Relief and Roadblocks

Assessing New Deal relief for African Americans

USH.C.4.3.G "Describe the extent that New Deal programs provided relief for African- Americans, including the influence of the "Black Cabinet" and educator Mary McLeod Bethune."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two examples of relief that reached African Americans, circle two barriers to relief, and write a 1 beside a sentence that shows how Bethune or the Black Cabinet influenced access.

Who Received New Deal Relief?

1. Imagine a Black teenager looking for work in 1936. The National Youth Administration (NYA) offered paid work and job training to young people, and its programs reached some Black youth. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) also hired unemployed workers, including African Americans, for public projects such as building schools. These jobs could mean food on the table during the Great Depression. Yet access was uneven. Local officials sometimes discriminated when assigning jobs or setting pay. Relief, then, was real for some families, but a federal program's promise did not guarantee equal treatment in every community.

2. Other New Deal policies left many Black workers out or made their lives harder. The Social Security Act of 1935 initially excluded farmworkers and domestic workers from its old-age insurance program. Many African Americans worked in those jobs, so they missed this protection, although white workers in the same jobs were excluded too. Under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), the government paid landowners to cut crop production. Some landowners removed tenant farmers and sharecroppers from the land while keeping the payments. Black sharecroppers were especially vulnerable because they often did not own the land they worked.

3. Inside the Roosevelt administration, an informal group of Black advisers became known as the Black Cabinet. They urged federal agencies to pay attention to discrimination and to include African Americans in New Deal programs. Educator Mary McLeod Bethune, who led the NYA's Division of Negro Affairs, used her position to press for training and work opportunities for Black youth. Her role gave Black communities a stronger voice in federal decisions. Still, advisers could not force every local official to treat workers fairly or erase exclusions in laws. Their influence widened access, but it did not make New Deal relief equal.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. To what extent did the NYA and WPA offer relief to African Americans, and what limited that relief?

2. How did the Social Security Act's job exclusions limit relief for Black workers even though the law did not name race?

3. How could AAA payments make the Depression worse for Black sharecroppers instead of helping them?

4. How did Bethune and the Black Cabinet expand access, and why could they not guarantee equal relief?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label of 75 to 100 words arguing whether the New Deal was a turning point for African Americans. Use two named programs, explain Bethune and the Black Cabinet's influence, and identify one barrier that remained.

ANSWER KEY

Relief and Roadblocks

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.3.G

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two examples of relief that reached African Americans, circle two barriers to relief, and write a 1 beside a sentence that shows how Bethune or the Black Cabinet influenced access. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	To what extent did the NYA and WPA offer relief to African Americans, and what limited that relief?	**The NYA offered some Black youth paid work and training, and the WPA hired some Black workers. Local discrimination in job assignments or pay limited access to equal relief.**
2	How did the Social Security Act's job exclusions limit relief for Black workers even though the law did not name race?	**The old-age insurance program initially excluded farmworkers and domestic workers. Many African Americans held those jobs, so many missed the protection.**
3	How could AAA payments make the Depression worse for Black sharecroppers instead of helping them?	**The AAA paid landowners to reduce crop production. Some landowners then removed sharecroppers from the land and kept the payments, leaving vulnerable Black sharecroppers without work or land to farm.**
4	How did Bethune and the Black Cabinet expand access, and why could they not guarantee equal relief?	**They pressed federal agencies to include African Americans, and Bethune sought NYA training and work for Black youth. They could not force local officials to end discrimination or remove exclusions in laws.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The New Deal was a limited turning point for African Americans, not a promise of equal relief. WPA jobs and NYA training offered wages and skills to some Black workers and youth. Bethune and other Black Cabinet advisers pushed federal agencies to include more Black people, giving their communities a stronger voice. Yet local discrimination restricted jobs, and the Social Security Act initially excluded farm and domestic workers from old-age insurance. Black sharecroppers also faced eviction when landowners reduced crops. These gains mattered, but important barriers remained.

Accept supported judgments that weigh real opportunities against unequal access. Students should describe the Black Cabinet as advisers, not as members of the president's formal Cabinet.