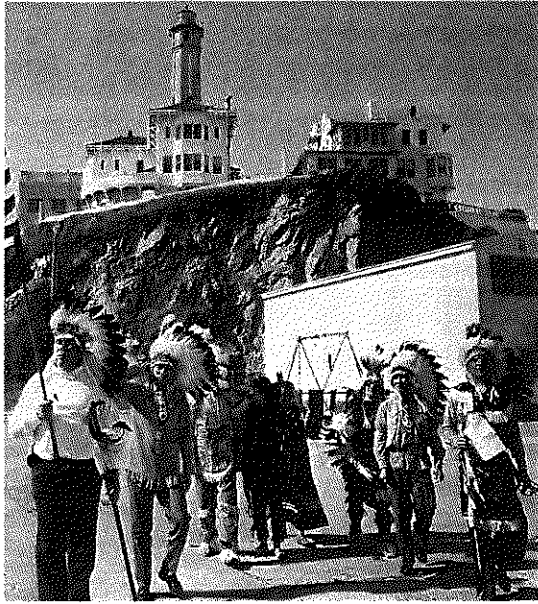
Most American Indians, including Alaska Natives, live in the western United States. As this map shows, the number of native peoples in each state, as a percentage of state population, varies considerably. Note that Alaska Natives made up nearly one fifth of that state's population in 2000.

### Ten Largest American Indian Tribes, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The 2000 census reported 2.5 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States, or 1.5% of the total population. These native peoples belonged to many different tribes, or nations. This graph shows population figures for the 10 largest tribes in 2000.



In November 1969, American Indians occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. They demanded Indian ownership of the island and funding for an Indian university and cultural center. The occupation lasted until June 10, 1971.

**Radicals Make the Cause Known** On November 20, 1969, eighty-nine Indians took over Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, occupying the island's deserted prison. The group called themselves Indians of All Tribes. Their Alcatraz Proclamation declared, "We . . . reclaim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery." In addition to the land, the group demanded that the government fund cultural and educational centers.

The U.S. government rejected the demands. But for the Indian rights movement, also called Red Power, the occupation was a success. As one participant said, "We got back our worth, our pride, our dignity, our humanity." The Indians occupied Alcatraz for more than a year and a half.

American Indians took other actions in their struggle for equality. In 1972, AIM led an event called the Trail of Broken Treaties. A caravan of protesters left the West Coast and traveled to Washington, D.C., to draw attention to Indian concerns. They brought a 20-point proposal to present to the government. The proposal focused on restoring federal recognition of Indian tribes and Indian control on reservations. It also sought protection for Indian cultures and religions.

When the caravan arrived in Washington, some protesters occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. After six days, they agreed to leave, on the condition that no one be prosecuted and that the federal government agree to respond to the 20 points. After studying the AIM document, however, the Nixon administration rejected its demands.

Tensions increased in February 1973, when AIM protesters occupied the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the site of an 1890 massacre of American Indians. They called for changes in the governing of reservations. They also demanded that the U.S. government honor the Indian treaties it had signed over the years. After 70 days, the FBI stormed the site. Two Indians were killed, and one federal marshal was seriously injured.

In 1978, American Indian activists continued their actions with a five-month protest they called the Longest Walk. The walk started in San Francisco and ended in Washington, D.C. Its purpose was to bring attention to the many times American Indians had been forced off their land.

**Courts and Legislation Bring Victories** Although the actions of groups like AIM failed to bring dramatic improvements in the lives of most American Indians, they did draw attention to Indian rights and help promote some reforms. In 1975, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. The law provided more federal money for Indian education. It gave Indians more control over reservations. It also placed more American Indians in jobs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Indian tribes also won some legal victories. The government returned control of Blue Lake in New Mexico to the Taos Pueblo tribe, which considers the site sacred. Congress also passed the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act in 1971. The law turned 40 million acres of land over to Alaska Natives. In 1980, Penobscot and Passamaquoddy Indians in Maine were awarded \$81.5 million in exchange for giving up claims to their land. They used some of the money to buy back 300,000 acres. These victories raised hopes for a better life for American Indians.



## 4.7.5 Asian Americans Raise Their Voices

Asian Americans also joined the broad movement for civil rights in the 1960s. In fact, the farmworkers' strike against California grape growers was launched by Asian American activists. Larry Itliong, one of the leaders of a largely Filipino farmworkers' union, played a key role in this strike. He and other Filipino activists also helped form the United Farm Workers. They were part of a growing movement for Asian American rights.

