

HOMEWORK HELPSHEET / REVISION FILE

THE AMERICAN DREAM

KP1

BACKGROUND

America is a nation of immigrants. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century millions of Europeans emigrated to the USA in the hope of building a better life for themselves and their families. The USA was seen as a land where anyone – no matter what their background – could succeed through hard work and individual effort. This idea that America was a land of opportunity for all is captured in the phrase 'The American Dream'. After the Civil War ended in 1865 and the new railways opened up prairies of the west, the American economy began to grow rapidly. Soon it became clear that more and more workers would be needed to develop the huge agricultural and industrial resources of the country. The American government adopted an 'Open Door' policy on immigration which allowed almost anyone from anywhere in the world to settle in the USA. The inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty reads-

'Give me your poor your tired your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..... I lift my lamp beside the golden door'

This was an invitation to come to America, and enjoy the freedom and wealth that the country offered to those who were prepared to work hard.

- The attractions of America to immigrants in the period from 1830-1890 are quite clear. Land was plentiful, and fairly cheap or even free. Work was easy to get, labour was scarce and wages were much higher than in Europe. America also offered religious and political freedom.
- Until around 1890 the vast majority of immigrants were English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Dutch and, Swedes. The US government opened immigration offices all over Northern and Western Europe to encourage people to make a new life in America. Shipping companies placed adverts in newspapers and American industrialists sent agents to Europe to recruit workers.
- With perhaps the exception of the Irish most immigrants to America were not the poorest people in their home countries. Many were farmers, skilled workers or small businessmen who were able to save the cost of the sea passage and usually arrived to take up a job offer or with enough money to start a farm or a small business.
- In the 1890s large numbers of people from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean began to arrive in America. Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and other national minorities fled the Russian Empire to escape discrimination and religious or political persecution. At the same time many Italians and Austrians came to America to escape poverty and unemployment.
- These 'new immigrants' were often poor, uneducated peasants who arrived in America without any money and were unable to speak English. As a result they often had no choice but to remain in the crowded cities of the east coast.
- New immigrants provided cheap unskilled labour needed by American industries and farmers and immigrants often did jobs that Americans did not want to do. Cheap immigrant labour allowed American employers to keep wage levels down and helped American industry and agriculture to be more profitable. Immigrant workers were sometimes used by employers to break strikes.
- The motto of the USA is *E PLURIBUS UNUM*, which is the Latin for OUT OF MANY COMES ONE. This expressed the hope that all the differences of nationality, culture and religion would eventually fade away and all immigrants would adopt the American way of life as loyal citizens of the United States. In 1915 President Wilson claimed that America would be a melting pot where all the immigrants would merge together and become Americans.

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THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

KP2

BACKGROUND

Many of the new immigrants who arrived between 1890 and 1920 found that life in America was not what they expected. For those without money or skills and unable to speak English life was very hard. An old Italian saying summed up the disappointment felt by many new immigrants:

"I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, found out three things: First, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all: and third, I was expected to pave them." In spite of the difficulties, few gave up and returned home.

For most immigrants the first port of call was the Immigration Control Centre on Ellis Island in New York harbour. Here they would be checked for disease and held in quarantine for six weeks. Once cleared by the immigration authority new arrivals were transported to New York. No further help was given and immigrants were expected to find work and a place to stay. The lucky ones had friends or family to help them settle, some even had a job arranged. But many faced the terrifying experience of arriving in a busy city, unable to speak the language with little or no money and no contacts.

- Immigrants from the same country usually lived in the same area. They wanted to be close to other people who spoke their language. They felt safer in their own communities where rents were usually lower. In New York there was a Polish district, a Jewish district, an Italian district etc.
- Immigrants had little money and low wages so could only afford the cheapest housing in the worst areas. Many families had to share a house or take in lodgers to help pay the rent. Whole families sometimes with 10 or 12 people had only one room to live in.
- The tenement slums were damp, dark and filthy with no water supply, toilets or drains. Rubbish and sewage was thrown into backcourts or streets. The tenements had few windows and were built so close to each other that there was no natural light or ventilation.
- Buildings were badly made of cheap materials - there were no building regulations. Landlords did not maintain houses and were only concerned to make money from high rents. For a single room an immigrant might have to pay half his/her weekly wage.
- Finding work could be a problem for immigrants. Many immigrants were poorly educated and could not get skilled work. Immigrants often had no one to help them find a good job. Some had to pay bribes or local 'bosses' often helped new immigrants find work in return for a percentage of their wages.
- Immigrants with no money had to take any job they could get. Usually low paid labouring jobs or as servants. Many had been small farmers and had few skills for other types of work. Employers could pay immigrant workers less because they were desperate for work and were willing to accept lower wages than American workers.
- During World War 1 millions of new immigrants arrived in America and many Americans began to feel that they were being swamped. Immigrants were blamed for crime, disease, prostitution and drunkenness. They suffered from discrimination, racist insults and physical attacks.
- By 1920 anti-immigrant feeling was increasing. Americans were mistrustful of foreigners and adopted an isolationist foreign policy. There was a growing demand for an end to mass immigration, which politicians could not ignore.

