

TITLE: WHAT WERE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE  
QUIET REVOLUTION OF CANADA AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF THE  
U.S.?

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Total Word Count: 2168

Canada's Quiet Revolution occurred between 1960 and 1970, while the primary part of the United States' Civil Rights Movement that will be analyzed occurred between 1954 and 1968, with some events occurring as early as 1919. The Quiet Revolution was a period of breaking away from the Catholic Church and questioning of social order implemented by previous national leaders, which had allowed for increased rights of French Canadian citizens. The American Civil Rights Movement involved the goal of ending racial inequality and segregation, but began as a general civil resistance characterized by nonviolent protests and civil disobedience. Within the investigation, the question analyzed is what were the similarities and differences between the Quiet Revolution of Canada and the Civil Rights Movement of the United States? "The Quiet Revolution"<sup>1</sup>, crafted by Claude Bélanger, is significant to examining the reasons for social change in Quebec during this period and while involving short excerpts from speakers of the era, develops a biographical secondary account of the occurrence. "The Civil Rights Movement,"<sup>2</sup> by Jamie J. Wilson, is a biography that breaks down the issues within the American movement through different accounts, while including the generalized accounts as well.

"The Quiet Revolution"<sup>3</sup> by Claude Bélanger is a published historical source through Marianopolis College in Canada. Bélanger graduated from the University of Ottawa and later worked at historical institutes within Canada and France, until he became a history teacher at Marianopolis College in Montreal<sup>4</sup>. The text is informational and focuses on the issues

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<sup>1</sup> Bélanger, Claude. "The Quiet Revolution." *Quebec History*, August 23, 2000. Accessed March 30, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Jamie Jaywann. *Civil Rights Movement*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Bélanger, Claude. "The Quiet Revolution." *Quebec History*, August 23, 2000. Accessed March 30, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> "Claude Belanger." Marianopolis College. 2004. Accessed March 20, 2016.

surrounding the causes and events within the Quiet Revolution, and the purpose is to educate the population in depth about the social movement within Canada. The series of short biographies explores the reasoning behind the drastic upheaval in society, and also proposes ways that Canadian citizens questioned the government and leaders. One value is that it provides both a more generalized and focused view on specific events, mentioning names and groups of people influenced by the Quiet Revolution. One limitation is that the side of the government is not fully explored, but only the side of the rebels is explored. Another limitation is that was not written during the era, however a value is that it uses direct quotes from era-based involved citizens. The text is relatively current, so modern events and other social movements could have potentially affected the information as well.

“The Civil Rights Movement”<sup>5</sup> by Jamie J. Wilson, a professor at Salem State University, was published in 2013 through Greenwood Press<sup>6</sup>. The text is informational and analyzes the Civil Rights Movement as a whole, including explanation as to why black citizens were treated unfairly, their acts towards the country, and changes made. The purpose of the biographical text is to educate the population on the Civil Rights Movement within the United States, and about the multiple influences surrounding the movement. The biography includes different views of previous slaves, explanation of treatment, and how the constitution played a role in the movement. One value is that the subjects examined are not isolated to one specific city in America, but the entire country, while another value is that the text is modern and was not written during the era. Since it was not era-based, there are increased outside perspectives, while many exterior studies and references are included which increases its importance.

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson, Jamie Jaywann. *Civil Rights Movement*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> "Jamie J Wilson." Salem State University: Faculty. Accessed March 20, 2016.

The Silent Revolution was a time of social change within Canada, and specifically within Quebec, however the situation influenced the country. Canada was stuck initially in a state of national conflict lead by Maurice Duplessis and the Union Nationale, was stressed the need of the church, sense of anti-unions, and issues with minimum wage<sup>7</sup>. Due to extreme vocal criticism of the Union Nationale, the liberals and Jean Lesage replaced Duplessis, allowing for a more tolerant and accepting province to develop<sup>8</sup>. This replacement, however, only occurred through the criticism by the people and over-powering of the election. The people at this time were considered the young baby boomers that did not agree with the values of their elders. Taking ideas from their American counterparts, the rebellion of the Quiet Revolution began with a rapid expansion on university campuses, which “provided an ideal spawning ground for youthful rebellion”<sup>9</sup>. As America proposed civil rights, and preached equality for all races and people, the French-Canadian youth identified with Pierre Vallière’s *White Niggers of America*, which allowed for youthful idealism and provided ideas of protest. The youth in this Canadian sector developed the idea of socialism within the country, which exposed issues with the current system of government, but did not propose new ideas. With different levels of extremes, students of universities hosted student protests that fed social change<sup>10</sup>. The Quiet Revolution was an act of nationalism to equalize Quebec as a province, and challenged national unity within

