

To what extent was the USA a free and fair society in the 1920s?

Society



I don't agree that the USA was a free and fair society in the 'Roaring Twenties'. Not everyone had the rights to get a good job and earn money. Blacks and immigrants were just some of these minority groups that were prejudiced against. Although this was true, the majority of Americans could purchase things they never could before, they could watch "Nickelodeons", they could listen to the radio. In this essay I will explain who didn't benefit, who did and to what extent the U. S. Was a free and fair society and explain who was caught in the middle of these groups.

There were a number of groups who weren't being treated with liberty and fairness in the 1920s. Many Americans were experiencing this freedom, many others were facing racism and prejudice. A huge majority of Americans were immigrants or descendants of immigrants. It was the more recent immigrants that got the abuse. There was a hierarchy of these new citizens in the big American cities. At the top, and competing for the best jobs and highest salaries, were the bigger and better established groups of Irish-Americans, German-Americans and French Canadians.

These groups scorned the newer Eastern Europeans and Italian immigrants, who in turn held contempt for the Mexicans and blacks, who were at the bottom of this scale. The Russian revolution of 1917, sparked communist ideas in Russia and Eastern Europe. The new Russian government had usurped the Tsar Nicholas and killed him and his family. With all the communist ideas floating around the countries below Russia, some were bound to come to America via the immigrants.

And they did. The period when the U. S. government thought communist ideas were spread around America by anarchists and extremists was known as the Red Scare. Evidence was added to these fears and superstitions in 1919. 400, 000 workers went on strike, and then the Boston Police Department struck and all hell broke loose in the city, as thieves and looters had free reign over the city. Most people today believed the strikes were not to do with communists, but an economic difficulty. Because the government did not know any better, they thought communists would take over America.

These fears weren't untrue, as some immigrants did feel the need to overthrow the government, and so leaflets were published in the city, calling for the abolishment of the current system. Bombs were planted against important figures, and one almost killed the Attorney General, Mitchell Palmer. He asked a man named Hoover to round up people with extremist beliefs. Hoover was a controversial man in history, and he built up 60, 000 thousand files and deported 10, 000 immigrants because of these extremist ideas. Only 556 of these had hard evidence.

Mr Palmer, however, found these purges of communists popular, and used their popularity to run for president. As a result of this, Jews, blacks and even Catholics were accused of being communists. In fact, Palmer accused most minority groups in America. Palmer, though, caused his own undoing. He predicted a Red Revolution and when nothing happened he was ridiculed and lost his popularity. Black people had life very bad in the teens and 20s. The Ku Klux Klan had been revived after a film, and they were originally formed in America's Deep South, to keep the slave descendents in order.

However, the Klan had much support and managed to get some of its members into high positions of power, such as State Governors. The Klan, however, fell out of favour when its leader, Grand Wizard David Stevenson was accused of sexually motivated murder. The corruption of the Klan then became known to many, and that they were not to be trusted. Not everyone had it bad in the 20s. They were known as the 'Roaring Twenties' because the equivalent of a revolution was taking place. America was quickly becoming known as the most technologically advanced country in the world, and one with an ever increasing economy.

It easily overtook Britain, France and Germany, as these countries had taken severe financial losses in the First World War. The 1920s were described as "one never-ending party". Sex was no longer taboo, as it had been in the 1800s and early 20th century. Women were seen as less subservient, and there was certainly a huge decrease in prejudice against them. They had decent jobs although still earned less money for the same job. The motor car had been ingeniously redesigned and reproduced by Henry Ford, founder of the world's largest motor company today.

Radios and other luxuries were being mass-produced, and so music was becoming increasingly popular, especially Jazz. Wages were raised and so people could spend more money on what they wanted to spend it on. The film industry was being developed and Hollywood had been discovered. It is still the place today where the majority of films are made. The cinema was the most popular pastime of the American population. Films were silent until

1927, but were still incredibly popular, and more cinema tickets were being sold in a week than in a year in Britain today.

Films about the former taboo subject of sex were being watched by millions of people. Women had major roles in these films and one of the most successful film stars of the 20s was a woman, Gloria Swanson. Because sex was no longer frowned upon, it was increasing outside marriage. The majority of the American population was incredibly happy. There is an extent to which the freedom and fairness goes in the U. S.. Women for example had it two ways. They were certainly less controlled by men, but they still couldn't work the top jobs or earn as much money in the same job as men.

They didn't have the same rights still, although they were greatly improved. Black Americans could work a wider range of jobs, but were still prejudiced against and earned little money. This is why I do not think that the USA was a completely free and fair society in the 1920s, because not everyone had equal rights. Blacks are still treated awfully in the Deep South of America today, so the society is still not free or fair. Using this evidence, I don't think any society could be completely free and fair, as racism, prejudice and chauvinism has gone on for centuries.