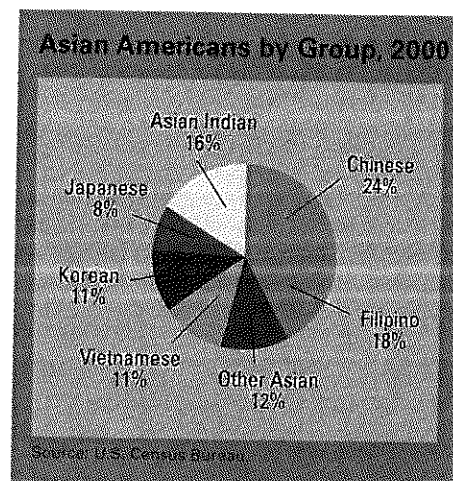
**The "Model Minority"** Like Latinos, Asian Americans are a diverse group. They have ties by birth or culture to the countries of eastern and southern Asia. Asian groups with a longstanding history in the United States include Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans.

Starting in the 1870s, the U.S. government set limits on Asian immigration. The Immigration Act of 1965 removed those limits, and the number of Asian immigrants increased greatly. In recent decades, people from such countries as India, Vietnam, and Cambodia have added even more diversity to the Asian American population.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, many Asian Americans thrived in the United States. They were sometimes called the "model minority" because they were seen as working hard and succeeding without protesting or making demands. Some people even pointed to their progress as proof that ethnic differences were no barrier to success in American society. But these arguments, along with the "model minority" label, aroused resentment among other minorities, who sometimes felt that Asian Americans received favorable treatment.

The perceived success of Asian Americans was only partly true. Although data from 1980 show that many Asian Americans earned salaries higher than the national average, more than half lived in just three states: New York, California, and Hawaii. These states have a very high cost of living, a measure that includes the price of food, housing, and other essentials. People had to earn more to live in those states. Also, many Asian American households include several adult wage earners, a fact that was reflected in higher family incomes.

Furthermore, although many Asian Americans had attended college and entered professions, others had not. Many Asian immigrants had low-paying jobs, limited English language skills, and little education. Like other minorities, they faced discrimination because they were not white.



Chinese Americans have traditionally been the largest Asian group in the United States. As this graph shows, that was still the case in 2000. Since the 1960s, however, immigrants from other parts of Asia have been arriving in increasing numbers. As a result, Asian Indians, Vietnamese, and others are making up a growing share of the Asian American population.



Although Asian Americans live throughout the United States, many are concentrated in traditional ethnic neighborhoods. New York City's Chinatown, pictured here, is the largest Chinese enclave in the Western Hemisphere. In recent years, it has also become home to other Asian groups, including Burmese, Filipinos, and Vietnamese.

**College Students Unite to Be Heard** Asian American students began to call for equal rights in the 1960s. On some college campuses, student activists organized a political movement. Their stated aim was to end racial oppression “through the power of a consolidated yellow people.” Yellow Power became their slogan.

In 1968 and 1969, Asian American students at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley helped organize student strikes. They wanted more minority participation in university affairs. They also called for academic programs that focused on ethnic and racial issues. At the time, minority perspectives played little role in university education.

Their efforts succeeded. In 1969, San Francisco State started the country’s first school of ethnic studies. Between 1968 and 1973, many other colleges and universities also set up Asian American studies programs.

These new programs had a great impact on students. Helen Zia, a Chinese American, recalled, “In college, I learned that I was an Asian American. I learned that I didn’t have to call myself Oriental like a rug. It was like a light bulb going off.” What Zia and many others learned about their heritage gave them a new understanding of their identity and rights in American society.

**Fighting for Internment Reparations** One key battle for Asian American rights focused on Japanese American internment during World War II. Executive Order 9066 had forced many into internment camps, and the Supreme Court’s 1944 ruling in *Korematsu v. United States* had upheld the order. Thirty years later, many people began to demand reparations for this historic injustice.

In the 1970s, a younger generation of Japanese Americans inspired by the Black Power movement spoke out against the discrimination their families had suffered. In 1978, a group in Seattle held the first Day of Remembrance. They shared family stories and discussed the hardships of internment. One organizer described the event as a “way to reclaim our past and make it our own.” The Day of Remembrance is now observed in other cities, too.

