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Progressivism in America

The United States of America is a country that managed to turn from a wild land into a progressive and prosperous country. It is hard to identify when the Progressive Era in America started. However, most historians refer to the period as The Progressive Era since various social and political movements actively called for reforms across the United States. It is believed that the Progressive Era started in 1890 and ended during World War I. The progressiveness during the period was motivated to do away with various challenges in the society, including violence, corruption, poverty, racism, gender equality, and class warfare. Social activists such as Jane Adams were highly committed to doing away with the evils of the society. They were against Social Darwinism—the phenomenon in which natural selection applies to the human community—but instead believed that the social problems could be easily solved through the improvement of security, education, and providing a broad range of job opportunities. Moreover, various social, economic, as well as political movements in America support the belief that the problems faced in the community can be addressed by advancing education and increasing literacy levels in the society. Notably, the movements that championed social reforms had been in America since the 18th century, but they intensified their activism in the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

Outwardly, the US still holds progressive beliefs in the current century. Progressivism in America has never stopped, given that the country has been an active supporter of several

reforms—not only in the country, but also in the international community. America has been the leading nation in the improvement of education, security, integrity, and healthcare as a method of addressing social, political, and economic problems in the society. Even though historians limit the Progressive Era from 1890 to 1920, America has been continuing with progressivism even in the current century.

Therefore, this piece will extensively discuss how America has been continuing with progressivism even in the current century. The discussion will give a vivid account of how progressivism was established and why most historians limit the period of progressivism. The paper will then elucidate on why various interventions made by the U.S. in its later years are forms of progressive ideologies. The essay will utilize some of the documents that explain America's intentions to make local as well as international reforms. Generally, the essay discusses the role of politics, business, social institutions, wars, religion, feminist, and anti-racist movements on the development of the US as a progressive country.

Several factors motivated the start of progressivism in 1890. Majorly, activists cited social problems, but the concerns gradually led to the advocacy of political reforms such as voting rights. Jane Addams' document gives an account of how progressivism was founded in America. Addams who was one of the most well-known social activists during the time. She explained why the society needed social reforms. She pointed out that the young generation during the time lacked direction despite the several opportunities that were present in the community. Specifically, Addams questioned how people in the society utilized their education to solve cultural problems (Johnson 104). Therefore, Addams opened the Hull-House to show how to use knowledge in addressing issues such as democracy and humanitarianism.

Notably, the championing of humanitarianism and democracy has been a significant

focus of the American government. America is widely known for its efforts to practice democracy not only in its country, but also other nations—especially in third world countries. The country has also sponsored several humanitarian missions across the world, which indicates how the state is continuing with progressive ideologies.

The US's power was necessary for the world stage. The book provides a procedural recount of what the US did to maintain its dominance in the new fast-paced world, which proved to be turbulent at the same time. The US strategically confirmed its economic power and voice in the world by exerting dominance over countries that were gaining political and economic might and relevance at the time. The states included Japan, Germany, and Russia. President Woodrow Wilson was responsible for the planning and strategizing of ways to give the US political and economic mileage in the global arena. However, Wilson's term was faced with shortcomings, such as violent actions taken against African Americans, the suppression of political radicals, and the experience of combat. The main agenda behind the vices were to maintain Wilson's might and eliminate any troubling forces that would hinder his decisions, as he viewed his plans as long-term and necessary goals. In 1917, Americans were ready for war in Europe following President Woodrow's Wilson request for fighting through a congressional declaration. He termed the move concerning the founding fathers, and he pointed out that there was the need for more military training. Categorically, the military training was meant for remedial courses and not destructive ones. Priorities were saving lives in Germany, Hungary, and Austria by averting the Russian spirit of war for a peaceful world.

The US was becoming more dynamic as time went by. People changed their ways to adapt to new systems of life. The result was complacency in religious, social, and economic growth. Different schools of thought informed different sects of the American population.

Religion, for instance, became a proactive tenet of the society that insisted on the need for critical thinking backed by giving and having true salvation for economic and societal empowerment (Johnson 148). The essence of business in life was reinforced. Vocational training institutions sprung up to confirm the need and importance of training for a growing nation.

Common laborers were challenged to unite for a better bargaining power against their employees. Unionization was coined around this time, but faced a lot of contention from the elite and the ruling class who wanted a workforce that was subjected to them. A consensus of uniting the laborer and the capitalist was reached to help the US grow in the advent of industrialization and the need for economic improvement. The author opines that the pleasure of money is in getting it and not having or spending the same. This grew a work culture among the US populace.

