

Name _____



Fair Pay

The Civil Rights Movement was not only about ending segregation, but also about fighting for equal economic opportunities. African Americans and other minorities faced many challenges in finding good jobs, earning fair wages, and getting decent housing. These unfair conditions helped create urgency for change.

Unfair Wages and Job Discrimination

Even after slavery ended, African Americans were often paid less than white workers for doing the same jobs. Many businesses refused to hire

Black workers for high-paying jobs. Instead, they were given the hardest work for the lowest pay.

During the Great Depression (1930s), many Americans struggled to find work, but Black workers were often the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Even during World War II, when factories needed workers, Black Americans had to fight for the right to get good jobs. In 1941, civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph pressured President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign an order that banned racial discrimination in government jobs. This was a big victory, but economic unfairness continued.

Housing Discrimination

African Americans also struggled to find decent homes. Many neighborhoods had rules that did not allow Black families to buy houses, even if they had the money. Some banks refused to give loans to Black families, making it nearly impossible for them to own homes.

After World War II, a program called the G.I. Bill helped soldiers buy homes and go to college, but many Black veterans were denied these benefits. This made it harder for them to build wealth and provide for their families.

The Fight for Economic Justice

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. knew that fighting for equal rights also meant fighting for economic fairness. He spoke out against low wages, poor housing, and job discrimination. In 1963, more than 250,000 people joined the March on Washington, where Dr. King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. One of their demands was better jobs and fair pay.

Later, in 1968, Dr. King helped lead the Poor People's Campaign, fighting for fair wages and better working conditions for all Americans, no matter their race.

Economic struggles were a big reason why the Civil Rights Movement was so important. People wanted not just equality in public places, but also the chance to earn fair wages and live in safe homes. The fight for economic fairness continues today.