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<sup>7</sup> Bélanger, Claude. "The Quiet Revolution." *Quebec History*, August 23, 2000. Accessed March 30, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> "Canada A Country by Consent: The Quiet Revolution: The Lesage Government." *Canada A Country by Consent: The Quiet Revolution: The Lesage Government*. Accessed March 20, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Bumsted, J. M. *A History of the Peoples of Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Bumsted, J. M. *A History of the Peoples of Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Canada<sup>11</sup>. French Canadians within Quebec were mistreated and were limited socially and economically, but attempted to find social equality through protest and government changes<sup>12</sup>.

In contrast to the Silent Revolution, the African American Civil Rights Movement within the United States involved the entire country, and was focused on providing the this segment of the population with equal rights. Through different events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the creation of the NAACP, the movement was primarily fought through silent protests and no violence.<sup>13</sup> Leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks encouraged, pursued, and advocated for the equality of African Americans through anti-violence and silent protests. The movement began and stemmed from the mistreatment of the race during the times of slavery within the United States, and continued to cause frustration as African Americans were not allowed to use the same public locations as whites, and were not allowed to vote amongst other things<sup>14</sup>. Citizens pursued bus boycotts, silent picket lines, and speeches along with discussions to prevent the inequality within the country.

The 1960s was a time of change in the world, one where new solutions and methods were used to solve problems, and people gained more of a voice within society. With previous social revolutions and movements, the citizens did not have a voice and were overpowered, such as in the French Revolution or Mexican Revolution, where the movements were based on the ideals of the government more than the people. As time altered the era, both the United States and Canada experienced social movements by the people for the people. These movements allowed

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<sup>11</sup> Bélanger, Claude. "The Quiet Revolution." *Quebec History*, August 23, 2000. Accessed March 30, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Riendeau, Roger E. *A Brief History of Canada*. New York: Facts On File, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> National Humanities Center. "The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story." *The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story*, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center. Accessed March 20, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, Jamie Jaywann. *Civil Rights Movement*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013.

for permanent change to be proposed affecting the entire country, however the South within the United States was the primary focus, and Quebec was the primary location within Canada of these revolutions. While considering the two events, the calibers of intensity, origin, and location limitations of the two social movements can be defined as more different than similar. Past violent revolutions, along with mistreatment of slaves, which was initially challenged by Abraham Lincoln<sup>15</sup>, encouraged Martin Luther King Jr. along with other revolutionaries to develop an environment of non-violence. The early non-violence movements and actions taken during the African American Civil Rights Movement in America ultimately influenced the Silent Revolution of Canada<sup>16</sup>. Overall, the primary similarities between the two movements was how they were non-violent uprisings by unpopular groups, and how violence occurred against them leading to potential retaliation with violence. In contrast, the largest difference between the two revolutions was the intensity, as the Civil Rights Movement involving the African Americans was extremely serious and intense all throughout America, and stemmed from slavery within the United States. The Silent Revolution, while also intense, was of a lesser caliber, and involved less of an influence to drive the actions since the people contributing towards the actions were younger<sup>17</sup>.

Both the African American Civil Rights Movement and the Quiet Revolution that affected Canada, specifically Quebec, involved non-violent uprisings by unpopular groups. In the United States, African Americans attempted to find equality after centuries of mistreatment,

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<sup>15</sup> United States. National Park Service. "Lincoln on Slavery." National Parks Service. Accessed March 20, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Bumsted, J. M. *A History of the Peoples of Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> "The Beginning of a New Era- the Quiet Revolution in Quebec." Musée Québécois De Culture Populaire. 2011. Accessed March 14, 2016.

