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## **Analysis of the Interaction between the Native and Occupants of America**

Ever since the First Fleet landed on the shores of Port Jackson in 1788, the relationship between the Indigenous people and the settlers has been difficult. The Aboriginal people were subjected to relentless levels of racism and on most cases inhumane conduct from the British. It would be hard to believe that the former occupants of the land could ever be equal to the new settlers after the brutality and genocide that had taken place. From the 1930's however, Aboriginal Right groups and individuals began to tackle the discrimination. From that point on there were many campaigns from Aboriginals and whites alike. The 1960's Freedom Rides are an example of white Australians beginning to become involved in protesting segregation and would become a major component in the general population of Australia becoming aware of the racism present. This would be proven in the 1967 referendum where a large majority of Australians voted 'yes' to Aborigines having full citizens' rights. The biggest amount of progress made though was due to Eddie Mabo's Land Rights campaign which virtually changed Australia forever. The examples mentioned were all important in establishing equal rights for Aboriginal people and helped shape Australia into the multicultural nation it is today.

The Aborigine individuals active in the 1930's that were determined to achieve equal rights were significant factors in Aboriginal equality. Two important roles involved in various acts of protest were William Cooper and Jack Patten, some of the first to campaign their rights to the Australian public and government in a rational manner. Both influenced many others in the future to take action and stand against racism and discrimination. The numerous petitions, protests and public announcements made by the two raised awareness of the struggle their race was facing. From 1934 to 1938, William Cooper collected 2,000 signatures from Aboriginal people for a petition requesting that the Australian Government allows an Aborigine MP in their federal parliament. Although the petition was not successful in gaining their wish, it succeeded in uniting Aborigines across Australia, inspiring hundreds to take action and fight for their beliefs. As mentioned before, another individual who was crucial in achieving equal rights was Jack Patten. Jack Patten has been described as "one of the most important activists of his generation" . He held a central role in the Cummeragunja Walk Off in 1939- another example of Aborigines taking collective action, published the first Aboriginal newspaper in 1938 and participated in the Day of Mourning - a large protest taking place on 26th January 1938 where the white Australians celebrated the 150th anniversary of English settlement. The determination Patten and Cooper had displayed throughout the 1930's and the campaigns that took place under their management unified Aborigines across Australia, gained attention of the racism in the Australian government and public, and arguably most importantly, influenced many others to fight for their values. As of these reasons, it can be evident that individuals such as Patten and Cooper were significant factors in accomplishing Aboriginal equal rights.

The on-going African American civil rights movements taking place in the US during the early 1960's were what stimulated University of Sydney students to become involved in the equally if not more racist events taking place in Australia at the same time. What made this occurrence so significant in achieving equal rights was that for the first time, white Australians were not only noticing the discrimination and segregation that was present, but beginning to take action against it. The Freedom Ride held by the students were what helped draw additional attention to

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the conditions and inequitable situations that so many Aborigines were being subjected to; and would later cause students from other Universities to partake in similar protests. The mentioned University of Sydney students toured Australia and displayed their protests outside public areas such as swimming pools and social clubs and anywhere else where separation between whites and Aborigines was typical. The revolutionary ideas being exhibited by the students were not appreciated by the majority of the general public in the NSW town Moree, resulting in eruptions of violence directed at the students. These outbreaks exposed the racism in Australia to the rest of the world, embarrassing the Australian government and many white rural NSW citizens. The Freedom Ride was extremely effective in gaining media attention that soon began to support the cause and began to show interest in Aboriginal affairs. The students persisted in what would become a meaningful component in revealing the high levels of racism that was apparent in Australia throughout the 1960's. After considering the reasons presented, it is clear that the protests demonstrated by the University students throughout the 1960's were effective in raising awareness of the racism that was present throughout that time and would therefore making it a significant factor in achieving Aboriginal rights.

