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Role of women during the Civil right movement

During the 20th century, African American women fought for civil rights. They spoke out against racism and became the backbone of the modern Civil Rights Movement. They established women's clubs to improve conditions for African Americans. African American women were the critical mass, the grassroots leaders challenging America to embrace justice and equality for all. Major key playing organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were all formed with each organisation having female founding member's.

Hundreds of African American women organized and led grassroots efforts during the Civil Rights Movement. They formed a composite image of the new black woman leadership. Some were college-educated, club women, while others were grassroots organizers. Some were young adults displeased with the conditions of black, poor, and working class people, while others were middle age women whose lives were testaments of struggle and survival.

A simple act of defiance by a woman in 1955 ignited the modern Civil Rights Movement, earning Rosa Parks(1913-2005) the title "Mother of the civil rights movement." As a seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama and an active member of the local NAACP organisation, Parks refused to give up her seat in the assigned section for blacks in the bus to a white man. Parks' actions led to her immediate arrest. Her calculated decision to remain seated was the culmination of decades of municipal abuses. Her arrest triggered a 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system. The Women's Political Council, an organization of black women active in anti-segregation activities and politics, provided the hands, feet, and voice of the Montgomery bus boycott. This protest was successful as on June 5, 1956 a Montgomery federal court ruled that any law requiring racially segregated seating on buses violated the [14th Amendment](#) to the U.S. [Constitution](#). Montgomery's buses were integrated on December 21, 1956 which could not have been possible without boycotts sparked off by a woman.

As momentum built, black women became involved in all aspects of protest during the 1950s and 60s. Women such as Dorothy Height(1912-2010) and Daisy Bates (1914-1999) played a crucial role in school desegregation. Height focused on improving the circumstances of and opportunities for African-American women. In the 1950s she pressured President Eisenhower to more aggressively pursue school desegregation. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision decreed school segregation unconstitutional, yet the ruling was unenforced. Under Daisy Bates, the NAACP sued the Little Rock school board, and in 1957 Bates recruited nine students to integrate the all-white Central High School. Under the protection of the federal troops, with the Bates' home serving as their headquarters The Little Rock Nine successfully integrated the school this could not have been possible without the involvement of Heights and Bates.

Ruby Hurley(1909-1980) was known as the "queen of civil rights". She was on the front lines of the modern Civil Rights Movement as an NAACP executive and organized youth councils and college chapters, building a base of 25,000 youth members. NAACP Youth Council members launched the 1960s sit-in movement in Tennessee protesting against segregated facilities, these movements put pressure on the mayor, Ben West, who came out publically in the support of the principle of desegregated facilities. This movement proved successful as facilities were desegregated and in 1964 the civil rights act was passed which prohibited discrimination on the basis of **race**, color, religion, sex or national origin thus proving the value of the foundation Hurley laid down.

Black people in Selma were for many years unsuccessful in registering as voters were often prevented by force. A black woman named Amelia Boynton Robinson (1911-2015) brought Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to Selma, Alabama to campaign for voting rights. The team set up headquarters in Robinson's home to plan a protest march from Selma to Montgomery. On March 7, 1965, 600 marchers were violently attacked by policemen with tear gas while crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in an event that became known as "Bloody Sunday". Robinson was beaten unconscious. Her bloody image published in newspaper photos drew national outrage and attention to the cause. A week after Bloody Sunday, on March 15, 1965, President Johnson delivered a nationwide address in which he declared that "All Americans must have the privileges of citizenship regardless of race." Johnson informed the nation that he was sending a new voting rights bill to Congress, and he urged Congress to vote the bill into law. Congress complied, and President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on August 6, 1965. Without the involvement of Amelia Robinson African Americans would not have been able to register to vote.

Conclusion:

Women were at the forefront of transformation in America during the civil rights movement, yet their contributions are often under-rated. Civil rights activism involved a diversity of approaches, from bringing lawsuits in court, to lobbying the federal government, to mass direct action, to black power. The efforts of civil rights activists resulted in many substantial victories, but also met with the fierce opposition of white supremacists. The Civil rights movement could not have been possible without the role played by the women of America.

African American women lobbied strongly for their passage Two significant laws, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, were among the Civil Rights Movement's most important achievements which could not have been achieved without the role played by women.