Meanwhile, the **Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)**, which was formed in 1929 to defend the rights of Japanese Americans, sought legal remedy. In 1978, it began to pursue compensation for the suffering in the internment camps. In 1988, Congress finally apologized for the internment. It also authorized payment of \$20,000 to each survivor. Although the sum was relatively small compared to individual losses, this official response helped to make up for a historic wrong.

In 1978, Japanese Americans began seeking reparations for their internment during World War II. Three key activists in this effort were Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi (shown here, left to right). Each had fought the internment policy in the courts during the 1940s. In 1988, the government apologized and offered \$20,000 to each survivor.



## 476 More Groups Seek Civil Rights

In 1962, the University of California at Berkeley reluctantly admitted Ed Roberts as a student. Roberts had a severe **disability**, an impairment that limited his daily activities. Polio had left him paralyzed, and he needed a respirator to breathe. California's vocational rehabilitation agency had told Roberts that he would be too disabled to work. But Roberts surprised everyone. He fulfilled his degree requirements and graduated from UC Berkeley.

As a disability-rights activist, Roberts changed the way many Americans viewed people with disabilities. He helped disabled people gain the right to participate in life at the university. His achievements encouraged other disability activists around the country.

Many disabled Americans were inspired by the African American civil rights movement. So, too, were other groups, including gay Americans and older Americans. Starting in the 1960s, these groups made their own claims for equal rights.

**Disabled Americans Demand Equal Access to Opportunities** Disabilities can be both physical and mental. Physical disabilities include blindness, deafness, and impaired movement. Mental disabilities include illnesses like bipolar disorder. According to the 2000 census, nearly 20 percent of Americans over the age of five have some type of disability. But this large population has often been subject to discrimination.

The first groups of disabled Americans to fight for their rights were deaf and blind people. Decades before the civil rights movement, they set up organizations to provide education and other services to those who needed them. They also asserted that blind and deaf people had a right to use their own languages: braille and American Sign Language.

In the early 1970s, after graduating from UC Berkeley, Ed Roberts started a program to make it easier for physically disabled students to attend the university. He and fellow activists pressed the school to improve **accessibility** on campus, making it easier for the physically disabled to enter university facilities. Ramps and curb cuts, for example, made the campus more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

In 1973, Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act, which some supporters compared to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This law stated,

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability . . . shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

— Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973

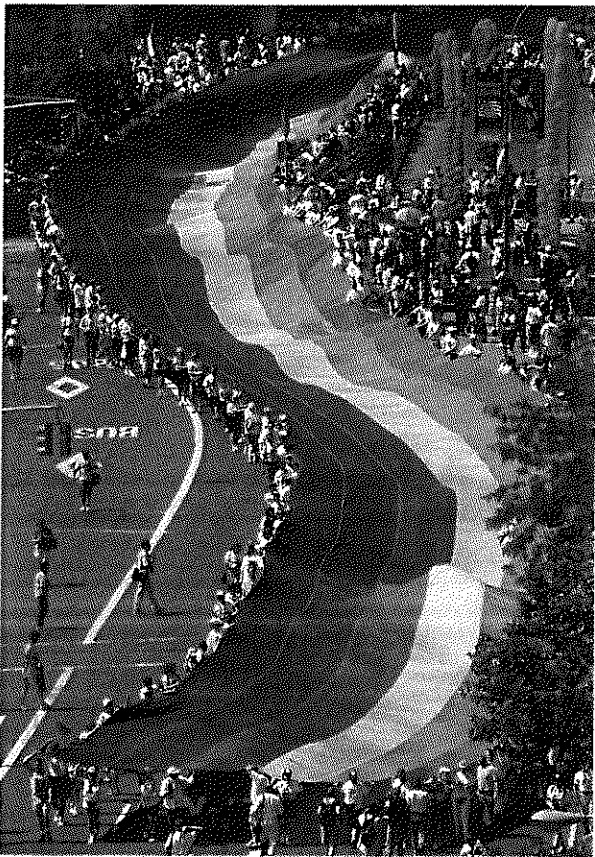


In the 1970s, disability-rights activists began to demand equal rights and opportunity. Protesters blocked doorways and demonstrated at the Capitol building. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act brought major reforms.

The law granted disabled people the same access to federally funded programs as other Americans. It took four years, however, for government officials to decide how to enforce the law. They finally did so in 1977 after protesters, many in wheelchairs, took over the offices of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C.