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CHANGING ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRATION

KP3

BACKGROUND

The flood of new immigrants increased during World War 1 as millions came to America to escape the war and the economic depression, which followed it. There was growing public concern about the number of new immigrants and many of the old immigrants were worried that foreign cultures and religions would threaten the American way of life. The first immigration controls had been introduced in 1892. An act of Congress stated that all immigrants would be examined and that convicts, polygamists (people with more than one wife), prostitutes, people suffering from diseases, and people who were unable to support themselves would not be allowed into America. In 1917 a law was passed that enlarged the list of people who could be legally excluded. It also imposed a literacy test and almost totally banned Asian immigrants. Despite these measures immigrants continued to arrive and by public opposition to further immigration could not be ignored.

- Many Americans began to reject the idea of America as a 'Melting Pot' where immigrants would quickly integrate and adopt the American way of life. The new immigrants lived in their own districts, continued to speak their own language and continued the traditions and customs of their home countries.
- World War 1 caused divisions in American society as many immigrants took sides, some supported Germany and her allies while others supported Britain.
- There was suspicion of the new immigrants. Many were poor, uneducated and couldn't speak English. They were blamed for disease, slum housing, rising crime, alcoholism and other social problems.
- Organisations like the Ku Klux Klan spread the belief that America should be a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) country. New immigrants were mainly Catholic and Jewish.
- The Red Scare - In 1919, there was a wave of strikes and communist immigrants from Eastern Europe were blamed. Thousands of East Europeans were deported without trial. The Saco and Vanzetti case seemed to prove that many immigrants were un-American and were spreading violent anarchists or communist beliefs.
- Unemployment increased after the war and immigrants were accused of taking jobs from Americans. Labour Unions complained that immigrant workers were forcing wages down by working for less.
- In 1920 a Republican President was elected and immigration cuts were part of his policy of isolationism. Quotas were introduced in 1921, 1923 and 1929 to cut immigration and ensure that most immigrants were from Northern and Western Europe.
- In 1921, The Emergency Quota Act limited the number of immigrants to 357,000 per year. It also restricted each nationality to 3% of the 1910 population. This discriminated against immigrants from south and east Europe.
- In 1924, a new immigration law reduced the number of immigrants of each nationality to 2% of the 1890 population. Even fewer immigrants from east and southern Europe were allowed in.
- In 1929 total immigration was limited to 150,000 each year – America closed the door to further large-scale immigration.

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RACIAL TENSIONS

KP4

BACKGROUND

After the First World War, racial tensions became a serious problem for American society. New non-protestant immigrants like Jews and Catholics had been arriving in their millions from Southern and Eastern Europe since the 1890s. Old immigrants who were mainly White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (W.A.S.Ps) resented the newcomers and were afraid that they would destroy American culture. Asians, Mexicans and the Black population suffered the most from discrimination and prejudice at the hands of those concerned with preserving W.A.S.P. domination of American life. Prejudice and racism affected many areas of society, with people showing support for racist views in the media, literature and towards organisations like the Ku Klux Klan. The racist language, the living and working conditions and the Government legislation that ethnic minorities were subjected to is clear evidence that the twenties was an increasingly racist decade. It was also during this period that serious race riots broke out in American cities as a result of the friction between blacks and whites

