

Parent Guide



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We're excited to share this activity with you. If you are interested in finding more exciting, fun and interesting activities for you and your children, then check out these links to different areas of the [Twinkl Parents](#) website.

games



crafts



puzzles



experiments



word searches



What is this resource and how do I use it?

Read about civil rights campaigner Fannie Lou Hamer. She grew up working on a cotton plantation and went on to fight for social justice for others throughout her life. Learning about significant individuals may help a child's understanding of the wider world and how people in the past fought for freedom and rights for others.

What skills does this practise?

Empathy

Understanding the World

Extending Vocabulary

Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

Read more about the Slave Trade with this [timeline](#). Why not try some discrimination [challenge cards](#) as discussion starting points?

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Fannie Lou Hamer



Born: 6th October 1917
in Mississippi, USA

Died: 14th March 1977
in Mississippi, USA at
59 years old

**Civil and Voting Rights
Activist**

Fannie was the youngest of 20 children her parents had.

After experiencing a racist attack on their farm when the animal stock was poisoned because Fannie and her family were Black, they moved to a different area of Mississippi and secured work on a cotton plantation.

At six years old, Fannie joined her family picking cotton on the plantation. Her family was poor and every member played their part to help provide for each other.

During wintertime, when cotton was not in season, Fannie would attend school. Her school was a one-room facility set up by the plantation owners for children of the workers to go to. The main objective was to keep the children whose parents

worked on the plantation busy and out of the way. Any learning they received was a bonus.

Fannie enjoyed her days in the school. She loved reading and performed well in her spellings. She was able to recite poetry with confidence too.

However, when she reached 12 years of age, Fannie had to give up her place in school to work on the cotton plantation full-time to help her family earn money. Her parents were getting older and working on the plantation was increasingly hard for them. But if they did not work, they did not get paid. There was no such thing as a pension or sick pay on the plantation. So, Fannie did what she thought was best and worked to help support her family. On average, Fannie would pick 90 to 140kg of cotton a day. She

Fannie Lou Hamer



continued to read at church and worked on her Bible studies to improve her literacy.

In 1944, the plantation owner realised she had good levels of literacy and was, in fact, the only employee who could read. Her boss selected her to work in the administration office and become the plantation timekeeper.

It was on the plantation where Fannie met her husband, Perry. He was a tractor driver on the farm and they worked together for the next 18 years.

Fannie and her husband were very much looking forward to starting a family. However, during a surgical operation in 1961 to remove a tumour from her uterus, the surgeon removed all her reproductive organs in a procedure called a 'hysterectomy'. This operation was performed without Fannie's consent.

Surgeries like this were commonplace within the Black community. Known as forced sterilisation, it was used to prevent Black women from getting pregnant.

Fannie had unknowingly become

part of an atrocious sterilisation programme. Now unable to have children of their own, Fannie and Perry decided to adopt two daughters.

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was set up in 1960 for students to come together and support the civil rights movement.

Fannie went along to a meeting led by civil rights activists and became angry when she found out Black people were being denied the right to vote.

She rallied her community together and became a field secretary in the SNCC helping volunteers to register to vote at a Mississippi courthouse. Fannie helped all the volunteers to complete the forms correctly, but they were all rejected after being told they had failed a literacy test. People from white communities were not asked to complete a literacy test.

On their journey back from the courthouse, they were harassed and pulled over by the police who fined them \$100 for travelling in a bus which was 'too yellow'.

When Fannie returned to the cotton plantation, she was fired for

Fannie Lou Hamer



attempting to vote. Her husband Perry was told he would have to stay until the cotton harvest.

When Fannie and Perry left the cotton plantation, which had been not only their place of employment but also their home for many years, the plantation owner took a lot of their property claiming it to be his. When they moved out of the plantation, they moved with very few of their belongings and had to start again. But Fannie had always faced adversity with a positive attitude and, where she was positive, she always had hope.

In the summer of 1963, Fannie had successfully registered to vote in Charleston, South Carolina. When travelling with several other Black women on a whites-only bus, they were pulled over by the police. The women were arrested and sent to a local jail. While in the jailhouse, they were brutally beaten, leaving Fannie with life-long injuries including a blood clot on her eye, kidney damage and a permanent injury to her leg.

As a young girl, she had contracted polio so, along with her jailhouse beating, she would now walk with a permanent limp.

Angered by her treatment, she co-founded a new political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Its aim was to challenge the opposition's intention of blocking Black participation and the right to vote. Her reputation within Black communities strengthened. Fannie wanted to give a voice to African Americans and make sure they were represented. Fannie did not stand for discrimination or exploitation of any kind. She wanted equality and



Fannie Lou Hamer



a right to be heard.

When she announced her running for the Mississippi House of Representatives, she was banned immediately from the ballot. Along with two other women, they became the first Black women to stand in the US Congress after protesting against being banned from the election process.

Fannie, becoming increasingly frustrated with political barriers being out to prevent her from taking part and speaking out, looked for alternatives to make a difference to her community. In 1968, she started a 'Pig Bank'. By providing free pigs to Black farmers, they could then breed, raise and farm the animals for meat themselves. The farmers could then support their families and Fannie was able to offer new life chances to people who thought they were limited to always working for others for low pay.

She soon realised this venture had potential and went on to launch the Freedom Farm Collective.

Together with a few investors and sponsors, they bought some land to share with Black farmers. They bought 640 acres of land and opened a cooperative store, boutique and sewing business. Low-income housing was also built on the land providing safe homes for the employees. At its highest point, the collective was one of the largest employers in the region.

Fannie continued to travel and speak out against discrimination, prejudice and adversity. In 1977, she died from breast cancer at the age of 59.

Fannie Hamer was prevented from fulfilling her dreams by the barriers put in front of her by others. She continually looked to solutions to these problems and throughout her life made a difference to others in her community. She was a selfless woman who put the needs of others before her own while breaking barriers and transforming the future.

***Disclaimer:** We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation. All information is correct as of 12.3.22.