Christianity played a pivotal role in the spread of business culture, especially in Detroit. Entrepreneurship was encouraged, and businesses continued to grow although the number of business owners was skewed. People of color mostly found themselves in laborer positions.

The economic recession had heavily hit America, and there was a need for recovery for USA's dominance and stability in financial markets as well as politics. The approach as a strong economy enhances the political power of a country. The concept of political power versus economic dynamics is discussed in chapter 26, where the USA opts to become peaceful to avert war with wealthy countries like Russia. Hope for new and improved deals under Roosevelt's government was rejuvenated. Roosevelt brought back economic strength to the nation. People became endeared to Roosevelt, and he became a symbol and beacon of hope to needy families and American idealists.

Unfortunately, there was a new spread of diseases, such as smallpox and syphilis that hit

the country. The illnesses were a threat to the health of the nation, and more medical professionals were trained and clinical centers established to avert the imminent danger. The US needed a stable population for posterity to continue its progressive ideology.

Laborers became more sensitized and saw the need for unionization. The elite as earlier mentioned designed ways to frustrate unionization and the poor continued to receive low wages to fend for precious lives. The workers labored for long working hours. Averagely, each worker worked for 10 hours a day, earning 35 cents for every hour. The downside to the US economic system during Roosevelt's time is that workers received poor wages to sustain an expensive life that the markets offered. Huey Long, a Louisiana Senator, advocated for the distribution of wealth for economic empowerment, but did not realize much success although more awareness was created about the plight of the working community.

The US was aggressive in its progressive ideology, hence the motivation of the mobilization of the American economy. Planes, ships, and military vehicles were designed to strengthen the military. The US would also sell items to other countries, which would rake in revenue to the state.

A side note is a case of two ladies trained in the barracks. The two ladies were taken into the barracks together with their families for the avoidance of leakage of any information outside the military. The ladies were amazed at the project and ability to develop planes, especially in a male-dominated setting. A passion for building fighter jets and aircraft grew in the ladies, and they became more involved in the building of items for the military. The ladies later learned that the specific plane they took part in the building was meant to drop an atomic bomb to get revenge on Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The ladies were warned not to leak any information to anyone outside the barracks, as that would award them with a jail term (Johnson

189).

The American ideology of the good neighborhood grew, and the government became more interested in people's welfare. The move was significant for a coherent country that needed to be strong. The government gave coupons for food and gas that relived families or recurrent expenses. Some needy families were afforded \$3.5 a week for the facilitation of secure livelihoods. The US population was enjoying the economic and political moves of the time, which made the country more progressive.

The author presents President Truman as the focal person in the era of the Cold War. The US strove to retain its military strength countering the Soviet's influence in the world through Truman. Germany and Japan had surrendered, which made some of the US military executives see the need for backing down and engaging in a less violent approach. General Marshall in 1945 insisted on the need to have a peaceful coexistence with other nations such as Russia, because the latter was an economic powerhouse and provoking it would lead to disastrous fights. The US avoided provoking the Soviets, but their antagonism deepened due to differences sparked after the Hiroshima bombings.

The US advocated for peace through conferences through the sending of delegates who would deliver peace messages and insist on the importance of a peaceful world. Truman's era was faced by the Cold War, which analysts in the book say was the biggest lie that has ever happened to the common man and the rest of the world. Russia and USA had the most prominent currency systems of the time, and that still is the case today. The message passed across at the end of this chapter (26) is that Russia and US had their interests at heart and at some point, were conflicted, but this was resolved through diplomacy at the time.

The US witnesses an increase in consumerism in this chapter. People became more

inclined to popularize ways of social elevation. Television sets, refrigerators, and automobiles were the items that brought success in the American society in the 1950s. People strove to have the latest details in the market to command respect among their peers. The phenomenon was referred to as status thriving. The elite at the time criticized the new social order as a false measure of success that was misleading.

Success was instead supposed to be a way of giving and multiplying what one initially had and not what one bought. This assertion is similar to the one in the previous chapters: that the pleasure of money is in getting it (Selden, Raman, and Booker 35). The author condemns the practice of status thriving as misguided, as it would lead to the frustration of those who could not afford new items. The author points out that self-reliance is an essential measure of success and that people should not be swayed by materialism.