- In the 1920 Presidential election the Republicans were elected on a policy isolationism, which reflected a growing distrust of foreigners. During the election campaign the fears of native-born Americans about immigration were deliberately stirred up to win votes.
- Newspapers stirred up public opinion against new immigrants. They were blamed for crime, disease and alcoholism. Labour Unions accused immigrants of forcing wages down, strike-breaking and taking jobs from American workers.
- Academics and some politicians claimed to have 'scientific' evidence that the new immigrants from Southeast Europe were racially inferior. They believed strongly in WASP values and did not wish to see America 'polluted' by the religions of minorities like Catholics and Jews.
- Racist nicknames for minorities became popular in the 1920s. People of Spanish origins were "Spics". Italians were, 'Dago', Guinea, and 'Greaser'. Jews were Kikes, Chinese were Chinks, Poles were Polacks, and Germans were Huns. Black people were still referred to as Niggers.
- In the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan increased its membership to 5 million. The Klan's appeal spread from the south to the western and northern states, where Catholics and Jews, as well as blacks became the target of their threats and violence.
- During the twenties 1.5 million southern blacks migrated from the south to the north to escape from poverty and discrimination. Northern factory owners encouraged this as blacks could replace the cheap immigrant workers who were now kept out of America by immigration laws.
- The migration of southern blacks worried many whites and created racial tensions. Whites had to compete for jobs with blacks, who worked for lower wages. Employers used blacks to break strikes and this led to violence. Access to housing became a major source of friction – blacks were forced to live in slum ghettos and were often attacked if they tried to move to white areas.
- Between 1917 and 1923 there were race riots in a number of American cities. New York, Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago were affected. The worst violence was in Chicago 1919. After a black boy was killed by a stone thrown by a white man, mobs ran through the streets burning, looting and killing. Over 138 people were killed and hundreds more were injured. The army had to be brought in to end the trouble.

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THE JIM CROW LAWS

KP5

BACKGROUND

In the Southern States of the USA racism was deeply ingrained and the idea of white supremacy was unquestioned. After the defeat of the Confederate States in the Civil War, which ended in 1865, slavery was abolished. The freed black slaves were granted full rights as American citizens. Many southern whites would not accept that blacks were equals and state governments introduced laws known as the 'Black Codes'. These were designed to keep blacks under control and maintain white power. The laws included curfews, blacks could not leave their job without their employers permission, they could not testify against whites in law courts and could still be whipped for breaking the law. In most Southern States blacks could not vote. The Black Codes did not last long. In 1868 Amendment 14 of the American Constitution stated that 'No state shall make any law which shall reduce the rights of citizens of the United States' and in 1870 Amendment 15 stated 'The right of American citizens to vote shall not be denied because of race or colour. The intention of these amendments was to give blacks equal rights with whites but in most southern states they were ignored and blacks continued to suffer discrimination and were treated as second-class citizens. The most obvious sign of this was in the racial segregation which blacks faced in almost every aspect of daily life in the south

- From the 1890s until the 1960s, Southern states enforced segregation through "Jim Crow" laws (so called after a black character in minstrel shows). The most common types of laws forbade intermarriage and ordered business owners and public institutions to keep their black and white customers separated.
- In 1896, Homer Plessey was charged in Louisiana for riding in a white only railway car. He took his case to the Supreme Court, which ruled that segregation was legal as long as facilities were kept "separate but equal". The Southern States and cities immediately began to pass segregation laws, which affected schools, hospitals, public transport, parks, cinemas, restaurants, swimming pools and even churches. In almost every case blacks had to make do with inferior facilities.
- Blacks were also prevented from voting. By 1910 every Southern State had a literacy test, a poll tax or a law, which stated voters had to prove that their grandfathers had voted before they were allowed to register.
- Members of the Ku Klux Klan usually waited outside the voter registration office to scare off blacks. Any black attempting to register as a voter could lose his job or farm. Town sheriffs and registrars were often members of the KKK or would pass the names of blacks who tried to register on to them. The names of registered voters were often published in local newspapers and blacks were afraid of being attacked if they registered.
- Blacks in the South lived in fear of threats and attacks by the Ku Klux Klan who attacked their property and murdered or lynched many Negroes. They were not protected by the police who were often Klan members and all white juries refused to convict whites for crimes against blacks.
- Blacks suffered from discrimination in jobs and were only employed in low paid unskilled work. Most were poor sharecroppers heavily in debt to white landowners for farming equipment and seeds for planting. They lived on the edge of white towns in wooden shacks with no running water or sewers. Poverty and bad health was much higher than in white areas.
- Blacks were humiliated every day by the social customs of the South. They were expected to be always 'respectful to whites' and never argue or disagree. Blacks had to step aside for whites in the street, and address white people as 'sir' 'ma'm' or 'boss'. Whites addressed blacks as 'nigger', 'boy' or 'missy' – never Mr or Mrs.

