The Impact Of Civil Rights Movement In USA On Australia

The US civil rights movement in the 1960s successfully influenced change in Australia for Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander people. With this successful change in the law, Aboriginals and Torre Strait Islanders have the right to vote and the right to ownership of land. However, there are still many things that need to be attended to, to achieve the best possible outcome for Aboriginals to get the same rights as everyday Australians.

In the 1930's Rosa Parks became the first lady to be involved in the US civil rights movement and be actively involved in politics. Rosa was involved in training sessions for political activists and met and worked with other civil rights leaders to achieve the Montgomery Bus Boycott. She was sent to jail for deliberately protested segregation by refusing to stand up for a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Once she was released, she founded and organized a group and started the Montgomery bus Boycott. She peacefully protested segregation for one year with the US's first collective large demonstration. Rosa was prepared to go to prison again but fortunately, she didn't. She used the publicity (bipartisan support) from the bus boycott to successfully end segregation in the US. However, this did not end racism in the US but gave black people rights that they never had before. Rosa once said, "Nothing would be gained by violence, threats or belligerent attitudes".

After this civil rights movement influenced the US, Australian citizens heard what had gone on to end segregation. The Aboriginals and Torre Strait Islanders wanted to get on board and end segregation in Australia. One of Australia's Aboriginal civil rights activists was Charles Perkins. He was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from an Australian university. Charles was inspired by the bus rides in the US and then organized a bus trip around New South Wales for some of his students. These bus rides were called freedom rides. Charles's tour was used to draw attention to indigenous peoples' poor housing, health, and education. This bought attention to racial differences in Australia. After the bus ride, the students recognized the differences between themselves and Aboriginals. The students organized a peaceful protest about racism in Australia and poor working, living, and health conditions for the Aboriginals. Charles said "We are willing enough to stand here but you people have to do it from this week on. No one is going to stand up for you but yourselves. If you don't do it now, your kids will be in the same position as you are when they grow up." This helped the students on the freedom ride and many Australians realize that, if you don't do something to help yourself, then nothing is going to change for the rest of us. Therefore, the students held a peaceful protest for aboriginal to help them get their rights.

Aboriginal people didn't have equal rights with other Australians in the 1960s, as they weren't counted as citizens of their country. The indigenous had unfair working conditions and decided to demand equality and have the right to vote. After Charles's freedom ride students went on protest. This was protesting racism and poor conditions for the indigenous. A message that an Aboriginal activist expressed to Australians in 1965 was "the time has come that Australia can no longer tolerate legal racial discrimination against its indigenous people." After this statement was released many Australians wanted the constitution changed (bipartisan Support). The Aboriginals had to convince politicians to hold a referendum to change the constitution. Politicians said that Aboriginals had to get one hundred thousand signatures on a petition to

hold the referendum. After 10 years the hundred thousand signatures were achieved and a referendum was held. 90% of Australians voted yes to change the constitution this was the largest yes vote ever. By changing the constitution Aboriginals were given the right to the government to make laws for Aboriginals and the right to be included in census and voting. The referendum was so successful because it was organized from the freedom rides, it had bipartisan support and mass demonstrations from the peaceful protest held by the university students. This was a massive turning point for Aboriginals in Australian history.

I believe that if Rosa Parks didn’t successfully change civil rights in the US then Australia would not be where it is today. There would still be different rights for Australia’s indigenous and people would be treated differently. I know that Aboriginal and indigenous rights have come a long way from where they were and after the 1967 referendum massive changes were implemented so they could have equal rights. Charles Perkins was one of Australia’s first Aboriginals to open the eyes of everyday Australians, to show the lives that many indigenous were living. If this hadn’t been done, then aboriginals wouldn’t be where they are today and many indigenous would thank him.