



1929

Ford Employs African American Skilled Tradesmen and Management

One of the first automobile companies to hire African Americans and the first to offer an equal wage, Ford Motor Company continued to be one of the largest employers of African Americans. By this time Henry Ford hired salaried employees with better jobs. Starting with lower jobs in the foundries, African Americans climbed up the ladder to hold more important and successful positions. Over the next few decades, they would continue to play a more active part in the Ford Motor Company.



¹ White and Black workers on the assembly line

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² Black supervisor

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Credits:

Bruggermann, John. "The Power and Collapse of Paternalism: The Ford Motor Company and Black Workers, 1937-1941". *Social Problems*. Vol. 47, No. 2. pp. 220-240. 2005

Meier, August and Elliott Rudwick. *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007. Print.

Keywords/Topics:

Work/Jobs

Questions:

1. Why did Ford begin to hire African Americans as skilled tradesmen and management?
2. How do you think white tradesmen felt about Ford's new hiring practices?
3. Within Ford Motor Company, what specific tasks did African Americans do?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/1845390>

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/3097199>

<http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm;jsessionid=f830671591271253291600?migration=8&topic=6&bhcp=1>

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At Ford Motor Company white and blacks workers often worked together on the assembly line and as skilled tradesmen. African Americans generally supervised and trained with a mixed race crew.

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By 1929, Ford employed African Americans in supervisory positions and skilled trades, such as electricians and tool-and-die makers. Blacks operated machinery and worked in laboratories and draft rooms.