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CIVIL RIGHTS 1945-1960

KP6

BACKGROUND

When America went to war in 1942, most blacks supported it. But while they were fighting for democracy and against the racist Nazi state, in America blacks still faced discrimination, and in many states they could not vote. Even in the army, black units were segregated from white units. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph called for a March on Washington to demand an end to discrimination against black Americans. In 1942, President Roosevelt introduced the Fair Employment Act which stated that all companies with government contracts had to end discrimination in the workplace. Roosevelt also promised an end to segregation in the armed forces. When the war ended the US Supreme Court made a number of important rulings which challenged the Plessey v Ferguson judgement of 1896.

1946 - segregation on buses that crossed state borders was made illegal.

1948 - contracts to stop the sale of homes to blacks became illegal.

1950 - black students were given the right to attend universities.

1954 - segregation in schools was ruled unconstitutional.

Most Southern States simply ignored the Supreme Court and continued to enforce segregation laws.

- **The Montgomery Bus Boycott.** – In December 1955 NAACP activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. She was arrested and a boycott of the buses was organised by the NAACP and the local churches. To organise the boycott, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed. Its President was Martin Luther King.
- At first, the MIA did not demand an end to segregation –only fair service. This was rejected and blacks were harassed for taking part in the boycott. e.g. King was arrested on a false speeding charge. As the boycott continued the demands to end segregation grew.
- Montgomery was not the first bus boycott but it attracted the greatest amount of public attention. In 1956, a district court ruled that segregation on the buses was unconstitutional. This was upheld in the Supreme Court later the same year.
- The day after the Supreme Court judgement the Montgomery Bus Boycott was called off after 381 days. The bus company had no choice but to desegregate the buses as they were losing so much money.
- The Montgomery boycott gained national publicity and proved that blacks had economic power and could use it to end segregation. It led to the setting up of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and established Martin Luther King as the leader of the Civil Rights movement. It gave blacks confidence and determination to campaign for civil rights and proved that non-violent protest could work. Other bus boycotts followed all over the South. States.
- **Little Rock High School.** - In September 1957, nine black students attempted to attend Central High School. The governor of Arkansas sent the National Guard (state troops) to stop them. A federal court ordered the National Guard to withdraw and a white mob gathered to threaten and insult the children as they tried to enter the school.
- The events at Little Rock were shown on national television and exposed the race hatred of southern whites. President Eisenhower sent in the army to escort the children safely into school and troops patrolled the school for the rest of the year.
- Events at Montgomery and Little Rock sent a clear signal to the southern states that they would not be allowed to ignore federal law any longer. Civil rights campaigners were greatly encouraged and more determined than ever to press for equality.

HOMEWORK HELPSHEET / REVISION FILE**MARTIN LUTHER KING AND NON-VIOLENCE****KP7****BACKGROUND**

After the success of the Montgomery bus boycott Martin Luther King became the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and led the civil rights campaign in the South. His aims were to end segregation, discrimination, and racial violence and to ensure that all blacks had the right to vote. King believed in civil disobedience and that people had a duty to break unfair laws, even if that meant taking beatings or being jailed. He insisted that civil rights activists should not fight back, even in self-defence. He believed in integration – that black and white could live together in peace as equals. King's beliefs were shaped by the example of Gandhi in India, his family background and his Christian faith. He argued that passive resistance would reduce the threat of violence and encourage ordinary people to join the movement. Where there were violent attacks, the publicity would damage the opponents of civil rights and encourage support for the protestors. In the end all whites would see that racial discrimination was morally wrong and bad for every American, both black and white.

- **1960** - The Greensboro Sit-in - four black college students ordered food at a whites-only counter in Woolworth's. Sit -ins spread quickly and had huge support. Attacks on the protestors were shown on television and northern whites were shocked by the treatment of blacks in the south.
- **1960** – The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was set up. This worked with the SCLC to provide volunteers for marches and other protests -e.g. wade-ins at segregated pools, pray ins at churches, and voter registration campaigns,
- **1961** - Groups of black and white 'freedom riders' travelled on buses from Washington to New Orleans. They were attacked and one bus was firebombed. Once more this encouraged sympathy for their cause among northern whites.
- **1962** - James Meredith, a black student, tried to attend the University of Mississippi. When he arrived there were riots - two onlookers were killed and hundreds were injured. Federal troops had to be sent to re-establish order and uphold Meredith's right to attendance.
- **1963** – In Birmingham Alabama King led demonstrations demanding an end to segregation. Hundreds were arrested, including King. Police attacked the marchers using batons, high-pressure water hoses and police dogs. The photographs that appeared in newspapers and television of children being attacked shocked America and embarrassed the government.
- **1963** - The March on Washington on August 28th 1963, over 200,000 protesters, black and white, marched to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. Martin Luther King addressed the crowd with his 'I have a dream' speech. President Kennedy decided to introduce a Civil Rights Bill but he was assassinated in November 1963.
- **1964** - President Johnson's Civil Rights Act became law. Segregation in public places and facilities was banned. The desegregation of schools was to be speeded up by the Attorney General. Discrimination against blacks in employment was also banned.
- **1964** – Freedom Summer, SNCC organised a campaign of voter registration in Mississippi, the state with the lowest level of black registration. Three civil rights workers were murdered.
- **1965** – Selma, Alabama, King led a voter registration campaign in Selma where only 1% of blacks were registered. The police attacked blacks and a march from Selma to Montgomery had to be protected by the national guard. Events at Selma led both Johnson and popular opinion to the view that further action. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed. This ended the literacy tests and poll tax qualifications that had prevented blacks from voting.