Equal access applied to children, too. In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law set a new standard for educating disabled children. It said that these students must be in “the least restrictive environment possible.” Wherever possible, students with disabilities were to be **mainstreamed**, or included in classrooms with nondisabled students.

The most important civil rights victory for disabled Americans came years later. In 1990, Congress passed the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. The ADA called for better public access for people with disabilities. Changes included braille signs on elevators and accessible public transportation. The ADA has also improved education for disabled children. Equal access to employment remains a problem, however. About 30 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed.



Every year, activists hold gay pride marches to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall riots of 1969. Stonewall is considered the start of the gay rights movement. The rainbow flag is a symbol of gay and lesbian community pride.

**Gay Americans Stand Up for Their Rights** Gay men and lesbians also began to demand equal rights in the 1960s. At the time, the police often harassed gay men and lesbians in public places. An employee could be fired for being gay or even for being perceived as gay. Many gays and lesbians felt they had to hide their sexual orientation to avoid discrimination.

A gay rights movement had begun to emerge in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the late 1960s, gay rights activists in Philadelphia were holding an annual Fourth of July protest. Neatly dressed gays and lesbians gathered at Independence Hall, where the Constitution was signed. They pointed out to visitors that gay Americans did not enjoy many of the rights that most Americans took for granted.

It was not until the **Stonewall riots**, however, that the gay pride movement became highly visible. On June 27, 1969, New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in the neighborhood of Greenwich Village. New York outlawed homosexuality at the time, and police raids were common. That night, however, the customers at the Stonewall fought back. Riots broke out and lasted for hours. The Stonewall riots marked the beginning of the gay rights movement. Since then, the anniversary of Stonewall has prompted annual gay pride events in cities around the world.

After Stonewall, more Americans began to join the gay rights movement. In March 1973, a group of parents with gay sons and daughters began meeting in New York. By 1980, the group—now known as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, or PFLAG—had members around the country.

Another key event in the history of gay rights occurred in 1977, when Harvey Milk was elected to the board of supervisors in San Francisco. Milk was the first openly gay candidate to win office in a major American city. Eleven months later, however, Milk was assassinated by a former colleague.

**Older Americans Promote Productive Aging** Older Americans also joined the civil rights struggle. In 1972, Maggie Kuhn and some fellow retirees in Philadelphia formed the **Gray Panthers**. This group spoke out against unfair treatment of older Americans. The Gray Panthers called this treatment **ageism**, or discrimination against people on the basis of age.

Other groups had formed earlier to advocate for older Americans. The largest was the American Association of Retired Persons, founded by Ethel Percy Andrus in 1958. Andrus formed AARP to help retirees get health insurance. At the time, many older Americans had no health coverage, either because it was too expensive or because private insurance companies would not insure them. They were considered too much of a risk because of their age and potential health problems.

AARP lobbied for government health insurance. In 1965, Congress responded by establishing Medicare. This program provided hospital insurance for people ages 65 and over. It also helped pay prescription drug costs and other medical expenses for seniors.

Older workers also complained about discrimination in the workplace. To remedy this problem, Congress passed the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. This law made it illegal for employers to use age as a factor in hiring or promotion. In 1978, the Gray Panthers helped persuade Congress to push back the required retirement age from 65 to 70. Seniors could now work longer and continue to enjoy the benefits of employment.



The Gray Panthers fought age-based discrimination. Most of the Panthers, like cofounder Maggie Kuhn (above), were older Americans, but they believed that many young people suffered from discrimination, too.

## Summary

**The civil rights movement inspired many Americans to stand up for their rights. During the 1960s and 1970s, various groups sought equal treatment under the law and in society.**

**Women** The National Organization for Women (NOW) and other feminist groups worked for women's rights. They wanted reforms to ensure greater equality and opportunity for women.

**Latinos** Various groups of Latinos struggled for their rights and identity in American society. The United Farm Workers (UFW) organized migrant farmworkers and helped increase their wages and benefits. The 1968 Bilingual Education Act required public schools to provide bilingual instruction.

**American Indians** The American Indian Movement (AIM) protested unfair treatment of American Indians. By the mid-1970s, some tribes had won payment for lost lands.

**Asian Americans** Asian American students asked for university programs in ethnic studies. The Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL) sought compensation for internment during World War II.

**Other groups** Disabled Americans fought for equal access and won passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. After the Stonewall riots, gay Americans gained greater visibility in their fight for equal rights. Older Americans countered ageism by working through such groups as the Gray Panthers.