and in Canada, the French-Canadians, along with the general population, sought equality and unity with a sense of nationalism through government reform. Both movements occurred throughout the 1960s, however they both also had stronger roots. The roots of the United States' movement were more lengthy however, as inequality had been present since colonial times and stemmed from mistreatment and slavery. As various groups against mistreatment were formed within the United States, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, and the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, the need for change grew<sup>18</sup>. In contrast, the Quiet Revolution began in response to anger against the United States and the Vietnam War in parts of the country, and mistreatment towards French-Canadian Citizens in other parts, however immigration of French-Canadian citizens to Canada occurred much later and treatment was of a different caliber. Historians such as Maurice Duplessis acknowledge the rejection of the past to be one of the largest reasons for the event to occur, which also occurred in the U.S. through the rejection of slavery. Both of these events involved groups of previously oppressed people uprising in hopes of finding equality, and included everyday citizens that fought the issues.

African American Civil Rights within the United States had been developing for a great deal of time prior to the 1960s through the issue of racial inequality. As the Civil Rights movement stemmed from slavery, the Quiet Revolution was due to relocation after the British took over the province, and the French-Canadians no longer had a strong place in society. Historians analyzing the Civil Rights Movement, however, have trouble determining a specific start date to the movement, and found also that McCarthyism was a large influence on limiting

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<sup>18</sup> National Humanities Center. "The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story." The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center. Accessed March 20, 2016.

the movement from occurring. As they felt threatened and angry at the situations at hand in America and Vietnam, the youth and the era's baby boomers began to protest for more equality and acceptance. With this protesting, however, citizens were not afraid to result to terrorism if need be. Due to events within Canada in October of 1970, the city of Quebec experienced the October Crisis where a manifesto was released to benefit the national liberation movement, and increased revolts and protests occurred, along with several assassinations, which eventually lead to police and army involvement<sup>19</sup>. Although the Quiet Revolution did have select moments of aggression and retaliation to the unfair government, the level of aggression and number of deaths and injuries was less overall than that of the African American Civil Rights Movement<sup>20</sup> since the entire nation was involved through various legislative pieces passed including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The larger scale of the movement allowed for greater changes within the nation in terms of voting rights and ridding of the segregation within the country, all widely publicized through photographs, newsreels, and recorded speeches<sup>21</sup>. Overall, the United States experienced a great deal of violence against the African Americans, however many African American citizens also believed that protecting their homes and churches through gun use and patrol was necessary, making the civil rights movement more violent for both sides of the issue<sup>22</sup>. Anthony J. Badger, a historian of the United States, provided a different opinion in that

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<sup>19</sup> "The Beginning of a New Era- the Quiet Revolution in Quebec." Musée Québécois De Culture Populaire. 2011. Accessed March 14, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Williams, Jerome. *African Americans in US History*. Place of Publication Not Identified: B & H Pub Group, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> National Humanities Center. "The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story." The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s, Freedom's Story, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center. Accessed March 20, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> "On Violence and Nonviolence: The Civil Rights Movement In Mississippi." Mississippi History Now. Accessed March 20, 2016.



armed self-defense was a necessary thought introduced in the south since it could make white extremists pause<sup>23</sup>

In our modern world, there are many opinions on history and what defines the significance of history. As I studied two very different, yet similar topics, I began to realize how important history is considering that one of my topics is known throughout the world as a country-altering event, while the other topic is not widely known. Regardless of their popularity, both events are historically relevant because they provided a social or governmental change for the country, and had the potential to affect other countries. Everyday citizens are the ones who decide which events are historically significant based on how popular and important they prove to be towards society, along with how relevant they are to current events. Within my investigation, I learned that regardless of the size of the event, it can still be historically significant because it allows for change to occur and influences to be present.

Due to little connection or previous analysis of this topic by historians, I was able to find more significant primary sources and was given the opportunity to be my own historian. Using the opinions of historians specific to an individual event, I was able to draw my own conclusions based on fact, similar to that of a historian, and I simply extended two ideas to find common ground. One challenge that I faced, similar to historians in general, is limited and difficult to find lesser known topics along with discovering conflicting information. Through thorough investigation of the Quiet Revolution, however, and reflecting on how I've been taught about the African American Civil Rights movement since elementary school, I was able to better draw

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<sup>23</sup> "Different Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement." The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Accessed April 20, 2016.

ideas between the two and create a comparison between two events that happened during similar time periods.

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