In 1967, due to numerous campaigns from Aboriginal right groups, the Australian Government held a referendum to decide whether Aborigines should be counted as part of the population. The mentioned Aboriginal groups raised awareness of the racial issues and organised a petition collecting around 100,000 signatures to prove to the government it was an important situation. Similar to the other factors that were important in achieving equal rights, the referendum was quite radical for Australia in the fact that it was the first time the government was beginning to reduce the levels of racism present, and resulted in progress and success for Aboriginal protestors. On May 27th 1967, an astonishing 90.7% of voters said 'yes' to Aborigines having full citizenship rights. Aborigines now had the opportunity to vote, be counted in the census as well as other benefits. This particular referendum had the highest percentage of 'yes' votes ever for an Australian referendum, proving racism was a concern that the majority of the population were determined to abolish. The referendum was the biggest case of progress made in Aborigine rights for that time with so much development being made. Unfortunately, it would turn out that much more progress was required for acquiring equal rights, evidence of this being the federal government refusing to give necessary funds for Aboriginal advancement in the budget of that year. The government had succeeded in establishing the Department of Aboriginal Affairs however it was almost ten years before any laws were made to benefit the Aboriginal people. While the government still failed to end their discrimination and racism, the facts shown prove that Aborigines were becoming so much more accepted in society by the public and the racism that was once found in so many Australian citizens was beginning to diminish. With such a remarkable level of Australians wanting Aboriginal rights and the fact that Aborigines now had full citizen rights, it is obvious that the 1967 referendum would become a significant feature in obtaining equal rights for all Aborigines.

A largely significant aspect that helped grant equal Aboriginal rights was Eddie Mabo's Land Rights case as it had so many outcomes that proved to be so important in making Aborigines so accepted by the government and public. As stated before, even with the 1967 referendum initially being a huge win for Aboriginal rights groups, more progress was still required before Aborigines could truly be equal with whites. In Queensland especially, the state government would show no means of giving equal rights to Aborigines. Eddie Mabo experienced first-hand this segregation and realised something needed to be done. However what gave Mabo the decision to begin fighting for equal land rights was a discussion he had while working at the James Cook University as a gardener. Mabo's Land Rights campaign was a massive factor in

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achieving equal Aboriginal rights. No person, white or Indigenous, had ever succeeded in confronting the government in such a way that Mabo did. The result from the campaign was one of the “most important judgements in Australian legal history” and was extremely important as it “fundamentally changed the relationship between black and white in this country, and has gone a long way in the recognition of Indigenous rights” .

After the triumph of Mabo’s case, Aboriginal people were finally recognised as the traditional owners of the land; there is no doubt that it would have been a momentous occasion for all Indigenous people across Australia as it gave them acknowledgment and respect. Soon after, reconciliation between whites and Aboriginals became more common with the first national reconciliation week being celebrated in 1996 . Earlier, in 1992 the federal parliament of the time recognised the destruction that had taken place since British settlement, with Prime Minister Paul Keating saying “...The starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians...We committed the murders...We practiced discrimination and exclusion.” All of the results and changes brought by the success of the Land Rights campaign would essentially lead to the 2008 Apology made by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd publicly apologising for all the wrong the Australia government had done towards the Aboriginal people. Eddie Mabo’s case brought the white Australians and Aboriginals together and helped end the discrimination that the federal and state government had been displaying for so long, it is obvious that it was an extraordinarily symbolic moment that made up a highly considerable element in achieving equal Aboriginal rights.

In conclusion, from the 1930's on-wards there were many significant factors in achieving equal aboriginal rights. The mentioned factors all had different outcomes and were all quite radical. The determination, sacrifice and dedication that the individuals and groups displayed is why Aboriginals can now have more opportunities than anyone could have believed a century ago. There is however more progress required before Aboriginals can truly be equal economically, health wise, politically and socially. An example of this is in the fact that the average Aboriginal life expectancy is around 20 years below non-indigenous people . Indigenous people still have less employment opportunities than non-indigenous people due to racial discrimination. Even with all the efforts made throughout the 20th century, there is still more required, but with the help of initiatives such as ‘Closing the Gap’ and the Australian government attempting to end these problems, Aborigines will have access to more opportunities and equal rights.