Legalised discrimination in the South ended and King turned his attention to the North. He campaigned in Chicago for integrated housing but was attacked by whites and achieved little. The civil rights campaign was turning to the ideas of black power. Attention moved from civil rights to the anti Vietnam war campaign. King opposed the war and began to make socialist speeches. When he was assassinated in 1968 he was planning a 'Poor People's March' on Washington.

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WHITE RESISTANCE

KP8

BACKGROUND

In the southern states of the USA racism and ideas of white supremacy were deeply ingrained and whites believed black civil rights would destroy their way of life. The south had been the main slave owning area and after the civil war, laws known as the Black Codes were introduced to maintain white control over blacks. These laws were ruled unconstitutional, but in the 1896 Plessey v Ferguson case the Supreme Court ruled that 'separate but equal' facilities for blacks and whites were legal. This opened the door to a wave of segregation law in the southern states and in almost every case facilities for blacks were inferior. When the civil rights movement began to campaign against segregation and discrimination southern white society reacted violently. They claimed there was no coloured problem in the south and that Negroes were being used by corrupt northern politicians and communists to stir up trouble. They worried that whites would lose their jobs to blacks and that blacks would demand higher wages. Whites were afraid that blacks would move into white areas and compete for housing. In many counties and towns blacks were in a majority. Whites were afraid that if blacks could vote they would elect other black people as mayors, judges, and sheriffs. White politicians and elected officials worried that they would lose their positions of power to blacks.

- The influence of the Ku Klux Klan was very strong in the south and they were prepared to use threats, violence and even murder to prevent blacks gaining equal rights. The KKK was behind many of the attacks on blacks who took part in sit-ins freedom rides and protest marches. KKK influence was widespread and included politicians, judges and police.
- The most serious KKK violence was the murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers in Mississippi and the deaths of four black children killed by a bomb while attending Sunday school in Birmingham Alabama. In Neshoba County, Mississippi three civil rights workers were murdered. (These killings inspired the film 'Mississippi Burning')
- The police in the south were used to attack peaceful civil rights campaigners. In Birmingham Alabama police chief Bull Connor used high-pressure hoses, batons and dogs to attack peaceful protestors including children. Police brutality and unfair arrest faced every civil rights campaigner.
- The judges and courts of the south were prepared to convict on very little evidence and impose heavy fines or prison sentences on civil rights activists. Cases against whites or the police were usually dismissed or if convicted they were given very light sentences. Civil rights campaigners were brutally treated in southern prisons.
- The political leaders of the south were also opposed to the civil rights movement and in 1963 Southern Senators attempted to persuade Congress to accept the 'Southern Manifesto', which would have allowed segregation to continue. George Wallace was elected governor of Alabama promising that he would never allow integration of schools. In some towns schools, libraries, pools and parks were closed rather than allow blacks to use them
- In many southern towns 'Citizens Councils' were set up to prevent integration. They issued racist pamphlets, wrote to newspapers and organised white opposition to the civil rights movement. Most southern newspapers, radio and television also took an anti-civil rights stance when reporting events.
- In the end white opposition and violence had the opposite effect to that which they intended. Violence and attacks on peaceful black protestors shocked white opinion in the north and led to thousands of volunteers joining the campaign. It was also an international embarrassment to the American government, which was forced to take action to end segregation and discrimination.

