***The Shadows of Youth***

**Book Review**

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This book’s purpose is to inform the general public of “The Remarkable Journey of the Civil Rights Generation” ¹ in particular some of the main of the activists. In particular it showcases the lives of Julian Bond, Stokley Carmichael, Bob Moses, John Lewis, Mario Barry, Bob Zellner, and Diane Nash their triumphs and hardships encountered as civil rights activists. In the book Andrew Lewis also mentions Martin Luther King, the Little Rock Nine, President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and President Lyndon Johnson and how they affected the Civil Rights Movement.

The main ideas that *The Shadows of Youth* are, what started the African-American youth wanting more rights and freedoms; the non-violent protests the activists staged and how they were met with violence from segregationists especially in the Deep South; and how the still youthful African-American leaders made it into politics.

On May 16, 1954 all American schools become desegregated but only a bare minimum of African-American students attended the former white schools. Those students who did attend encountered physical and verbal abuse, some did attempt to sue. One of the most famous cases, Brown vs. Board of Education, “laid the groundwork for the civil rights revolution” ², for the following years. Even though the African-American side lost, it still was a big step for the civil rights movement. The Little Rock Nine was a group of African-American students attending an integrated school but the citizens of Little Rock did what they could to prevent them from attending. Over the school year these students were constantly abused and even had to be escorted to school by the National Guard, since even the teachers did little to protect them. While these students were not welcome in Little Rock, in the national eye they were heroes mainly, due to the media light shed on them. In the state of Mississippi, the most hostile state, students who decided to support the movement had to choose between protesting or school, many of them chose to continue protesting. The police in many areas, arrested protestors with excessive force many times, even though in some cases it was illegal. The reason there was no federal interference with these situations, was the President Kennedy knew that the issues had to be solved locally in order to have permanently change in the system.

Civil rights activists in Montgomery, Alabama 1955 organized a bus boycott which was the first organized protest and included the now famous Rosa Parks. This event was a large success as well as it was the first time Martin Luther King Jr. was in the media spotlight. King also helped African-Americans protest non-violently throughout the movement and helped youth learn more about the movement through his church, which wasn’t viewed as necessary in school.

On February 1, 1960 four African-American college students staged the first sit-in protest that many different types of shops were segregated or even forbade African-Americans to be served. Soon the tactic of a sit-in grew in popularity and spread across the country with the largest ones occurring in the south. In some locations white students started to participate joining the cause which enraged other non supporting white people.

King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech was very optimistic compared to the speaker before him, Lewis, who spoke with frustration at the March on Washington in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial. King’s focus of this speech was “primarily on economic matters, culminating his plans for the [second Washington March] and the sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis” even though he did differ from his planned speech. This sanitation workers strike was the strike in Memphis which led to his assassination. 3

President Johnson was publically showing more willingness to help the cause than his predecessor Kennedy, as President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964. Even with this law being passed though the local political systems weren’t all that helpful towards the movement. Also the movement itself, had its youthful leadership and followers fading away making it even harder to make a difference.

Activists, in efforts to gain African-American’s the right to vote, staged ‘Freedom Votes’ which were mock elections where they managed to get 97 000 African-Americans to participate . In 1965 King decided to focus on gaining voting rights for African-Americans but President Johnson was hesitant to pass a voting rights bill, as it meant that he could lose his support of the Southern senators. The African-Americans did gain the right to vote in August 6, 1965, but hardly any signed up to vote. In efforts to get more African-American’s to vote Carmichael formed his own political party but he had little state and federal support so his plan failed. A second attempt was made to start a political party, the Black Panther Party, because “it didn’t make sense for [them] to go join the Democratic Party, when they were the people who had done the killing” ⁴ against them.

Freedom Ride, another form of protest, consisted of both black and white citizens who planned to ride a bus around the country. In some areas they were attacked brutally by white segregationists and rumours were constantly spreading of more attacks. President John F. Kennedy showed public support of the Civil Rights movement but his support was not always shown through the actions of local authorities. With more white supporters joining the movement tension was created between the two races as the African-Americans were wondering if they should be the sole leaders and participants of the cause. In 1966 many of the civil rights organizations expelled their white members and some left before they were expelled due to how they were treated by other white people.

In 1998, Julian Bond ran for state legislature in Georgia and won 70% of the Democratic vote for candidate and beat out the African-American Republican candidate with 82% but he was expelled from the house and was not allowed to take office twice. When the federal government heard of this they banned the Georgians from disallowing him to take office again. This was also the first time that the federal government had limited a state’s political power.

With the book aiming to relay the stories of a few of the civil rights activists the author presents his information by retelling their stories in chronological order of the events each of the highlighted activists participated in. Overall, the book highlighted the lives of these few activists, in particular their enormous efforts towards the American civil rights movement.

Endnotes

¹ Andrew B. Lewis, *The Shadows of Youth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009) cover page.

² Eric J. Sundquist, *King’s Dream* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 65.

3 Vernon E. Jordan Jr. and Lee A. Daniels, *Make it Plain: Standing Up and Speaking Out* (New York: Public Affairs, 1962) 8.

⁴ Andrew B. Lewis, *The Shadows of Youth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009) 200.