

The Struggle for Equality

For hundreds of years, most African Americans were enslaved. In 1865, the U.S. Civil War ended, and slavery in the United States also officially ended that year. But African Americans have been struggling to be treated fairly and equally ever since. Many have helped change laws to make the United States a better country for all its people. Here are stories about how some heroic African Americans worked for equality for everyone.

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 when she refused to give her bus seat to a white passenger. At the time, a city law required black people to give their seats to white people on crowded buses. Parks's action and arrest was a major event in the civil rights movement, which led to greater equality for black people in the U.S.

Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri. He went to college and became a writer in the 1920s. Hughes published 50 books. He wrote poetry, plays, novels, songs, and children's stories. Many of his books are about the struggle for equality. One of his fictional characters says, "I've been insulted, eliminated, locked in, locked out, and left holding the bag. But I am still here."

Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall became the first African American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Named after his grandfather, who had been enslaved, Marshall always tried to help poor people and other African Americans. Before becoming a justice of the Supreme Court in 1967, Marshall helped end segregation in schools.

Jackie Robinson

Jackie Robinson was born in Cairo, Georgia. After graduating from college, Robinson joined the Army and became a lieutenant. In 1947, he became the first African American to play for a major league baseball team. Robinson's spectacular skills won him many fans, and he became one of the greatest players of his time. Throughout his life, Robinson tried to help other people. He once wrote, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

Barbara Jordan

Barbara Jordan was born in Houston, Texas, in 1936. She was the first African American woman elected to the Texas state legislature. In 1972, she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Jordan always believed that if people worked hard, they could overcome any barriers and become successful.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What important event happened in 1865 in the United States?

- A) Slavery officially ended.
- B) Langston Hughes published his first book.
- C) Thurgood Marshall became Supreme Court Justice.
- D) Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama.

2. What does the text list?

- A) Barbara Jordan's achievements in the U.S. House of Representatives
- B) laws that have made the United States a better country for all its people
- C) key events in the American civil rights movement
- D) some African Americans who have worked for equality for everyone

3. In the passage, the lives and work of five African Americans who have worked for equality for everyone are described. These African Americans include a writer, a Supreme Court justice, and an athlete. What can be concluded about the struggle of equality based on this information?

- A) The struggle for equality is over thanks to these five African Americans.
- B) The struggle for equality has not had an effect on America.
- C) A variety of people in society have struggled for equality in different ways.
- D) Only politicians and government workers have struggled for equality.

4. Based on the text, what is one thing Thurgood Marshall and Jackie Robinson had in common?

- A) They both wrote books about their experiences with racism.
- B) They both tried to make a positive difference in other people's lives.
- C) Neither one of them had to deal with racism.
- D) They both tried to pass laws to make sure everyone was treated equally and fairly.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A) the effects of slavery on African Americans after the Civil War
- B) the ways people lived life in the United States from 1865 to 1972
- C) how the laws in the United States make the country a better place for everyone
- D) how some African Americans worked to promote equality for everyone

6. Read this sentence from the passage: "Jordan always believed that if people worked hard, they could overcome any **barriers** and become successful."

What does the word "**barrier**" mean?

- A) occupation
- B) help
- C) obstacle
- D) progress

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Many African Americans worked hard for equality. _____, the United States has become a better country for all its people.

- A) Although
- B) As a result
- C) Primarily
- D) For example

8. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?

9. How did Thurgood Marshall work towards equality during his lifetime

10. Explain how an individual can fight for equality. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