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BLACK POWER

KP9

BACKGROUND

By 1965 the non-violent civil rights campaign led by Martin Luther King had succeeded in ending legalised segregation and discrimination in the southern states. Many blacks living in the ghettos of the northern cities still faced discrimination in jobs, income, housing, education, health etc. The civil rights campaign had not brought the social and economic improvements blacks wanted. They believed King's methods were taking too long and would not work in the northern cities. Many blacks also thought King was influenced too much by white advisers. The assassination of President Kennedy was a setback for the non-violent civil rights campaign and although the Civil Rights Act became law in 1964 many blacks were disappointed, as it did nothing about black poverty and racism. Northern blacks wanted ideas that addressed their problems and Black Power seemed to offer answers. It offered blacks an end to discrimination and racial abuse and wanted blacks to take control of their own communities. Black power encouraged blacks to take pride in their African roots and culture and tried to tackle discrimination, poverty, crime and slum housing in the black ghettos.

- The origin of the Black Power movement goes back to the Black Nationalist movement of the 1920s. Its leader, Marcus Garvey, believed that blacks should return to Africa and set up their own country. He encouraged blacks to be proud of their race and culture.
- In the 1960s many of the ideas of Black Power came from Malcolm X who changed his name from Malcolm Little and became a member of the Nation of Islam. He opposed integration and believed blacks should live in separate communities free from white influence. He also argued that blacks should be prepared to use force to defend themselves. In 1965 Malcolm X was murdered after he criticised Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam.
- In 1966 Stokely Carmichael became the leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Under his leadership the SNCC became more militant. Whites were expelled from the organisation and Carmichael became a supporter of black power. This led to a break with the SCLC and the NAACP who accused Carmichael of anti-white racism.
- The most extreme black power organisation was the Black Panther Party formed in 1966 and led by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The Black Panthers were a political party with a social and economic programme but they are mostly remembered for their threats of violence, and appearing heavily armed in military style uniforms. The FBI targeted the Panthers and by 1970 most of the leaders were dead or in jail.
- Black Power could mean different things to different groups. For some it meant militant action to improve the lives of black people, for others it simply meant pride in black culture and a rediscovery of black history, art, literature and music. 'Black is beautiful' became an even more popular than the slogan 'black power'.
- Black Americans began to reject white fashions in their style and appearance. They adopted Afro hairstyles and African forms of dress. For the first time many blacks felt they had a worthwhile identity and confidence that they were strong enough to prosper without the support of whites.
- Despite their relatively small following, black power leaders had a powerful and positive influence on the civil rights movement. In addition to setting up many community self-help organizations, supporters of black power encouraged black studies courses in universities and encouraged black Americans to take pride in their racial background.

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FREE AT LAST

KP10

BACKGROUND

The civil rights movement made important progress towards gaining equal rights for black Americans. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King civil rights campaigners ended legal discrimination, segregation and the denial of voting rights to blacks. This was achieved by non-violent methods and in the face of threats, violence and murder. King's campaign gained the support of many whites, including the media and political parties and he persuaded thousands of black (and white) activists to join peaceful protests.

Racism and discrimination still existed - the assassination of Martin Luther King and the riots in American cities showed there were still many problems to be overcome. These were identified by the 1968 Kerner Commission, which was set up to investigate the causes of the riots. Kerner concluded that America was deeply divided by race. Blacks still suffered from social and economic inequality and were still confined to city ghettos. They had the lowest incomes, poorest housing, poorest schools, worst health, highest unemployment etc. Although legal discrimination ended, blacks still faced racial prejudice by white authorities such as the police.

SUCCESSSES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made segregation and discrimination illegal in all aspects of life and an Equal Opportunity Commission was set up to deal with complaints. The Act also gave the Federal Government powers to force State Governments to comply with the law.
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 brought an end to literacy tests and poll tax qualifications which prevented blacks from voting
- In 1967 the Supreme Court ruled that laws that prevented inter-racial marriages were illegal.
- In 1968 the Fair housing Act was an attempt to make sure that blacks were given access to good quality public housing.

FAILURES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

- For a time the civil rights movement increased support and gave new life to violent racist organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan.
- Martin Luther King was unable to transfer his campaign to the north where the problems were those of social and economic discrimination. King's methods were seen as too slow and irrelevant to the problems of blacks in the cities.
- The civil rights movement split. The SNCC and CORE began to support the ideas of black power and a more militant campaign. The SCLC and the NAACP continued to support integration and non-violence. This split weakened the struggle for equality.
- Although political progress had been made, blacks remained under-represented both in voter registration and as elected officials.
- The violence in the northern cities between 1964 and 1968 lost much of the white support that had been built up. Many white liberals who had supported the civil rights movement began to support to the anti-Vietnam war movement.