The criticism by the elite never stopped the people from embracing new things into their culture. They gave them a sense of success that needed to be satiated by the accumulation of fresh cultures and items. A new culture that connoted success was the need for housing and innovative ways of designs, such as interior aesthetics. Architecture became pronounced, and house designing became a new career that was added to art, and some individuals made a living out of this process.

The military and large industries became business partners. Significant sectors supplied the military with different essentials and equipment to keep its operations running. Contracts were drafted and awarded with fewer barriers, as a substantial part of the government was involved. The relationship between the military and big industries was critical in the growth of the economy, which meant more of a circulation of money the right way.

Police brutality and social disorganization increased and sparked concern from the

American population. The law was put into question. Activists and clergymen found themselves in the hands of the brutal police. Crime rose, and people became uncomfortable with the police. Clergymen were jailed and fought for their justice through writing a letter from Birmingham City Jail in 1963. Public uproar was evidenced, and the justness of the law was heavily criticized.

A different case of wearing diamonds is said to symbolize the adornment of slavery and manipulation in Africa, which only benefits the white man. The author asserts that African countries have shed blood and tears to satisfy the greed of people who want to become rich at their expense. People with African backgrounds are sensitized not to wear diamonds, as it is a form of betrayal of their sisters and brothers. The chapter ends with an active and affirmative tone, insisting on the harnessing of black power for equality and empowerment.

Military might in the society is evidenced in this chapter. People became more educated and caused public uproars in the community. The educated sensitized the rest of the population on the need for development. The sensitization included pointing to cases of deception and many truths by those in authority. The need for economic empowerment and gender equality was highlighted as well.

The US military invaded Vietnam and fought hard. The Vietnam forest fighters were adamant and brutal in their fight against the US military. The US military fought for heroism and exerted the same cruel ways the Vietnam fighters used. The removal and cutting off of body organs was a prevalent element of this war. This resulted in a humanitarian outcry by John Kerry, who denounced the Vietnam War before the Senate to avoid implicating the US before the world as an inhumane and irresponsible military force. This was later referred to as criminal hypocrisy.

The drug problem became a major story in the US at this time as well. Cartels were

growing strong, and more drugs were penetrating the society, especially in urban settings. New York was one of the profoundly affected cities due to drug trafficking and addiction. Crime rates grew, and police reported that they were drug-related. Government bodies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration were then empowered to fight the rising drug problem.

The sensitization of women on birth control, pregnancy, and abortion is a visible construct in chapter 30. Clinics were set up to educate and cater for women. Different debates arose primarily due to abortion. Abortion was illegal in many states, but different schools of thoughts held valid viewpoints that needed listening, hence the intervention of the Supreme Court in 1973. The Supreme Court ruled that dangers and benefits were surrounding the abortion discourse and that a conservative approach was needed.

Morality, religion, and beliefs were some of the issues reported as the protagonists of abortions. Proponents of abortion cited population growth, poverty, and respect for privacy. Different backgrounds, such as religious and moral standings, made people view abortion as inhumane and unethical. On the other hand, poverty limited a woman's ability to raise a child. The economy was already difficult for the ordinary person in US, and only abortion would help an economically disadvantaged pregnant woman give herself another chance for financial empowerment. Abortion would afford her time to gain more economic muscles to cater for any other child she would deliver and her life as well. The justification for abortion takes center stage in this chapter, and the empowerment of women to understand the dynamics of reproductive health realizes success.

Christianity is judged in this section of the book, where its real intention is questioned. The author opines that some people saw Christianity as a vehicle for economic and political growth for some people, while enslaving people to the word of the Christian religion. The Bible

is criticized regarding its authenticity and truthfulness where a massive contention of who wrote it is noted. The white man is accused of using Christianity to his advantage and having benefited from it at the expense of naïve Christian followers.

A shift from Christianity is noted where Barack Obama creates a new relationship with the Muslim world. The association is meant to cool the tension between the West and the Muslim world. A big reason for the truce is the deletion of the biased approach many people had against Muslims after the September 11th, 2001 attack. The removal of American troops from Afghanistan followed. Obama asserted that it was essential to save the lives of its military that also have families and need a break from foreign lands, hence the leaving of Afghanistan. Deductively, this book is an informative piece that documents the history and the progressive state of the US through its different leadership figures. The book is informative and offers insight into the minds of the greatest Americans and also its common people.